



Ayah Bdeir

Topics

Education, Science and Technology, TED Talks

Travels From

New York

Bio

Ayah Bdeir is an inventor, entrepreneur and social activist. She is the inventor of littleBits, the electronic building block that has transformed STEM education for millions of kids around the world. For over a decade, Bdeir's work has centered around empowering everyone to be an inventor — by modularizing and democratizing electronics, by pioneering new ways of learning through play, and by reimagining the relationship between technology and creativity. Bdeir has been particularly focused on empowering underrepresented communities, and especially girls, with the tools to become tomorrow's changemakers. An alumna of the MIT Media Lab, Bdeir founded a company, littleBits Electronics Inc., and raised over \$100 million from prominent investors in Silicon Valley and New York. The company was acquired by Sphero in 2019 and together have become a leader in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) education. Today, more than 20 million "Bits" are in the hands of kids, teachers, parents, artists in over 70 countries. And littleBits has won over 150 awards including Toy of the Year Bdeir is also a co-founder of Daleel Thawra (translation: Directory to the Revolution), a

platform to help political and civic activists in her home country of Lebanon use technology to further democracy. In 2009, and to further her mission of democratizing invention, she co-founded the Open Hardware Summit and helped shape the principles by which Open Source is applied to hardware for hundreds of millions of hardware products. In recognition of her work, Bdeir has received numerous awards, including: BBC 100 Most Influential Women (2019), New York Times Groundbreaker (2019), Inc Magazine Top 100 Female Founders (2018), CNBC Next List (2015), MIT Technology Review's 35 Innovators Under 35 (2014), and Popular Mechanics 25 Makers Who Are Reinventing the American Dream (2014). She has received fellowships from Creative Commons and TED, and her TED talk, "Building Blocks that Blink, Beep and Teach," has garnered more than a million views. Bdeir has appeared on the covers of The New York Times Magazine (2011), WIRED UK (2016), Marie Claire (2018), Forbes Middle East (2015), MAKE Magazine (2019) and others. She was featured on 60 Minutes (2019) in an episode about the gender gap in STEM. Her inventions are included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and have appeared in The New Museum, The Royal College of Art, and Ars Electronica. She holds over a dozen patents. Bdeir is a Board member of the Fund for Public Schools, a non-profit partner to the Department of Education dedicated to raising funds and developing pilot programs for New York City Public Schools Originally from Lebanon, Ayah now lives in New York City

SPEECHES

Introducing LittleBits Ayah Bdeir tells us about littleBits, a set of simple, interchangeable blocks that make programming as simple and important a part of creativity as snapping blocks together, like Legos.

The Building Blocks of the Future The world is broken. It's devastating, disruptive, and painful. But it's also an opportunity. What if we rethought the fundamentals of the world? From what we eat, to how we learn, to how we build, we could reconsider the building blocks of the future in every aspect of society. In this talk, Ayah Bdeir, inventor of littleBits, the electronic building block that reinvented STEM education, will explore how we can use modularity to construct a more equitable, creative, and harmonious future. This is a talk about creativity, democratizing technology, and equity.

REVIEWS: "There was a lot of buzz in between the afternoon sessions, and specific references to Ayah's presentation. People were talking both about Ayah, and the Little Bits product. She brought the perfect blend of energy and inspiration to our morning line up."

- Kim Mahan, Maxx Potential (WomenEtc Conference)