INVENTORS DIGEST

THE MAGAZINE FOR IDEA PEOPLE

MAY 2015
Volume 31 Issue 05
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A tale of two grill masters.

How the inventor of this famous grill got burned.

AY HELLO TO INNOVATION

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He Got How Much?

It's hard to believe when you invent one of the most profitable and well-known products of all time that your pitchman can make upwards of 8 million dollars a month and you make pennies on the dollar. Michael Boehm knew he had a winner and wouldn't give up until he saw his dream come true. So how could this happen?

Everyone wants a Lean Mean Fat Reducing Grilling Machine – right? Mr. Boehm found that concept harder to sell than he ever dreamed. After years of working every angle imaginable, along comes a celebrity pitchman, infomercials, a catch phrase and sales reaching fantasy proportions. Jackpot, right? Well, maybe not so much.

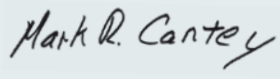
Like a great number of independent inventors, the world seems large and launching those dreams appear to be a herculean task. Our cover story is a fascinating tale of one of the greatest products of all time, but it's also a tale of how our system needs to protect us more from the so-called "deals" of the world.

Changes On The Horizon

More changes are taking place at *ID* each month. Last month we introduced Gene Quinn's new IP Watchdog column to the magazine and website, and this month we're adding design changes.

More changes are on the horizon so please let us know your opinions and suggestions. After all, the magazine exists for you.

Mark R. Cantey



VP & Associate Publisher

Contact Mark at: mark.cantey@inventorsdigest.com

Inventors Digest LLC

INVENTORS DIGEST

THE MAGAZINE FOR IDEA PEOPLE

MANAGING EDITOR
MARK R. CANTEY

ASSOCIATE EDITOR & ART DIRECTION
MATTHEW B. WYNN

CONTRIBUTORS
EDIE TOLCHIN
JON RAU
JACK LANDER
DHANA COHEN
GENE QUINN

INVENTORS DIGEST LLC

PUBLISHER
Louis Foreman
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Mark Cantey
VICE PRESIDENT, INTERACTIVE AND WEB
Matt Spangard
FINANCIAL CONTROLLER
Debbie Muench
ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER
Kara Sheaffer

ADVISORY BOARD
Ken Bloemer
James Daly
Paul Schols

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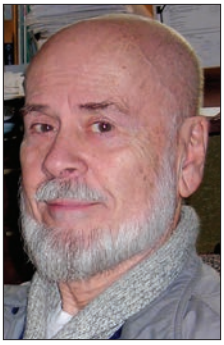


JACK LANDER – *ID*'s regular columnist on all things prototyping, licensing and inventing, explores the gap between inventor and entrepreneur. Jack, a near legend in the inventing community, is no stranger to the written word. His latest book is *Marketing Your Invention – A Complete Guide to Licensing, Producing and Selling Your Invention.* You can reach him at: Jack@Inventor-mentor.com

DHANA COHEN – Co-founder of The Women Inventorz Network and Inventorz(VIRTUAL)Network. Dhana knows a thing or two about great innovation. As an inventor, she struggled with whom to contact and who had her best interests in mind. She eventually partnered with Melinda Knight and together they have developed the right connections, education and marketing for the inventor community. The new (VIRTUAL) InventorzNetwork.com is the only platform like it in the inventor industry. Think Match.com meets Angie's List for the inventor industry.

EDIE TOLCHIN – also known as The Sourcing Lady (SM), has worked with new products and inventors for over 25 years. Owner of EGT Global Trading (www.egtglobaltrading.com) since 1997, she has helped hundreds of inventors bring their products to market through China sourcing, manufacturing, product safety issues, importing, Customs, branding, packaging design arrangements and websites. Author and editor of numerous publications for inventors, her most recent is Secrets of Successful Inventing (www.secretsofsuccessfulinventing.com). Contact Edie at egt@edietolchin.com.

GENE QUINN – is a patent attorney and the founder of IPWatchdog.com. He is also a principal lecturer in the top patent bar review course in the nation, which helps aspiring patent attorneys and patent agents prepare themselves to pass the patent bar exam. Gene's particular specialty is in the area of strategic patent consulting, patent application drafting and patent prosecution. He has worked with independent inventors and start-up businesses in a variety of different technology fields.

JOHN RAU – president/CEO of Ultra-Research Inc., an Anaheim, Calif., based market research firm, has over 25 years 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, Calif., which is one of the largest inventor organizations in the nation. He has been a contributor to *Inventors Digest* magazine since 1998. John can be reached at (714) 281-0150, or ultraresch@cs.com.

Does your invention pass the stupitity test?

So you have come up with a new idea for a product that everyone in the world must have. You tell your family and friends (maybe some soon to be ex-friends!) about it and they all say "that is the stupidest thing I have ever heard about or seen and no one in their right mind would ever buy it!" Well, this is a rather "shocking" choice of words and is potentially discouraging to an inventor, but what should you do? First, they might be right, but you need to validate this yourself. If they are wrong, then you need to devise a plan as to how to move forward and perhaps get some new friends. (No comments about family members!). Successful inventors don't take "No" for an answer! They can be expected to investigate this "proclamation" further to see if it really is true.

At this point, you need to apply the "invention stupidity test," which is based on the following considerations. First, we need to define what we mean by "stupid". T*he Free Dictionary* (see http://www.thefreedictionary.com) defines "stupid" as "lacking in common sense, perception, or normal intelligence." Now, an informal use of the word "dumb" is stupid, which Webster defines as "resulting from, or evincing, stupidity; formed without skill or genius." Another related and important term is "useless" which Webster defines as "having, or being of no use; unserviceable; producing no good end; answering no valuable purpose; not advancing the end proposed; unprofitable; ineffectual." In the context of this discussion and in my opinion, your new product idea fails the "invention stupidity test," that is, really is "stupid," if it can be characterized by one or more of the cited definitions for "stupid," "dumb" or "useless."

Many examples can be found on the Web that most likely would be labeled with one or more of these adjectives, such as unscented perfume, diet celery, powdered water, toasted popsicles, see-through blinds, screen door on a submarine, underwater hair dryer, inflatable dart board, black highlighter, clear correction fluid, open-toed safety shoes, combs for bald men, flashbulb tester, wooden soap and bird laxative, to name a few.

One word of caution here is that, even if your new product idea fails the "invention stupidity test," you may still be able to make money from it. The classic example is the Pet Rock which was never patented because it couldn't pass the "having a clearly defined use" test, yet the inventor made millions from his idea.

"Anything that won't sell, I don't want to invent."
Thomas Edison

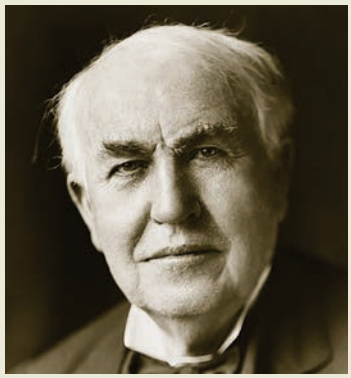


Photo credit - www.denkbilgi.com

If you are able to pass the "invention stupidity test," then the next issue you need to deal with is the statement that was made regarding "no one in their right mind would ever buy it."

This is where market research comes in. Remember, just because you believe that you have a good idea, doesn't necessarily mean someone will buy it. To be successful, you've got to be able to sell it. As Thomas Edison said: "Anything that won't sell, I don't want to invent." In this regard, there are several steps that you could take. A word of caution, however, is that, if you have not already filed for patent protection, be careful what you say and show as you pursue this "inquiry process." Good advice says get non-disclosure/confidentiality forms signed and in place before revealing to anyone what you have in mind.

Suggested steps in this assessment process are as follows:

- Find an inventor group in your area and talk to inventors who have invented similar or like types of ideas/products. *Inventors Digest* contains a list of approximately 70 inventor groups by state which will help get you started (see page 43).
- Contact companies that manufacture similar products. Look in stores for manufacturers' names on like products. Look in trade magazines and product catalogs to get company names. Conduct an Internet search and use online manufacturer databases. See local library reference materials and information sources to help identify companies.
- Contact companies that are looking for specific types of products. You might find their advertisements on the Web or in various trade publications. I*nventors Digest* frequently publishes such solicitations.
- Conduct a patent search to identify patents that have been issued for similar or like products. You will need to do this anyway to assess the patentability of your new product idea, but here the objective would be to follow up with the inventors whoa got the patents to see what they did with their ideas and what companies they may have dealt with.
- Talk to potential investors, such as angel investors and venture capitalists, to see what types of new ventures they are looking for and are willing to invest in. Stay away from the "three F's" (friends , family and fools) and focus on potentially serious investors.
- Get your idea evaluated by a reputable, professional invention evaluation firm. In this regard, be careful in responding to TV/radio solicitations and classified ads in magazines from invention promoters/promotion firms seeking new ideas and who claim that they have "companies standing by ready and looking for new product ideas." Historically, many of these types of firms have developed a tarnished reputation in terms of not delivering on claims made at the expense of inventors.
- Contact local universities and business schools as there may be student teams interested in research projects regarding new business ideas. They could help you in your market research assessment.

In summary, an interesting article appeared a number of years ago written by Don Debelek was published in the June 2002 issue of *Entrepreneur* magazine titled "Want Some of This, A Good Product is Nothing Without a Customer Who Wants to Buy It" the article states that "if you want to make sure you're spending your money and time wisely, take time to find out what potential buyers think of your idea. That small step will stop you from making costly mistakes, and it will give you the best shot at successfully introducing the best possible product".

Contact John at:
ultraresch@cs.com

1

The **eShield** covers are the only covers approved by the FDA to let users bring their small electronic devices into a sterile environment. Although tablets and smartphones are useful medical tools, surgeons are not able to access them within their sterile surgical field. Instead, they must step of out of the area, which wastes time and adds more steps to the complicated sterilizing process. In response, Whitney Medical Solutions developed the eShield cover—an extremely clear polyethylene pouch that creates a barrier from contaminants. The device's touchscreen can still be accessed through the material—even while wearing surgical gloves—and the ultra-clear material will not distort photographs. The eShield covers come in a variety of sizes, and can even be used to protect SLR cameras during procedure documentation.

http://www.medgadget.com/2014/08/eshield-covers-let-you-bring-phones-cameras-tablets-inside-operating-rooms.html

2

Designed with jet engine technology, the **Flare Pot** directs the heat from flames for more efficient cooking. Created by kitchenware manufacturer Lakeland with engineering professor Dr. Thomas Povey, the cast aluminum pot is made with 'fins' along the sides that channel heat upward on the outside of the pan, resulting in a more even heat distribution. According to the developers, the Flare pot can cook foods up up to 44% faster than a regular pan.

http://inhabitat.com/rocket-scientist-designs-pot-that-cooks-food-40-faster-saves-energy/

3

The **SaddleBaby** lets parents carry their child on their shoulders while still keeping their hands free to handle other tasks. The SaddleBaby is equipped with a chest harness and attached industrial-strength Velcro ankle cuffs which hold the child securely on the parent's shoulders. The device comes with a foam saddle for additional comfort, though the saddle is not required, and is meant for use with children between two and five years old.

http://saddlebaby.com/

4

The **multilevel dish rack** organizer combo is compact, yet expandable and organizes dishes by type while being air dried. There are three separate areas for drying. The plates are elevated so that each plate is stacked one inch higher than the previous one, and the cups and glasses are placed below the plates. Whenever necessary, pots and pans are placed on a separate slide out grid that fits under the main grid when not in use. Each plate is separated by metal support that are two inches away from both slides so the plates are evenly placed in the center of the plate slots . The rack is erected on four legs, but held tightly together by screws, which make it easy to assemble and disassemble. This rack organizes, saves time and looks great on the counter top.

http://oncourseinnovations1.com/

5

Club Glove is a patented self-stabilized luggage assembly trademarked as the Train Reaction System. Club Glove's TRS is the world's only self-balancing luggage connection system that creates a perfectly balanced luggage train by attaching multiple pieces together.

The Club Glove TRS BALLISTIC premium luggage line is designed for the affluent globetrotter or discerning golfer seeking the world's most durable and functional luggage. This luggage is specifically designed to relieve any heavy burden associated in traveling with multiple luggage pieces.

www.clubglove.com

6

As environmental awareness has grown, so has the microfiber mop industry. Revolutionizing the everyday mop, TeleBrands introduces Hurricane Spin Mop™, an ergonomic mop that actually spins dirt away for optimal cleaning. Featuring microfiber technology, the Hurricane Spin Mop reduces water consumption through its ability to clean large surfaces with less water than traditional mops. With Hurricane Spin Mop, consumers no longer need to spend long hours using costly equipment and expensive disposable refill pads.

Its detachable microfiber head can be easily removed and machine washed up to 300 times, which is beneficial to both the environment and the budget. While the special mop head leaves no streaks or smears and creates a powerful suction that quickly picks up the mess, the washer/dryer bucket uses centrifugal technology to spin the mop at more than 1,000 RPMs to quickly dry it and push dirt to the bottom of the bucket, virtually cutting the cleaning time in half.

www.HurricaneMop.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

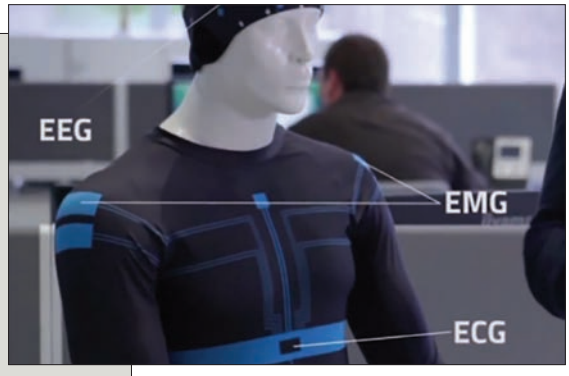
7

Keep your kids and your car free from sticky drink spills and nasty food crumbs with the revolutionary AutoTray. Designed to keep meals and snacks ON your lap - not IN them - the AutoTray is perfect for families on the go. Our patented flat surface design fits comfortably on any lap and the no-slip backing keeps it securely in place. The AutoTray features a molded drink or sauce holder and it even has a built-in crumb compartment you can empty later. The AutoTray's convenient handle makes it easy to grab and go. The AutoTray offers your children the ideal mobile driving tray, as well as a surface they can use for homework activities or playing electronic games.

http://autotray.net/

8

The WEMU shirt is able to detect an epileptic seizure and contact a doctor immediately, allowing for a quick response as well as a way to continuously monitor seizure patterns. Developed by France-based Bioserenity, the WEMU shirt is equipped with sensors able to monitor the wearer's heart rate and other physiological characteristics—including brain activity—in real-time. The data is transmitted to a smartphone via Bluetooth and then uploaded to the cloud, where a designated physician can access the information and contact emergency services if necessary. The system also helps users keep track of their symptoms, food intake and medications in order to determine what external influences may be triggering the attacks.



http://www.medgadget.com/2014/08/wemu-smart-clothing-for-epilepsy-monitoring-and-diagnosis-video.html

9

The vacuum cleaner lens from Nisshin Seiko takes some of the frustration out of removing dust from the camera's interior. The lens, developed for use with Canon DSLR cameras, is equipped with a high-speed motor and fan able to remove the dust from the interior of the camera, including the fragile sensor. It attaches to the camera in the same way as a regular lens, and is activated by pressing the shutter release button. Since activating the shutter causes the camera's mirror to flip up, this design also allows for a more thorough dust removal.

http://gizmodo.com/this-fake-lens-is-actually-a-vacuum-that-sucks-dust-out-1617567392

10

OwnPhones are the first wireless earbuds that can be 3D printed for a unique fit and custom look, providing a better fit as well as a personalized style. Already far outpacing its funding goal on Kickstarter, the OwnPhones earbuds take advantage of some of the most recent advances in personal audio, Bluetooth technology and 3D printing. Individuals can order their custom fit by using the companion app and their phone's video camera to make and upload a video scan of their ear. From there, they can choose from a huge array of colors, styles and finishes, as well as four different types: Fit, Designer Fit, Smart Fit (with a digital processor to help fine tune the background noise), and the Jewelry Collection (with choices of gemstones).

https://ownphones.com/

The KeyMouse™ is a revolutionary new product that combines the keyboard and mouse into a more ergonomic and efficient device. It consists of two devices, one for the left hand and one for the right hand. A QWERTY keyboard is split over the two devices, and each device has a high resolution laser sensor so users can choose to operate the mouse with the left or right side. And the best part of all – your hands stay in typing position while you move the mouse. No more constantly moving your hand between the keyboard and mouse!

http://www.keymouse.com/

11

12

The AMPL Smartbag has an 8.5Wh battery with support for up to three modular SmartBatteries, and can charge phones, tablets, and other gadgets through seven USB outlets accessible inside every pocket. Smartbag is lightweight and has a shock-absorbing structure with water-resistant exterior coating, which helps protect your gadgets. It has a mobile app that lets you monitor and prioritize plugged in devices. Add-ons include extra battery packs and an inverter with an AC plug. It drops soon for $299

http://ampl-labs.com/

13

The Sit & Stand concept could replace conventional crutches with a more comfortable and convenient design that also leaves the hands free. Developed as an entry for the Dyson Award, the Sit & Stand concept features a simple design that spreads the weight of the injured leg over the backside of the thigh instead of relying on the upper body to carry the burden. The user's lower leg is attached to the crutch, while the thigh of the same leg rests on an adjustable, hinged platform, which allows for a more natural walking motion than traditional crutches can provide. And, true to its name, the Sit & Stand can also function as a personal seat that enables the user to take a break when needed.

behzadrashidi.com

14

The space-saving Hangar' adds a few more levels to your closet with its clever design and elastic material. Created by Ivan Zhang of A'Postrophe studio, the Hanger' was inspired in part by the common habit of hanging multiple items on a single hanger in order to save closet space. It retains the original shape of conventional hangers, but can also twist to form a pair of paratactic hangers—allowing the user to hang clothing separately on the same hanger. Shaping the Hangar' into its dual form also causes a ring to form at the bottom, which can be used to hang belts or other accessories.

http://gizmodo.com/a-smart-transforming-hanger-will-double-the-capacity-of-1625105921

IPWatchdog

As we are going to press with this issue of *Inventors Digest*, Congress is returning from Easter recess and patent reform will be back on the agenda with more hearings.

On Tuesday, April 14, 2015, at 2:00 pm ET, the House Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on H.R. 9, more commonly referred to as the Innovation Act. The Innovation Act was introduced on February 5, 2015, by Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), and is identical to the Act of the same popular name that passed the House during the 113th Congress, but then failed in the Senate.

Among other things, the Innovation Act would: (1) Institute loser pay rules, setting up a presumption that the prevailing party would be entitled to recover their attorneys' fees from the losing party; (2) require plaintiffs in patent infringement lawsuits to disclose the real parties in interest behind the litigation; (3) require more specific information in a complaint; and (4) give defendants who are technology customers the ability to stay patent infringement lawsuits while technology sellers complete similar patent lawsuits against the same plaintiffs. The Innovation Act is widely supported by large technology companies, but vigorously opposed by independent inventor groups, universities and many biotechnology companies.

Despite a heavy lobbying effort being put forth by independent inventors, the Innovation Act seems destined to pass in the House Judiciary Committee and go on to a vote by the full House. In December 2013, the House passed the Innovation Act by a vote of 325-91. During the 113th Congress, the Innovation Act has only been introduced on October 23, 2013, was marked-up on November 20, 2013, and passed on December 8, 2013. This break-neck pace seemed extraordinary, leading Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) to say, "This schedule suggests the fix was in."

Congressman Darrell Issa

Little seems to have changed in the House since the Innovation Act was so quickly passed by an overwhelming vote. In fact, on February 11, 2015, speaking at the National Press Club, Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA), Chair of the House Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet, struck a defiant tone, explaining in no uncertain terms that the patent litigation reforms contained in the Innovation Act will not be watered down, period. He told the audience point blank that those who are seeking alterations will not succeed. "I do not have any authority to make it happen," Issa explained.

The hearing in the House Judiciary Committee is not the only patent action on Capitol Hill for week, Congress returns from recess. On Thursday, April 16, 2015 at 11:00 am ET, the Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade (CMT) Subcommittee of the House Energy & Commerce Committee will also hold a patent related hearing. The subject of the Commerce Subcommittee hearing will be the Targeting Rogue and Opaque Letters Act (TROL Act). The TROL Act was introduced during the 113th Congress and Commerce Subcommittee Chairman Congressman Michael Burgess (R-TX) seems interested in picking up where things left off last year.

The TROL Act is a much more targeted piece of legislation than is the Innovation Act. The TROL Act would focus directly on fraudulent and misleading demand letters sent by a small percentage of patent owners in hopes of scaring recipients into paying to settle ill-defined and largely dubious claims of patent infringement. These abusive letter-writing campaigns are no doubt problematic. The bad actors who are engaging in fraud and misrepresentation to score a quick buck have, rightfully so, become the boogeyman of the patent system. Something can and should be done to stop them. No one is in favor of allowing small businesses to fall prey to fraudulent or misleading demand letters. But these bad actors are being propped up as illustrative of all patent owners, which is unfair and untrue.

Although not a true companion bill, the STRONG Patent Act introduced in the Senate by Senator Chris Coons (D-DE), Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), does share similarities with the TROL Act. The STRONG Patent Act goes further though and would also modify post grant administrative trial practice at the USPTO, as well as address fraudulent and misleading demand letters.

Predictions and Analysis

I continue to believe that the most likely scenario is either no patent reform this year, or that the reforms that are enacted will be substantially watered down from those currently found in the Innovation Act and more closely related to the TROL Act. There seems to be little or no appetite in the Senate for the sweeping changes embodied in the Innovation Act. This coupled with the fact that the Innovation Act died in the Senate in 2014, suggests that the Senate will either do


Senator Chuck Schumer

nothing or limit action to legislation that targets the most egregious actions relating to demand letters.

In fact, in recent weeks Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) explained during a hearing that these issues are particularly difficult to resolve because no one wants to adopt changes that make it more difficult for innovators. "Patent troll legislation is in many ways… like a Rubik's Cube," Schumer explained on March 18, 2015, during a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee. "You need to turn and twist all the parts properly so we are really fixing the problem, but also protect those who are not a part of the problem… very hard to do and why it has taken a long. It is not ideological as much as it is trying to solve the problem without creating negatives that might outweigh the benefit of solving the problem." Schumer's remarks are significant because over the past several years he has been one of the main proponents of patent reform in the Senate. Thus, if Schumer is pulling back and signaling he wants to proceed cautiously it does not bode well for the future of patent reform in the Senate, at least for now.

Not surprisingly, however, there is near unanimity that fraudulent and misleading demand letters are inappropriate. Thus, if we see patent reform actually passed in Congress this year, it will likely be limited to demand letter legislation. The TROL Act and STRONG Patents Act could easily be reconciled into a common piece of legislation to accomplish that task, which should easily pass in both the House and Senate. So if there is a desire to do something, which there may be, it will likely be small. Of course, it is worth remembering that Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) has said that if something cannot be done on fee shifting then it makes no sense to do anything at all. Given his position in the Senate majority the comments of Cornyn, who also serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee, must be given serious consideration.

The Wildcard

Over the past several months there has been extreme consternation with respect to the inter partes review (IPR) petitions filed by hedge fund manager Kyle Bass. *The Wall Street Journal* recently published an article explaining Bass' novel strategy to make money by invalidating patents. Bass, who has teamed up with Erich Spangenberg, has filed several petitions for IPR at the USPTO asking the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB) to invalidate patent claims covering certain drugs. After filing the IPR, Bass then allegedly either shorts the stock of the company owning the patent, or buys shares in companies that would benefit from the patent claims becoming invalidated.

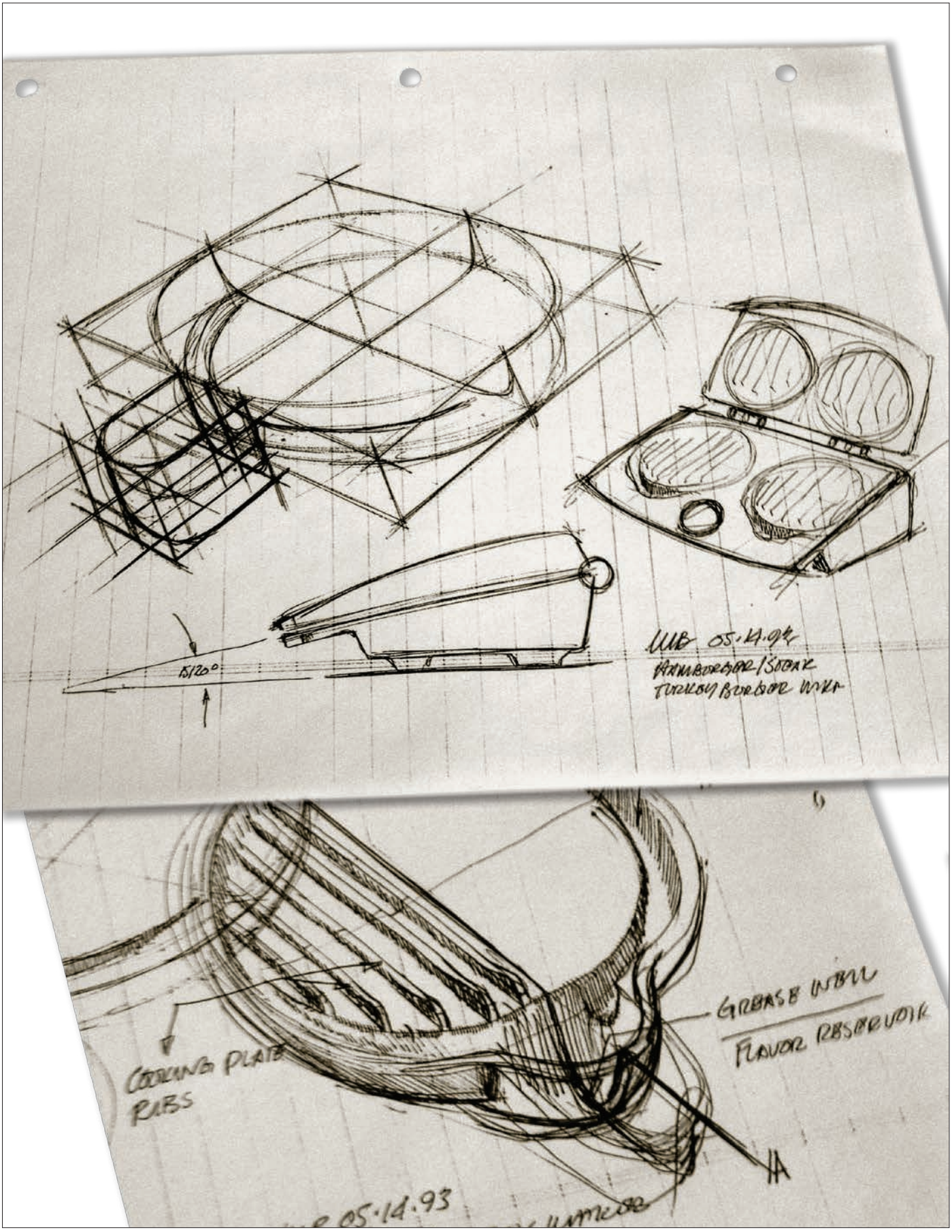
It seems virtually certain that Congress did not intend for IPR to be used in this way. Yet, it does appear as if the text of the America Invents Act (AIA) would allow for this type of challenge. The pharmaceutical industry was one of the main driving forces behind the drafting and passage of the AIA, so the fact that a hedge fund manager is using tools provided by the legislation to challenge patents on drugs is very interesting if not incredibly ironic.

The pharmaceutical industry is livid with respect to Bass' strategy, and so to is the Biotechnology Industry Organization. "Hedge fund manager Kyle Bass has opened a new door to abuse of the U.S. patent system, exploiting the USPTO's patent challenge proceeding as part of his cynical short-selling strategy against innovative biotech companies that are delivering transformative therapies to patients in need," BIO President and CEO Jim Greenwood explained in a statement on February 11, 2015. "Patents are the lifeblood of innovative, lifesaving biotech companies. Congress and the USPTO should act promptly to prevent abuse of the patent system in this manner."

This means that the respective pharma and bio lobbies will be increasingly pushing for a legislative solution. That being the case, one possible theory suggests that if Congress were to insert a legislative fix to the Bass situation, both pharma and bio could line up behind that piece of legislation with their full force, almost regardless of what else is contained in the bill. If that happens, all predictions about the likelihood of patent reform passing, or even the Innovation Act having a chance in the Senate, would be void.

Thinking ahead, can you imagine the uproar if there is a legislative fix to save pharma and bio from the type of strategy employed by Kyle Bass? Post grant administrative challenges to patents have been far more popular than predicted, and the PTAB has been finding about three-quarters of patent claims to be invalid. Patent owners are being forced to defend their patents, which can easily cost $500,000 to $1 million per challenge, and multiple challenges to a single patent are not uncommon. It would be extremely difficult to justify a pharma/bio carve out with respect to post grant challenges. After all, if IPRs are such a wonderful thing then why shouldn't the industry that pushed for them subjected to them?


Visit Gene @ www.ipwatchdog.com


COOKING PLATE
RIBS
GREASE INTAKE
FLAVOR RESERVOIR
05.14.93

A Tale of two grill masters.

by Hal Sundt

Michael Boehm and his wife, Julie, were grocery shopping near their lake house in northern Wisconsin a few years ago when, as they passed through the frozen meat section, they caught the scent of grilled sausage wafting from a sampling display. As the Boehms approached, Julie noticed something familiar.

"Mike, they're using a Foreman Grill to cook these," Julie said, adopting the shorthand for the small electric grill that was first introduced to the world nearly 20 years ago as the George Foreman Lean Mean Fat Reducing Grilling Machine, and has since been so fervently pitched by the man whose name and signature grace its sleek plastic casing.

Many of us wouldn't have thought twice about the sight of a Foreman Grill in use, quietly humming as fat crackles off the non-stick coating and streams into the shallow drip pan at its base. But Michael Boehm had thought about the grill. He'd thought about how its slanted grilling surface drains the fat out of food, and how the floating hinge between the top and bottom grill plates enables the grill to easily adjust from cooking thin strips of bacon to thick juicy burgers.

Michael Boehm has probably thought more about the George Foreman Grill than anyone on the planet, because he invented it.

Boehm felt compelled to reveal his identity to the broad, aproned man overseeing the display. But the man, Boehm remembers, sounded skeptical, perhaps believing as many do, that George Foreman invented the grill.

"No one believes me," Boehm said when we met one afternoon in early August 2014.

And can we blame them? If the grill calls to mind any likeness, it's not Boehm, who resembles the actor Martin Sheen, with his thick head of slicked-back white hair, cheeks that hang just below his square jaw and slight smile, that is constantly on the verge of a grimace. Rather, we think of George Foreman on those late night infomercials, staring into the camera with his small, soft eyes nestled above the high cheekbones of his perfectly round face, holding up a measuring cup filled with fat and earnestly championing the grill's defining feature: "This machine knocks out the fat!"

In truth, while more than 100 million Foreman Grills have been sold in the last 20 years, we know little of its origin and less about the man who invented it. Nearly everyone with whom I've spoken was surprised to learn that Foreman did not invent the grill, and upon learning this assumed that Boehm must have made a fortune off of his invention. He didn't. "It says Hulk Hogan passed on the Foreman Grill," Julie said during our conversation while scrolling through her iPhone. "He was never offered that."

Like most tales of invention, the story of how the George Foreman Grill came to be and why it was so successful is complicated. At its core, it highlights the peculiar relationship between inventor and spokesperson, whose lives have taken radically different turns since the grill's introduction. George Foreman remade himself into a pitchman, and he may now be as famous for the grill as he once was as a boxer. But his fame has cast a tall shadow over Boehm, who has gone through life largely unnoticed while another man is mistakenly credited for his work. And yet, these men will forever be linked: Michael Boehm designed a grill to make home cooking easier and better; George Foreman made us believe it could happen.

Boehm suggested we meet at a Starbucks in Romeoville, Il., just west of Chicago and about 25 miles south of his home in Batavia. I ordered a small black coffee, found a table and waited, unsure of what to expect. Part of me thought Boehm might be bitter or obnoxious. Or maybe he was nuts and lived in a garage littered with half-finished inventions. But I sensed that Boehm was eager to tell his story; he had quickly replied to my email request to meet, writing, "There are several chapters to the story, and as usual with any successful product, it has many fathers."

A few minutes after I sat down, Boehm walked in, wearing loose-fitting, light brown slacks and a black collared shirt embroidered with red stitching that read, "Rod and Gun Club." He moved slowly and he was clutching a small black brief case. His wife, Julie, attentive and slender with close-cropped white hair, had come along as well. Boehm hadn't mentioned that he would be bringing anyone with him, so I wasn't sure if she was there for an additional perspective or for protection, maybe a little of both.

Born in Chicago in 1944 and raised in South Bend, Ind., Boehm is the first of two children to obviously right-brained parents. His mother was a painter and sculptor, and his father designed cars for Studebaker. On Saturday mornings when Boehm was in elementary school, he joined his dad in the Studebaker studio. There, Boehm sat at his own table with a block of clay and sculpted quarter-scale models of cars. His favorite Studebaker was the 1953 Starliner hardtop and coupe. Boehm later urged me to look up images of this "beautiful automobile," which I did, and coincidentally, the top of the Foreman Grill has a negative slope just like the Starliner's hood.

Boehm realized his talent for inventing while studying product and transportation design at the Art Center College of Design, in Pasadena, Calif. One semester, General Motors gave his class a six-month assignment to build a luxury car. Boehm's design flopped.

"I remember my car was a four door on one side and a two door on the other side," Boehm said. "But my two door had kind of a hidden back door. And I remember having to explain that in the presentation. And people just doubled over laughing, just thought it was the stupidest idea they'd ever heard of. And it's interesting that Mazda introduced it about four years ago."

Model of the car Boehm designed.

After graduation Boehm worked for the camera company Bell and Howell, whose president encouraged him to "diversify [his] experience." He took jobs inventing, designing and developing products in Europe, Australia, China and Japan. He worked as a designer for a retailer, and he co-founded a retail company that he franchised called Space Options, which sold housewares that could be easily stored away, like coat hangers that become key chains and ladders that practically fold flat.[1]

"I've designed just about anything you can think of," Boehm told me. "Lamps, snowmobiles, riding lawnmowers."

To get ideas for what to invent next, Boehm would scour USA Today for trends in advertisements. In the late 1980s, while promoting and developing products as the general manager for the Chinese manufacturing company Tsann Kuen, Boehm noticed that Americans were craving healthier, more nutritious food. Such as skinless poultry, lean cuts of meat and fish. But while these ads and health crazes told people what to eat, "what they didn't do is tell people how to prepare it," Boehm said.

There was also a glaring problem with the current health grills on the market. "They ... overcooked [or] undercooked [the food]," Boehm said. Boehm's solution, a modest oval-shaped electric grill, featuring top and bottom grilling plates, much like you'd find on a panini press. It contained a shallow recessed flavor reservoir at the center that could be filled with water or broth. The broth would boil over the reservoir and steam the food to make it savory.

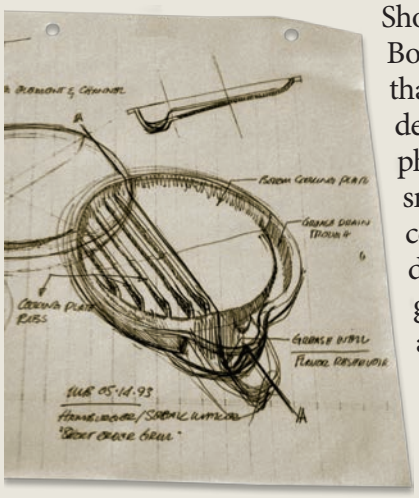
"So what this did was give you grilled outside and flavor-steamed inside," Boehm told me while pointing gingerly to the crisp original instructional guide for his invention, later marketed as the Hamilton Beach Steam Grill (variations of this model were also sold to Betty Crocker and Singer). The Steam Grill debuted in 1991 with decent sales, but Boehm thinks the grill would have sold

1 "Space Options Gets Customers Organized," Chicago Tribune

better if Hamilton Beach had hired a more recognizable spokesperson. They chose a chef from California whom Boehm believes lacked a strong national profile. After the steam grill, Boehm set out to invent a fat-reducing grill. And he wanted it to sell well.

Boehm began sketching. In its earliest iterations, the fat-reducing grill was shaped like a dumbbell, with two circular trays each big enough to cook one hamburger. Over time, Boehm merged the separate grilling plates into one rectangular surface. Throughout its transformation, Boehm kept his design small for two reasons. First, he wanted to fit as many units of his product as possible into the shipping containers being sent from China. And second, because "if it failed, we didn't have that much invested in it."

As the grill's design evolved, so did its name. Boehm first called it the Great Hamburger Maker. Then it was the Hamburger Steak-Maker. Finally, he settled on something more versatile: the Short-Order Grill. Boehm maintains that the product development phase had few snags. He conceived of and designed the grill by himself, and it took him less than a year to assemble a working prototype. Also listed on the patent is a man named Robert Johnson, who Boehm met in college and engineered the product. However, Boehm told me, "Conceptually, it's very much a solo album." By late April 1994 Boehm began pitching his grill to home appliance manufacturing companies.



Selling the grill proved to be more difficult. "There's not one person that I can think of [who] had any enthusiasm for it," Boehm said, adding that Tsann Kuen "was totally unenthusiastic." Appliance companies were worried food would slide off of the slanted grill, even though Boehm had implanted reverse-angle grooves on the bottom grilling surface to prevent this very problem. And when Boehm demonstrated the grill for companies they, like his college classmates, laughed.

Companies were skeptical about the brilliant simplicity of Boehm's design. "Anytime you do something new, people look and say, if it's so great, why didn't someone else do it before?" Boehm told me. He estimates nine companies passed on his grill. Finally, Salton, Inc., which had passed once before, expressed renewed interest. "The president of Salton, [Leon Dreimann], who I really enjoyed, was a product person. He got it ... the only person I've run across who's like that," Boehm said.

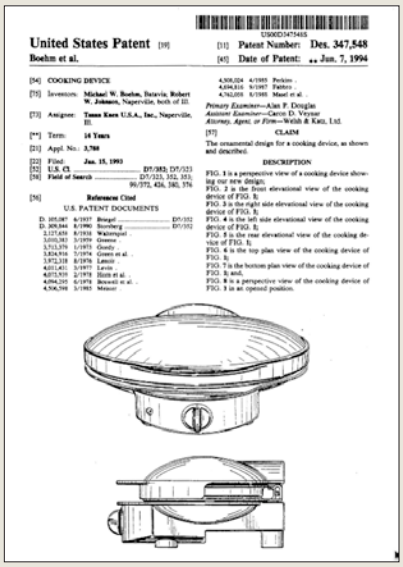
According to Boehm, Salton would only purchase the rights to the grill if Boehm could find an endorser, a caveat that didn't surprise him. "I know enough about retail [that] if you bring a new product by itself on the shelf it's going to die," Boehm told me. This time, Boehm was determined to find a surefire endorser. In the past, Boehm had been drawn to Joe DiMaggio's ads for Mr. Coffee—a sports hero patiently teaching us how to make the perfect cup. Boehm began searching for someone who could establish a similar quick, positive association with his invention. What came to mind were George Foreman's spots pitching muffler and brake repair for Meineke. Foreman, who after a 10-year layoff was about to cap a stunning return to boxing by winning his second heavyweight title, had been rumored to eat hamburgers before every match. He seemed like the perfect fit. Now Boehm just had to get Foreman to sign on.

Boehm sent a prototype to Foreman, but the grill sat unused, collecting dust in Foreman's home for six months.

"I looked at it and said, 'I'm not interested in toys,'" Foreman recalled in his CNBC Titans special that aired in August of 2010 (I contacted Foreman's representatives on multiple occasions, but he could not be reached for comment). Eventually, Foreman's wife, Mary, cooked Foreman a burger on the grill and convinced him to endorse it.[2]

In the final deal for the grill, Foreman was to receive 45 percent of the profits.[3] The deal seemed like a safe bet for Salton, as they would only have to pay Foreman once they earned back their investment.

Boehm did not receive royalties from the grill. While Boehm said that the intellectual property and patent belong to him, Tsann Kuen is listed as the "assignee" on the grill's patent, which, according to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, effectively grants the company ownership of the grill and the "right, title and interest in [the] patent." In the end, Boehm was not included in the contractual talks with Salton and didn't get a chance to negotiate with the company himself, which he called "a sore point."



United States Patent [19]
Boehm et al.

[11] Patent Number: Des. 347,548
[45] Date of Patent: ** Jun. 7, 1994

[54] COOKING DEVICE

[75] Inventors: Michael W. Boehm, Batavia; Robert W. Johnson, Naperville, both of Ill.

[73] Assignee: Tsann Kuen U.S.A., Inc., Naperville, Ill.

[**] Term: 14 Years

[21] Appl. No.: 3,760

[22] Filed: Jan. 15, 1993

[52] U.S. Cl. D7/352; D7/353

[58] Field of Search D7/323, 352, 353; 99/372, 426, 340, 376

[56] References Cited
U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

Boehm never heard from Salton again. It would be up to Foreman to make something of the grill that now bore his name and signature.

In 1995, not long after the 45-year-old Foreman became the oldest heavyweight champion of all time, Salton created a 30-minute infomercial called "The George Foreman Grilling Show." It opened with customer testimonials and a brief clip of an aproned Foreman alone in a kitchen, pouring the fat from the grill's drip pan into a measuring cup, holding it up to the camera and saying emphatically, "This ordinarily would have gone into you!"

The infomercial is contrived, but oddly convincing, scattered with forced references to Foreman's boxing career. Three times within the first minute, Foreman reminds us that the grill "knocks out the fat," delivering the line deliberately with his left index finger extended as though he's addressing an important part of a presentation. The camera cuts away to a live studio audience and Foreman, wearing a boxing robe, walks on stage where he's joined by Nancy Nelson, a petite blonde woman wearing bright red lipstick and a multi-colored, busy-printed bohemian dress with a high neckline. Nelson, once named by CBS as the "The Queen of Infomercials,"[4] does most of the talking and repeatedly refers to Foreman as "champ."

Yet throughout, Foreman appears genuine in his excitement for the grill. Maybe it's the big smile, or the way he holds his hands behind his back and looks on innocently while Nelson buzzes around him, but I found myself instantly liking and trusting Foreman when I watched the infomercial this past summer.

The infomercial I saw, however, was not the first one that Salton produced. In the first cut, Salton tried to capitalize even more on Foreman's boxing fame, opening with footage of a vicious, sweating Foreman throwing hard punches in the ring. This cut of the infomercial failed to engage viewers, and the reason became evident when Salton CEO Leon Dreimann was told that the boxing clips just didn't make sense in the ad. How did Foreman's left jabs translate to him grilling healthier hamburgers?[5]

In response, Salton cut out the boxing clips in favor of scenes with Foreman and his family to sell the image of Foreman as a wholesome, caring father. The tactic worked. The grill would go on to sell one million units on QVC alone.[6] But if this is where the story of the Foreman Grill becomes a success, it's also where it becomes puzzling.

The science behind celebrity endorsements is inexact, and questions about it rarely yield a satisfying answer. I found this to be especially true with the Foreman Grill, a case in which what made the celebrity famous (boxing) had little to do with the product he was endorsing (a kitchen appliance). What is it about Foreman's association

2 CNBC Titans: George Foreman
3 "Gorgeous George," Fortune
4 NancyNelson.com
5 CNBC Titans: George Foreman.
6 CNBC Titans: George Foreman

with the grill that compels us to go out and buy one?

I spoke with Joseph Goodman, an associate professor of marketing at Washington University's Olin Business School who specializes in consumer behavior and decision-making. Goodman explained that celebrity endorsers can be useful, in part, because "they get our attention, and we like people we're familiar with. It's called the mere exposure effect. That liking then rubs off on the product." Still, Goodman acknowledged the odd match between a heavyweight champion and an electric grill.

"The Foreman Grill's a little bit different because [Foreman] was positioned as an expert on food and it really didn't have anything to do with boxing," Goodman told me. Goodman clarified that a match between an endorser and a product doesn't have to be predicated solely on their profession or skill-set. "This isn't a traditional appeal, they're not trying to convince you of anything," Goodman said. "They're just trying to build positive associations and give meaning to the product."

Consumers may have considered Foreman an authority on health foods. It's well-known that Foreman gained a lot of weight after he left boxing in the late 70s—possibly as much as 100 pounds—but then shed it to get back in shape during his mid 90s comeback.[7] Or maybe shoppers believed in the grill because Foreman himself appeared to believe in it. According to a 2003 feature for *Fortune*, while Foreman was pitching the grill on QVC, the network received a sudden influx of calls. Salton CEO Leon Dreimann credited it to an instance where Foreman, unprovoked, picked up a hamburger and took a bite.

George Foreman was born on January 10, 1949, in Marshall, Texas, and raised in Houston's Fifth Ward, known as "the bloody fifth."[8] Foreman's mother always worked, he didn't know his birth father, and his stepfather reportedly drank heavily.[9] As a child, Foreman often got in fights. When he was 14, he dropped out of school.

"I was a bad boy in Houston, Texas," Foreman told CNBC. "I was the person that people had to defend themselves against because I was the delinquent of all delinquents, fighting on the street." One night, when Foreman was running from the police, he hid under a house. "I said to myself then, 'If ever I get from this house and the police don't get me, I'm going to change my life.'" Foreman joined Job Corps, and while he nearly got expelled for fighting, he connected with a boxing trainer who saw potential in Foreman as a professional fighter.

Foreman went on to win a gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City when he was only 19. He quickly developed a reputation as a fierce fighter, knocking out opponents fast and hard. Former heavyweight boxer George Chuvalo once said that taking a Foreman punch was like "a Cadillac hitting you at 50 miles per hour."[10]

In January 1973 Foreman defeated Joe Frazier to become the heavyweight champion of the world. But less than two years later, in the infamous "Rumble in the Jungle," Foreman lost his heavyweight title in a devastating defeat to Muhammad Ali. Foreman took a year off and then returned to boxing, only to lose another match shortly thereafter. In the locker room after the loss, Foreman experienced hallucinations, which doctors attributed to heat prostration; in that moment, though, Foreman says he was saved by God.[11]

In 1977 Foreman left boxing to become a preacher and establish the George Foreman Youth and Community Center in Houston, Texas. But within 10 years, Foreman, who was funding the center, was almost out of money. Now 38 and overweight, Foreman returned to boxing. The time off had softened not only his physique, but also his demeanor. Having devoted so many years to serving God and children, Foreman was no longer a symbol of intimidation. Instead, as he worked his way back into shape, he turned himself into a likable, marketable figure. Once towering and sneering, Foreman was now bald and beaming.

When Boehm's grill came along, Foreman hadn't

7 "Licensed to Grill," The New York Times
8 CNBC Titans: George Foreman
9 "Mr. Mean Becomes Mr. Clean," ESPN
10 "Mr. Mean Becomes Mr. Clean," ESPN
11 "Mr. Mean Becomes Mr. Clean," ESPN

just learned how to pitch mufflers and the word of God; he learned how to pitch himself.
"I was going to be that product," Foreman told CNBC of the Foreman Grill, later adding, "I dedicated myself to being a great salesperson twenty-four hours a day."

Now Foreman speaks about endorsing products with the confidence of a seasoned businessman. Foreman told AARP in October 2014, "You sell yourself; the product almost is secondary."

In 1999, Salton bought out Foreman from his contract for $137.5 million under the condition they could use his name.[12] No one knows exactly how much Foreman has made from pitching the grill, but accounting for what he was paid before the buyout and for later TV spots, he may have earned as much as $200 million.[13] Foreman maintains he made even more.

"Much more," Foreman told AARP. "There were months I was being paid $8 million per month."

Foreman is still presented as an authority on inventing. He once served as a judge on the ABC reality series "American Inventor," and he is currently a spokesperson for the company InventHelp.

Meanwhile, Boehm has gone unrecognized, but he continues to invent. He told me he's working on a "whole new cooking system" for his inventing company, Intellection and that he has several other product ideas that have not been commercialized.

Boehm knows his grill would not have sold nearly as well if he had simply pitched it at county fairs, which he mentioned as a possibility. "You've got George the swashbuckler and he's over this little machine," Boehm said in praise of the infomercial. "He lifts up that cup and [says], 'This is what you're not getting.' … It told a great story."

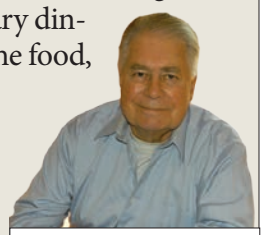
The grill's popularity, however, came at a cost. Shortly after Boehm patented his grill, his family visited home shows and saw showrooms dotted with knock-offs. And once, the Boehms heard George Foreman being interviewed on a local Chicago radio station when the host incorrectly stated that Foreman invented the grill (such a slip isn't uncommon: I came across a blurb in a *Houston Chronicle* article erroneously introducing Foreman as a "two-time heavy weight champion, Olympic gold medalist, preacher and inventor of the Foreman grill [sic]"). The Boehms called into the station, but before they could get the announcer to correct his error, the broadcast was abruptly cut off. To his credit, Foreman has publicly denied inventing the grill.

Boehm's oldest daughter, Brady, remembers watching her father pitch his grill at home shows before it was sold to Salton. "I think watching him was great because he truly had lived the process," Brady told me. "He knew why he did it and he knew why it was important. And so it was confidence without arrogance ... and it was confidence that was begging people to ask questions and question why he did it."

At one point I asked Boehm if he would have marketed his grill any differently in the infomercial. He seemed to struggle at times with my inquiries, perhaps because he rarely had been asked about his invention. But this time he spoke with such ease, it was as though he'd been thinking about how he' would answer this question for nearly 20 years.

"I would have liked [Foreman] to show it in different environments!" Boehm said excitedly. He leaned back in his chair, his eyes widened, and he began moving his hands. "Like ten to twelve … a montage of a picnic scene, a beach scene, on a boat!"

Before Boehm invents anything, he writes a story in which he anticipates a need for his latest invention. For the Foreman Grill, he saw himself hosting a dinner party, desperate to quickly cook for all of his guests. He told me he wanted his grill to be so effective that his imaginary dinner guests wouldn't just devour the food, they'd feel compelled to ask him, "How did you do that?"



contact Michael at:
mwboehm44@aol.com

12 "Mr. Mean Becomes Mr. Clean," ESPN
13 CNBC Titans: George Foreman
14 "Foreman's Grill Deal: Best In Sports Marketing History?" CNBC

Robyn Pellei, serial inventor in Charlotte, NC

How We Came to Be

Vive Vita arose from the need of one woman to tackle problems she encountered in everyday living. Robyn is the mother of nine children who became frustrated when she could not find a simple solution to issues such as handtowels and bathroom towels constantly on the floor, confusion between multiple drink cups for children, and organization and security for the children while in public places. With no readily available products that fit her needs, Robyn decided to create her own solutions.

Retail Rack

When she did create her own solutions, something magical happened. Her friends and family noticed the ingenuity of her solutions. Strangers commented on the functionality of her solutions, and both mothers and entrepreneurs encouraged her to share her discoveries and inventions with others encountering similar dilemmas. As she revised and improved several seemingly unrelated products they became more functional, less cumbersome, and more elegant. Thus was born a new company–Vive Vita–roughly translated into "Living Life."

Who We Are Now

ViveVita is the product company that is living life everyday, just like you. We're making life easier and prettier, one product at a time. We have found that life is better when purpose and pleasure are balanced. Our goal is to create products that solve everyday issues in a way that makes everyone smile. Having fun, looking pretty, adding flair – that's how life's everyday issues should be solved. Flair and function coming together, now that is savvy living!

Visit Robyn @ Vivevita.com

Doctors Sean Hensler & Thomas Medlin, inventors in Charlotte, NC

Hensler Surgical Products, LLC was founded by inventor and physician assistant, Sean Hensler. Frustrated by the antiquated process and sheer time involved with autologous bone collection during surgery, Sean set out to design a process and a product that reduced the cost associated with bone substitute, while simultaneously improving patient care by harvesting more of the patient's own material for reincorporation within fusion procedures.

Having performed in over 1,500 neurosurgical cases, Sean continues to work as an active physician assistant in Wilmington, N.C., along side with Dr. Thomas Melin. Prior to founding Hensler Surgical, he served in several tours of duty overseas for the United States Navy Hospital Corps, 2nd Marine Corps. Mr. Hensler holds a Bachelor of Science degree from The University of North Florida and a Master of Medical Science and Physician Assistant degree from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale.

Thomas Melin, M.D., has over 20 years of experience in neurosurgery. Having performed over 5,000 surgeries in his distinguished career, Dr. Melin has been in search of the "perfect" fusion material. After utilizing virtually every synthetic option on the market, he concluded that the use of the patient's own bone for fusion is the superior and most economically conscience choice. The challenge has been to efficiently collect an adequate amount of autologous bone during surgery.

As a practicing surgeon, Dr. Melin's need for efficient and effective autologous bone collection inspired the creation of the HBP. Dr. Melin received his M.D. from the University of Kentucky and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for his neurosurgical training.

Sean Hensler and Thomas Medlin

How Having a Kid Is Kind of Like Product Development.

On February 17th my second child (and second daughter), Ivy, was born. She came out a perfect blonde haired, healthy, 8 lb ball of love. Her first few weeks on Earth have (mostly) been a delight. My partner, Kerry, was a total champ, birthing her naturally and without any pain medication. The labor and delivery process was fascinating to witness and I was happy to be able to be in the room to help her through it. Once Ivy was safely in our arms and the excitement started to dissipate, I started to think that having a kid has a lot of similarities to product development. It is pretty obvious that the uterus is the best 3D printer in town, but there are plenty of other similarities too.

Getting it done in the labor suite.

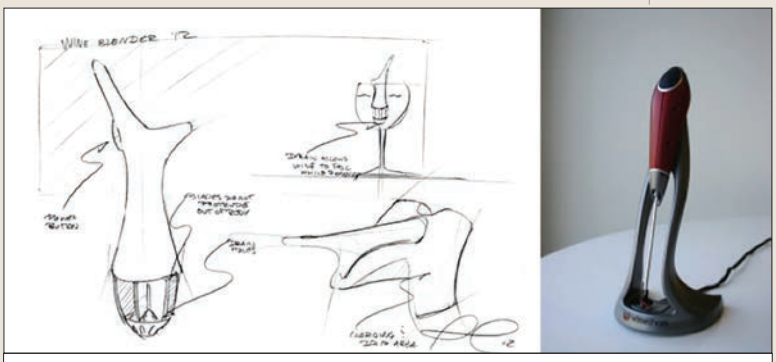
While you can look at photos of parents-to-be and mentally average their features to try and guess what a baby will look like, sometimes you get surprises. Genes can combine in strange ways and recessive traits from prior generations can reemerge. My mom has dark curly hair, which you would assume would be a dominant trait, yet I ended up blonde. You can barely tell we are related.

Product development is no different. In the early stages of the development process, the focus is on proving that an idea works. Features and functionality can get added and dropped throughout the process. Only in the later stages does it become clear what form the final product will be. When Taylor Hayden had the idea for a wine aerating blender, he had no idea that he would end up with the Wine Shark. While looking at a series of industrial design sketches during one of our meetings he was drawn to some wavy marine forms. He thought one of them looked like it had a shark fin and the rest was history. It helps to work with someone with experience

Birthing a baby is a pretty intimidating experience. Many women get help from family members, a midwife or a doula during labor. We had a doula for the birth of both of our children and they were a great help for both Kerry and me. Our doulas had witnessed all types of births and worked with many moms, and they knew just what to help Kerry have the most pleasant birth experience possible.

Many inventors toil in isolation trying to bring their invention ideas to life. Some have

success, but it can take years, and the path may be wrought with frustration. It is often helpful to find a mentor who can help you navigate the different stages of product development to keep the project on track. Edison Nation is a great resource to find mentoring. The Edison Nation community has many experienced members that have been through the whole process, from idea to licensing deal, and are easily accessible through the forums on the site. New information is posted from the Edison Nation team every week on the blog to help furnish ideas and how to put your best foot forward with prototyping, patenting, and marketing, etc. There are also inventor groups all over the country where you can meet others that are working on products.



The Wine Shark ideation sketch compared to the beta prototype.

They need protection.

A newborn is a fragile organism that needs many protection. It needs a car seat to keep it safe while in the car, and it should stay away from large crowds for a few weeks or more to mitigate the risk of getting sick, especially one that is born during flu season.

New technology and products also need protection from the elements of the marketplace. This is usually in the form of a patent. Filing a patent affords the applicant a way to prevent others from monetizing their idea and creates a potentially valuable asset that can be licensed or sold. Getting a new idea through the patent process can be a long and expensive process (two years or more and typically between $6-$10,000). However, filing a provisional patent allows an inventor to protect their idea for a year before having to decide whether to file a full patent.Submissions to Edison Nation need not be patented prior to submission. Edison Nation files patents on behalf of the inventor if a submission is licensed.

They tend to keep you awake at night

It is no secret that a newborn is great at keeping you awake at night. Late night diaper changes, spontaneous crying fits and 3AM feedings all become the norm. After a few easy

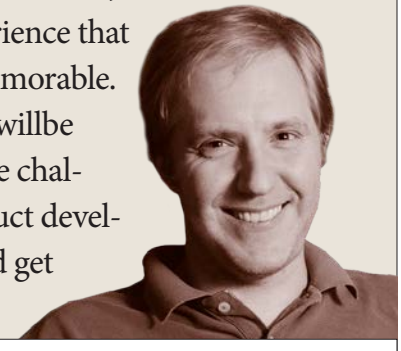
Our doula providing comfort for Kerry during labor.

nights, my new girl has developed a habit of screaming about 10 minutes after Kerry and I fall asleep. I have never been water-boarded, but given the choice between the two, I may be tempted to try it over the constant wakeups.

While new babies eventually start sleeping through the night, new products from concept through to manufacturing can keep you up at night. When the lightning bolt moment hits and you are in the early stages of product development, it is not uncommon to wake up in the middle of the night with a new idea on how to make it better. If the product goes to Kickstarter or is being pitched to an angel investor, there will be late nights making pitch decks or answering questions from backers. If the product goes to manufacturing overseas, there will be late nights on video chat with the factory working out the details. It takes immense effort to get a product from concept to the store shelf and it will likely take many late nights to achieve this goal. The Edison Nation design team experiences the excitement of late night idea surges, the occasional all-night prototyping session getting a product ready for a meeting, and doing sourcing work with companies in different time zones. We live the dreams of each inventor, as well as the late nights.

Ivy on her first drive home bundled up in a hat and tucked into her car seat.

Late nights are common when caring for a newborn or nurturing an idea or prototype. It has been an exciting and hectic month to welcome Ivy into my family. She was born the morning after a debilitating ice storm in Charlotte, was almost two weeks overdue, and when we found out she was a girl she did not have a name for awhile after her birth. All of these little challenges were difficult to get through in the moment, but made the experience that much more memorable. Hopefully you willbe able to overcome the challenges in your product development journey and get your product onto the shelf.



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

Innovation Divaz Melinda Knight and Dhana Cohen from the Women Inventorz Network.

TrakLight is an amazing stepping stone for inventors who may be exploring the decision on whether to invent or not. TrakLight, for a fee, will vault, time and date stamp your IP, drawings, and descriptions to have as proof in the uncertain court system if you ever need to prove prove that your idea is yours. We asked the owner and creator a few questions that will aid in your invention journey.

Q – What was the inspiration for creating your company?

A – In law school I saw IP horror stories both in cases and in real life clinic, all of which could be prevented by identifying and addressing risks early on. People tend to ignore and fear the legal profession so we built software to bridge the gap. Initially we focused on IP, but have expanded to include all risks facing small and medium sized businesses.

Q – Why should an inventor be concerned about their IP, or intellectual property?

A – Intangible assets, which include the four traditional types of IP (patent, trade secrets, trademark, and copyright), are the most valuable assets a business can own, even more so for inventors. If you do not take the proper steps from day one, you can end up losing your IP rights or never owning them in the first place.

Q – Is there a particular category of inventors that should utilize your software?

A – All companies have IP and all inventors also have IP. Everyone should do an inventory of potential IP long before they publicly discuss or fundraise for their invention.

Q – Why would an inventor use your services vs. those of an attorney?

A – We encourage inventors to use our software to identify their legal issues and risks, including potential IP protection, and then track their IP using our platform. Then recommend that they use attorneys or other professional services to address the risk and do IP protection. In other words, we complement attorneys not compete. We do offer tips and business strategy in our detailed reports and that can save the inventor money.

Q – If you had to tell one success story about an inventor you worked/or are working with what would that be?

A – Most of our customers remain anonymous as that is part of our offering but amongst those that we have worked with when they reached out for additional help or to offer feedback - one that stands out is someone who had worked with a supposed inventor assistance program. The painful lesson of learning to read or having a professional read contracts to understand what he was giving up. Also the idea that even if you are not patenting something, you have to take important steps to protect your trade secrets.

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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.

Melinda Knight & Dhana Cohen

2 Critical Steps to getting your NEW PRODUCT "out there"

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Contact Edie Tolchin – "The Sourcing Lady"(SM) for sourcing, China manufacturing, product safety issues, packaging assistance, quality control, production testing, final shipment inspections, freight arrangements, import services and delivery to your door!

2 GET A WEBSITE!

Contact Ken Robinson – While your order is being manufactured, you need to start working on your WEB PRESENCE! Get people talking about your product on Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+), get good search engine placement (SEO)!

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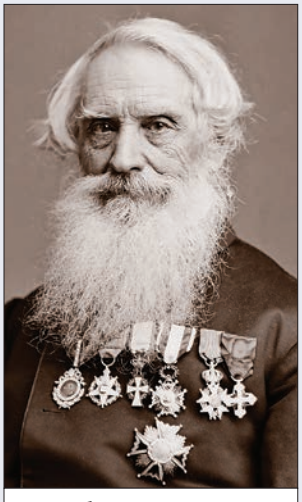
New Creativity for Renewed Prosperity

"If the presence of electricity can be made visible in any part of the circuit, I see no reason why intelligence may not be transmitted instantaneously by electricity."

Samuel F. B. Morse
American artist and inventor

On a recent flight to Orlando, home of Disney World and fantasy, I sat next to a bright young entrepreneur. Working in the automobile parts supply business, he learned who the buyers and sellers are, pricing, key trade shows to meet important contacts, and so forth. He coupled this knowledge and his boundless inquisitiveness and energy with the new marketing medium of the Internet to start an "aftermarket" automobile accessories supplier, mainly to the world of Toyota.



Samuel Morse
photo credit - Wikipedia

He has about 20 employees, is self-financed with no debt or government aid, has an adoring wife and great kids, and is generally enjoying the American Dream. He is less than half my age and, I thought, an ideal observer of the enterprise world coming upon us.
I asked him, "Are you developing any of your own products? Will you have some cool addition to the standard stuff everybody is making and selling?" He thought for a minute and replied, "There are extremely few, if any, new inventions anymore."

You might think we will turn into the Internet marketing capital of the world and leave it to the rising class of Asian engineers who have found stimulating opportunities in their home countries to generate the products the whole world will need for today and tomorrow. Creativity will be reduced to thinking up new corporate goals statements and new luncheon theme ideas.

But Bette Nesmith Graham didn't know this. A single mother and secretary in Dallas, she thought there should be a better way to cover up mistakes made in typing. She recalled along-ago artistic experience and began looking for a liquid mixture to paint over the typing errors. She made the first formulations in her kitchen blender.

In 1956, Ms. Graham founded the Mistake Out Company, later well known as Liquid Paper, or "white out," starting on the proverbial shoestring and working nights and weekends. By 1968, she had her own plant and 19 employees. She sold her company for $47.5 million.

Bette Graham
Photo credit - www.nwhm.org

This story of success is still possible at all levels, from the kitchen chemistry lab to the killer app corporate development project or multinational research initiative. In 1993, I started my last company on the dining room, table soldering parts together mostly purchased at the local Radio Shack. It grew into a small but leading gas detection instrument company, which I sold in 2007 at many times my investment.

We are in new times and uncharted territory in the saga of enterprise. The United States and the rest of the Western world are facing the possibility of no growth, or at best, very controlled growth for decades or longer. Major product ideas and resources are harder to find.

We must create new solutions, products and services as a major component of future sales.

Entrepreneurs and managers must rediscover discovery. For the last few decades, the mantra in business schools and corporate training programs has been marketing. This has been the way to the top. Information technology has also become an important fast track for rising managers. In many cases, product development and intellectual property accumulation have been discretionary activities, seriously pursued when extra cash was in great supply.

In his book, *MegaMinds: How to Create and Invent in the Age of Google,* Larry focuses on the mindset and creative process involved to imagine, create and invent in the 21st century. These subject are not generally taught in schools and colleges, and do not lend themselselves to a few simple rules for success. We must tackle them if we are going to ejoy renewed prosperity any time soon. While management of innovation has been a popular management development subject, the creative process itself is often not meaningfully addressed. Whatever the era or product, the successful project or company starts with a creative visionary—somebody who is imaginative and persistent and who has a multifaceted mind.

Would an American corporation in the early 1800's (or now) hire as their chief designer a financially failing artist with radical political views and an itchy foot for world travel? There was such a person. He did not have a comfortable job, but he had a vision to develop a communication system that could send messages faster than the best steam trains and ships, unhindered by rain, sleet or snow. He was Samuel Finley Breese Morse, who invented the telegraph.

In 1832, while on a return sea voyage back to America, Morse began to think about the concept of a telegraph system. He knew the basic principles of electro-magnetism, but not the practical aspect of engineering products and systems. Several European inventors were also working on telegraph systems, but apparently their efforts were unknown to him.

Morse used his creative abilities to see relationships and possibilities. His breakthrough was coding letters and numbers as groupings of binary digits. This allowed the simplicity of sending messages over one wire (the return circuit being ground) instead of several wires that would be required for simple or no coding schemes. The competing European designs required as many as 35 wires.

Public demonstrations of telegraphy happened about 12 years after Morse's first vision of it. What carried him through those wrenching times were perseverance, the ability to tinker and improvise, a wide scope of thinking about all aspects of the design, and his ability to bring other people to help when design, manufacturing and other challenges required additional talents and facilities.

Fast forward to 2005. Steve Jobs, the legendary leader at Apple, is initiating a great leap forward. He has directed about 200 of his best engineers to create what we now know as the iPhone. Like Morse, he is not the first with some version of his product. And like Morse, Jobs can focus on a product vision that combines needs satisfaction, functionality, apparent simplicity, and, in addition, design beauty. The resultant product is a combination of invention, engineering, and aesthetic appeal. In short, it is

Steve Jobs - Former Apple CEO reveals the iPhone (Photo credit - Wikipedia)

a bold act of creativity.

Where the telegraph initiated the era of wired communications, the iPhone has put computer clouds (almost infinitely large bundles of data and services available by Internet) in the palm of your hand. The telephone is not obsolete, music radio will not go away, computers of all sizes will always be here, video games will always be ready to use, and data transmission will always be available through specialty equipment. But now all of these modalities are available together through a personal portable device.

iPhones and similar smart phones are forever changing the way we use computers and communications. Now there are many competitors to the iPhone, but the design led by Jobs crystallized that this new communications and computing package was not a temporary success. It is a basic paradigm shift with benefits for everyone.

Apple's sales of the iPhone have skyrocketed from nothing in early 2007 to 17 percent of the world market in late 2009. Steve Jobs commented in November 2009, "We're making our most innovative products ever, and our customers are responding. We're thrilled to have sold of 5.2 million iPhones during the quarter, and users have downloaded more than 1.5 billion applications from our App Store in its first year." In 2013, two years after Steve Jobs' death, Apple shipped 153 million iPhones and accounted for 15% of one billion total market shipments. Four other companies accounted for most of the rest of the smartphone sales.

Samuel F. B. Morse, of course, did not have the technology and resources available to Jobs for his design project. Most important for Apple is the role of computers in complex design. The several hundred engineers assigned to the project could not integrate all the subsystems of the iPhone such as the radio circuits, internal power supply, microprocessor, software, touch screen display and mechanical packaging without computerized integration of the subsystem designs. The search for components and design solutions would require intense use of the Internet.

Still, even in the Age of Google, a visionary leader is required, and Jobs is reported to have mercilessly driven his design group, never taking "no" for an answer. There were screaming matches in the hallways, doors slamming and completely burned out engineers.

The iPhone and many other recent developments, from tiny pills to giant airliners, call for the new tools of creativity, invention and design which we will explore in parts 1 and 2 of this book. A common thread among these tools are computer clouds and computer networks.

They show up as:

- Use of large research teams in virtual labs defined by computer networks.
- Artificial intelligence (AI).
- Novel methods of analysis of massive data sets, or "big data."
- Collective intelligence involving communities larger than research teams sharing private computer network wikis.
- Designing and inventing with the help of Google and other search engines.

These creative tools are required because the most creative challenges are much more complex compared to a century ago. The development of the iPhone required thinking in a much more complex space than did the development of telegraphy even though both were hugely important in their time.

Larry Kilham is from the third generation of a family that has produced notable inventors who built successful businesses. Larry, a Sloan School of Management graduate from MIT, holds three patents and has founded two high-tech companies. In 1986 Larry was the co-recipient of the IR-100 Award cited by *Research & Development* magazine for developing one of the 100 most significant technical products of the year.

Contact Larry
at lkilham@gmail.com

Photo credit - www.santaferadiocafe.org

Lemelson-MIT InvenTeams: An Inventive Journey

The Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam™ initiative offers an unparalleled opportunity for high school students to experience invention. InvenTeams are comprised of high school students, educators, and mentors that receive up to $10,000 each to invent technological solutions to real-world problems of their own choosing, and rely on inquiry and hands-on problem solving as they apply lessons from science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to develop invention prototypes.

Students learn to work in teams, while collaborating with intended users of their inventions, and learn to move forward through challenges and celebrate "Eureka!" moments. After the InvenTeam experience, inventive cultures often continue to prosper at schools through further development of InvenTeam prototypes or the pursuit of new invention projects.

The following three students' accounts of their InvenTeam experience depict the invention journey over time. From a new inventor just beginning her project, to a continuing InvenTeam that has been hard at work for the past few years, and to InvenTeam alum, who has been inspired to become an inventor and is currently pursuing that goal at MIT.

Nikita Patel, 2015 South Brunswick High School InvenTeam

Nine months ago, when our team was first introduced to the Lemelson-MIT Program, we had a preconceived notion of what failure meant. Failure was supposed to be a good thing, because through it, you can learn from your mistakes, but we had no idea how this applied to the invention process. In the beginning we believed that we would somehow escape failure and come out scot-free, with a fully functional prototype of our proximity sensor and alert system in hand. Needless to say, throughout the many months of cycling between designing, testing, and altering, we realized that no invention can be completed without setbacks and failures along the way. However, throughout this experience we've also learned that there are two types of failure: unavoidable failure and avoidable failure.

Experiences that our InvenTeam classified as unavoidable failures involve more than just crossing an idea off a list because it is not viable anymore. We've spent considerable time building, testing and then analyzing results, while locating and targeting weakness areas in that specific model of the device. Though the concept of building and testing a device that will eventually culminate into a failure seemed ineffective to us, we learned that this part of the invention process is actually one of the most important parts. Unavoidable failures have brought us closer to our ultimate goal of improving the safety of drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, rather than further from it.

On the other hand, avoidable failures are often ideas that are thrown away too quickly. They are ideas that are not planned and researched completely before implementation, and as a result, do not usually come to fruition. For our InvenTeam, our avoidable failures were a result of jumping from idea to idea, without proper planning and testing ultimately leading to an inability to analyze and learn from past mistakes.

Throughout these past nine months, we've noticed that the distinguishing factor that separates avoidable and unavoidable failure is time. What can be said for our InvenTeam, can be said for any inventor; we must make the decision of how much time should be spent on each idea, allocating just enough to ensure that if the idea fails, it can still be beneficial. Though I cannot claim that our InvenTeam has mastered this happy medium, we have certainly amended the way we process our new ideas in an effort to allow ourselves more time for failure, because after all, a successful invention is built from the mistakes and failures that came before it.

2014 Providence Day School InvenTeam

Our InvenTeam's journey began for all of us in middle school. We, as a group of girls, found our passion for invention when we participated in nationally recognized STEM competitions. But when we became a Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam for the 2013-2014 school year, our focus became less about us, and more about others. We wanted to use our compassionate side as female inventors to make a difference in the lives of others, and we became a tight-knit group that was focused on this goal. In the brainstorming process, we wanted to pursue an invention that would give

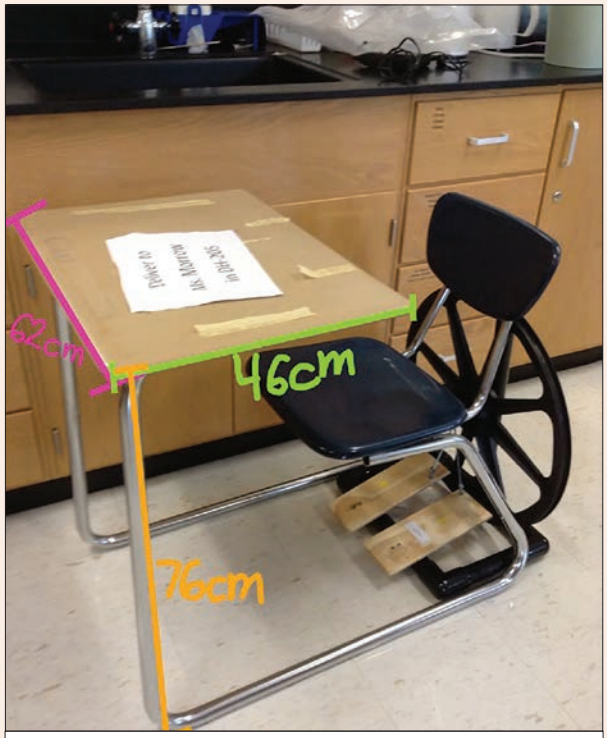
Providence Day School InvenTeam

students across the globe the same opportunities that we are fortunate to have.

Our school, Providence Day School, is a TK-12 school that has always had a strong focus on global education and social responsibility, and this motivated and fueled our project. As we focused on providing practical solutions to problems that may prevent students around the world from reaching their potential, our InvenTeam, "Charger Potential" and the G.R.ID. (Green Renewable "Current" Desk) System were born. Our grid (of twenty pedal-powered desks) will allow students to generate and store energy while in a classroom setting. We continually redesigned the pedals to minimize the energy and force needed to set the wheels in motion (generating electricity), and we did not want this mechanism to be a distraction in the learning environment.

While addressing mechanical and electrical issues, another major challenge we faced while developing the G.R.ID. System was choosing an appropriate beneficiary for our invention. After a lengthy search, we eventually formed a partnership with The Foundation For Tomorrow (a nonprofit organization that empowers vulnerable children in developing nations), with the intention of implementing our desks in the Kisimiri Secondary School in Arusha, Tanzania. With Providence Day School's strong sense of social responsibility and our InvenTeam's desire to improve education conditions for children, we are moving forward to fulfill our commitment to Kisimiri Secondary School throughout the next four years, before the youngest members of Charger Potential InvenTeam graduate high school in 2017. With additional funding from our school and a partnership with a local community college, we have been able to continue on the path of reaching our goal.

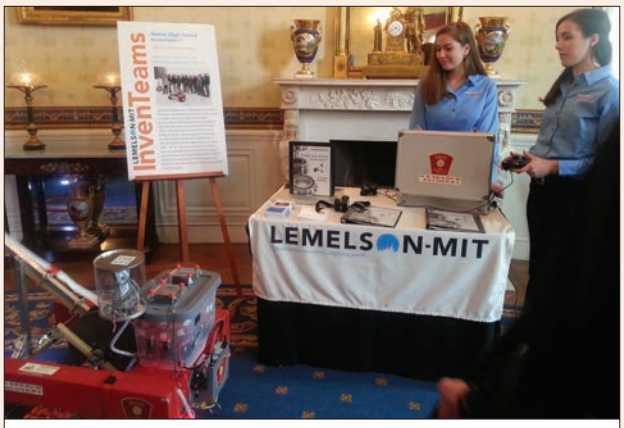
We have taken many steps in the 2014-2015 school year to further design and implement the G.R.ID. System. For example, we have begun welding aluminum frames instead of steel frames in an effort to reduce shipping costs and increase transportability and mobility within the classroom. By tailoring the device so that it is the most helpful to students in Tanzania, we became empathetic inventors, learning to focus on the needs of others, even if there is not always a simple solution. The Lemelson-MIT program, along with support from our school community to design and implement the G.R.ID. System has helped our team to develop lifelong skills, gain a deeper understanding of social responsibility, and become empathetic inventors while making a difference and inspiring others (especially young women) to do the same.



Prototypo of the green renewable desk system.

Katelyn Sweeney, 2013 Natick High School InvenTeam

If you had told me my freshman year of high school that I was going to be an engineer, there is no way I would have believed you. I did not consider myself



Katelyn Sweeney & the ROV

an inventor; on the contrary, science was the subject I liked the least. However, by some happy accident (that I was not so happy about at the time), I was placed in a class called "Succeeding with Technology," an elective led by Mr. Scott, the teacher who would later become my Lemelson- MIT InvenTeams advisor. My development since then had largely been based upon his skill as an educator, and it speaks to the importance of great teachers like him. Between his energy and the hands-on design aspect of the class, I realized that I loved inventing. That realization changed my life.

When most people hear the title "inventor" certain characteristics come to mind, and a high school student is usually not one of them. Contrary to popular stereotypes, the true indicators of an inventor are simply creative critical thinking skills, a unique idea, and a willingness to fabricate that idea into an actual product.

We began the InvenTeams process during March of my sophomore year when the local fire department approached the team and asked us to design a small remotely-operated-vehicle (ROV) to aid them on search-and-rescue missions. This task would prove much longer and more intense than any curricular project I had ever encountered; but with the exponential rise in workload came an even greater gain in reward. The team spent every day after school and every Saturday in the shop brainstorming new facets of the device and developing the components we needed. From this, I developed a serious critical thinking ability. Everything had to maximize efficiency and minimize error. As an engineer, being able to analyze all possible outcomes and assess risk like this is an invaluable asset.

Another key to invention is the ability to collaborate in a team environment. I stand by the claim that this project would not have been successful were it an individual task. There were far too many obstacles to consider. Having many minds working on different aspects allowed us to tap into each other's strengths and work through our weaknesses. The different approaches that each member contributed helped avoid a one-track solution that would have caused failure of the machine.

The path toward a working prototype was rarely straightforward. The most useful takeaway for me can be paraphrased by Mr. Scott's advice: "fail often, fail early." This is by far the most important thing I have been taught inside the classroom or otherwise. Don't get me wrong, success is wonderful and it is something that should always be striven for but the gain from failure is useful beyond description. From every failed attempt in the lab, the team gained dozens of new approaches to problems. We spent months going through different deployment methods before we finally settled on our final boom-apparatus. Each intermediate idea contributes something new that would help us create the final part. This ability to adapt and grow from ideas is something that applies well to both inventing and everyday issues, and it is critical to ultimately achieving success.

It still amazes me every time I see our final prototype. There is no feeling quite like looking at a device having seen it transition from a written concept to a physical, working machine. Being able to present at EurekaFest at MIT in 2013 once it was finished was euphoric. Sharing something I was passionate about and seeing people express interest in this labor of love was what solidified my desire to become an engineer. A year later, I decided to attend MIT as a member of the Class of 2018, and I can definitively say that inventing has been the main source of my success thus far.

Currently, my InvenTeam is working toward securing a patent for our device. Since EurekaFest I have had the opportunity to share our project at many conferences and symposia, including presenting it to the president at the White House Science Fair in 2014. Inventing has brought me so far since my freshman year of high school, and it has been the most critical factor in shaping my future. Contrary to what I pictured four years ago, I am an inventor, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

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Giving Up for Success

Winston Churchill said,

"Never give up something you can't go a day without thinking about."

Sir Winston Churchill (photo credit - wikipedia)

He also said, "Never, never, never give up." But Kenny Rogers sang to us, "You gotta know when to hold em, know when to fold em, and know when to walk away."

All three are good advice, depending on the circumstances. And as inventors, we need to know when to fold em, and when to walk away. That's difficult. Been there; done that, a number of times. And how many of us have walked away, merely by default – that is, we failed to act when the time was right – and later we've discovered our invention on the market?

So, how do we know when it's time to continue with renewed effort, or tell ourselves to cut our losses and give up? It's usually not black and white, but by relating our own situation to certain typical situations, we may find reasoning that's better than the toss of a coin. Here are examples of such situations:

- The inventor who solves a personal need, and may have only one or two inventions in his or her lifetime.
- The highly productive inventor who frequently comes up with novel solutions to needs, wants, and annoyances.
- The inventor who was told by a patent attorney that his invention is not patentable.
- The inventor of a high-tech electronic device who is not an electronics expert.
- The inventor who has submitted their invention to a corporation and been rejected.
- The inventor who has a great idea, but has little or no idea of how to pursue it.

Inventor solving personal need:

Over the past 18 years I've had several tradesmen come to me with tools they've invented to enable them to do a better job in their trade. I've also had women inventors come to me for advice on kitchen and household inventions. These inventors have a better than average chance of succeeding because they usually are well-aware of the absence of the tool on the market, and because they have a practical understanding of the need and use. Many have made and used a prototype.

Of course, the invention may not be a tool in the usual sense. In general, this inventor should not give up on his invention until the patentability opinion discourages filing his patent application. (See also the general approach at the end of this article.)

Highly productive inventor:

This inventor often has a long list of inventions, and may be working on more than one at the same time. But their creativity often gets in the

way of a practical assessment of which invention has the best chance for commercialization. He may work on the one that he can't go a day without thinking about, rather than the one that has the best chance in the market. A search of prior art and products on the market often reveals an overcrowded field in which one more invention would not easily find a home. An abundance of prior art provides more chances for the patent examiner to pick individual features found in other patents, and combine them to disqualify his combination feature as novel, thus, eliminating his chances of getting a meaningful patent. In such case, they should give up the potential loser in favor of another invention that shows more promise for patent protection.

The inventor who is advised not to file by his patent attorney:

The temptation would be to give up. But the inventor should determine what feature(s) it is that is found in prior art that is the same as his or hers. This information will come from a thorough search and written patentability opinion, which may cost $1,000 or more. Knowing the feature that can't be patented, the inventor may invent another non-infringing way to achieve the same purpose.

A patentability opinion that advises to file or not to file, without providing detailed reasoning, may cost as little as $250, but it leaves the inventor with no obvious option but to give up.

The inventor with a high-tech electronic device:

Unless this inventor has an in-depth electronics background, they will not be able to provide a sufficiently detailed description to the patent searcher. A general idea for an electronic invention is not an invention until at least a specific and detailed block diagram defines it. An idea for an invention is not an invention in the sense of patent traditions. Thus, the person with a new feature for the cell phone should review patents with similar features, and learn how to diagram his invention. In a hot field, such as cell-phones, our chances of coming up with something novel are very small. Hundreds – perhaps thousands – of bright engineers are thinking about this technology daily, and probably have already documented the idea we believe to be novel. I'm not saying to give up before you start, but recognize that you are trying to out-think companies that have enormous resources.

Chester Carlson (photo credit - seizingourdestiny.com) with his Xerox machine.

The rejected inventor:

Many inventors who hope to license their patent send a letter to a company, and often a copy of the patent, hoping they will be invited to negotiate. In general, they receive a polite letter of "no thanks." The larger the company, the more doubtful the validity of such rejections. Many large companies have a policy of automatically rejecting all proposals from outside. This is due partly to arrogance, and partly to frustration at having to sort through a glut of suggestions each year, to find the proverbial needle in the haystack. Since rejection is easy, and evaluation is not, and the company believes it has already thought of every conceivable good idea, they simply reject everything from the outside. (I wonder about the fate of the several invention evaluators who rejected Chester Carlson's

Xerox® process during his long, persistent quest.)

Some companies will review your invention, but first, your letter is passed through the lawyers to make sure you have received the company's standard form-letter that asks you to sign away all of your rights except those granted by your patent. Then, assuming you have already received and signed it, your information will be passed to someone who must evaluate it. Again, rejection is easy, and evaluation is not. Since the vast majority of such ideas will be rejected, there is, we might say, inertia favoring the rejection route.

Most inventors will try two or three -- maybe even four or five -- companies, and then give up. Often, the act of giving up is not decisive; it is an unconscious setting aside due to discouragement. Although I can't find any reliable statistical data on invention rejections, such rejections have a legitimate parallel with book rejections. Long before the annual hundreds-of-thousands of self-published books was made super-easy by online marketers like Amazon.com, Zen and the *Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* was rejected 121 times before Robert Pirsig was given a contract.

From the perspective of creativity, there is not much difference between an invention of a book and the invention of hardware. The evaluators simply don't always know a promising invention when they see it. We might wonder what it was that the Random House reader saw in Pirsig's bestselling book that 121 others missed.

Thus, the inventor with a patent for license should take Churchill's advice: "Never, never, never give up." The most effective way to land a deal is to personally meet the director of marketing, or his/her delegate, of an appropriate prospect at a trade show. Shake his hand, get a business card, and leave two or three professionally prepared sell-sheets. Call him after the show, and ask for an appointment.

The inventor who doesn't know how to pursue his invention:

Try the following general approach:

- Decide whether you will pursue licensing your patent, or producing and marketing on your own.
- Do a product search yourself. If it's out there already, maybe you can modify it, providing benefits for a special set of customers. Or, perhaps it's wise to give up on this invention, and go on to the next, especially if you are a prolific inventor.
- If your search looks promising, have a professional patent search made. Your attorney will do that for you, or, you can have an independent searcher do it. Either way, you need a sound patentability opinion. If you plan to produce it, ask your patent attorney if you'll be infringing on a patent that is still in force.
- Seek specific advice for your pursuit. Join an inventor's club; there's probably one near you. *Inventors Digest* generously devotes space to listing all of the known clubs in each issue, at the back of the magazine. Subscribe, if you don't already. Read, read, read. Start with a copy of Secrets of Successful Inventing, edited by fellow *Inventors Digest* writer, Edie Tolchin. The sixteen authors, I am one of them, provide expert, practical advice. Five star rating. $16.85 at Amazon.com. You might even ask me about my mentoring services.

One more quote from Churchill:

"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."

He lived those words.

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Auburn, AL 36849
Grant Moore
hgm0001@gmail.com

Invent Alabama
Bruce Koppenhoefer
137 Mission Circle
Montevallo, AL 35115
205-222-7585
bkoppy@hiwaay.net

Arizona

Inventors Association of Arizona, Inc.
Tim Crawley, President
PO Box 6436
Glendale, AZ 85302
(623) 680-5192
www.azinventors.org

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34522 N Scottsdale Rd
Scottsdale AZ 85266
ideascouts@gmail.com
www.ideascout.org

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Arkansas Inventors' Network
Chad Collins
PO Box 56523
Little Rock, AR 72215
Phone: (501) 247-6125
www.arkansasinvents.org

Inventors Club of NE Arkansas
PO Box 2650
State University, AR 72467
www.inventorsclubof nearkansas.org
Jim Melescue President
870-761-3191
Robert Bahn V. President
870-972-3517

California

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1320 High School Rd.
Sebastopol, CA 95472
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(760) 591-9608
www.sdinventors.org

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Roger Jackson, President
Suite 480 1805 S. Bellaire St.
Denver, CO 80222
(303) 271-9468
info@rminventor.org
www.RMInventor.org

Connecticut

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pal@ourpal.com
www.ourpal.com

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860-793-5299

Danbury Inventors Group
Robin Faulkner
2 Worden Avenue
Danbury, CT 06811
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Inventors Association of Connecticut
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(203) 924-9538
www.inventus.org

Aspiring Inventors Club
Peter D'Aguanno
773 A Heritage Village
Hilltop west
Southbury, CT 06488
petedag@att.net

District of Columbia

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P.O. Box 18052
Baltimore, MD 21220
Ph: 443 794 7350
www.dcinventors.org

Florida

Inventors Council of Central Florida
Dr. David Flinchbaugh
5635 Commerce Drive
Orlando, FL 32839
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www.Inventorscouncil centralfla.us
drdavidflinchbaugh@ bellsouth.net

Edison Inventors Association, Inc.
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Inventors Society of South Florida
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www.inventorssociety.net
mazurelectric@earthlink.net

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Melbourne, FL 329 01-8666
321-768-1234

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PO Box 8132,
Columbus GA 31908
Mike Turner
cpcinventorsassociation@ yahoo.com
www.cpcinventors association.org

Inventor Association of Georgia
Dave Savage,
Point of contact
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Kansas

Inventors Assocociation of South Central Kansas
Richard Freidenberger
2302 N. Amarado St.
Wichita KS, 67205
(316) 721-1866
inventor@inventkansas.com
www.inventkansas.com

Inventor's Club of Kansas City
Carrie Jeske, President
15701 Howe Street
Overland Park, KS 66224
(913) 322-1895
www.inventorsclubofkc.org
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David F. Herron II
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Kentucky

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dlwest3@yahoo.com
www.ckic.org

Louisville Metro Inventors Council
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Louisville, KY 40217
Alex Frommeyer
lmic.membership@gmail.com

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Jackson Inventors Network
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Rives Junction, Mich. 49277
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www.jacksoninventors.org

Grand Rapids Inventors Group
Bonnie Knopf, President
2100 Nelson SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
(616) 293-1676
www.grinventors.org
info@grinventors.org

President Grand Rapids Inventors Network
Joseph Finkler
940 Monroe Ave
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-935-5113
www.grinventors.org

Inventors Council of Mid-Michigan
Martin Sovis
PO Box 232
Lennon, MI 48449-0232
(810) 659-6416
msovis@comcast.net
www.inventorscouncil.org

President West Shore Inventors
Kathy Devries
West shore College
5300 US 10
Ludington, MI 49431
231-845-6211

President Michigan Inventors Coalition
Joseph Finkler
P.O. box 0441
Muskegon, MI 49443
616-402-4714
www.michiganinventorscoalition.org

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Orville Crain
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Muskegon, MI 49445
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www.muskegoninventorsnetwork.org

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Inventors' Network Minneapolis/St.Paul
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Minnesota Inventors Congress
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www.minnesotainventorscongress.org

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Bay Shore, NY 11706
(631) 969-3700
LCarter@lift.org

NY Society of Professional Inventors
Daniel Weiss
(516) 798-1490 (9AM - 8PM)
dan.weiss.PE@juno.com

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Bay Shore, NY 11706
(631) 969-3700
LCarter@lift.org

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Daniel Weiss
(516) 798-1490 (9AM - 8PM)
dan.weiss.PE@juno.com

North Carolina

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Tom Getts, President
520 Elliot Street, Suite 300
Charlotte, NC 28202
(704) 369-7331
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tgetts@ezclaw.com

North Dakota

North Dakota Inventors Congress
2534 South University Drive, Suite 4 Fargo, ND 58103
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(800) 281-7009
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www.ndinventors.com

Ohio

Inventors Council of Cincinnati
Jackie Diaz
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Inventorscouncil@inventcinci.org
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rherberger@roth-blair.com

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(787) 518-8570
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Puerto Rico Inventors Association
PO Box 1081
Saint Just, PR 00978
(787) 760-5074
acuhost@novacomm-inc.com

Tennessee

Music City Inventors
James Stevens
3813 Dobbin Rd
Springfield, TN 37172
(615) 681-6462
inventorsassociation@hotmail.com
musiccityinventors.com

Mid South Inventors Association
Deborah Murdock
1115 Halle Park circle
Collierville, TN 38017
(meets in Memphis)
(901) 850-7324
murdock@legacytransfers.com

Tennessee Inventors Association
Igor Alexeff
PO Box 11225
Knoxville, TN 37930-1225
(865) 483-0151
ialexeff@comcast.net
www.tninventors.org

Texas

Amarillo Inventors Association
J. T. Haynes, President
2200 W. 7th Avenue
Amarillo, TX 79106
(806) 367-8610
info@amarilloinventors.org
www.amarilloinventors.org

Houston Inventors Association
Ken Roddy
2916 West TC Jester #100
Houston, TX 77018
(713) 686-7676
kenroddy@nol.net
www.inventors.org

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Suite T-14
San Antonio, Texas 78229
210-582-5835
www.Alamoinventors.org

Austin Inventors and Entrepreneurs Association
Lill O'neall Gentry
12500 Amhearst
Austin, TX
lillgentry@gmail.com

Utah

UtahInventors.org
David Osborne
8180 s 700 E, Suite 350
Sandy, UT 84070
(801) 748-1939
utahinventor.org

Virginia

Virginia Inventors Forum
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Camp Douglas, WI 54618
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www.iandeclub.com
jcedc@mwt.net

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