INVENTORS DIGEST

THE MAGAZINE FOR IDEA PEOPLE >

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TWIN CITIES, MN.

SILICON VALLEY, CA.

1930-39 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 38

1950-59 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58

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1980-89 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88

2010-15 11 12 13 14

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EDITOR'S NOTE

I Got Mail.

I received the following from a subscriber and it made me think about what I'd written in January.

> Hi mark,
>
> With all due respect your father was right & wrong.
>
> The marketplace is dangerous in part because IP systems are a mess - I had the largest jury verdict in the history of Virginia to prove it - here is a short CBS news video to understand: http://www.x-itproducts.com/news/ but it does not need to be this way and will change as we evolve toward simple truth. Harvard wrote teaching cases on my IP experience: https://hbr.org/search?term=x-itproducts/
>
> Tuesday I am teaching the case at Dartmouth College. Over fourteen years down the road these issues resonate & are gaining momentum.
>
> Please consider looking deeper into the challenges IP faces and the opportunities therein. I work quietly behind the scenes for change & can shed some light.
>
> Did you know in 1790 when the US patent system was created it took a few weeks to issue a patent and the equivalent of $100. In 1790 information moved slowly by foot, horse & sail; today information moves around the globe instantly while patents usually take 3 years to process and +$20,000 to issue. This disparity empowers bad behavior in the marketplace.
>
> There is a better way - Jefferson understood this as the first examiner, inventor & later president.
>
> Blessings, thanks & be safe,
>
> **Aldo Dibelardino, Inventor & Advocate**

Yes, my father did say he wishes he'd never pursued a patent and protecting it, but that's a snippet of a long story. Each inventor needs to weigh what they deem appropriate for their scenario. If you think I'm advocating one way over another, you're misunderstanding my message. I'd be an arrogant fool if I tried to put people in a bucket by answering a couple of questions. Life and your products are certainly more complex to categorize by answering a question or two.

Aldo, you have a great story and congratulations on your win and sticking to your guns.

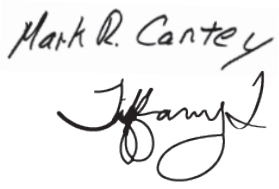
Happy almost spring,

Mark R. Cantey

Mark R. Cantey

VP & Associate Publisher

INVENTORS DIGEST
THE MAGAZINE FOR IDEA PEOPLE>



MANAGING EDITOR
MARK R. CANTEY

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TIFFANY TALATO

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AY HELLO TO INNOVATION

Get to know strategic branding

Shake hands with results

At enventys we breathe new life into existing products and brands,
as well as create new ones using an efficient, collaborative approach.
Simply put, we believe there are two ways to grow your business:
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JACK LANDER, our regular columnist on all things prototyping, licensing and inventing, explores the gap between inventor and entrepreneur. Jack, a near-legend in the inventing community, is no stranger to the written word. His latest book is Marketing Your Invention – A Complete Guide to Licensing, Producing and Selling Your Invention. You can reach him at Jack@Inventor-mentor.com

DHANA COHEN Co-founder of The Women Inventorz Network and the newly created Inventorz(VIRTUAL)Network. Dhana knows a thing or two about great innovation, as an inventor herself she struggled with who to contact, and who truly had her best interest in mind. Luckily she stopped inventing after several products and took her background in marketing and partnered with Melinda Knight, together they have developed the right connections, education and marketing for the inventor community. The new (VIRTUAL) InventorzNetwork.com is the only platform out there in the inventor industry, think Match.com meets Angie's List for the inventor industry.

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JOHN RAU, president/CEO of Ultra-Research Inc., an Anaheim, CA-based market research firm, has over 25 years of experience conducting market research for ideas, inventions and other forms of intellectual property. In addition, he is a member of the Board of Directors of Inventors Forum, based in Orange County, CA, which is one of the largest inventor organizations in the nation. He has been a contributor to Inventors Digest magazine since 1998. Mr. Rau can be reached at (714) 281-0150, or ultraresch@cs.com.

Market Research *tip of the* Month

by John Rau

Do you recall how many times your parents used to tell you that you had to do your homework before undertaking some other activity such as watching TV, listening to music, going shopping at the mall, playing sports, or going out with your friends? Bet you thought that you would never hear that again after you moved out of the family home. Well, if you are going to be an inventor, you can't escape this requirement. To have any chance of success with your invention idea, you have got to do your homework.

Let me refresh your memory (after all these years) in the context of what you were told to do and how it relates to inventing:

1. **Write a description of your homework project.**
   You have an invention idea. Describe what it is. What does it do? What problem(s) does it solve? How does it function and how does its design contribute to its function? Have you seen anything like it in the marketplace – something designed differently but used for the same function? How and why does your idea work better?

2. **Do your art work for your class project.**
   Create some drawings and diagrams that describe your new product idea. Make drawings from all angles with as many details as you can so that one can understand what your new product idea looks like. You need to explain what your invention will look like, at least conceptually. Basic sketches are important, as they will be the basis of your patent application and supporting claims.

3. **Take a field trip.**
   You need to find out if there are other products on the market that are similar to your idea and, if so, how are they similar. You need to "walk the aisles" and visit department stores, specialty shops, and electronics stores, as well as search online for products that meet the specifications of your idea. Are these products different from your idea and, if so, how? How well do these similar products sell? Do they meet a need and does there appear to be a substantial customer base that would purchase your new product? Is your idea an improvement in the sense of either a modification to an existing product or a totally new innovation? Remember, you don't want to waste your time developing something that already exists. Who makes these products? What do they sell for? You need as much information as possible about possible competition in order to successfully commercialize your new product idea.

4. **Go to the library.**
   Your local library has multiple resources to help you find out more about the industry your product sells in including information about wholesalers, manufacturers, distributors, trade associations and potential competitors. Research librarians can help you search the Internet for more information as well as numerous computer databases including the USPTO database of existing patents. You need to learn everything you possibly can about the industry your invention is in.

5. **Collaborate with other inventors.**
   Find a local inventors club or organization in your area and go meet with other inventors to see how they

pursued their invention ideas in terms of what they did, were they successful and, if not, why? How did they find help in getting their invention idea into the marketplace? It's essential that you network with other inventors and join local inventors groups. Anwa Robinson, the American singer/songwriter/musician, who may be remembered for his appearance on American Idol, provides good advice. He is quoted as having said: "Make sure you meet the right people who know the industry and are willing to help you. Do your homework – read books about the industry, talk to people. If you don't know something, ask."

6. **Make something for "show-and-tell."**
   As pointed out by the New York-based Invents Company LLC in its November 19, 2012 post on the Web (see http://www.invents.com/i-have-an-invention-idea/), "a prototype or model of your idea is essential. When first developing your idea, you don't need a working prototype or a beautiful one, but you should put together a rough prototype. Basically, you want something to show a product designer who will help you make technical drawings for your invention. The initial prototype offers a couple of advantages. First, it allows you to see a physical representation of your idea and, secondly, it enables you to refine your idea as you progress through the invention process."

7. **Get help from your instructor and/or tutor.**
   You should surround yourself with a team of professionals with expertise in the areas needed such as a patent attorney or agent, product designers, engineers, accountants, cost estimators, marketing professionals, prototype builders, manufacturers, etc. You may not need all of these, but don't hesitate to get outside help. You might also be able to get some assistance from a college or university marketing, engineering, architecture or design class where you can get the support of "student teams" who would be willing to take on your new product venture as a class or group project—maybe for free or for the cost of parts and materials only. You might also want to investigate getting involved with a business incubator in your area where you can receive a broad range of services.

8. **Write a project report.**
   If your intent is to license your invention, then you will need to prepare some literature, generally referred to as your "sell sheet", that describes your invention and what problem(s) it solves, its market (including market study results), its intellectual property status and its ability to generate revenue. This is what you would provide to both investors and potential licensing candidates. If you are planning to manufacture, distribute and sell your new product yourself, then you will need a business plan.

9. **Make a final project presentation to your class.**
   If you have prepared a marketing plan, then you will need to make presentations to potential licensing company candidates, investors and manufacturing companies to "sell" your new product idea. Many industries have one or more companies that sponsor/conduct invention contests. If your invention looks like a good fit, then consider entering these types of events. This will bring you a lot of exposure and could result in a license. Financial presentations to bankers and venture capital groups may also be required if you plan to set up a company to manufacture and sell your new product yourself.

The above discussion illustrates how the "homework assignment process" that you went through years ago (and perhaps conveniently forgotten about!) has direct applicability to helping you become a successful inventor.

Thomas Edison is quoted as having said, "A genius is just a talented person who does his homework." You don't have to be a genius to be an inventor, but you do need to do your homework!

Contact John Rau at:
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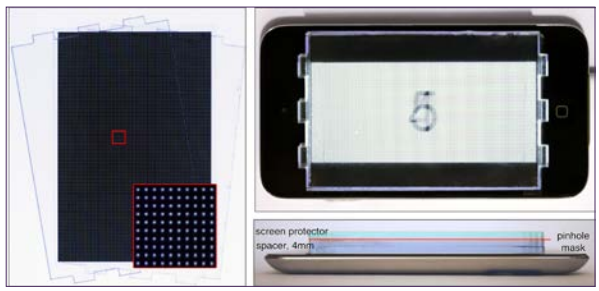
714.281.0150

UNDER THE RADAR

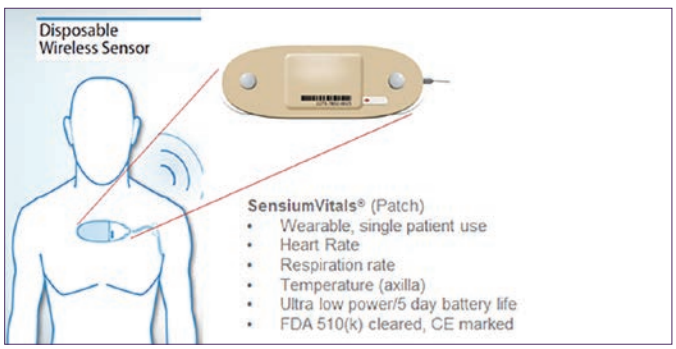
1 Prototype Display Lets Glasses-Wearers Go Glasses-Free



A new prototype display allows people with vision problems to see device screens clearly without wearing their prescription lenses. The technology consists of an algorithm developed by the team that uses eyeglass prescription information to alter the way the pixels generate light on the screen, along with an acrylic filter laid over the display. The filter's tiny holes are each placed directly over a pixel, allowing the filter and algorithm-altered pixels to create an image on the screen that looks the same to the viewer as it would through prescription glasses.

http://techxplore.com/news/2014-07-prototype-eyeglass-prescription-viewing-devices.html

2 SensiumVitals Patch Allows for Quick Patient Intervention



The SensiumVitals patch joins the growing ranks of medical wearables, and will attach to a patient to easily and unobtrusively monitor vital signs. The wireless, disposable patch, created by Sensium Healthcare, weighs only half an ounce, yet is equipped with sensors able to monitor temperature, respiration and heart rate. It will take a reading every two minutes and then transmit the data to the assigned location, such as a nursing station and heldheld devices, allowing for a quick intervention if the patient's condition suddenly deteriorates. In tests, nurses in particular have enjoyed the ability to have easy access to frequent patient updates. According to the developers, early intervention during medical treatments tends to lead to shorter hospital stays and lower hospital bills.

http://www.sensium-healthcare.com/sensiumvitals®-system#.VNuXQqWaGxI

3 Lechal Interactive Vibrating Footwear

Described as the world's first interactive haptic footwear, the Vibrating Footwear from Lechal will guide the wearer to their destination with a series of vibrations. nDeveloped with the visually impaired in mind, the Vibrating Footwear insoles are seen as an improvement over the usual assist devices, which rely on audio cues. Instead, once the intended destination has been set using a smartphone, the insoles will vibrate to signal a left or right turn. The companion app and charging device for the insoles can be controlled by using the volume buttons on the smartphone, with no visual cues required, and the charger will respond with audio feedback. Besides giving directions to the wearer, the Vibrating Footwear also allows users to tag their destination with a foot tap, share their route with friends and track daily activity.

http://www.lechal.com/press-release/

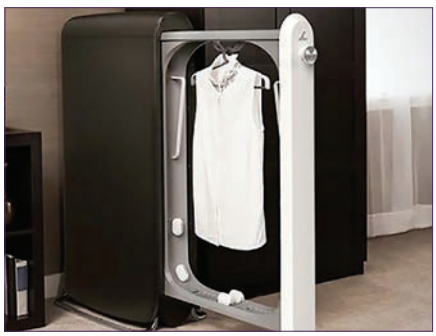
UNDER THE RADAR

4 Wassily Fruit Bowl Suspends Fruit for Better Storage

The Wassily fruit bowl helps to keep fruit fresh by suspending it in a net of elastic bands. Created by Scaleno, the Wassily bowl features a web of stretchy silicone that holds the fruit in mid-air, allowing for better air circulation and keeping the fruit from getting bruised. The suspended storage also helps to speed ripening and keeps any rotting fruit from spoiling the rest of the batch.

http://gizmodo.com/banish-bruised-fruit-by-floating-it-in-this-webbed-elas-1612690411

5 Swash Refreshes Clothing in Just Ten Minutes



The Swash in-home clothing care system can clean and refresh clothes in only ten minutes, making it easier to wash delicate or special fabrics while also extending the life of the clothing. Meant to be used as a home dry cleaning system, the Swash can fit in a closet or bedroom and requires only a standard wall outlet for power. The system works with the Swash Pods Cups to neutralize odor and refresh clothing, with each disposable cup good for one cleaning cycle. Once the item of clothing has been clipped into the Swash machine, the Swash cup will release a "uniquely designed solution" that cleans the clothes, followed by a "rapid thermal drying function" that dries the clothes quickly and leaves them wrinkle-free.

http://www.swash.com

6 HIRO - Bluetooth Thing Finder

If you misplace your phone, you can simply give a ring and find it. What if you misplaced your keys? or anything else that is valuable to you? Solution is the Hiro, a Bluetooth enabled gadget that can be connected to your smartphone application and find whatever you have misplaced. Compatible with both Apple and Android devices and helps you find lost things up to 200ft away. Hiro allows any user with a smartphone to activate an alarm on the device which will alert you to the Hiro's location and whatever item is attached to it. Why waiting, just order some and attach to safeguard your stuff.

http://www.findmyhiro.com

DREAM SMALL

DISCOVER NOTHING

IMAGINE LESS

DO WHAT'S BEEN DONE

INSPIRE NO ONE

GIVE UP HOLD BACK

INVENT NO MORE

IGNORE YOUR HEART

SHOOT FOR AVERAGE

THINK NEGATIVE

REACH FOR THE GROUND

IF CONGRESS PASSES LEGISLATION WEAKENING PATENT PROTECTION, THE MESSAGE TO INVENTORS IS, "WHY BOTHER?" SO WHAT INVENTIONS WON'T BE INVENTED? WHICH START-UPS WILL GET KILLED BY FOREIGN COPIERS BEFORE THEY GET STARTED? WHOSE JOBS WILL GET SHIPPED OVERSEAS? VISIT SAVETHEINVENTOR.COM AND TAKE ACTION TO HELP PRESERVE U.S. INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

SAVE THE AMERICAN INVENTOR

TAKE ACTION AT SAVETHEINVENTOR.COM

BROUGHT TO YOU BY INNOVATION ALLIANCE

UNDER THE RADAR

7 Emberlight Makes Conventional Bulbs Smarter

The Emberlight adapter lets normal, dimmable bulbs function as smart bulbs, providing the convenience of WiFi connectivity without the expense. The adapter, which has already exceeded its funding goal on Kickstarter, is designed to fit between the bulb and the light socket. Once it has been installed, it will access the home's WiFi network, allowing the bulb to be controlled via the companion app from any internet-enabled device. The Emberlight can be used to trigger the lights to come on automatically when the smartphone is nearby, dim lights according to a set schedule, and control the lights remotely. The adapter is compatible with Edison screw bulbs, and adapters for bayonet bulbs are available as well

http://www.ideaconnection.com/new-inventions/emberlight-makes-conventional-bulbs-smarter-08623.html

8 KettleCharge Lets Campers Charge Larger Gadgets

The new KettleCharge from BioLite lets campers charge gadgets twice as large as tablets with any existing camp stove. The latest in the array of camping chargers offered by BioLite, the KettleCharge is designed to be filled with water and then slid into the stovetop, where it will convert the heat from the water to electricity. Devices can be charged via a USB port at the base of the fold-down handle, and any extra generated power can be stored for use later. The KettleCharge is also equipped with a display that indicates the ideal temperature range as well as an audible alert that will sound if the device gets too hot.

http://www.gizmag.com/biolite-versatile-kettlecharge/33172/

9 Trunkster - Suitcase with GPS, USB Charging and Scale

A new crowd-funding project at Kickstarter for high-tech suitcase is attracting the attention of tech lovers. The main attractive design point of The Trunkster Luggage is the sliding door instead of the regular zipper. The smart suitcase also features a built-in digital scale allows you to measure the weight instantly, a removable 15,000 mAh battery plus USB port means you can charge your phone several times on any journey and with an extra pay of $40, you will get a GPS tracking device to ensure your luggage never gets lost in transit. Starting price of the carry-on is $245.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/trunkster/trunkster-zipperless-luggage-with-gps-battery-scal

UNDER THE RADAR

10 Polygons Folding Measuring Spoon

The origami-inspired Polygons measuring spoon can be shaped into different sizes depending upon the way it is picked up. The spoon is made from a single, flat piece of plastic that has been etched and scored to create specific fold lines. Picking up the Polygons at one of these lines will cause it to fold into the correctly sized measuring spoon, while releasing it will allow it to lie flat again. This ability to flatten not only makes the Polygons easier to store, but also makes it easier to ensure all the measured ingredients are added to the dish. Designer Rahul Agarwal envisions the Polygons being integrated into packaging as well as offering an easy-store, measuring spoon solution.

http://www.psfk.com/2014/08/origami-swiss-army-knife-design-spoons.html

Indoors System Guides the Visually-Impaired Via Smartphone 11

A new pilot program at the San Francisco airport will test the feasibility of using wall-embedded sensors to help the visually impaired make their way through the terminal. The sensors, created by the Austrian indoor positioning company Indoors, are Bluetooth-enabled, which allows them to send a signal to any smartphone running the companion app. As an individual moves through the airport, the sensors will track their motion and 'transfer' the person to the next sensor down the line. This allows the system to provide verbal directions, much like a GPS system, while also alerting the user to services, such as restaurants or restrooms, as they walk by.

http://techxplore.com/news/2014-08-san-francisco-airport-sensors-smartphone.html

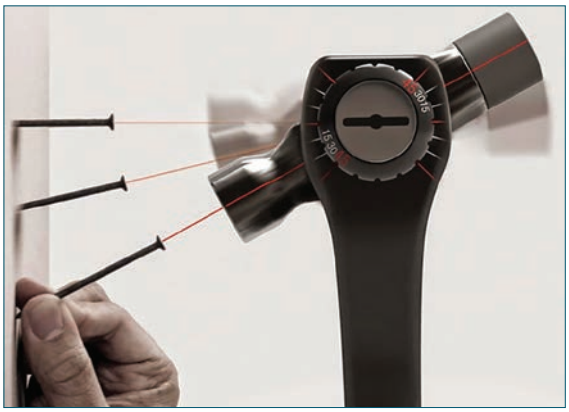
12 Dustproof, Floating Mighty Speaker

Ready for a day on the water, the Mighty Speaker is waterproof, sand proof and dustproof—and it floats! The Mighty Speaker is completely sealed, allowing it to be submerged in water up to one meter for 30 minutes. But since the speaker also floats, it is more likely to be in danger of drifting away than being damaged by sand or water. It is equipped with Bluetooth connectivity, which allows the users to adjust the music, ask Siri questions or answer calls without needing to touch their phone, and it can also be used as a tablet stand or attached to a smooth surface with its removable suction cup.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfD5hGgJSIY

UNDER THE RADAR

13 Hammelean Allows you to Adjust the Angle of the Hammer Head



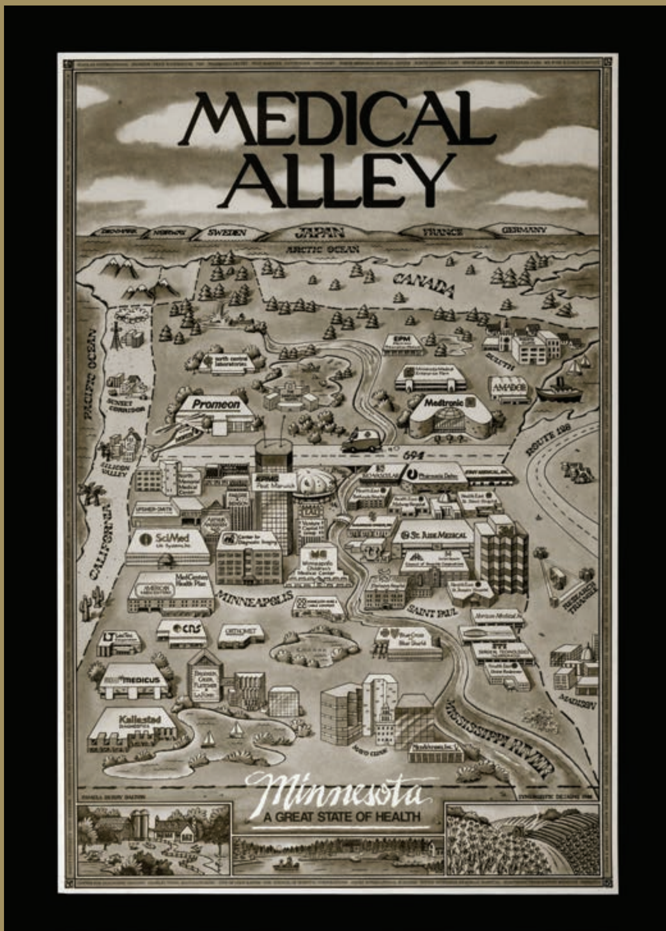
Very rarely are you trying to put a nail into the wall with perfect ergonomic form. The rotating hammer accounts for the fact that some hardware will need to be positioned high up, and that some is best inserted on a slant. The Hammelean concept was developed to make the act of hammering a nail a little more comfortable for the handyman or woman by enabling the head to be adjusted for each task. A lock in the end of the instrument can be opened, allowing you to rotate the mallet according to the job at hand.

http://www.trendhunter.com/trends/rotating-hammer

14 TipTapTop Makes Handwashing Fun

The TipTapTop combines music and an amusing shape to encourage kids to wash their hands while also reducing water waste. Created as a Dyson Award entrant, the 3D-printed TipTapTop attaches to the faucet, where its integrated hydroelectric generator harnesses the water flow to charge its 9-volt battery. Once the child places their hands beneath the device, its sensors will trigger the water flow while a peppy song guides the child through the best hand-washing methods. The TipTapTop's sensors also save water by turning off the water flow while the user is scrubbing their hands as well as when the hand-washing session is complete.

http://www.jamesdysonaward.org/projects/tiptaptop-2/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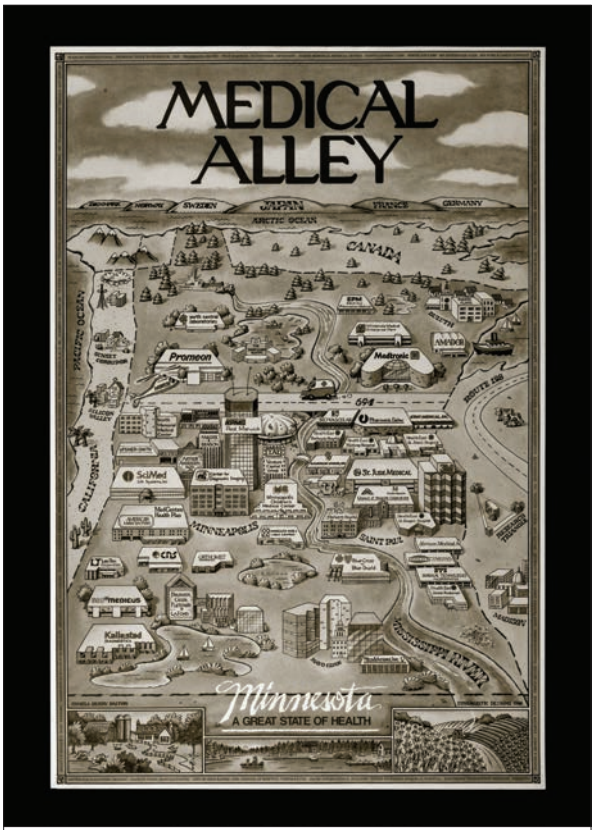
MINNEAPOLIS
SAINT PAUL
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
SciMed
St. Jude Medical
Medicus
Minnesota
A GREAT STATE OF HEALTH


Colorado State

Continued from the February issue.

A BRIEF TOUR OF OUR CASE STUDIES WITH THEIR EXHIBITION TAGLINES.



Minnesota, MN 1950'3 (Figure 3)
Tight-Knit Community of Tinkerers
Keeps Hearts Ticking

Medical Alley, Minnesota - Starting in the 1950s, risk-taking and collaboration between heart surgeons and engineers helped the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul earn their reputation as part of an important medical-device industry region, later dubbed "Medical Alley." New medical research, technologies, materials, and procedures developed during World War II, combined with major Federal government funding for medical research as part of the post-war boom, led to rapid and innovative research and experimentation. The University of Minnesota, particularly its Variety Club Heart Hospital, was a key hub early on for medical invention and innovation, thanks to charismatic leadership and a culture of collaboration, problem-solving, and risk-taking. Surgeons, medical residents, and engineers—most of whom were born and educated in Minnesota—worked together to develop inventions and innovative techniques related to cardiac surgery that transformed the medical field. As part of a community of healthcare organizations such as the Mayo Clinic, medical-device companies like Medtronic, and bold investors and skilled workers, Medical Alley may not be as famous as Silicon Valley, but it is a leading medical-device industry center today.

In the exhibition gallery the Bronx is strategically placed next to Silicon Valley. We thought this surprising juxtaposition would spark the curiosity of our visitors. What do hip-hop music and personal computers have in common? They were both children of the turbulent 1970s, born to innovative people who, building on inventive skills and prior technological innovations, nurtured them through creativity, collaboration, risk-taking, problem solving, adaptability, and hard work. The Bronx in the 1970s was a paradox. Culturally rich with communities of African Americans and immigrants from Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic, it was also economically devastated. But it provided the right environment for the invention of hip-hop. The residents' diverse heritage influenced the sound of hip-hop, while the urban

Bronx, New York, 1970s (Figure 4)
Neighborhood Streets Create Brand-New Beats

landscape provided the raw materials for its technical innovations. DJs mined the Bronx's abandoned buildings, cars, and streets for the components they needed to craft the "best" sound system. Inexpensive turntables, speakers, and components and scavenged materials, were re-worked, re-imagined, and re-wired in ways never seen before. The transformed equipment was paired with newly created techniques for manipulating records. The result was a system that made—not just played—a new kind of music. Today, the sound systems, techniques, and genre they invented are global in scale and diversity.

that funds them. But California's Santa Clara Valley wasn't always known for high-tech. This "Valley of Heart's Delight" had once been an agricultural paradise, teeming with fruit orchards and canneries. Over time, its sunny weather, attractive suburbs, proximity to Stanford University, and casual but fiercely entrepreneurial business culture attracted talented people and new businesses to the region. A booming electronics industry emerged in the 1960s and inspired the new nickname, "Silicon Valley," after the main element in integrated circuits. Then, in the 1970s and 80s, the region nurtured the invention of the personal computer.

Silicon Valley, California, 1970s-1980s (Figure 5)
Suburban Garage Hackers + Lab Researchers = Personal Computing

Since Silicon Valley is perhaps today's most recognizable place of invention, we decided to feature it near the entrance of the exhibition gallery. Collaboration was essential to the technological advances behind the birth of the personal computer and the Valley's enduring success. This cluster of towns south of San Francisco—including Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Santa Clara, and San Jose—has been the epicenter for innovations in solid state electronics, personal computing, networking, software, social media, and the venture capital sector

This period is the focus of our exhibition story, although Silicon Valley continues to dominate the invention headlines even today.

We felt it was important to research and document a place of invention as it is developing, before historians like us have dissected its long-term successes and impacts. In Fort Collins, Colorado today, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are being applied to sustainable clean energy innovations. Situated where the Great Plains

meets the Rockies, Fort Collins is known for its abundant natural resources, fertile agricultural land, and outdoor lifestyle. The city is also gaining a reputation for breakthrough inventions in clean energy and

Fort Collins, Colorado, 2010s (Figure 6)
A College Town Combines Its Energies for a Greener Planet.

socially responsible innovation. Colorado State University, the city, and community businesses actively pursue collaborations that result in local innovations with global impact. We feel very fortunate to be able to interview the city's inventors and innovators about their first-person experiences. Seen as a place where a person can make a difference while enjoying life, Fort Collins is one of America's newest places of invention.

We chose this case study framework out of our conviction that history offers valuable lessons for understanding how new cultures of innovation develop, from the personal to the local, regional, national, and beyond. Though they may feel very recent to us, modern places of special scientific, technological, and cultural ferment have many far-reaching historical precedents, going back to Renaissance Florence, 10th and11th-century Baghdad, and earlier. What do modern places of invention have to learn from history? As historian of technology Jennifer Light has observed, "Scholars have identified changes in the inventive process from the late 19th through the 20th centuries, suggesting the value of taking a historical approach to assess even contemporary innovation practices". Our case studies, then, help us understand a complex historical phenomenon that continues to evolve today. There may not be a recipe to follow to create the next Silicon Valley, but we believe we have shed some new light on key ingredients for communities of invention.

To increase the range and scope of these stories, we also conceived of an interactive map at the center of the exhibition that would allow us to share additional curated case studies, present crowd-sourced visitor stories, and feature video case studies created by 12 Smithsonian Affiliate museums participating in the Places of Invention project. Smithsonian Affiliates are non-profit or publicly-operated museums, arts/culture/science centers, or educational organizations who formally partner with the Smithsonian Affiliations program. This national outreach program develops long-term, collaborative partnerships to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. The interactive map—accessible both in the gallery at NMAH and online via the Lemelson Center website—will continue to grow organically as stories about innovative communities around the world are added by the public, including, we hope, members of the National Academy of Inventors.

ECOSYSTEMS OF INVENTION AND INNOVATION

Places of invention are more than statistical data, spatial processes, and maps. Connecting personal narratives with institutional and local histories, Places of Invention aims to close the gap between the territory of individual inventors, their personal and professional networks, and the geography of the technology region. Though working mostly outside of institutional contexts, independent inventors are invariably plugged into local and regional networks.

A good illustration of this relationship is Ralph Baer, known as the "father of video games," which he introduced in the 1960s. A German immigrant who fled Hitler just before Kristallnacht in 1938, Baer went to work for US Army intelligence in World War II, then attended technical school on the GI Bill to study electronics, and ended up running a major electronics lab at Sanders Associates (now BAE Systems), a defense contractor in Nashua, New Hampshire. He started inventing video games on the side at Sanders, which made huge profits thanks to the video-game patents Baer assigned to them. He also set up a basement lab in his home, which eventually became his base of operations for successful toy inventions such as Simon and Odyssey (Figure 7). Even as an "independent" inventor, Baer maintained close ties with Sanders and Sanders employees, collaborating with some in business ventures and with the military who applied his video game technology to battle simulations. Ralph Baer thus created not one, but two significant places of invention within the Manchester-Nashua, New Hampshire nexus: his corporate lab at Sanders and his basement lab at home. (NMAH is in the process of collecting Baer's basement lab in order to exhibit it in conjunction with our Places of Invention exhibition.)

This dynamic interaction between individuals and the surrounding innovation ecosystem may be the most important ingredient in the making of places of invention. Sociologists find that charismatic leaders like Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin play a crucial role in developing such places of invention. They set the tone and attract talent and funding. More importantly, they connect individual practitioners with the larger scene of social and collaborative networks that define technology regions. Businessman Samuel Colt played such a shaping role for Hartford; surgeon C. Walton Lillehei for Medical Alley; professor Bryan Willson for Fort Collins. A symbiosis develops between

Inventor Ralph Baer (Figure 7)
"the father of video games," in his home lab in Manchester, New Hampshire, 2003.

the individual and the city or region: Community brings a wealth of resources to the innovator, whether independent or institutionally based. Individual innovators in turn contribute their skills, knowledge, and creativity to the larger ecosystem of invention. If a tipping point is reached, a node can blossom into a full-blown technology region. The concept of the "tipping point," the threshold moment when an idea or social process takes off, is explored by Malcolm Gladwell. This exchange and sense of community (though not always "comity," because disagreement often results in profound change) are necessary ingredients in a rich culture of innovation, as appreciated by scholars like Markusen and Florida. Such a culture potentially produces not only breakthroughs in technology but also new forms of art, architecture, music, or film with the power to shake up the status quo.

The Lemelson Center's Places of Invention project explores the key role that place plays in the dynamic interaction among inventive people, institutions, and resources that leads to innovations across diverse fields and time periods. Many individuals, organizations, and governments around the world have a stake in this process. We hope the historical case studies presented in this exhibition will stimulate an informed dialog among these stakeholders and the general public that will inspire the next generation of inventors and inventive place-makers.

FIGURE LEGEND

Figure 1. A bird's-eye view of Hartford, looking east to the Connecticut River, 1864. In the late 1800s, Hartford was one of America's key places of invention, and a leading industrial city.

Figure 2. Natalie Kalmus in Hollywood, California, around 1935. Kalmus was Technicolor's chief color consultant throughout the 1940s.

Figure 3. Like more famous garages in Silicon Valley, the Hermundslie family's 800 square foot garage (made out of two railway boxcars) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, shown here around 1930, served as a convenient location for Earl Bakken and Palmer Hermundslie to found Medtronic in 1949. Bakken invented the first wearable, transistorized cardiac pacemaker in collaboration with Dr. C. Walton Lillehei.

Figure 4. G Man and his crew DJ-ing at a park in New York City, 1985. Beginning in the 1970s, hip-hop DJs in the Bronx used every corner of their borough as venues to showcase and test their innovations: parks, schoolyards, abandoned buildings, community centers, rec rooms in housing projects, and more.

Figure 5. Informal meeting on beanbags in the Computer Science Laboratory's Commons at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), Palo Alto, California, about 1980. The atmosphere at Xerox PARC reflected the West coast's casual culture, much different from the Xerox corporate headquarters in Connecticut.

Figure 6. Inside Colorado State University's Engines and Energy Conversion Lab (EECL) in Fort Collins, 2011. The Lab is housed in the former Fort Collins municipal power plant.

Figure 7. Inventor Ralph Baer, known as "the father of video games," in his home lab in Manchester, New Hampshire, 2003. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History is in the process of collecting Baer's basement lab in order to exhibit it in conjunction with our Places of Invention exhibition.

This article first appeared in the journal Technology and Innovation – Journal of the National Academy of Inventors, 16(3-4), pp.175-185, and is reprinted by permission of the publisher Cognizant Communication Corporation (NY).
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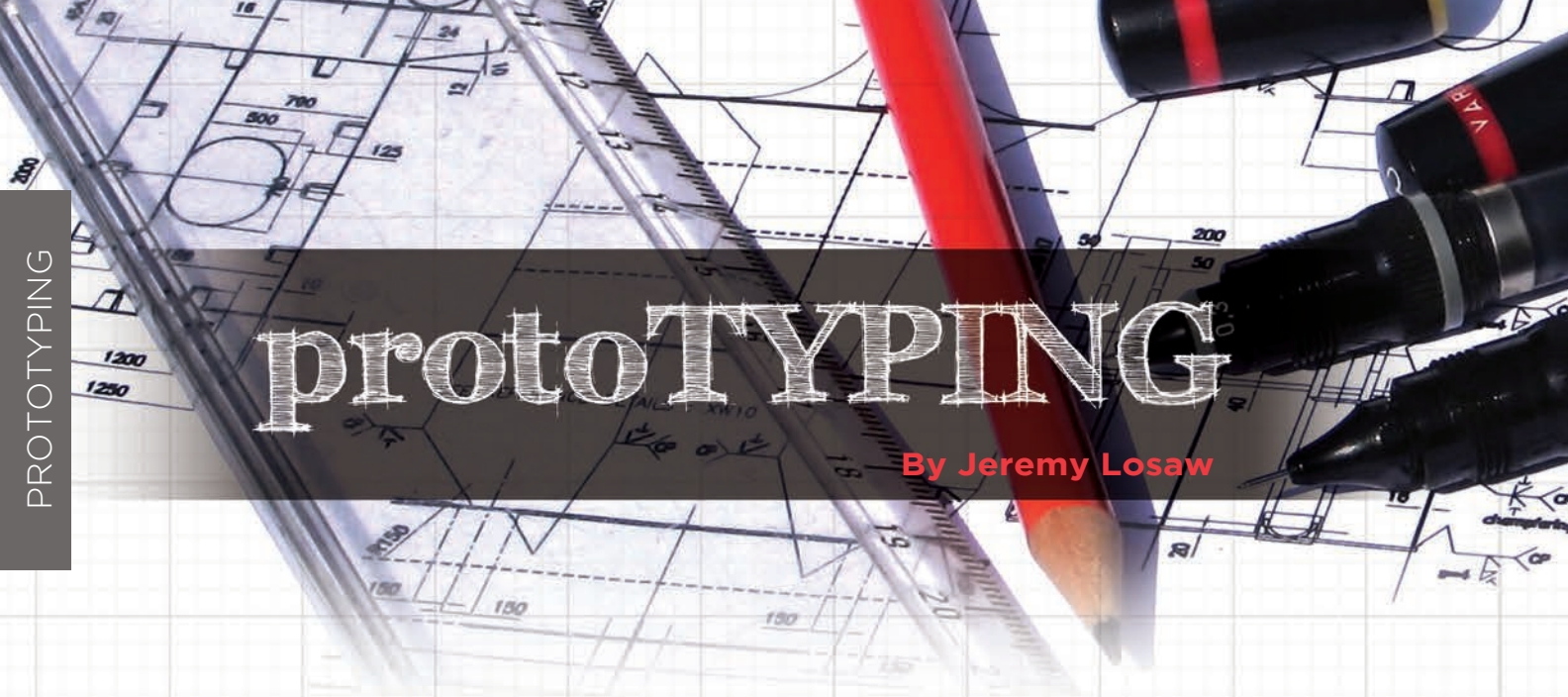


protoTYPING

By Jeremy Losaw

I Have a 3D Printer.. Now What?

There has been no hotter topic in product development over the last half decade than 3D printing. It has helped professional engineers and prototypers to cut design iteration time and bring products to market faster. Fortunately, the technology has been scaled down and there are a plethora of desktop sized units that are available to the shade tree inventor and at-home maker. If you have bought or received one of these units, after the initial excitement has worn off, you may be wondering what do with it next. I had the same thought before I bought my desktop printer about a year ago, but I have found it immensely useful.

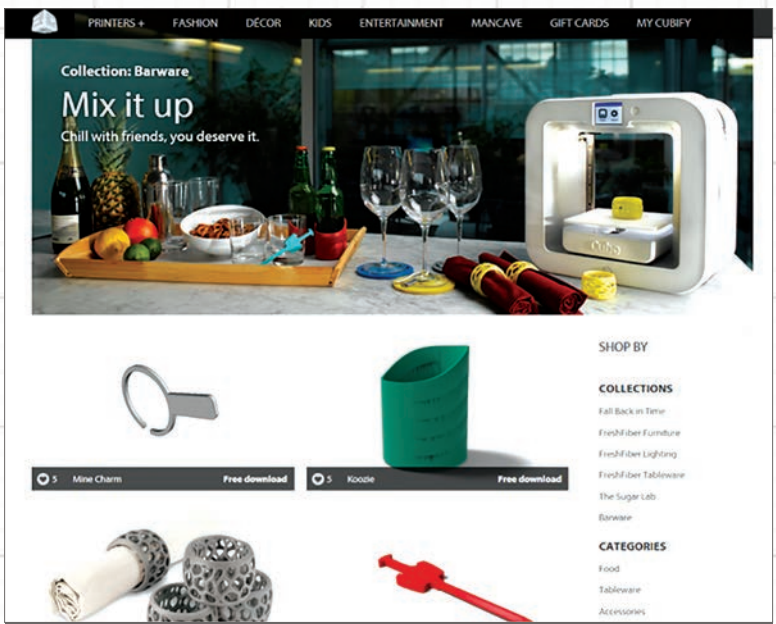
Here are some tips and exercises to get your year of 3D printing started right:

Finding Models

Every 3D print job needs a computer-aided design (CAD) file to print from. Some inventors may already have CAD software to create their own models, but many 3D printing newbies may have neither the software nor the inclination to make their own files. There are a variety of free, user-friendly CAD software options for those who seek to learn. Each printer has its own specific software to setup a print job, but by and large, most printers require an .STL (STereoLithography) file to print from. Fortunately, there are many 3D printing open innovation sites that have CAD models in STL format and are ready to download and print.

Two of the easiest sites to get files from are Thingiverse from Makerbot and Cubify from 3D Systems. Each is free to register, and they both have a wide range of user-generated content that includes wearables, toys, art, figurines, and other models. Most of the content is free, but

there are select models that require a purchase. Another site I'd recommend is GrabCAD. It is free to join and has a variety of free content, however, many of the files are not native STL files and need to be converted before printing. Websites like Cubify.com have free downloads for 3D printers



Websites like Cubify.com have free downloads for 3D printers

Making it Stick

One of the hardest and most frustrating parts about creating 3D printed models is getting the part to stick to the build platform. Professional fusion deposition modeling (FDM) systems have fully enclosed build chambers that are heated. This allows each layer to be built at the same temperature, which makes the part geometry more consistent and allows for good adhesion to the build platform. Most consumer level printers, however, are open to ambient room air conditions, which makes it harder to get prints to stick. There are a few ways to fix this though. Some 3D printers come with a heated build platform and these should be turned on during while printing. There are also mechanical means to help the builds stick to the platform, such as applying masking tape over the build surface area. This gives the build platform a rougher surface texture to help the first layer lock into.

Another common technique is to apply a glue stick or other type of glue to the build platform to promote adhesion. 3D Systems Cube machines come with a Cubestick, which is a gooey glue stick and works really well on Cubes and other 3D printers.

CubeStick and masking tape on the build platform helps keep prints from pulling off the print bed.

Try A New Material

The great part about home-based 3D printing is that there is a range of different materials and colors that can be used. The two most common materials are Polyactic Acid (PLA) and Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS). PLA is a biodegrade plastic that is great for 3D printing. It has a low melt temperature, flows really well and is forgiving to print with. ABS is a proper engineering plastic that is commonly used for injection-molded parts. It has a higher melt temperature than PLA, is very tough and can be harder to print with.

Many desktop 3D printers can be setup to accept either type of plastic, but be sure to consult the user manual to make sure. In general, PLA is better if you are a casual printer and are more interested in printing wearables and decorative models. If you need increased toughness, ABS is superior. A nice feature of ABS is that it can be brushed with acetone (the main ingredient in nail polish), which lightly melts the surface. This smoothes the exterior and can help make models water tight. It is good to test acetone on a sample part as it can bleach out the color on some dyed ABS filaments.

Color break on an 3D printed ABS orchid pot treated with acetone.

Of course, 3D printer filament comes in a whole spectrum of colors, but there are many other types of filament that expand the capability of 3D printers. There are 3D printing filaments like NinjaFlex that is a special blend of flexible plastic that be used to create bendable models and are compatible with most printers. Zen Toolworks has an electrically conductive filament which is ABS blended with carbon and other materials. There are also some filaments that change color with changes in temperature like Afinia's grey to white color change ABS. 3D printer materials are evolving at a rapid pace—this is only the tip of the iceberg of available specialty materials.

Make a Prototype

Printing other's designs is fun, but the real power of owning a 3D printer is creating custom parts for your own prototypes. Creating a prototype for your Edison Nation idea submission is by no means required, but is something we sometimes recommend. The key to unlocking this functionality is to get a piece of CAD software to draw your own parts. The Edison Nation design team primarily uses SolidWorks CAD software, but it is a professional package and the price will most likely be outside the means of individual inventors. There are plenty of free or low cost CAD software packages available. One of my favorites is Cubify Invent from 3D Systems. It is only $49 and it has most of the core functionality of high end CAD software. There are other programs like Autodesk 123D, Tinkercad and FreeCAD that will allow you to model your own parts or creations.

A 3D printed prototype shock tower for my aftermarket R/C company, Vectorworks.

No matter which package you choose, count on spending at least a few hours to get familiar with the software before being able to draw your own parts. More complex designs may require additional time. Once you learn the basics of 3D modeling, you can starting creating custom parts to help take your inventions to the next level.

Desktop 3D printing is a powerful technology, but many consumers wonder what to do with it once they have their printers up and running. There are plenty of websites to download existing CAD models, but once you learn the basics, there are some good 3D modeling packages that are free or low cost to make your own designs. There are also tons of great material colors and technologies to help take your 3D printed parts to the next level. 3D printing is an integral part of the design process at Edison Nation, and could be an integral part of yours as well.

Visit Jeremy @ http://blog.edisonnation.com/category/prototyping/

Innovation Divaz Melinda Knight & Dhana Cohen from the Women Inventorz Network

Dhana Cohen is the co-founder of www.inventorznetwork.com the only connection platform in the inventor industry. From Media to Pitch sessions, to Industry Experts and Buyers, Dhana & Melinda have created an amazing network for all to get involved in!

Q & A with Kevin Prince from Quick Patents

Quick Patents knows the ins and outs of patents. Since 1990 Kevin has been working as a patent agent, which is a different approach from a patent attorney. His assistance to inventors with their patents is refreshing and well needed in our industry. His advice, and years of knowledge will help any new inventor confidently walk without stumbling through the maze of inventing.

Q. How did you get started helping inventors and for how long have you been helping them?

A. I'm an inventor myself, and right out of college I started to develop products. My first idea was a brainwave-reading alarm clock, but when I had a local patent agent do a search it turned out that the idea had been patented ten years earlier. I didn't pursue that idea, but the experience showed m¬¬e how much detail you have to have in your patent applications. The patent agent I worked with asked me if I'd like to learn how to write patents and do patent research. I joined his company in 1990 and opened up his first office in Irvine, California. I spent 4 years patent writing and saw many great inventions come through our office every month. We also founded Inventors Forum, a non-profit educational group for inventors, which is the largest inventors group in Southern California.

Q. What process do inventors have to go through in order to get a patent?

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Q. What process do inventors have to go through in order to get a patent?

A. First, if the inventor requests a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), I'm happy to sign one. While it's a bit redundant to have an NDA in place with your patent agent or attorney, I think it's a good habit for inventors to get into so I encourage them to ask everyone to sign a NDA. Typically the next step is a patentability search, to make sure the client is actually the first inventor. If the search comes back relatively clean, then we can discuss what type of patent or patents make the most sense for the clients situation.

Q. What are some ways that inventors can make more money on their ideas then they've spent on a patent?

A. There are really only two ways to make money with an invention idea: 1) start a business and compete with everyone who's already in that market, or 2) license the idea to an existing company in that market. Any money you spend on a patent ought to come back to you in the form of increased sales. If having a patent on the idea does not increase your sales, then don't spend money on a patent. The same holds true for both US and foreign patents. There are times when having a patent will open doors that might not otherwise open. In that case it may be that the cost of the patent is just the price of admission. Every market is different, so you need to know how important patents are in your industry.

Q. What is the biggest mistake you see inventors make before they request your assistance?

A. Inventors are optimistic by nature, why else would they pursue a risky endeavor like inventing? But sometimes people take advantage of that optimism. As inventors, we're susceptible to believing the high-pressure salesperson at the invention promotion company who says, "Wow! That's the greatest idea I've seen all month! You're going to make a lot of money with this one. As soon as you write us a check for $10,000 we'll get started helping you!" Don't do it! I know every inventor wants to get rich quick, but my motto is "Don't get poor quick." Get references from anyone you work with, particularly if they are invention promotion companies that claim they can introduce your product to the players in every single market.

Q. What is your number one tip for inventors?

A. Guard your start-up cash! Don't cash-in you 401(k) on what you think might be a "super thing" when there may be dozens of patents similar to your idea out there. Don't believe hype, but do believe what your professional advisors are telling you (after you get references that show those professional advisors are legitimate).

Q. What makes Quick Patents different from patents from a lawyer?

A. Primarily cost makes Quick Patents different. I don't have the overhead that most attorneys do. I don't have a marble coffee table in my office on the 16th floor of a building overlooking Newport Harbor. There's a time and a place for those guys, but usually it's not where you're fist starting out. Guard your start-up cash, and that's particularly important when considering spending thousands on a patent application.

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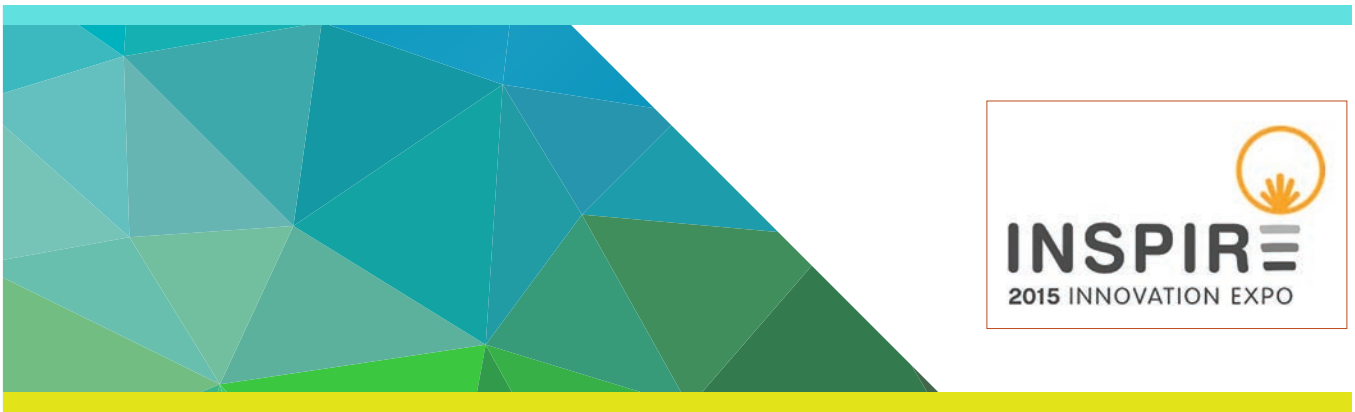
Contact Dhana @
www.inventorznetwork.com



Showcase Your Invention at the Inspire™ 2015 Innovation Expo and Make Connections to Fuel Product Entry into the Marketplace

Inventors have the opportunity to get their inventions in front of investors, manufacturers, licensing agents, product scouts, and consultants from the US Patent and Trade Office, US Small Business Administration, and LegalCORPS at Inspire™ 2015 Innnovation Expo, April 30th and May 1st at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

The reliable information exchanged at this event can be instrumental in successfully bring marketable products through the invention development process.

At the 2011 Expo, Inventor Greg Amundson of Scandia Minnesota made the connections he needed to help bring his Easy Caulk peel and stick caulk strips to the marketplace. Amundson says, "My success started at this show." His company, CornerFlex, is now selling Easy Caulk via amazon.com and they are about to launch three new products. And in 2013 Sequence® board game inventor Doug Reuter was the Grand Prize winner, for his new game QB8.

Since 1958, the Minnesota Inventors Congress has presented this internationally known event that showcases innovation and provides an opportunity for aspiring, emerging and established inventors to move from ideas to manufacturing to the marketplace. "Innovation is a driving force behind the U.S. economy," says Program Director Deb Hess." "Inventors from across the country come to test market their products at our show and attend our Inventing Success™ Workshops, hosted by experts who teach the product development process."

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"Patent Reform" on Capitol Hill (H.R.9, The Innovation Act II)

By Warren Tuttle, President of the UIA Board of Directors (February 2015)

Unbeknownst to many in America, a major "patent reform" initiative was stopped on Capitol Hill in May of 2014. What patent reform initiative, many might ask? Didn't Congress just pass the American Inventors Act the year before? What exactly did this new initiative entail and why was further reform rushed through the House of Representatives before being ultimately thwarted in the Senate? And why is this same legislation being once again brought back before Congress this Spring, now that the Senate is Republican controlled? Let me bring everyone up to speed on this critical issue.

America Invents Act of 2013

For starters, The America Invents Act (AIA) was just implemented in March of 2013, representing perhaps the most sweeping changes in the history of the US patent system. Seven years of dedicated effort were put into refining this Act, with all parties, including independent inventors, offered a seat at the hearings. With overwhelming bipartisan support, and the able leadership of USPTO Commissioner David Kappos, this effort was signed into law.

Google Feels the AIA Didn't Go Far Enough

The problem was that some of the large Silicon Valley Tech companies, led by Google, were not happy that the Bill did little to address what they perceive as a "patent troll" issue in this country. While those involved in promoting the AIA went home after the Bill was signed into law, these companies continued to keep the army intact and carried on with their own reform battle, intensively lobbying Washington for additional patent system changes, even while the ink was still drying on the implementation of AIA. Needless to say, these companies have major financial resources, a plethora of lobbyists on the Hill and full access to legislators in both political parties. It is my understanding that the number of lobbyists Google employs in Washington today dwarfs what they had just three short years ago. By estimate, that number is somewhere near one hundred.

Patent Trolls

And what exactly is a "patent troll"? Well, it's an ingenious negative marketing moniker used to defile non-practicing entities that help litigate, for a variety of reasons, patent rights in this country. Though there are certainly some bad apples in America who frivolously sue large companies for personal financial gain, many of the folks targeted in the new patent reform sweep were attorneys and entities taking on patent litigation to help inventors who otherwise lack the resources to go to court. Also targeted as "patent trolls" were universities, outside investors and other well intentioned third parties. By their definition, Thomas Edison would have been considered a "patent troll" were he alive today.

Studies have revealed that the type of troll-like patent infringement attacks that these large tech companies decry make up only 18% of all patent litigation, which means that 82% of claims don't even fall under what the tech firms themselves even consider harmful. And though there is more patent litigation today in total numbers than years ago, the amount of demand letters and lawsuits has on a percentage basis remained remarkably consistent, based upon the fact that so many more patents are applied for and issued today. This belies the argument that the so called "patent troll" issue has been getting worse and requires legislative correction before things get totally out of hand.

The Goodlatte Bill

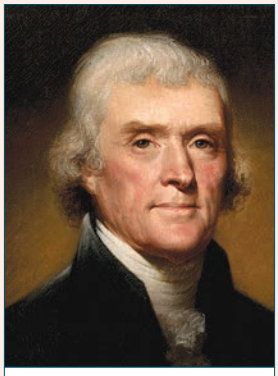
With this as a backdrop, the first part of the "patent toll" reform effort, known as the Goodlatte Bill, hit the House of Representatives floor in September of 2013. The Bill was coined for House Judiciary Chair Goodlatte (R Virginia) who championed the legislation. The Bill came roaring through committee to House floor

vote in record time and overwhelmingly passed by December 2013. It was a poorly thought out, tremendously rushed effort that did not gather input from a single inventor. The United Inventors Association, by luck of the draw, just happened to be advancing a parallel Small Claims Patent Court effort on the Hill at the same time the Goodlatte Bill came down and otherwise would not have been aware of the rather stealthy launch.

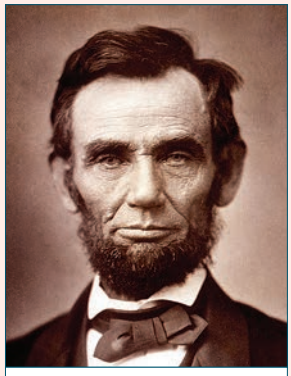
And what exactly concerned us at the UIA? We had no problem with any focused effort to reduce the frivolous 18% litigation or irresponsible demand letters. But the Goodlatte Bill went far beyond this concept. It was a total over-reaction to a modest issue for the vast majority of America, and in the process planned to strip inventors and patent holders of their valuable property rights.

Loser Pays

The keystone plank to the Goodlatte Bill was an automatically mandated loser-pays patent infringement legal process, the first step in an effort towards potential major US tort reform. This would have been the first such built-in loser pays legislation in American history. Courts have always had the option to enforce loser-pays if they felt such a remedy warranted. The obvious fear and unreasonable burden to an independent inventor, when weighing their personal options in protecting their property from unlawful infringement, would tip the scales even more than they already are towards corporate America going end-run around patents. This action alone would artificially stifle legitimate infringement claims which, in turn, would stifle US innovation. The patent system is, after all, a way to provide fair access to marketplace by individuals and micro-entities who wish to risk not being overrun by the collective. Adding to the sublime was that conservative Republicans abandoned their traditional support for private property protection to pursue the shiny metal attraction of the ever-elusive tort reform holy grail. In other words, install a loser pays legal system for patents and how far behind can be medical malpractice tort reform?



Thomas Jefferson - The first Commisioner of the USPTO.



Abraham Lincoln - The USPTO is one of the modern marvels of the world.

America had a chance to invoke a loser pays legal system in the late 1700's, just as it existed in England, but the founding Fathers chose to go a different route for an entirely different intended consequence. I would argue they got it right back then; they understood that establishing a vibrant patent system would provide America with economic innovation and advantage and dedicated significant efforts to that end. To wit, Thomas Jefferson was our first Patent Office Commissioner and the US Patent Office (USPTO) was the second building constructed in Washington DC after the White House. Did not Lincoln observe the USPTO one of the three wonders of the modern world? I think most would agree they were pretty smart guys back then. So exactly what was the 2013/14 House trying to do?

Another significant event popped up on the way to the forum; the Supreme Court reviewed a pending case just this past Spring that involved fee shifting. In their ruling, they laid out precedent for how to handle such an issue. So that would take the fee shifting issue off the table for Congress, right? Not a chance. Upon the ruling, back room legislative efforts seemed to redouble and staffers prepped for such anticipated decision by the well-organized "patent troll" reform team. Close all the hatches; it was full steam ahead for the post AIA "reformers".

Joinder

The Goodlatte Bill did not stop at fee reversal though. It also introduced a topic called "Joinder". For the layman, this provision proposed tying in the assets of anyone who helped the inventor along the way, making them potentially liable for paying the loser portion in the event that the inventor did not have the resources to pay the legal bills themselves….even if they were not a party to the lawsuit! And who's to say the loosing outcome would necessarily be based upon the merits of the case? This would have destroyed many inventors opportunity when seeking outside capital for their product launches or licensing opportunities. Without access to capital, grass-roots innovation in this country would be dealt a devastating blow

Stay

But wait, there was more. In the Bill's "Stay" provisions, it became far more difficult to pinpoint who exactly would an inventor actually pursue for infringement in the supply chain, both within the US and outside, thus dramatically reducing the effectiveness and value of any patent. It would also allow for the legal proceedings to be stopped while an issued patent was re-examined, playing time-wise into the hands of the infringer.

In summary, the Goodlatte Bill of 2013/14 would have dramatically weakened our historic patent system. When the UIA took a rough poll last Fall of its members (15,000 surveyed with about 135 responses) 70 percent said they would either stop inventing, or seriously curtail their inventing efforts, if the Goodlatte Bill were turned into law. Imagine this percentage extrapolated to innovation as a whole in this country. What is Mr. Goodlatte possibly thinking?

The Senate Side

The next step for the "reform" effort was to advance a similar Bill in the Senate. It should be noted that President Obama announced in his January 2014 State of The Union Address that further patent reform was on its way. This placed undue pressure on the Democrats in the Senate to get their corresponding patent reform Bill advanced. So we began to witness a very strange development of political bedfellows: Republicans who wanted to advance tort reform in any way possible to get a legislative foothold on the issue, and the President revealing a starry-eyed reverence for the high tech companies without regard for many of the onerous details…both sides funded by big time corporate donations.

Suddenly, with great precision and planning, several other large corporate interests came in supporting the tech position. Banks were in favor of further patent reform because they claimed frivolous demand letters were being sent to them repeatedly by third party entities threatening law suits surrounding automatic cash machine patent violations. Large retailers, Like Macy's, came out in favor too. They were getting demand letters, though I would argue retailers' self-interests as middlemen are served by any system featuring brands alone and devoid of patents. Then some small Mom and Pop coffee shops were trotted out that were supposedly using WiFi services illegally and receiving unruly demand letters. So now main street America, it was claimed, was in favor of patent reform too. The consumer electronics industry also joined the google team. Orchestrated articles and editorials appeared in newspapers, both big and small, across the country from the Wall Street Journal to home town press; we need more patent reform they cried, the little guy is getting crushed! It was a remarkable marketing effort. I would have laughed it all off as totally bizarre if the consequences weren't so damn frightening.

Finally…Some Opposition

Finally a number of individuals and organizations started to wake up and realize that this onerous legislation was really gaining serious momentum and could have, as written, a devastating effect on real innovation in this country. By the way, a large amount of the Bills were crafted by the tech firm lobbyists themselves, which appears the norm these days on Capitol Hill. This meant that companies like google, who

got their initial break with original patents of their own, were now advocating pulling up the ladder to the tree fort and excluding others behind them from equal access.

What would that do for US innovation down the road? History is replete with big companies and myopic personal fortune forcing their will upon society. Look at what General Motors took from our country in the 1950's. They destroyed public transportation initiatives, produced uncompetitive cars, ignored fuel consumption, opposed Corvair safety standards and delayed emissions reductions. Then, 50 years later, the government was forced to bail them out. I would argue that the two events...monopoly to bail out....we're 100% related. Look what Dow Chemical did to our environment with DDT and the imbedded cancer it still reveals in so many today. I would recommend reading Silent Spring again. Look what the British East India (substitute Africa, Ceylon, et al) Trading Company did for the empire. I am not against corporate success, just not at the expense of the average person and the fundamentals that allowed our country to become great in the first place. Innovation with ongoing replenishment and fresh capital investment is what ultimately drives our economy. Not monopolies.

So, getting back to the business at hand, a number of individuals and small groups started spending more time in Washington DC on the Senate side to slow the run-amok momentum and supply a rational and constructive alternative to the lobby machine on the other side of this issue. I spent five days hoofing around the three Senate buildings on several trips from CT (and what an amazing learning experience it was) and visited about 35 to 40 Senate offices, as well as most on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Of particular importance was visiting the office of my home State of Connecticut Senator Blumenthal, with a very special shout-out to his chief counsel Sam Simon, who was of tremendous help listening, explaining and otherwise staying in touch throughout the entire process. We pounded away at the unfairness issues and pointed out core flaws in the Bill. I was far from the only one who volunteered time and energy; former UIA Board member and Everyday Edison founder Louis Foreman spent a great deal more time on the Hill. Organizer Charlie Sauer also led an amazing effort pulling together events, setting up meetings and producing factual reading materials to leave behind. A small group of prolific inventors from around the country also came to town, such as Cal Tech professor Jim Bower, legendary Wi-Fi inventor Greg Raleigh, and product developer Chris Hawker, to push the coordinated agenda. IPWatchdog founder Gene Quinn also wrote extensively on the patent troll issue and I sent many of his terrific articles onto Congressional staffers and related groups.

And while we were trying to hold the line, thankfully bigger help started to arrive. It turns out most of America's universities were against the Bill. Unbelievably, they too would be deemed patent trolls by the definition imposed. Then some of the old guard companies with significant patent portfolios of their own came out against, such GE and 3M. Then legal groups like the AIPLA (patent lawyers association) and the Trial Attorneys were against. And then Congressmen like California Rep Dana Rohrbacher, who was terrific providing advice, started to vocally question the presumed order and others on the Hill began to realize this was not the slam dunk they thought it originally was going to be.

Current Situation…February 2015

I started this piece describing events last year and what was then a happy outcome for inventors when the Senate side of the Bill shut down. But here is some unhappy news; with the Senate now Republican, Mr. Goodlatte has just re-launched his exact same effort from last year (H.R.9) literally without any revisions; nary a single attempt to incorporate the views of the many that questioned the original Bill last year to make it more balanced and less harmful to start-up innovation in America. Here's why we are against this new Bill:

Top 5 Reasons Why Inventors are Against the Latest Patent Reform Effort on Capitol Hill

5.) It stops the normal process of litigation discovery mid-stream to allow for a court decision on patent interpretation, even when the patent has been issued. This allows for a strategic assault on the validity of a patent, takes valuable time and raises litigation costs.

4.) It requires a "stay" of proceedings against individual parties in the distribution chain of product fulfillment who may benefit from infringement and forces patent owners to seek remedies upstream where the infringers are often harder to identify and damage awards much lower.

3.) It requires courts to force losers to pay the winners' attorneys' fees in any infringement suits, even in meritorious patent infringement cases that ultimately fail for a variety of reasons including lack of funding, depriving judges of any discretion that they currently have in awarding damages, while providing a huge advantage to larger companies with deeper financial pockets.

2.) It allows for involuntary joinder of individuals and entities that invested in, or otherwise helped the inventor as a legitimate patent holder, making those who assist inventors additionally responsible for loser-pays fees, regardless of whether they were even involved in bringing forward the litigation to begin with. This will dramatically reduce capital investment in new product development.

1.) Innovation in America will soon look just like it does in the rest of the world.

Throwing Innovation Out With the Bath Water

The original Goodlatte Bill was raced along last year, under the radar from the start, and this looks to be happening all over again. Once again, no one is listening to the voices of independent inventors and small business entities. At the end of the day, we are not against any well thought-out, focused effort that hinders a narrow definition of true patent trolling. We feel the current legislation, however, is analogous to pouring gasoline on a lawn that sprouts a few weeds and lighting it; this approach will certainly kill all the weeds, but your lawn will also be destroyed in the process. Or, to use another analogy, this way over the top Bill would throw innovation in this country out with the bath water.

Some Companies Want the Demise of a Strong Patent System

We also feel that that some parties in America might view the demise of a strong US Patent system a benefit to their market interests. They often disguise this approach under the misleading headline that patents work against the greater social good. Some of these folks are very intelligent and have well thought out, self-centered, strategic plans in place with very powerful allies. We all need to see through this ploy and be ever vigilant in protecting America's overall long term economic interests. A strong patent system helps innovation.

Better Patents

Finally, as a proposed solution to any rational patent validity concerns, we would like to see an immediate 100% end to "Fee Diversion" at the Patent Office (over $1.2 Billion of your filing fee money has been siphoned off over the past few years to pay for other non-patent related Congressional efforts) and put that money back into hiring more USPTO examiners and producing better quality, and more timely, patents. This will reduce wasteful litigation in the long term. There is a Bill calling for this action advanced by Senator Feinstein (D California). We fully support its immediate passage. Patent fees should not be viewed as taxes. Independent inventors have never objected to any historic raises in filing costs. They simply want to get their money's worth.

Innovation is embedded in the history of our country. It is a core tenant upon which both our economy and social well-being are based. We believe that inventors and large companies work in unison every day in this country in many respectful and economically beneficial ways. Before we make any more dramatic changes to our national innovation ecosystem, we should all take sufficient time to study the facts resulting from the measurable effects of AIA of 2013 and come to considerate consensus on how to best proceed when the time is right.

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INPEX-America's largest invention trade show will celebrate its 30th Anniversary this June 16-18, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The show is a forum for inventors to display their inventions and attempt to make contacts with companies interested in manufacturing, licensing or marketing new products.

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Inventors who exhibit at INPEX also have the opportunity to attend The George Foreman Inventors' University, a series of panel discussions and educational sessions geared towards inventors. In addition, representatives and buyers from large, well-known companies including Stanley, Allstar Marketing and QVC attend the show to meet one-on-one with inventors.

With the show quickly approaching, it is only natural to reflect on inventions of years past.

What types of products were popular during INPEX's very first show?

The degree to which consumer products, technologies and innovations have advanced in the last 30 years is remarkable. Here's a look at some products that were just hitting the shelves during the mid–1980s:

Nintendo® Entertainment System (NES): NES hit the shelves in the U.S in 1985, and is said to have revitalized the video game market following a decline in popularity in the early 1980s.

Sony Discman: This portable CD player was introduced to North America in the mid-1980s. This technology emerged after compact discs began to be mass-produced. Prior to the Discman, only portable cassette tape players were available to consumers. This product would later be renamed to the Sony Walkman.

Apple's Mac: The first Macintosh computer was introduced in 1984. At the time, this machine was very expensive, with a price equating to almost $6,000 in today's market.

Teddy Ruxpin™: Much of the general population is probably familiar with this talking bear, which was one of the most popular children's toys following its release in 1985. Since its inception, many versions of this toy have been released, including a television cartoon titled The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin.

Birkin Bag: The Birkin Bag, named after actress Jane Birkin, was designed and released by Hermès in 1984. This handmade handbag has become a symbol of wealth and status, and can be seen on the arm of many celebrities today.

RC Cola's® Cherry RC and PepsiCo's Slice: These two fruit-flavored sodas debuted in the mid–1980s. Cherry RC is a cherry-flavored cola, while PepsiCo's Slice has come in a range of flavors over the years, including lemon-lime, orange, apple, pineapple, peach and more.

The iPhone 6, GoPro® camera, and Colgate® Optic White® Toothbrush were among hottest products of 2014. By the end of 2015, there will be even more advanced products on the shelves. Perhaps some of those products will be discovered at INPEX's 30th Anniversary show in June!For more information on how you can exhibit your invention at INPEX, call (888) 54-INPEX.

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Is the life of a pirate for you?

By Jack Lander

Steve Jobs once said, "Why join the Navy if you can be a pirate." I don't think Steve meant that he would confiscate the intellectual properties of others, but that he would act independently, with swagger and daring, to develop products that landlubbers hadn't yet dreamed of.

Now, doesn't that define the life that we inventors would love to live? Swashbuckler's, that's us. We'll invent the framistan or gizmotron and reap glory, gold, and greatness.

Hold on me hearties, thar's big risks on the high seas. Lift your black patch, and spy them with both eyes. In other words, don't quit your day job just yet

The first question we must all ask is this: Do we intend to develop and license, or will we produce and market? Licensing has the advantage that we can keep our day job until we receive royalty income—or lump-sum cash, if we sell our patent outright. And we can go on inventing without the restricting burden of producing. Producing and marketing has the advantage that we can build a company from scratch, and eventually sell out for a seven-figure sum. But in most cases we must devote full time for several years building toward that ambitious goal. Startups can be, and usually are, all-consuming, and the dedication required often runs against the grain of highly creative persons. As Hamlet said, "This above all: to thine own self be true." I speak from experience as well as from observation in working with inventors who have successfully started, or attempted to start, their own businesses

Back to the question.

Much has been written about licensing because it's the favored goal for the majority of inventors. And no doubt I'll write more about it in the future. But this article will focus on producing and marketing, the oft neglected alternative to licensing

Producing and marketing on your own involves these steps:

- Develop your invention;
- Position it;
- Prepare its sell-sheet;
- Tool up and produce it; and
- Sell it.

Develop your invention.

Development has two steps: define your concept on paper, and make a prototype. The task of defining involves sketching and writing. Your sketch need not be Leonardo da Vinci quality. But you should sketch something into your inventor's notebook to show that you have developed your invention at least to the point of its having a shape, however exact or crude. Eventually you'll probably need 3D CAD drafting, and you'll have to provide at least rough sketches to your CAD drafter.

You should also write a letter, as though to a stranger, describing your invention physically, revealing who would use it, and what its benefits are to its users. Write it in your notebook, of course and have someone who will not gain from your invention witness, date, and sign it.

Prototypes usually evolve through at least a few steps that run in parallel with positioning. And before tooling up to produce, your prototype should look like and operate like the product that will be sold.

Positioning your product: Positioning is the determination of your product's features, benefits, retail price, typical customer, competition, and market channels. Features and benefits must be decided so that our products fit a niche not already occupied. I often hear from inventors that "my invention has no competition." That can be beneficial or detrimental—usually the latter. A product without some form of competition is the highest risk of all. If it has no competition, then you'll have to create its market. Even the giant DuPont, creator of nylon, couldn't do that with Corfam®, its artificial leather.

So, enlightened by your competition, determine your niche and your retail price first. What's the highest price your customers will pay before your total profit drops off? (Total profit is sales volume times net profit per unit sold.) Now, tailor your features and their benefits to meet a production cost of about one-fifth of the retail price you've set.

Preparing the sell-sheet.

The sell-sheet should be prepared in rough draft early on. In fact, prepare it as the defining part of the development discussed above. If you want to dream

up inventions for mental exercise and satisfaction, that's fine. But if you hope to make money with your inventions, then get serious about the sell-sheet. Unless you know why someone will buy your invention/product, and know how to convince him or her to do so, you shouldn't invest further in your creative ideas. Ongoing refinement of your sell-sheet helps you to understand more about your potential customers and competition, and your eventual product's features, and their benefits. In short, positioning and your sell-sheet go hand in hand.

If you find the need for a financial or strategic partner as you get deeper into your venture, you'll need an executive summary in addition to your sell-sheet. Strategic partners are those who primarily invest skills, knowledge, professional services, or production resources.

An executive summary is based on the same "formula" as a sell-sheet but adds positioning, marketing, and net profit details. And it avoids statements such as, ". . . if only one percent of the market buys my gizmotron, the sales will be a million dollars a month," etc. Sign of an amateur. E-mail me for a free copy of my private paper #26 on how to prepare the sell-sheet if you need help.

Tool up and produce it.

Tooling up is perhaps the most risky part of your venture. This is because tooling for almost every production process offers a range of choices. And there is an intimate correlation between the cost of tooling and the cost to produce a part. For example, let's say that we can purchase a single-cavity plastic injection mold for $20,000, or a four-cavity mold for $35,000. The cost per part using the single-cavity mold will be $.68 (.20 for plastic and .48 for machine cycle time). The same part from the four-cavity mold will cost $.32 (.20 for plastic, and $.12 for machine cycle time because cycle time cost is now spread across four parts per cycle).

Our choice is less perplexing if we have at least a rough idea of our sales volume. But let's look first at just the cost figures, and calculate the volume at which the added cost of the four-cavity mold is paid off by cost-per-piece savings. The incremental cost of the four-cavity mold is $15,000. And the savings per piece is $.36. Dividing 15,000 by .36 we get 41,667. So, we pay off the added cost of four cavities when we have sold approximately 42,000 units. From that point on, the savings go into net profit. If we figure on selling 50,000 in the first two years, the investment seems to be the way to go if we can afford it. This principle—the more refined (and expensive) the machine, the lower the per-unit c ost of production—applies to nearly all processes and tooling.

The point here is that we must understand our production options, and make informed decisions if we are to become profitable. Many startups fail because the entrepreneur didn't know or learn enough about production processes, tooling options, and their resulting costs.

Selling.

Many inventors I work with hope to enter the brick-and-glass retail channels from the start. That invites disaster, but fortunately, it's self-correcting. Most retailers won't take on products that are produced by very small companies, especially if they're run by inventors, and they won't take on products that don't have a sales history on which they can project their return on investment—their profit.

Startup marketing is a process of beginning small and building toward the retail chains that are household names. The great advantage of this approach is that you can grow at a manageable pace. I've seen large orders from distributors paralyze a small business, almost killing it. However, the Internet and catalogs are compatible with small-businesses. Catalogs, especially, depend on innovative products. And catalogs don't send around an inspector to find out if you have a traditional factory, or are producing in your basement, and using the spare bedroom as your warehouse. Most catalogs today have an Internet presence, so you get the benefit of both. And affiliate selling is another way to start small and grow at a pace you can accommodate.

Now, go forth with a parrot on your shoulder. Seek your treasure. And learn by doing. But remember, not all of us were born to be pirates. Some of us are destined to remain landlubbers.

Contact Jack Lander at:
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