



## **INVENTORS COLLEGE ORGANIZATION WORKSHOP ANALYSIS & EVALUATION**

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### **Introduction**

Inventors College Organization workshops began in the Fall of 2007. Research in various inventing groups and associations showed there was a tremendous need for change in the approaches to inventing. In general, there were many blocks and stale approaches.

The process of innovating needed an "incubator" for ideas and a more meaningful education for "wannabe" inventors. ICO was formed to rejuvenate inventing.

Canada is behind in producing new innovations for the world and there is a subsequent loss of jobs and lack of development of new businesses. Inventing new products and services is vital to growth and stability of the economy.

### **Source of Ideas for the Inventing Workshops**

Otto Schmidt visited several inventors groups as a guest speaker and from discussions with members and observations, it was noted that there was a lot of interest in inventing but few new inventions went into the marketplace. Personal skills training was also needed along with an education on how to invent. A combination of teaching and inventing was going to be the approach used for best results.

Otto met Jim Szabo at one of the adult inventors meetings. Jim had considerable experience in the inventing field and Otto passed on to him a request for an inventing presentation from a teacher with a large group of students in Kitchener, ON. The response of students was very positive and discussions came around to the possibilities of a professional training course for children and adults who were interested in becoming inventors. Jim was invited to assist in teaching the course and helped set up the lessons that became the Inventors College Organization workshops.

### **Instructor**

#### **Otto Schmidt – Certified Teacher**

Founder and Director of ICO, education consultant, skills training/staff development provider, gifted programming specialist, speaker, author, president of the Educators of the Gifted Organization. Otto brings the skills of an experienced teacher to the workshops and teaches the personal skills involved in inventing.

## **Objectives**

- 1) Make the inventing experience as real as possible
- 2) Determine and develop the key stages of the inventing process
- 3) Create a support team of experts that would take inventions into the marketplace

## **Gaining School Board Support and Approval**

Otto is a certified teacher and also has previous educational workshop experience. He approached his contacts in school boards who opened doors to those in charge of decision making. A key factor was assuring educators and parents that inventing workshops would support Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines. Students would be shown how to use what they learned in school in a direct, real-life, “hands on” inventing experience. Learning from all subjects would be included. Participants would not be engaged in a game or entertainment. Their efforts would be taken seriously and assistance would be provided to take viable inventions to the marketplace as quickly as possible. The experience was for personal enrichment and enhancement of life and learning.

## **Selection of First Participants**

The first groups were school students. They were all identified participants in an Ontario school board gifted program. These students spent one day a week away from their classrooms already so it was no problem to have them participate in workshops. It is expected that workshops will eventually become available to all students and teachers.

## **Advisory Team**

Valuable initial advice and direction were provided by the Canadian Innovation Centre in Waterloo, Ontario. Direction was also provided by a professional inventions evaluator and from key people in inventing associations.

The two instructors, Otto Schmidt and Jim Szabo decide and develop the details of the workshops. There is no formal advisory group, constitution or formal roles of members, at this time.

## **Introduction of the Workshops: Information Meetings**

Information meetings are held several weeks before sessions begin with all who are interested in participating. Members of the established support team are also invited to add extra credibility. Objectives, approaches and anticipated outcomes of the workshops are presented. Other invited guests may include media people, representatives from school boards, inventing associations, governments, and other interested community groups or individuals e.g. Association for Bright Children, international visitors, etc.

## **Workshop Schedule: Five One-Day Sessions**

In five days participants are taught how to:

- be innovative thinkers/creators of new inventions and solve related problems
  - do proper searches to determine and protect their inventions
  - develop working models/prototypes
  - present themselves and their inventions professionally
  - develop a business plan
- and more

## **Three Stages of the Inventing Process**

- 1. Personal Skills Training** – enhance personal skills in self-awareness, creativity, researching, leadership, communication, higher-level thinking. Adding value to people on a personal level adds value to what they produce and motivates them to do their best. Inventors need to be taught how to: develop an unlimited number of inventions, think about and develop them, and how to present themselves and the inventions.
- 2. Legal and Technical Training** – Participants experience genuine legal forms, searches, business plans, and the technical, design, and structural aspects of inventing. Participants learn to: protect intellectual property, do searches, build prototypes, assess and modify their inventions.
- 3. Expert Support Team** – “The inventions must not die!!” Experts and specialists are invited to support, advise, invest time and/or money in created inventions. There are also professional inventions evaluators made available. Team members may be special guests during sessions. Members come from all areas of technical, legal and manufacturing, business expertise. They are from many cities and districts.

## **Bonus Day - “ICO Inventions Exhibition”**

Inventors, their inventions, and invited support team members assemble for a day of evaluation and discussion of inventions. This is by invitation and non-disclosure forms are signed by all attending.

## **Exhibition Location(s)**

The first inventions exhibition was held at the Canadian Innovation Centre, University of Waterloo Campus, Waterloo, ON. The second was in Simcoe, ON. Future exhibitions will be held in locations close to where workshops are held.

## **People that Attend Exhibitions**

Exhibitions involve approximately 100-150 people. Besides the inventors and their families, there are many support team members, school board representatives, local politicians, a film crew that tape the inventors for a future inventing show, interested parties who attend by special invitation to view proceedings before possibly getting involved as members of the support team.

## **Number of Participants Involved in Workshops**

Workshops have 20-40 participants. Of 59 inventions so far, 35 were displayed at our exhibitions.

It is anticipated that the number of participants in future workshops will be in the 30-40 range and hopefully a higher percentage will be able to present their inventions.

## **Actual Inventions Created**

Because inventions may or may not be fully protected, terms of non-disclosure forms must be honoured.

## **Types of Inventions Created**

Inventions are personal protective devices, electronics devices, music related, home office furnishings, computer and board games related, kitchen and home hobbyist gadgets, sports related, pet related.

## **Noteworthy Inventions**

Of the twenty-two presented at the first exhibition, four were of particular interest. The one that generated the most interest was a protective device for athletes. The representative from a prototype company took personal interest in this one and worked directly with the inventor to get the product into the marketplace. In the following months, others of the inventions sparked interest with Cooper Sporting Goods, an office fixtures manufacturer, a golf company and a games inventor who asked our participants to assist him in developing a new game.

At our second exhibition, 8 of 13 inventions were of interest to the support team. An electronics firm, injection moulding company, and manufacturing consultant are some of the interested parties.

## **Successes**

There are a number of successes from our workshops:

- students, parents and their teacher appreciated the high level of performance and reality
- the fact that there were 22 viable inventions developed within a period of 6 weeks is remarkable. Four were considered exceptional.
- the people who hear about the venture are very complimentary and supportive
- the support team added new members easily after people heard about our venture
- the Member of the Provincial Parliament who attended the first inventions exhibition sent a special letter of introduction and recommendation directly to the Ontario Minister of Education
- the hiring school board was very positive about the accomplishments of the workshops.

ICO is signed to do three within the 2007-2008 school year. The board employees will also be invited to participate in a future additional workshop.

- two participants were invited to appear on other television shows for children who invent. One has his invention in process with Oakville Golf.
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## **After the Workshops**

Once a workshop is completed, there is no further ICO involvement with participants. Participants are, however, left with a number of practical, meaningful support options from ICO that encourage them to continue to make their dreams a reality and assist them in getting their inventions into the marketplace in a realistic way. It is anticipated that some inventors may be invited to again present at future exhibitions.

## **Future of the Program**

The program will continue to be improved in content and approach. Courses will be marketed more effectively and offered to a variety of special interest groups, associations, school boards, and the general public.

The Support Team will be further developed to interact and participate more meaningfully with inventors and inventions. There is a need to educate members on how to best get involved during and after the exhibitions.

Industry Canada invited the instructors to one of six special meetings across Canada that focussed on developing entrepreneurship and innovation in Canada. We hope to be recognized as an "incubator" for new inventors and inventions and bringing education and business together in a positive, productive way. Using this approach, we hope to bring about new products and viable businesses in Canada.

There is a possibility of franchising the course.

There is also discussion of affiliation with some of the inventors associations and being their educational wing to teach their members the course.

**Contact Information**

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