

THE NEXT INTERVIEW

BACK STAGE

ALAN GREGERMAN

Backstage Pass: The Next Interview with Doland White

Alan Gregerman, President & Chief Innovation Officer, Venture Works

Welcome to your **Backstage Pass companion** for this episode of *The Next Interview*. This guide helps you move from inspiration to action — to take what you heard from Alan Gregerman and apply it directly to your own leadership journey.

Alan challenges the traditional definition of expertise and innovation, inviting leaders to unlock genius within their teams by embracing humility, curiosity, and fresh perspectives. His message is clear: the future belongs to those willing to admit, *“I don’t know... but I’m willing to find out.”*

Trust & Autonomy

Alan redefines leadership as creating an environment where people feel safe saying *“I don’t know”* — not as a weakness, but as the beginning of discovery. Trust starts when leaders model vulnerability and curiosity.

Pro Tip: Empower your team to experiment. The fastest path to innovation is through permission to try, not perfection.

Communication & Transparency

He reminds leaders that innovation begins with dialogue — both with teams and customers. Real progress happens when leaders listen, ask better questions, and build honest feedback loops.

Reflection Prompt: When was the last time you truly listened to a customer or team member without trying to fix or defend?

Growth & Innovation

Alan's "Wisdom of Ignorance" principle reframes innovation as the *curiosity to explore what you don't yet know*. He urges leaders to get out of the office, explore new ideas, and look outside their own industries for inspiration.

Pro Tip: Schedule a "learning adventure" this month — visit a company, store, or environment unrelated to your field and ask, "What can we learn from them?"

Systems of Accountability

Innovation doesn't happen by accident — it happens through systems that encourage discovery, measure progress, and reward new thinking. Alan challenges leaders to bring teams together across departments, flatten hierarchy, and act on what they learn.

Reflection Prompt: What's one way you can create structure around curiosity — so learning and action become part of your rhythm, not random events?

“Apply It” Worksheet — Turning Insight into Action

Action Step 1: Create a Culture of Curiosity

Invite your team to share one “I don’t know” question each week — something that challenges your current approach.

Reflection: How does your reaction to uncertainty influence the confidence of your team?

2-Minute Leadership Move: Ask “What if we’re wrong?” in your next meeting.

Action Step 2: Engage Customers Differently

Schedule a direct customer conversation. Skip the survey — ask open questions about their challenges and future goals.

Reflection: What surprised you most about their answers?

2-Minute Leadership Move: Begin every strategy session with a real customer insight.

Action Step 3: Break Down the Zoo

Alan’s metaphor: get leaders out of their “executive suites” and into the mix. Create mixed-level pods to accelerate decision-making and empathy.

Reflection: Where could cross-functional collaboration create faster ideas and more substantial alignment?

2-Minute Leadership Move: Spend 15 minutes this week sitting with a different department — just to listen.

Measurable Outcome:

You’ll know this episode made an impact when your meetings shift from “Who knows?” to “Let’s find out together.” Track one team initiative that emerged from curiosity rather than expertise.

Quote to Remember:

“Innovation is anything we can do to create compelling value for the people we have the privilege to serve.” — *Alan Gregerman*

Guest Resource Section

-  **Book:** [*The Wisdom of Ignorance: Why Not Knowing Can Be the Key to Innovation in an Uncertain World*](#)

A refreshing look at how curiosity, humility, and the courage to admit what we don't know can unlock real innovation.

-  **Website:** www.alangregerman.com

Explore his work on innovation strategy, customer experience, and organizational culture.

-  **LinkedIn:** Alan Gregerman

Connect directly and join the conversation on leadership and innovation.