How well beaten is the innovation track?

A fairly light-hearted look at what it can mean to be an innovator, but with the positive message that it's well worth the effort.

Colin Bird
Let’s begin with …

… some audience participation …

What do you see as the characteristics of innovators?
One perspective ...

- Curious
- Outward Looking
- Opportunistic
- Brilliant
- Persistent
- A "hero[ine]"
- Optimistic
- Committed
- Charismatic
- Friendly
- Hard working
- Collaborative

Do you feel like this?
A different perspective …

- Will not focus
- "Off message"
- A "loose cannon"
- A nuisance
- Pigheaded
- A bit weird
- Fanatical
- Does not understand "no"
- Disruptive
- The centre of conflict
- Poor at delivery
- Non-team player

Or do you feel that others perceive you this way?
Compare the perceptions ...

- Curious
- Outward Looking
- Opportunistic
- Brilliant
- Persistent
- A "hero[ine]"
- Optimistic
- Committed
- Charismatic
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- Will not focus
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How do you perceive yourself?

O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
An’ foolish notion

Robert Burns, “To a Louse”

But …

did the Bard have the right message for innovators?
The Ideas Dungeon

Warning!
The inventor's nightmare is caged within these walls. Only enter if you are feeling strong ...
No!
Don't be silly
You can't do that.
It will never work
We've tried that already
It will never perform
We just don't work that way
Oh, that's obvious
It's just a few lines of code.
It's not important enough to be an invention
Pause for confession
Outside the dungeon …

… what environment are we looking for?

Tolerant?

Showing a mature reaction to "failure"

A young journalist challenged Thomas Edison, "Mr. Edison, why do you keep trying to make light by using electricity when you have failed so many times? Don't you know that gas lights are with us to stay?"

To this Edison replied, "Young man, don't you realize that I have not failed but have successfully discovered six thousand ways that won't work!"

On October 21, 1879, after thirteen months of repeated failures, Edison finally succeeded in finding a filament that would work.

“You need to kiss an awful lot of frogs to find a prince”

Graffito
Innovators are agents of change

*When men are easy in their circumstances, they are naturally enemies to innovations.*

Joseph Addison

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent … It is the one that is the most adaptable to change"

Charles Darwin

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

George Bernard Shaw, Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"

… the environment also needs to tolerate change
Listening helps too ...

Busy people focus on their tasks, not their goals

No! I can’t be bothered to see some crazy salesman. We’ve got a battle to fight!
Two more ‘L’s

- Learning

- Lateral thinking:
  - Helps you see past your assumptions and practices
  - Improves with practice ☺

From “The Dilbert Principle” by Scott Adams
Innovating should be fun …

… even though we want innovation that matters

- Solving problems
- Trying new techniques
- Gaining recognition
Gaining recognition ...

‘I take it your idea is pretty good.’

...and finally ...
In conclusion ...