

[ENTREVESTOR: N.B. firm Agora Mobile gets coding class on track](#)

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Published October 6, 2014 - 8:29pm

Last Updated October 6, 2014 - 8:33pm

Moncton-based startup **Agora Mobile** has launched a new method of teaching coding and has already signed up about 200 teachers to use the product.

Agora Mobile is an ambitious company founded by Dalhousie University computer science alum Simon Gauvin, who hopes to revolutionize the way people learn coding.

Agora's main product, Vizwik, lets anyone create apps that work on all mobile devices and that never have to be downloaded or updated. The company lets users join a social network on which they can develop their own apps. They can share these apps with other people. Soon, the system will let them sell the apps as well.

"Coding has become part of nearly every career path, but teachers just don't have the time to learn the complex programming tools to teach coding," said Gauvin. "We created Vizwik so teachers can fill this gap in both their own and their students' learning, allowing both to dive into coding."

The company has just launched Vizwik and its first sales campaign is an effort to get the product into the hands of high-school teachers who want to teach coding. It is working with Brilliant Labs, an initiative that aims to encourage teachers in the Maritimes to do more to teach coding to their students. Fewer than 10 per cent of North American high schools teach coding, even though more than one million positions are expected to be left unfilled over the next five years due the lack of qualified people, said Agora in a statement.

The Agora business model calls for the company to find adopters among teachers, preferring to make the sales in individual classrooms rather than to entire school boards. Agora charges \$9 for a basic account and as much as \$15 for an advanced package.

The company has so far found adopters in 22 high schools in the French-language segment of the New Brunswick school system, and it is making inroads in one of the four English segments.

Gauvin said teachers are generally not intimidated by the platform, and that it uses a more "visual" coding system than many others. Students can learn to code in a secure environment. They can develop their own apps. And using the Vizwik social network they will soon be able to even sell their apps and learn about entrepreneurship. Agora also provides tutorials that help them learn to code.

So far, about 900 people have registered to use the system.

As well as its consumer product, Agora is working on a corporate product that will allow businesses to use the Vizwik platform to develop their own product, branded specifically for that corporation.

Agora Mobile, which now has six employees, raised \$1 million in equity funding from the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation, **East Valley Ventures** and several angel investors earlier this year. The foundation accounted for half the round.