

# Inventors

DIGEST

## SAVING FACE

TRAGEDY IN PARADISE  
SPARKS INSPIRATION  
AND INNOVATION

### Holiday Gift Guide

FIRST-PERSON STORIES  
FROM INVENTORS

### 1 Million Strong

MAJOR MILESTONE  
FOR DESIGN PATENTS

**BRANDON HARRIS**

\$5.95

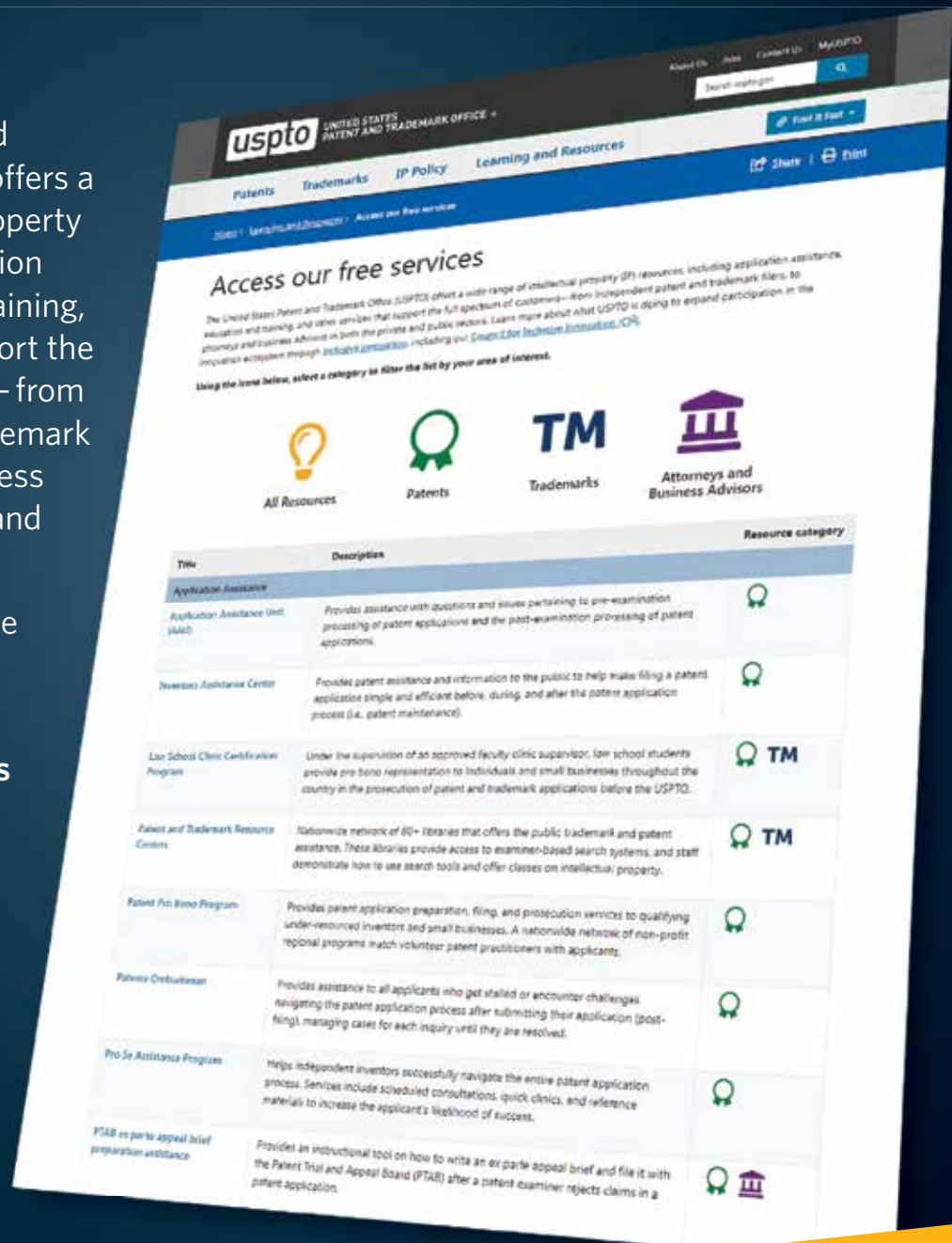
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# Access free services from the USPTO

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) offers a wide range of intellectual property resources, including application assistance, education and training, and other services that support the full spectrum of customers — from independent patent and trademark filers, to attorneys and business advisors in both the private and public sectors.

Browse our list of nearly three dozen free services and resources here:

[www.uspto.gov/freeservices](http://www.uspto.gov/freeservices)





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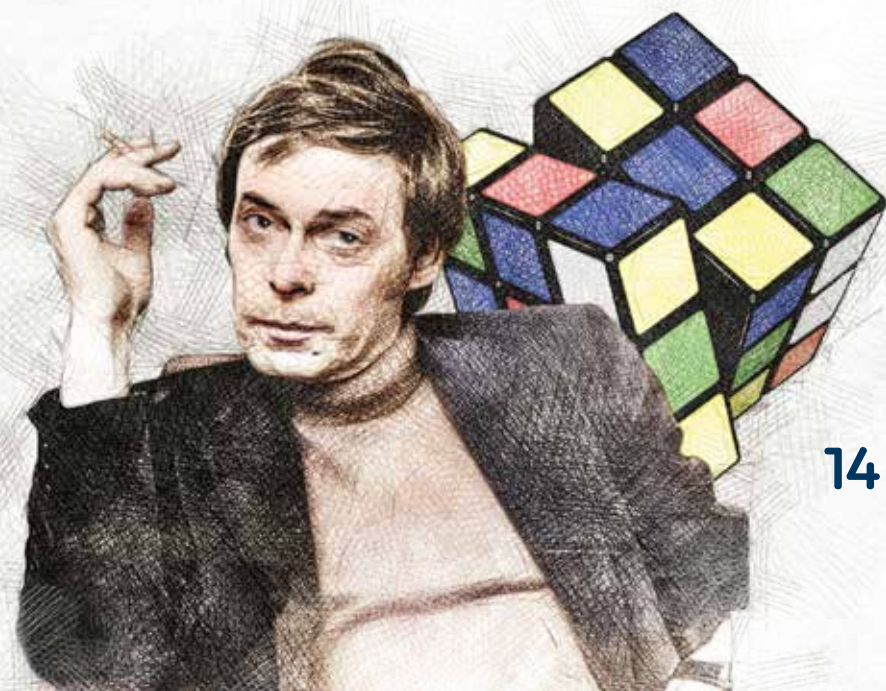
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**ON THE COVER**  
Brandon Harris,  
founder of Jawzsize;  
photo by Hawaiian  
Lifestyles Studio









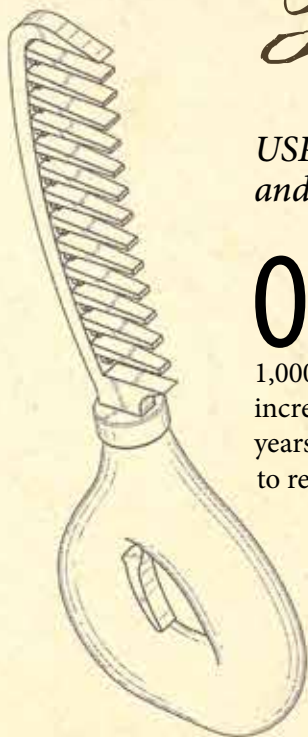
# Give no quarter to Patent Pirates.

Or they'll take every  
last penny.

Our ideas and innovations are precious. Yet Big Tech and other large corporations keep infringing on our patents, acting as Patent Pirates. As inventors, we need to protect each other. It's why we support the STRONGER Patents Act. Tell Congress and lawmakers to protect American inventors.



[SaveTheInventor.com](http://SaveTheInventor.com)



The USPTO received over 50,000 applications for design patent protection last year while experiencing a 20 percent increase in applications over the last five years.

# Thanks a 1,000,000!

*USPTO issues 1 millionth design patent, to Texas cosmetologist and mother of 3, for ornamental design of dispensing comb*

One-hundred eighty-one years after the issuance of the first design patent by the then-United States Patent Office, No. 1,000,000 is in the books. Based on the rapidly increasing number of design patents in recent years, it probably won't take another 181 years to reach 2 million.

Agustina Huckaby of Fort Worth, Texas, reached the milestone on September 26 for her ornamental design for a dispensing comb. Huckaby, a licensed cosmetologist, holds another patent for a different comb design and markets her business under the federally registered trademark Pump and Powder.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office grants design patents for new, original, and ornamental designs for an article of manufacture. Protecting the way something looks, as opposed to how it works (covered by a utility patent), is a vital step for many small businesses.

Huckaby is motivated by breaking down barriers and fostering relationships, as well as leaving a legacy for her three children.

"Being able to own that design and having something for my kids to look up to and pass on, that's groundbreaking to me," she said of the importance of her intellectual property protection. "I want to keep growing, keep building, keep creating as much as I can."

More inventors are applying for design patent protection than ever. The USPTO received over 50,000 applications for design patent protection

last year while experiencing a 20 percent increase in applications over the last five years.

Design patents play a critical role driving the nation's economy through consumer demand and the creation of new businesses and jobs. To better serve the American people, the USPTO recently worked with Congress to approve a re-organization package that elevates the Designs team within the Patents organization to its own division, with a new deputy commissioner for designs. Other enhancements will be announced as the USPTO continues to elevate the important role of design patents in the marketplace.

Printer George Bruce received the first design patent granted in the United States in 1842 for a new typeface, or font. In intervening decades, design patents have protected the unique appearance of products like Harley-Davidson motorcycles and Eames chairs, as well as iconic characters such as Star Wars' R2D2 and the image of Yoda.

**Printer George Bruce received the first design patent granted in the United States in 1842, for a new typeface, or font.**

The first U.S. utility patent was granted on July 31, 1790, to Samuel Hopkins for a process of making potash, an ingredient used in fertilizer. President George Washington signed the patent.

The 12 millionth U.S. utility patent is expected to be granted within the next several months.

For a list of milestone patents throughout history, go to [uspto.gov/patents/milestones](https://uspto.gov/patents/milestones).

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## DIRECTOR'S BLOG

# Navigating an AI World

*USPTO, U.S. Administration work to leverage artificial intelligence's promise—and minimize its potential problems*

BY KATHI VIDAL

When it comes to artificial intelligence, there is enormous potential for our country and for solving world problems—but there are significant risks as well. To shape the future of AI, we must act quickly but also thoughtfully and with your input.

The Biden Administration has moved with urgency to seize the tremendous promise and manage the risks posed by AI. It is developing an executive order that will ensure the federal government is doing everything in its power to advance safe, secure and trustworthy AI, and manage its risks to individuals and society.

Our Administration will also pursue bipartisan legislation to help America lead the way in responsible innovation.

The USPTO—and our sister agencies within the Department of Commerce, as well as the U.S. Copyright Office—play a critical role in this work.

One of the USPTO's top priorities is to ensure that the United States maintains its leadership in innovation, especially in emerging technologies (ET) such as AI. Our AI efforts align closely with the Administration's whole-of-government approach to AI, including the National AI Initiative that seeks to advance U.S. leadership in AI.

That is why, under my leadership, the USPTO created the AI/ET Partnership. Over the last year, the USPTO's AI/ET Partnership has worked closely with the AI/ET community to gather public feedback through a series of meetings on topics related to AI and innovation, biotech, and intellectual property (IP) policy.

We are integrating AI technologies into our next-generation tools to enhance the quality and efficiency of patent and trademark examination. Our examiners have conducted over 1.3 million searches using AI search tools. These tools also find potential foreign prior art

relevant to their examination of a patent application by searching patent documents from over 60 different countries. We are assessing approaches for making these AI search tools publicly available.

Also, we are also working to extend the search to images for design patents. And our Trademarks organization is also looking to develop AI capabilities in image searching, classification, and identification of goods that will better assist our more than 750 trademark examining attorneys examining applications for trademark registrations.

We have several user-facing AI initiatives in development and public beta, to help the public better navigate the patent and trademark systems. The USPTO Virtual Assistant enhances customer service by providing immediate, targeted answers to common questions. Though this is available on several Trademark pages, we will be adding the tool to more USPTO pages soon.

Our September 27 AI/ET Partnership Meeting explored the many ways that AI is shaping the work of both the USPTO and those who practice before us, along with the role of USPTO data in advancing state-of-the-art AI research and AI throughout the innovation economy.

For questions or feedback on our AI efforts, or to suggest a topic for a future meeting, contact [aipartnership@uspto.gov](mailto:aipartnership@uspto.gov).



USPTO Commissioner for Patents Vaishali Udupa speaks at the USPTO's AI/ET partnership meeting on September 27 about the agency's critical role in advancing emerging technologies and artificial intelligence.

Our Inventor Search Assistant tool allows you to search for your own prior art to help determine if your invention is patentable. Learn more in this *Inventors Digest* article: [inventorsdigest.com/articles/your-uspto-news-flash-start-your-search-with-the-inventor-search-assistant-tool](https://inventorsdigest.com/articles/your-uspto-news-flash-start-your-search-with-the-inventor-search-assistant-tool).

For the entire story and relevant links, see [uspto.gov/blog/director/entry/latest-updates-on-artificial-intelligence](https://uspto.gov/blog/director/entry/latest-updates-on-artificial-intelligence).

## JOURNEYS OF INNOVATION

# Visionary With Heart

*NASA scientist Robert Bryant's persistence with a special polymer paved his way to the National Inventors Hall of Fame* **BY CANDACE MUNDT-BATES**

**"D**on't tie your destiny to anybody else except yourself," said NASA scientist Robert Bryant, sitting in his wood-paneled office at the NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, as fighter jet engines roared in the background.

Evidence of this point of view can be found next to Bryant's office front door: a depiction of a rōnin.

In feudal Japan, rōnin were wandering, masterless samurai who put their military knowledge and swordsmanship to use as independent mercenaries and guards. He chose that drawing because he admires the rōnin's persistence to become the master of their own destiny.

Using his unique outlook, Bryant has made a career of determining his own destiny despite professional and personal hurdles and has positively impacted millions of

people with his innovative solutions to modern-day problems. He has more than 30 patents and peer-reviewed journal articles and has written more than 100 technical papers ranging from small and lightweight

power amplifiers to magnetic and mechanical properties of molded iron particle cores.

Bryant's perspective on a special polymer moved its use from the troposphere to inside the human body.

In the 1990s, while conducting research for NASA's High Speed Civil Transport (HSCT) project—think an American version of the British Concorde supersonic airliner—Bryant noticed that an experimental polymer behaved abnormally.

Despite being exposed to extreme temperatures, it remained soluble when it should have precipitated into a powder. After repeated successful experiments, the Langley Research Center-Soluble Imide (LaRC-SI) was born. This polymer is a durable and flexible thermoplastic that can be fabricated into very thin films

and coatings, molded into solid objects, and is biologically non-reactive and solvent resistant.

At that time, he said his leadership didn't see its use for HSCT when compared to the many other polymers screened for the aircraft and was thus not chosen for the project. But Bryant knew this polymer had potential, even if others couldn't see it.

"I had a particular technology that I thought was extremely good in the many ways it could be processed, but I wasn't running the show," said the 2023 inductee into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

During this period, the federal government worked to incentivize manufacturers in the United States to start producing specialty chemicals important to NASA's research that were previously sourced from foreign countries. Bryant believed his new technology could meet part of this strategic need.

After pouring countless hours and funding into creating the LaRC-SI polymer, Bryant was determined to see it go to market and prove its value. The team found success in the medical device market, and its value for countless patients was priceless.

Bryant recalled the medical industry seeing his research team's strict test protocols for their polymer as a form of risk reduction. This provided an opportunity to test it for their own pacemaker technology.

Due to its thin, flexible, and biologically non-reactive properties, the thermoplastic is ideal to use as insulation around the wires that are used to control a pacemaker. After the polymer was approved in Europe, rigorously tested and improved for its new medical use, it also received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2010.

Since then, more than half a million heart patients have benefited from the technology.



Hundreds of thousands of heart patients have benefited from the LaRC-SI polymer that Robert Bryant saw to completion.

For the entire story, see [uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/journeys-innovation](https://uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/journeys-innovation).



## REGIONAL HOMES

# Silicon Valley Regional Office: In the Heart of Tech

Opened on October 15, 2015, the USPTO's Silicon Valley Regional Office (SVRO) is appropriately housed in one of the area's most impressive technological triumphs: San Jose City Hall, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Richard Meier and built in 2005.

Located in city hall's Wing Building, the West Coast regional office serves California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Attendees can sit in on Patent Trial and Appeal Board proceedings at this location. The PTAB conducts trials, including inter partes, post-grant, and covered business method patent reviews and derivation proceedings. It also hears appeals from adverse examiner decisions in patent applications and reexamination proceedings, and renders decisions in interferences.

Among events hosted by the office this November are four Path to a Patent installments and three Trademark Basics Boot Camp modules. Both are virtual events.

Path to a Patent themes: Learn how to draft a patent application, November 2; Understanding the role of claims in a patent application, November 9; Learn how to protect your IP abroad, November 16; and How to file a patent application using Patent Center, November 30. Boot camp subjects: Responding to an office action; Keeping your registration alive; and a question-and-answer panel. They will be November 7, 14, and 21, respectively. All Path to a Patent and Trademark Basic Boot Camp sessions will be from 2 to 3:30 p.m. ET.

The SVRO welcomed a new regional director on September 19. Mary Fuller is to carry out the strategic direction of Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO Kathi Vidal, as well as ensuring the USPTO's initiatives and programs are tailored to the region's unique ecosystem of industries and stakeholders.

Fuller will lead the region's outreach efforts to expand America's innovation ecosystem and serve the area's nearly 70,000 patent holders and 500,000-plus trademark registrants.

For a listing of November events at the Silicon Valley Regional Office, see [uspto.gov/about-us/uspto-locations/silicon-valley-ca/silicon-valley-uspto-events](https://uspto.gov/about-us/uspto-locations/silicon-valley-ca/silicon-valley-uspto-events).

## NEWS FLASH

**PATENT CENTER TRANSITION:** Effective November 8, the USPTO's Patent Center system will fully replace the EFS-Web system and the Private Patent Application Information Retrieval (Private PAIR) tool for the electronic filing and management of patent applications. The transition to the Patent Center system is essential to ensure that USPTO tools continue to meet and evolve with user needs for patent application filing and retrieval.



## SEARCH PRODUCT IMPROVEMENTS:

The USPTO is constantly improving and updating its search tools. The agency will soon announce more details on the beta launch of a new trademark search tool that will replace the Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS) later this year. The USPTO will provide demos and trainings on this new system, and encourage customer feedback.

The beta release of the new [www.uspto.gov](https://www.uspto.gov) search tool was announced in May, improving how visitors find information on the website using the search bar that appears at the top of most webpages. In addition to new filtering options for search results, it also clearly directs customers to USPTO IP databases, which are separate search tools customers use to look up patent and trademark information.

## WHAT'S NEXT

**NEW ORLEANS WOMEN'S EVENT:** The next USPTO Women Entrepreneurs event will be in New Orleans on November 17 from 11 a.m. to noon CT, in collaboration with the Women's Business Enterprise Council South. Hear from successful innovators and intellectual property experts as they share their experience and provide tips and resources. An agenda and speaker biographies are coming soon.

For more information, or if you have questions or comments, email [we@uspto.gov](mailto:we@uspto.gov). Register early to attend this free special event in person or online: [uspto.gov/about-us/events/womens-entrepreneurship-new-orleans](https://uspto.gov/about-us/events/womens-entrepreneurship-new-orleans)



Visit [uspto.gov/events](https://uspto.gov/events) for many other opportunities to attend free virtual events and/or training.

## Inventing Words: Don't Believe the Hype



It sure sounded like a good idea.

The Los Angeles Lakers had won back-to-back NBA titles in 1987 and 1988 when one of their players, Byron Scott, conceived the term “three-peat” to describe what the team aimed to accomplish. Lakers head coach Pat Riley liked the word so much that he had it trademarked—meaning any use of it on a T-shirt, cap, etc., for commercial purposes would result in royalties to Riley.

Then the Detroit Pistons swept Riley's Lakers in the 1989 NBA Finals.

Merriam-Webster announced in September that it added 690 new words to its dictionary. Our language is constantly evolving, so overall this is good news. But some of these new words ... well ... it's probably a good thing we don't know who invented them:

**Zhuzh** is a small improvement, adjustment or addition. It's hard to spell—and impossible to use in Scrabble unless you have a blank.

**Doggo** is now a slang word for a dog. Really? Who stayed up all night inventing that one?

**Jorts** are shorts made of jeans. Apparently, “jean shorts” was—too long.

**Smashburger** refers to a hamburger that is pressed thin onto a heated cooking device. So ... exactly what amount of thinness differentiates it from a hamburger? Guess it's a matter of taste.

**Girlboss** describes “an ambitious and successful woman.” Just one definition, but with numerous ways to offend.

Girlboss is one of those combination words—such as “bromance”—that miss the mark. The most blatant example is a word you hear constantly in today's media: “horrific.”

Dumbest combo word ever.

This English language plague combines two words with strongly negative and positive meanings—“horrible” and “terrific”—to create a word with a solely and overwhelmingly negative meaning. Its frequent use (and overuse) is a relatively recent phenomenon, although I was shocked to find it in a 1975 dictionary I have at home.

It's safe to say that its inventor was not the optimist Pat Riley was.

—Reid

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# Inventors

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## CORRESPONDENCE

Letters and emails in reaction to new and older **Inventors Digest** stories you read in print or online (responses may be edited for clarity and brevity):

I applied to over 127 companies this past year, all of which told me they no longer accept outside submissions—despite their websites saying they welcome outside ideas. They never bother to update their website information.

They no longer consider licensing products from outside inventors. They develop products exclusively in-house. They would not tell me why they made this change.

This has become a nationwide trend. It seems that independent inventors are now locked out of the marketplace.

If you could update your website to reflect that, and reach out to the other companies your website mentions to see if they still accept outside submissions from private inventors, I think that would benefit your readers. Thank you. —JON DAVIDSON

*Jon, the trend you report is very real, and frustrating for inventors. Part of the reason is that some larger companies, especially those with deep resources, prefer to borrow or even infringe on ideas. It's cheaper for them than paying a licensing fee, and often their deep pockets intimidate independent inventors who do not have the resources to continue prolonged court actions.*

*Speaking of resources, Inventors Digest does not have the resources to keep current on what other companies do with regard to accepting submissions—especially since this can be a fluid situation. Suffice it to say that your experience with submissions is an important warning for all independent inventors.—Editor*

### 'Seniors' impact on inventing grows'

(September 2018)

Great article. Our findings support the writer's assertions that senior citizens have the right stuff. It's called experience.

—LARRY ROBERTSON, [aoninvent.com](http://aoninvent.com)

*Given that in the next couple decades older people are projected to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history, seniors are a crucial demographic in the current and future success of inventing.—Editor*



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On October 10, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to rule on whether the Lanham Act, a federal trademark law, applies to the unauthorized use of a celebrity's persona in



## SCOTUS TAKES A PASS ON CELEBRITY CASE

commercial motion pictures as trademark infringement.

The case originated from a lawsuit brought by the partner of Christopher Jones, a 1960s actor referenced in the movie "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood," directed by Quentin Tarantino.

In the film, Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt played fictionalized versions of Jones, whose name was used in the movie and promotional materials without consent.

Petitioner Paule McKenna, who sued Sony in Los Angeles County Superior Court, argued that courts need clarification on whether the Lanham Act can be used to address trademark infringement involving celebrity personas.

Previously, a California court ruled that Jones's name and likeness were not protected under the Lanham Act, stating that his name was not inherently distinctive.

# BRIGHT IDEAS

## InvenTABLE

KID-SAFE POWER TOOL  
FOR CUTTING CARDBOARD

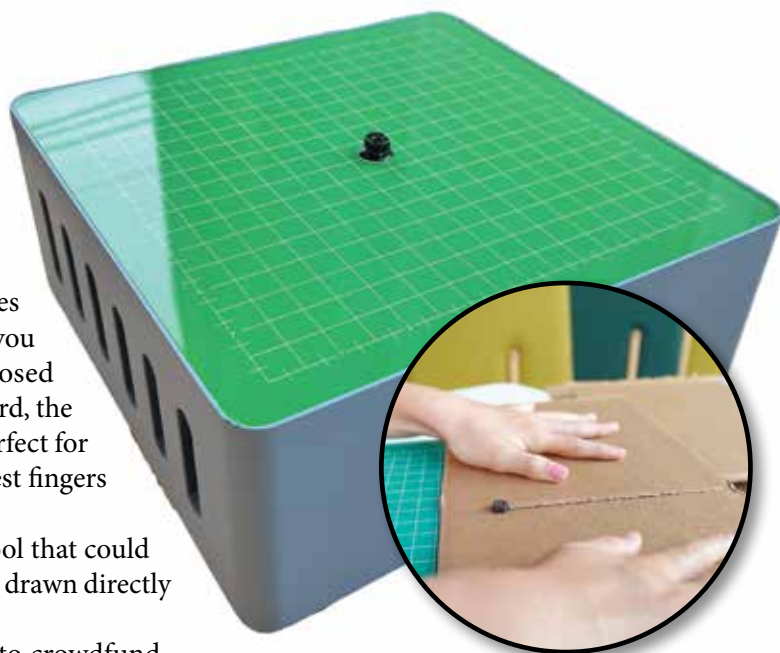
*Itsinventable.com*

InvenTABLE is a box-sized machine that uses the equivalent of a fast hole punch to help cut cardboard and facilitate kids' projects.

Within the metal guard is a rod that rapidly moves up and down and pinches away at cardboard as you feed it through. There is no blade, and no exposed part of the tool is spinning. Within that metal guard, the gap for cutting cardboard is only 3mm high—perfect for single-ply cardboard but too narrow for the tiniest fingers to reach the cutting rod.

There are no exposed spinning parts on the tool that could catch or pull hair or clothes. Cardboard debris are drawn directly into the box.

InvenTABLE will retail for \$230. It is to ship to crowdfunding backers in April.



## MagLight

MAGSAFE PHONE CAMERA  
SMART LIGHT

*moonside.design*

Billed as the world's first 6-in-1 MagSafe smart camera light for your phone, MagLight combines RGB LED camera light, MagSafe and Qi compatibility, 4000mAh power bank, wireless charger, phone stand and smart home lighting features.

Control the device with a smart app via Bluetooth on your phone. Charge the phone wirelessly with up to 15 watts of power. Other features include a front and back light, and the ability to customize colored and animated lighting effects. The device is pocket sized and very portable.

The standard MagLight pack will retail for \$119. It will be shipped to crowdfunding backers beginning in December.



## BluCap Moto

### MOTORCYCLE NAVIGATION SUNGLASSES

[blucapsport.com](http://blucapsport.com)

This device is meant to eliminate using a phone holder on the handlebars of a motorcycle for navigation.

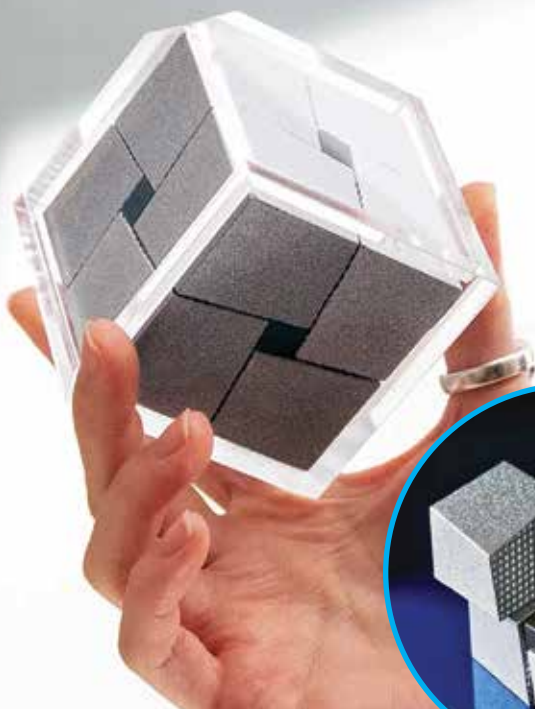
With these sunglasses, navigation instructions and maps are only displayed with a real-time map within the rider's line of sight, when necessary or under the rider's control. After removing flickering and irrelevant information, only essential, simplified graphical head-up displays (HUD) are shown, with no distractions or interference.

Using a phone holder on the handlebars for navigation while riding can result in vibration damage to camera lenses, phone overheating and power consumption, and unsafe distractions.

BluCap Moto, which will retail for \$399, is to be shipped to crowdfunding backers in June 2024.



**"In every work of genius, we recognize our once rejected thoughts."** — RALPH WALDO EMERSON



## Jack in the Box Puzzle

### PUZZLE WITHIN A PUZZLE

[craighill.co](http://craighill.co)

It's billed as "a puzzle within a puzzle, wrapped in a magic trick."

The puzzle's original form is eight solid metal pieces that form a perfect cube when packed inside the box. Yet there is a second puzzle hiding in plain sight. Every element, from the aluminum cuboids to the acrylic casing, holds a clue to the riddle.

Objective: Fit the three-dimensional star inside the box, along with all eight pieces of the cube.

The jack/stand is coated in a contrasting color. One corner of the acrylic box has been flattened to allow for diagonal display.

Jack in the Box, which will be shipped to crowdfunding backers in March, will retail for \$120.

# Turn! Turn! Turn!

ON THE EVE OF ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY, RUBIK'S CUBE STILL VEXES IN UNPRECEDENTED WAYS **BY REID CREAGER**

**T**YPE "RUBIK'S CUBE TORTURE" using a major internet search engine (not the one facing several antitrust lawsuits), and you'll get about 1.4 million entries.

Although there is no reason for a lot that is on the internet, there is a reason for this stunning fact. The puzzle cube craze that began in the 1980s has 43,252,003,274,489,856,856,000 possible combinations.

That's forty-three quintillion, two hundred fifty two quadrillion, three trillion, two hundred seventy four billion, four hundred eighty nine million, eight hundred fifty six thousand. And you thought Steve Urkel was frustrating.

The puzzle that was originally called the Magic Cube has one undisputable inventor—which, as readers in this space have seen, doesn't happen as much as we might think.

## Even the inventor was puzzled

You undoubtedly know the challenge and goal with the cube, which has nine colored squares on each side. In its starting position, each side

has a uniform color—red, green, yellow, orange, blue, or white. Your Mission: Impossible (sorry, wrong decade), is to twist the cubes so that eventually each side returns to its original color.

That mission is so darn-near impossible, the puzzle's inventor needed a long time to solve it on his first try.

In a fittingly colorful narrative, CBC Radio explained how it all began in 1974 for Hungarian architect Ernő Rubik. Then 29 and a professor of architecture, he had studied sculpture at the Technical University in Budapest and architecture at the Academy of Applied Arts and Design. He was sharing an apartment with his mother in Budapest when he was sitting around in his bedroom, tinkering.

"He has described his bedroom as looking like the 'inside of a child's pocket.' It was littered with crayons, strings, sticks, various odds and ends—and lots of cubes.

"One day, he tried connecting eight wooden cubes together so they could move around and exchange places. And it promptly fell apart. After several experiments, he figured out a unique design that contained an interesting paradox: It was a solid object that was also fluid.

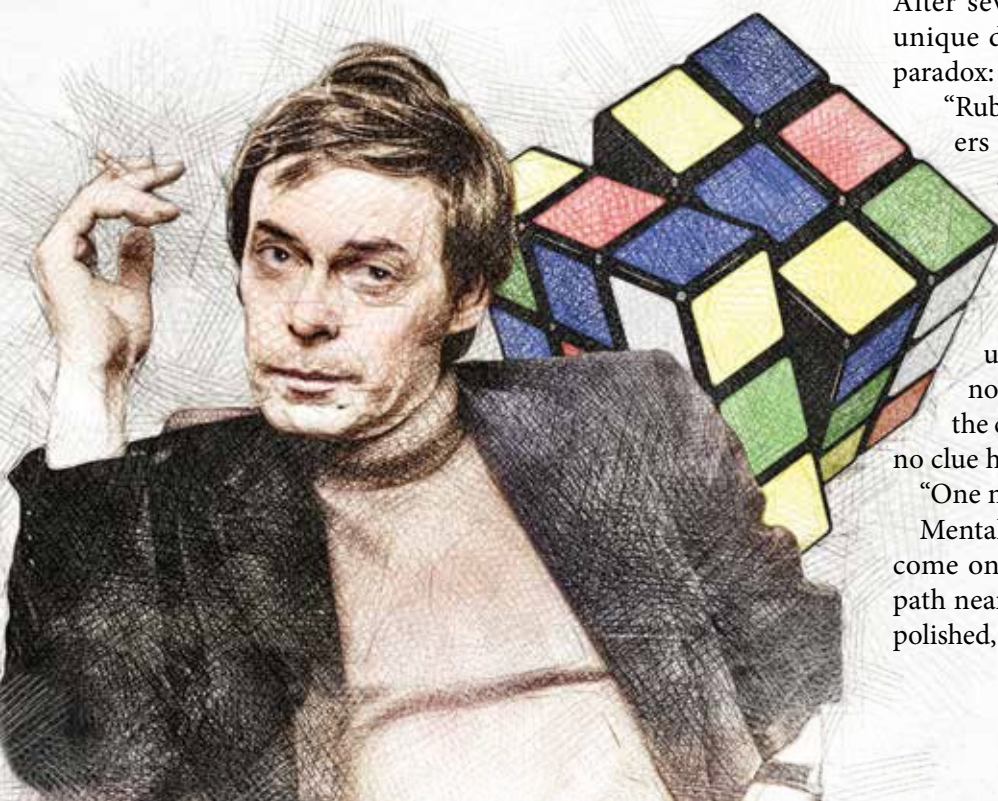
"Rubik decided to add 54 colourful stickers to the cube, with each side sporting a different colour—yellow, red, blue, orange, white and green. That way the movement of the pieces was visible and trackable.

"Then Rubik kept twisting the cube until he realized something: There was no way back. He had twisted it so much, the colours were now all mixed up. He had no clue how to restore it to its original state.

"One month later, Rubik finally solved it."

Mental Floss wrote that his inspiration had come one day as he walked along a familiar path near the Danube River and looked at the polished, round pebbles lining the riverbank. He

Ernő Rubik was a 29-year-old professor of architecture when he began tinkering on his puzzle in his Budapest bedroom, which he described as looking like the "inside of a child's pocket."





correctly posited that when individual blocks hinge on a rounded core, they could move freely while maintaining the shape of a cube.

He went home and created a prototype “held together with paper clips and rubber bands—a structure consisting of 21 smaller cubelets, adhered to a rounded interlocking mechanism.”

The professor, always looking for a challenging new task for his students, had found one.

### The marketing difference

That would be child’s play when compared to his efforts to market the puzzle. Part of the reason was, this didn’t seem like child’s play.

The puzzle is extremely challenging and doesn’t exude a toy vibe. Even with the bright colors, it’s a square block. It’s not cushy or cuddly. It generally doesn’t make you feel good. It doesn’t talk to you (although an embedded chip with taunting ... *hmmm*). Doesn’t wet itself.

Another obstacle was the place where Rubik conceived his invention. Those Iron Curtain days weren’t exactly rife with marketing possibilities.

His application to the Hungarian Patent Office in 1975 (Patent No. HU170062) referenced a “spatial logic toy.” He let a Hungarian toy-making collective produce the cube. Disaster. Half the order was prematurely canceled.

But inventors know that often, all it takes is one influential person to get behind a worthwhile idea. That person was Hungarian businessman Tior Laczi, who saw a Magic Cube sitting on a café table outside Budapest in 1978. According to Mental Floss, he bought it from a waiter for about a dollar.

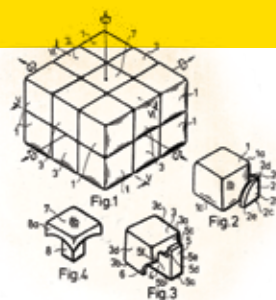
Laczi’s connection with British toy expert and marketer Tom Kremer resulted in a deal with Ideal Toy Corp., which ordered a million cubes. More important, the now-Rubik’s Cube was expertly marketed by challenging people’s intelligence, as in this TV commercial tease: “Sure, Sir Isaac Newton unraveled the mysteries of gravity, but could he have unraveled the mysteries of the Rubik’s Cube?”

More than 100 million cubes were sold in just over a year. An estimated half-billion have been sold since, with another estimated billion knockoffs.

## PATENT PATHWAY



Rubik was granted **U.S. Patent No. 4,378,116** on March 29, 1983. The patent, long expired, is titled “Spatial logic toy.” The toy is said to have “a total of eighteen toy elements which form a regular or an irregular spatial body, preferably an oblong body, in the assembled state.”



It is the best-selling puzzle game and best-selling toy of all time.

### A larger mission

Rubik became Hungary’s first self-made millionaire en route to becoming the world’s most respected blockhead. Pulitzer-Prize winning scientist Douglas Hofstadter called Rubik’s Cube “one of the most amazing things ever invented for teaching mathematical ideas.”

The puzzle became the star of an animated series in 1983 called “Rubik, the Amazing Cube.” It has inspired numerous artworks and films. Books have been written about it. Rubik told *Harvard Business Review* that more than 3,000 apps are connected to it.

Now 78, he savors his unthinkable success with a big-picture outlook not often associated with toymakers. He told the Review he remains a strong proponent of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics).

“This small blue planet and its entire interdependent population depends on future generations learning these subjects. I and my company have tried to help.” 🧠

## HE DID WHAT?

The Rubik’s Cube sensation cooled during the 1990s, only to resurface this millennium partially because of a competition called speedcubing. The goal: assemble the cube in the fastest time.

At a June 11 event this year in Long Beach, California, Max Park broke the record for the fastest time to solve a 3-by-3-by-3 cube: 3.13 seconds.



# The Patent Writing Homestretch

IN THE FINAL STAGES OF YOUR APPLICATION, FINDING THE RIGHT FORM COULD BE A CHALLENGE **BY JACK LANDER**

**I**N THE last two issues, I have shown you the basics and important nuances of writing your own patent application. At this point, you have created preliminary drawings and written the essential sections of your patent application:

- A carefully conceived, descriptive **TITLE**.
- **ABSTRACT**: Quoting from David Pressman and Richard Stim's book, "Nolo's Patents for Beginners": "The abstract is a concise, one-paragraph summary (150 words maximum) of the structure, nature, and purpose of the entire disclosure." An example of a good abstract is presented on page 121.
- **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**: Usually includes prior art (applicable patents on file) and a discussion of the advantages of the invention over prior art.
- **DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS**: Create a name for each part and brief description of the view. Use Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and so on, not Drawing one, etc.
- **DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION** and how it works, including advantages.
- **CLAIMS**: Very carefully crafted, preferably brief, statements about each vital part or section of the invention that you are fairly certain is novel. Independent claims usually end in a sentence beginning with: "Whereby (the named invention) enables (something to happen, often the objective of the invention.)"
- A dependent claim always refers to an independent claim by its number.
- **SUMMARY**: This section should be written in ordinary language (as against the sentence fragment and legal terms of the claims) and can be a restatement of the first or most important independent claim. The SUMMARY is similar to the ABSTRACT, except with more detail. I have used caps on all words above that are official headings to be used in your application.

Also note that I have included the **ABSTRACT** immediately after the **TITLE**. This is the only logical place for it, although you won't find any instruction for where to place it in Pressman and Stim's book, or on the United States Patent and Trademark Office site. At least, I couldn't. In any case, your assigned patent examiner will correct the location if he or she has another idea about it.

## Where is the sample?

While I'm being grouchy about the format, let me say this about the Pressman-Stim book and the USPTO website.

What you and I long for is a simple instruction, a sample patent application the way we will type it, including each of the required PTO forms. Is that too much to ask?

I could not find it. I searched and searched the book and the USPTO website, finding words of wisdom and much good help, but no sample application format. So, we worry a lot about our hard work being rejected for lack of some form or other that could have easily been solved—and such rejections come in the form of check marks in small square boxes on a standard PTO form.

But I'm still of the old school, filing by U.S. Mail. I haven't yet used the electronic form, which I'm sure is better. And I intend to use it soon.

Meanwhile, how do we find the needed forms so our applications are complete? I almost gave up on the PTO site until I stumbled onto EFS-Web Overview. (EFS = electronic filing system.)

I assume you will file electronically. It is preferred by the PTO and by patent examiners, I'm sure. It is better for you, too. It costs less, and you'll get your rejections sooner.

Yikes! Rejection? Sorry, but the PTO is extremely fussy about how we write our patent applications. Lawyers, you know. These rejections are known as Office Actions.





## Most of what you'll need for electronic filing will be discussed in the EFS-Web Overview.

If you can work your way through all the confusion at the beginning of your search for the EFS-Web Overview, most of what you'll need for electronic filing will be discussed there. The site reassures you that it is easy to use, and if any of your writing must be in PDF form, it will allow you to do so during the application process.

Also, the forms you need are accessible from the site as you type. (Almost too good to be true.)

There isn't much more I can say about electronic filing. You'll know more about that than I do once you get into it.

If you don't feel secure with your computer skills and prefer to file by mail, you can still use the EFS-Web section to find the needed forms. However, you may have to rely on your best guesswork to tell you which forms are required and which are a special case. Pressman and Stim give you some advice on this, but I found it wanting.

You can find the required forms by bypassing the PTO website and going to a search engine and typing in "U.S. patent application forms." Be sure you land on a site that identifies itself as the patent office. Fee-based patent services try to tempt you on their sites.

### And remember...

I'll summarize three points that are important in the writing and filing process, based on the many semifinal rejections I've had over the years.

1. If you have the money, which is a lot, it's certainly easier and more reassuring to

have a patent attorney prepare and file your application.

2. Claims writing is the most challenging part of writing your own application. Print out copies of fairly recent patents and study the claims. That's the way most of us have learned how to talk and write, by imitating others. Do the same for claims.

Consider: The patent examiner is probably a graduate patent attorney who has not yet been in practice. So, you'll likely get some rejections on your early claims writing. But hang in there. You can contact him or her by phone and ask how to amend claims that he or she has rejected. I've found them to be quite human and helpful.

3. The secret to success in the field of inventing is quantity and quality. You may patent several inventions before you succeed in licensing one of them. Inventing is easy; marketing isn't. Follow the writers in *Inventors Digest*, and you'll get expert knowledge about licensing inventions. But don't count on any specific invention to be the one that makes you rich. There are many reasons inventions don't make it to the market, most of them not obvious at first. 🍷

**Jack Lander**, a near legend in the inventing community, has been writing for *Inventors Digest* for nearly a quarter-century. His latest book is "Hire Yourself: The Startup Alternative." You can reach him at [jack@inventor-mentor.com](mailto:jack@inventor-mentor.com).



## PART 2 OF 2

# How to Hear Better

IN SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING, INVENTORS/ENTREPRENEURS CAN USE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK FOR MAXIMUM BENEFIT

BY ELIZABETH BREEDLOVE

**I**N LAST month's *Inventors Digest*, I wrote about why social listening is so important and how it can help inventors and entrepreneurs dive deeper into market trends, consumer sentiments and potential areas for product improvement. By developing a solid social media strategy, you can gather valuable insights you can use to grow your business.

However, deciding to add social listening to your overall plan for using social media is merely the first step. Now, let's look at *how* entrepreneurs can tap into the wealth of customer feedback available on these platforms.

## Trusted tactics

**Monitor brand mentions.** One of the fundamental aspects of social media listening, this primarily includes direct mentions of your brand, product or service. Positive mentions can be used to enhance your marketing tactics and build a great reputation; negative sentiments and issues require prompt attention and customer service to reach a resolution.

If you are interested in investing some of your marketing budget into social listening, you can pay for a tool such as Meltwater, Brandwatch or Sprout Social to streamline this process. However, these tools can be quite pricey, so you can also use free tools such as Google Alerts, or even simply search your brand name on social media every few days to see what people are saying about you.

**Engage in conversations.** Don't be a passive listener. Actively engage in conversations with your audience. Respond to comments, answer questions, and acknowledge both praise and criticism.

Engaging with customers humanizes your brand and you value their input. Plus, if you enter into a conversation with them, you'll likely gather even more valuable insights.

**Gather product feedback.** Social media is an excellent platform for gathering product feedback. It's often where customers go to share their experiences, suggestions and pains. Pay attention to these insights, which can guide product development and improvement efforts.

This is a great way to stay ahead of your competition, too. For example, if you notice an issue with a competitor's product coming up over and over online, you can use this knowledge in your product development to improve upon your own product or invent something superior.

**Conduct surveys and polls.** Have you considered leveraging the interactive nature of social media by doing this? These can help you collect specific feedback on product features, pricing and customer preferences. They also encourage engagement and participation on your social media accounts, which can help you grow your follower account and reach more potential customers.

**Encourage user-generated content.** This content, such as customer reviews, photos and videos, can be powerful tools to incorporate into your overall marketing strategy.

Encourage customers to share their experiences and content related to your products or services on their own social media channels. Recognize and reward those who participate with coupon codes, free products or something else that makes sense for your business.



## Respond and take action

**Prioritize responses.** Not all social media content and comments require the same level of attention. This is especially important to remember when you're a solo inventor with limited time or you only have a small team.

Prioritize responses based on the urgency and significance of the feedback. Negative comments and customer inquiries should be addressed promptly when possible.

**Be transparent and authentic.** This is crucial when responding to customer feedback, whether positive or negative. If a mistake was made, acknowledge it and outline the steps you're taking to rectify the situation. Authenticity goes a long way to build trust with your audience and grow your business.

Customers expect solutions, not excuses. If a customer has a problem or complaint, focus on resolving it. This proactive approach can turn a negative situation into a positive one.

**Take conversations offline.** This is the best approach when dealing with sensitive or complex conversations. Provide a contact email or phone number for customers for personalized assistance.

This demonstrates a commitment to resolving their issues. Then, make sure you or someone on your team is ready and available to respond and resolve any issues in a timely manner.

**Learn from customer feedback.** Customer feedback is a continuous source of new and important information for your business. Pay attention to recurring themes and issues raised by your customers, then use this feedback to drive improvements in your products, services and overall customer experience.

## Turn Insights into Innovation

**Identify market gaps.** By monitoring social media conversations around your brand, products or niche, you can identify unmet needs and market gaps. Are customers repeatedly requesting a feature or service that doesn't exist in your product or your competitors? This may be an important opportunity for innovation.

**Track new trends.** Social media is an excellent barometer for tracking emerging trends and consumer preferences. Stay ahead of the curve by using this data to guide your product development and marketing strategies as you invent

## Consider leveraging the interactive nature of social media by conducting surveys and polls.





new products, revamp existing ones and grow your product line.

**Test and iterate new ideas.** Engage with your audience to test new ideas and concepts. Share prototypes, mock-ups or product teasers, and solicit feedback from your followers. This iterative approach can help you refine your innovations, and you will likely find that your followers are more invested in the products they helped to create and improve.

Overall, social listening provides a huge opportunity for inventors to gather valuable data and

make informed decisions on how to improve their product offerings and grow their business.

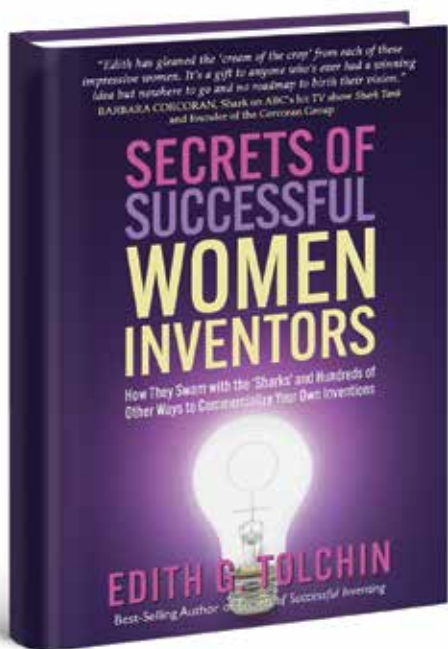
By listening to customers' voices, responding to their feedback and turning their insights into action, entrepreneurs can use social media to expand their business and find greater success. 📱

**Elizabeth Breedlove** is a freelance marketing consultant and copywriter. She has helped start-ups and small businesses launch new products and inventions via social media, blogging, email marketing and more.



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## Endorsed by Barbara Corcoran of The Corcoran Group and “Shark Tank”...



“... A gift to anyone who’s ever had a winning idea...” Read the compelling stories of 27 esteemed, hard-working women inventors and service providers, (many of whom have appeared on “Shark Tank”). All have navigated through obstacles to reach success and have worked hard to change the stats for women patent holders, currently at only about 13 percent of all patents.

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### Edith G. Tolchin knows inventors!

Edie has interviewed over 100 inventors for her longtime column in *Inventors Digest* ([www.edietolchin.com/portfolio](http://www.edietolchin.com/portfolio)). She has held a prestigious U.S. customs broker license since 2002. She has written five books, including the best-selling *Secrets of Successful Inventing* (2015), and *Fanny on Fire*, a recent finalist in the Foreword Reviews INDIE Book Awards.

**Edith G. Tolchin**  
(photo by Amy Goldstein Photography)

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# Forward, March!

FRUSTRATED BY PAST JOB SEEKING, 2 MILITARY SPOUSES FORM AN INNOVATIVE HANDBAG COMPANY **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

**LOVE ME** some “Shark Tank” stories. I especially love inventors who have appeared on the show and have great backstories.

I spoke with Lisa Bradley of Granville, Ohio—one half of R. Riveter, who narrates on behalf of herself and of Cameron Cruse, her business partner from Bridge City, Texas.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Please tell us about each of your backgrounds.**

**Lisa Bradley (LB):** Cameron and I met in Dahlonega, Georgia, where our husbands were Ranger instructors at Camp Merrill. Talking and getting to know each other better, we realized we both had difficulty finding and keeping jobs in our specific fields. Through the challenges of career choices came the idea to create R. Riveter.

Military families are relocated every 2.9 years, making it difficult for the spouse to pursue a single career or gain work experience. Like many small towns, however, Dahlonega poses yet another challenge for military spouses seeking employment. Cameron’s Master of Architecture degree and my MBA were becoming more and more irrelevant, especially with fragmented resumes from our multiple military moves.

Our one-of-a-kind handbag company was born of a mix of frustration, passion and creativity, and designed to help chip away at the heart of military spouse employment woes. In a converted attic, we laid the groundwork for

our still rapidly expanding company with a 45-year-old, 75-pound Consew industrial sewing machine, canvas scraps and the best leather we could find on the market.

Here’s a bit more about my background: I graduated from Columbus (Montana) High School in 2003. I attended the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota, on a track scholarship. I decided to study business after I won the entrepreneurship competition as their first woman and freshman awardee. Little did I know that it was going to be practice for a much more intense and public entrepreneurship competition ... “Shark Tank,” in 2016.

Here is more about Cameron Cruse’s background: She graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design, first with a BFA in 2010, and then again with a master’s in architecture in 2011. From 2014 to 2021 she lived in Southern Pines, North Carolina with her family, which became home for our company’s flagship retail store. She is currently living in the great state of Texas.

Cameron and Lisa were named among the 25 people changing the future of retail in 2019 by the National Retail Federation and Cameron was named Apparel’s “30 under 30,” in 2018.

**EGT: When did you decide on the business model of R. Riveter? When did you begin the business?**

**LB:** We decided on the business model before we decided on the product. It was 2011, and Cameron and I were both overeducated and underemployed after several military moves.

We knew there had to be a way to engage other military spouses like us, and we started thinking of ideas. With Cameron’s background in design and my business background, we somehow landed on the model of decentralized handbag manufacturing.

At R. Riveter, a portion of each She’s the Veteran Wilson Tote and Betsy Handbag sale will be donated to the She’s the Veteran organization, which works with female veterans to improve mental health.





**EGT: How are you giving back to the military community?**

**LB:** We give back in many ways, from our work-from-home “Riveters” and team members running the company daily, but we also give back to multiple military-affiliated nonprofits. As we continue to grow, we understand that the longevity of our ability to invest in our military communities depends on fantastic products that anyone can love—not just those who have served or with family members who have served.

**EGT: Have either of you ever manufactured handbags before?**

**LB:** The company is built on a lot of firsts; making handbags was one of them. It’s amazing how much goes into the design and manufacture of a handbag.

Our unique manufacturing process, inspired by Rosie the Riveter (the World War II cultural icon), is shattering the stereotype that you are either a career woman or a stay-at-home mother. We break down barriers and prove the unproven can succeed with vision and perseverance.

**EGT: How many different handbag styles are you featuring? Any add-on products?**

**LB:** We have 45 handbag styles and 40 supporting accessories which include small leather products such as keychains and wallets, to home goods such as candles and aprons—all Riveter-made.

**EGT: From where are you selling the bags?**

**LB:** We sell predominantly on our website D2C (direct to consumer), but we also have two retail stores: our flagship store in Southern Pines, North Carolina, and a store in central Florida attached to our production facility. You can also find us in boutiques across America, and on HSN.

**EGT: How can a military spouse participate in R. Riveter? Do you provide sewing and assembly training?**

**LB:** Military spouses can go to our website to a link toward the bottom of the page, called “become a riveter.” There, they can sign up to receive more information and eventually



**“Know what your mission is. Know your passion. Then, make a plan. Then make another one, because the first will probably break at some point.” —LISA BRADLEY**

complete a test kit, which is test fabric and instructions to complete a part of our assembly. We wanted to make getting started easy and affordable because that’s what makes us us.

**EGT: Where do your raw materials originate?**

**LB:** Our raw materials are globally sourced, as some of our hardware isn’t even being made in the States anymore. We design and assemble everything in the U.S.A.

**EGT: Have you tried crowdfunding?**

**LB:** In 2013, we ran a successful Kickstarter campaign. We were able to get enough capital to keep us moving forward, but the biggest outcome is that we caught the eye of a “Shark Tank” producer. After some encouragement, we decided to throw our names in the hat and ultimately were selected to pitch our company to the “Sharks.”

We appeared on “Shark Tank” in February 2016. The business has not been the same since! In 2016, we had a small team of 13 remote

Overeducated and underemployed in 2011, Cameon Cruse (left) and Lisa Bradley decided on the business model before deciding on the product.



Partnering with Susan G. Komen for the first time, R. Riveter developed a butterfly capsule collection.

Riveters and 11 sewing operators stationed in our “finishing” location in North Carolina. When Mark Cuban, who was known for working with military-affiliated companies, gave an offer of \$100,000, we couldn’t pass it up.

With Cuban’s support and expertise, the business saw financial growth and increased our customer following. This meant expanding the community of Riveters. R. Riveter was able to double our team, offering flexible and mobile incomes to even more women.

**EGT: How are you handling your PR?**

**LB:** We focus on storytelling—from each unique individual who goes into making our products that are truly one of a kind, to the story of two women who started the company in an attic.

**EGT: Is there any intellectual property involved with the R. Riveter bags? Trademarks? Patents?**

**LB:** We have multiple trademarks that cover our brand in our product segments.

**EGT: Have you had any difficulties in any areas of the business?**

**LB:** A few stand out, but I think one recent setback in particular was early in the pandemic.

We had just borrowed a bit over \$1 million to fund a purchase order and began to put it to work (as in, we spent it on the raw goods). The purchase order was cancelled, and the lender

wanted to be paid back immediately due to the uncertainty. So, double whammy.

We owed a million dollars we had spent, and we no longer had the sale that we borrowed the money against. I can’t describe the fear.

I didn’t know if we’d have to put the house up against the money, but I do remember two things: In that time of need nobody panicked, and everyone was supportive. From my family to our partners, it was OK.

A few phone calls and a few more emails over several days put the anxiety on hold, and we were able to get the PO reinstated and the loan terms renewed as planned. I may be downplaying the timeline a bit and really downplaying the hopeless feeling, but the point is, nothing is as bad as it first seems with a level head and a great support network.

**EGT: Can you offer encouragement for new entrepreneurs?**

**LB:** Know what your mission is. Know your passion. Then, make a plan. Then make another one, because the first will probably break at some point.

That doesn’t mean your idea or mission was bad—just that you need to find another way to achieve it.

I think it’s also important to understand what you want personally from the endeavor and over what timeframe so that as the plan evolves you stay true to the original vision. 🍷

*Details: [rriveter.com](http://rriveter.com)*

**Edith G. Tolchin** has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000 ([edietolchin.com/portfolio](http://edietolchin.com/portfolio)). She is the author of several books, including “Secrets of Successful Women Inventors” (<https://a.co/d/fAGlvZJ>) and “Secrets of Successful Inventing” (<https://a.co/d/8dafJd6>).





# Ay, There's the Rub

FLAVORING ADD MEANT TO ENHANCE THE TURBO TRUSSER EXPERIENCE

**B**RIAN Halasinski and Kirk Hyust of Canton, Ohio, inventors of the Turbo Trusser, appeared in chicken suits during their September 30, 2022, appearance on “Shark Tank.” So it’s not surprising they are doing whatever it takes to add to the product experience.

The Turbo Trusser (April 2023 *Inventors Digest*) is a kitchen gadget used for trussing chicken and turkey, a metal plate to which two legs of chicken and turkey are attached. The two entrepreneurs have since expanded into rubs and brines.

Enter the Cluckin’ Hot Rub, which they claim “will help you elevate your chicken and turkey recipes. Experience a mouthwatering twist on

traditional flavors without overwhelming your taste buds!”

Hyust and Halasinski got a royalty deal on “Shark Tank” with Kevin O’Leary: \$100,000 for 33 percent equity, plus a \$1 royalty fee on all units in perpetuity. They also got tremendous publicity, and a slew of knockoffs that approached 200 before they finally got it under control with the help of the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition.



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# TRAGEDY AND THANKSGIVING

BRANDON HARRIS SURVIVED  
A NEAR-FATAL ACCIDENT TO RESHAPE HIS JAW,  
HIS LIFE, AND INNOVATE FOR OTHERS

BY REID CREAGER

**B**RANDON Harris woke up in Oahu, Hawaii, to paradise tossed—his face mangled, his brain tangled.

It was an unlikely landing spot for a guy who had always gang-tackled life, a former oil field worker who grinded out 14-hour days in unthinkably frigid sites in his native Alaska. He had been a state finals wrestler. A force in boxing and martial arts.

But there he lay in Queens Medical Center's intensive care unit for nearly two weeks in a coma, following an accident that almost took his life and then gave him a new one as an inventor.

## 2 comas, 0 clue

The fateful day was January 21, 2013, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. From what he remembers or has been told, Harris had just picked up a used ZX1000 crotch rocket—a high-performance motorcycle also known as a sport bike—and began to leave work on it.

“First problem, it had a bad set of tires. Second problem, I hadn’t bought a helmet yet,” he said.

Third problem: “I took off like a bat out of hell. As I shifted, the bike broke loose, went sideways and I faceplanted.”

Harris sustained injuries to his jaw—already wired shut from a previous incident—and fractures to his sinus cavity and skull that resulted in a traumatic brain injury at the highest level.

The fighter in him was literally not going to take this lying down. “I guess I went from a regular coma that I woke up from, tearing out the IV and tubes from my body, and took off running like a madman. That’s what landed me in an induced coma while my brain healed.”

When he awoke from the second coma, “I was back to a second-grade IQ. My train of thought, memory and my cognitive skills were toast. I could barely talk—and when I did, I sounded like a broken record.”

All he could think about was fixing his brain, jaw and speech. All he could focus on was designing something to rehabilitate his caved-in face.

The crotch rocket totaled, he was back on his moped without moping and back to work

Brandon Harris emerged from two weeks in comas, multiple facial surgeries and having to retrain his cognitive processes to form Jawzrsize. The product, featuring a hard rubber device fitted with silicone bite parts, is designed to strengthen and tone the jaw.



within weeks. That's when he started doing a worldwide patent search on jaw exercise devices.

### **Losing face and more**

A ravaged jaw was nothing new for Harris. He had broken it during "the start of a big-ass, 20-minute brawl" at a party in his hometown of Fairbanks, Alaska.

He was wired shut for eight weeks, causing extreme atrophy in his facial muscles. The metal plate in his jaw caused a serious infection because his body was not accepting it.

"Long story short: About four months later, after having my jaw unwired and moving to

Hawaii, I had to go in for an emergency surgery to have the metal removed from my face and my jaw re-broken.

"I was rewired shut for another eight weeks. Now my primal bite was completely demolished—another crucial reason I could not stop thinking about creating this product to strengthen the facial muscles."

The motorcycle jaw trauma resulted in five surgeries related to his jaw and sinuses. He said it took years of yoga, breathwork, cognitive skills training—and Jawzrsizing—to return to optimal shape.

Restoring his cognitive skills was especially challenging: "I was on my own in one of the most expensive states to live in. I was dumber than you could imagine, and in worse shape than I even want to remember.

"Once I was at Barnes & Noble, trying to get some puzzles for cognitive skills. The lady

**"I knew this was just another hurdle in life, and I spent the next decade rebuilding my brain and physical strengths—and creating a life-changing facial fitness product."**



helping me could tell I needed a different section. She brought me over to the kids' section, where I picked up a second-grade-level word puzzle book. Worst part was, it was still hard.

"I had to live at the gym and go step by step on the long road to recovery to rebuild my cognitive skills. I knew this was just another hurdle in life, and I spent the next decade rebuilding my brain and physical strengths—and creating a life-changing facial fitness product."

### A good solution, improved

When he was a boxer and competing in martial arts, Harris designed a piece of nylon that he could chomp on to strengthen his jaw muscles and be able to get a better bite on his mouthpiece. It also made it easier to take a punch or kick.

He was always seeking refinements. One night in Maui, his team was looking at one of the devices he had. "It had the range of motion and the resistance was perfect, but it was just too bulky. That's when we decided to cut it in half."

"Then I came up with some EVA molding material out of some mouthpieces we had previously bought. I took my prototype down to the jewelry shop here in Maui and used their Dremel tools, making the tooth channels to glue the molding strips to.

The biteable stress ball "worked like a dream, and it was strong as could be."

He made thousands of duplicates, as well as 10 or so at-home prototypes for friends and family to try and some product testing. Buoyed by glowing reviews, his team designed a professional prototype soon after that was sent to manufacturers for a quote on how to move the product into production in the United States.

### Exercise for the face

Designed to work the full range of the jaw as it bites, Jawzrsize is not the first product that claims to give the jaw and face a stronger, leaner look. Harris said his favorite part about his brand is that it "focuses on the range of motion and alignment of your bite."

Competing products, or even gum, are "usually only one side at a time, creating an imbalance in

your TMJ. (According to the Mayo Clinic, the TMJ, or temporomandibular joint, acts like a sliding hinge, connecting your jawbone to your skull.)

"Jawzrsize focuses on your pre molars forward, making your TMJ free-floating while getting as close to teeth as possible. It's a healthy movement for the TMJ and great resistance for facial muscles, alignment, and mobility of your jaw."

"Jawzrsize is an exercise for your face like you've never experienced, activating your saliva glands and producing massive blood flow to the face, neck and head. Blood flow, oxygen and nutrients are factors in generating a vibrant appearance, similar to a good body pump after you've left the gym. It's so crazy how fast these results happen."

How fast? Harris said a new user will feel the results on the first day, and that by the second day he or she will start to feel the activation of jaw strength.

### Answering critics

Harris knows any product will have skeptics. So in late 2020, he commissioned a one-month independent clinical study led by Dr. Margin Giniger, who established the PSC Research Institute in 2005. The institute conducts clinical trials and clinical studies, and receives funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), private foundations and industry.

Among the results:

- 75 percent of users felt more attractive in 4 weeks.
- More than 80 percent felt more jaw strength, experienced no jaw pain, and claimed at least a small reduction in facial wrinkles (by increasing circulation around the mouth).

Harris cited "amazing results on TMJ health across the board. People were finding a solution to night grinding issues.



Opposite page, inset: Almost unrecognizable in the immediate aftermath of his January 2013 accident, Harris still had a puffy jaw for a long time afterward. Above: The Jawzrsize system is built on products providing progressive levels of strength and resistance. Top sellers are the Beginners Bundle and the Total Transformation Kit.



Below: Brandon Harris and his fiancé, Krisanna Black, work their bodies while Jawzrsize works their jaws. They even use it while playing with their dogs Bailey (held by Brandon) and Bella (held by Krisanna).

“We are very interested in taking a holistic approach of simple exercise to the facial muscles. Though we are hesitant to make any kind medical claims, results may vary and jaw exercise is not for everybody—but for most people, it works wonders.”

Jawzrsize, which has been featured on “The Doctors” and “Ellen,” among other shows, has been endorsed by Drs. Andrew Huberman, a neuroscientist and podcaster, and Adrian House, a California surgeon.

Harris is also an expert on the jaw—the hard way. He claims 57 facial muscles are activated by using the product. He said some of the most important ones are the sternocleidomastoid, “one of the largest muscles in your neck that controls your TMJ.

“The masseter is, pound for pound, the strongest muscle in the human body. Also activated are many small muscles, connective tissues and

tendons that surround your joints and protect your face.

“Building muscle is created by resistance, while building bone density is by pressure—something you get with Jawzrsize.”

He said the importance of this pressure and exercising “the primal bite” are exacerbated by what the modern human eats, given the shift to an increasingly heavily processed diet.

“Cutting, cooking and blending foods has caused humanity to lose the mobility, range of motion, size, strength and alignment of our jaw. This also leads to an undermasticated diet, from lack of chewing.

If you have read the book “Breath” by James Nestor or “Jaws: The Story of a Hidden Epidemic” by Sandra Kahn and Paul R. Erhlich, or perhaps seen the YouTube video by Dr. Andrew Huberman on why people have unattractive faces, they all talk a lot about the importance of a strong jaw for facial structure and a healthy lifestyle, which reconfirms and validates to me how important Jawzrsize is.”

**“We are very interested in taking a holistic approach of simple exercise to the facial muscles.”**





## Adding options

The product includes kits that customers can choose from based on their level of experience.

“We definitely would not recommend starting on a heavy resistance level as new exercise,” Harris said. “You have to build properly from the ground up, first developing your range of motion, mobility and alignment. Then comes the work on the muscles.”

That said, Jawzsize aims to meet all comfort levels. The original product was created with the EVA polyurethane molding strips. After boiling for 30 seconds, simply bite into the Jawzsize to create a mold of your premolars forward.

But the makers found that not everybody wants a custom-fit Jawzsize. They developed the universal fitting Pop & Go version that works directly out of the package. “This is for the people who want to take it to the next level and increase resistance with the elite Jawzsize package.”

The product’s growing popularity prompted Harris’ team to be granted two patents and some trademarks.

“We are currently expanding our intellectual properties to our top countries across the world. We have a solid legal team that goes after any intellectual property damage we receive. I believe knockoffs are more of a compliment and give Jawzsize credibility.

“The one thing that does bother me is the inferior products made overseas with poor manufacturing and unhealthy materials. I feel bad for the person who mistakenly bought the wrong product.”

As for what’s next, Harris wrote #Can’tShow MyCards:

“We’ve definitely got a few great things in the works. We plan to start releasing by the holiday season. All I can say for now is, stay tuned.” 🃏



**BRANDON HARRIS**

**OCCUPATION:** Owner, founder of Jawzsize (2016)

**HOME:** Maui, Hawaii

**EDUCATION:** High school graduate

**PAST OCCUPATIONS:** Journeyman, laborer, pipe-fitter apprentice

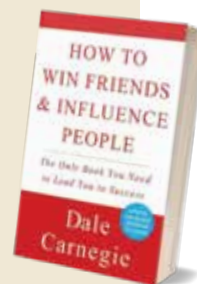
**PERSONAL:** I have a beautiful and supportive fiancé, and one amazing 18-year-old daughter.

**HOBBIES:** Yoga, boating, hiking, traveling, changing the world

**FAVORITE BOOK:** “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” by Dale Carnegie

**FAVORITE MOVIE:** Comedies; Ben Stiller and Adam Sandler are two of my favorites

**FAVORITE QUOTE:** “Plan your work, work your plan.” — unknown





# Gifts That Celebrate Our Gifted Inventors

**I**NVENTIONS are generally intended to solve a problem or need. When they improve the lives of a loved one or a group close to their hearts, the satisfaction of a successful invention grows.

The 2023 Inventors Supporting Inventors Holiday Gift Guide highlights people who had a personal reason to

invent. *Inventors Digest* columnist April Mitchell encouraged these inventors to tell their stories in their own words, which we have presented here.

We sought entries with the best personal stories and products with the most affordable holiday prices, with the idea of inspiring you to give while giving back to inventors.



## Buzzy and VibraCool

### WEARABLE PAIN BLOCKERS

[paincarelabs.com](http://paincarelabs.com)

Buzzy, \$44.95 to \$199.95;

VibraCool, \$65.95 or \$149.95

When my son had a distressing needle experience, I realized that if a pediatrician's kid could get needle fear from routine vaccines, others might develop a fear of medical visits and vaccination. I developed Buzzy, a needle pain blocker that is proven in over 90 trials and has blocked pain from 114 million procedures.

When a colleague used Buzzy's ice and vibration to avoid opioids after knee surgery, I developed VibraCool, a wearable device for pain from injuries, musculoskeletal conditions, surgery and physical therapy.”

**Inventor:** Dr. Amy Baxter of Pain Care Labs, Atlanta



## Tally Tumbler

### TUMBLER THAT KEEPS SCORES

[tallytumbler.com](http://tallytumbler.com)

\$29.99 or \$39.99

The Tally Tumbler is the only way to keep an easy tally and a cold drink while you are playing golf or tennis.

Our golf tumbler can be used for keeping your total score, strokes per hole, greens in regulation and fairways hit, as well as any side games that you and the crew are playing.

The tumbler has scorekeeping rings that align into place to keep an accurate score from 0 to 129. Add the top and bottom rings for your total score. (If the top ring is on 80 and the bottom 7, your total score is 87.)

Our tennis tumbler has two team scorekeeping rings that align into place to keep an accurate score from 0 to 7 and keep track of the number of sets won from 0 to 5.”

**Inventors:** Kelvin Sealy, Virginia Beach, Virginia; Matt Butler, Destin, Florida







### Bubble Pollinator Kit

SOAP BUBBLES  
THAT POLLINATE FLOWERS

[drzigs.com/products/bubble-pollinator-kit](https://drzigs.com/products/bubble-pollinator-kit)  
£26 (\$32 U.S.)

The product was invented in response to a peer-reviewed publication from Japan, demonstrating that soap bubbles could be used to successfully pollinate flowers.

As a sustainable bubble toy company, we were excited by this research and decided to invent a toy kit that would teach children about the science of pollination and the threats that our natural pollinators are facing—whilst having fun with bubbles. We developed a plant-friendly, plant-based bubble mix and bamboo-based materials for this kit.”

**Inventor:** Paola Dyboski of Dr. Zigs, Wales, United Kingdom

### Ultimate Treehouse

BOARD GAME

[evanstongames.com](https://evanstongames.com)

\$34.99

As an apartment dweller for many years, I had kids who often asked for a treehouse and why they couldn't build one.

In 2019, I started working on a different way to a build treehouse: through a board game. The magic of Ultimate Treehouse is in the playmat with the drawing of an empty tree that comes to life as you lay tiles onto it to build the treehouse, complete with lots of woodland creatures that make you feel all warm and fuzzy.”

**Inventor:** Kate Hunt, Evanston Illinois





## Race to Stupid and Pirate Blast

TRIVIA GAME, BATTLE CARD GAME

[racetostupid.com](http://racetostupid.com)

*Race to Stupid*, \$24.99; *Pirate Blast*, \$14.99

After playing a very bad and not fun trivia game, we decided to make a trivia game that was a lot of fun and didn't make you feel stupid for not knowing the right answers.

We wanted to create a card battle game that would appeal to not only kids but adults as well. Simple, easy-to-learn directions and a fast-playing time were important to allow multiple rounds to be played in one sitting.”

**Inventor:** Cathy Tenaglia and Marie Eckl, St. Marys, Pennsylvania

## Digi Pen

PEN WORN ON FINGERTIPS

[digipens.co.uk](http://digipens.co.uk)

£9.99 (about \$12 U.S.)

The Digi Pen gives the user the feeling of writing or drawing with the tip of his or her finger.

They are particularly good for anyone with gripping issues or hand disabilities, as they require far less grip to operate than a conventional pen. They are made from recyclable material and the cartridges are interchangeable, so they are not a throwaway product.

I invented it after my daughter asked me how to spell something, and I proceeded to write it out on the table using my fingertip. I thought how great it would be to be able to write with your finger. Within 20 minutes, I had made the very first prototype of the Digi Pen.”

**Inventor:** Richard Peel, Cambridgeshire, England





## HackBots and Patchwork Garden

STRATEGY CARD GAME,  
PRESCHOOL MEMORY MATCHING GAME

[blueninjastudios.com](http://blueninjastudios.com)

HackBots, \$18.99; Patchwork Garden, \$21.99

I created HackBots as a game for families and friends to enjoy together, blending strategy with lighthearted fun. The modern theme adds an extra layer of excitement, as players employ vibrant, themed characters and clever tactics to playfully sabotage and hack their opponents' devices.

I designed Patchwork Garden with the intention of providing a memory game that is both friendlier and engaging for toddlers and preschoolers. By incorporating a static element within the memory field, the game uniquely integrates recall prompts to assist younger players in finding matches.

Additionally, the game infuses a touch of imagination, allowing players to grow an imaginary garden as they uncover matches.”

**Inventor:** Brenda Ekstroem, Racine, Wisconsin



## WiperLift

4-IN-1 SNOW CAR CLEANING TOOL

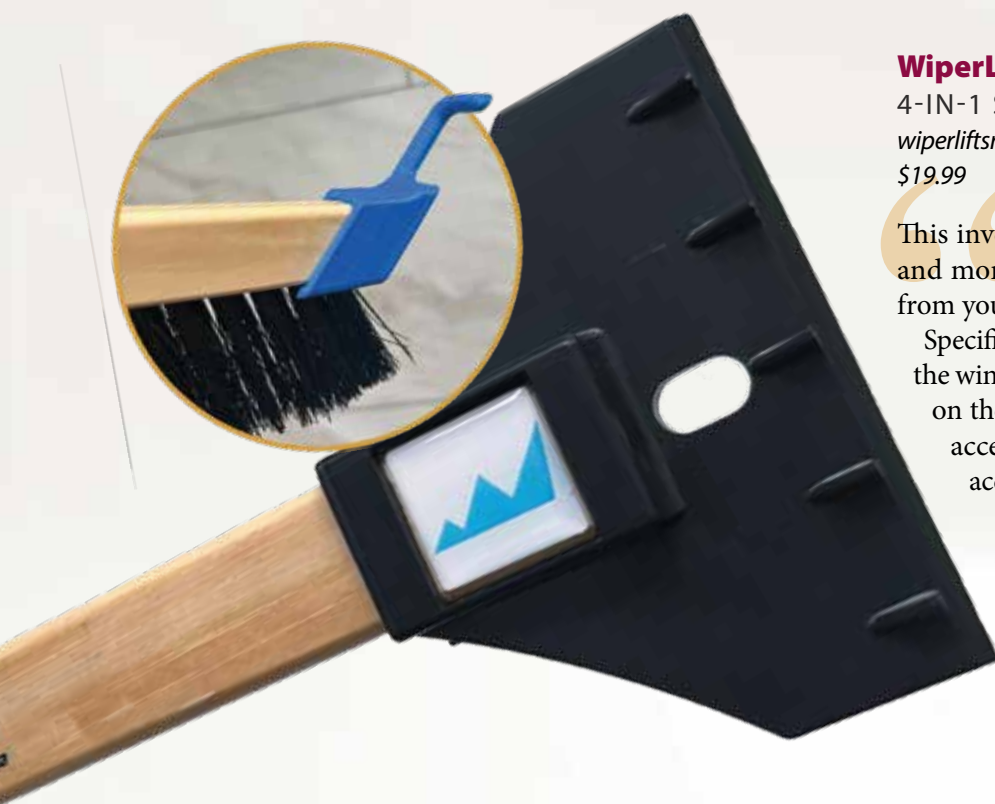
[wiperliftsnowtools.com](http://wiperliftsnowtools.com)

\$19.99

This invention was created to provide a safer and more efficient way to clear snow and ice from your vehicle after a storm.

Specifically, it enables the user to lift and lower the windshield wipers with an integrated hook on the end of the snowbrush. This provides access to hard-to-reach areas that tend to accumulate with snow and ice buildup.”

**Inventor:** Shawn Davis, Fairhaven, Massachusetts





# 2023 IPOEF INVENTOR OF THE YEAR

DR. CATO T. LAURENCIN HONORED FOR HIS PROFOUND  
IMPACTS IN REGENERATIVE ENGINEERING

Regenerative engineering is complicated. Naming Dr. Cato T. Laurencin the 2023 Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation (IPOEF) Inventor of the Year was easy.

Dr. Laurencin has a distinguished history in the discipline, which integrates cell and tissue engineering, biomaterials, biomechanics, cellular and molecular biology and clinical science. Its goal is to restore healthy tissues and organs damaged or lost due to disease, trauma, age, or congenital defects.

His work has led to clinical systems for bone, cartilage, ligament and tendon healing and regeneration. His technologies have had profound implications for the treatment of cancer, and degenerative conditions such as osteoarthritis.

Dr. Laurencin is a university professor at the University of Connecticut, a recognition only held by two professors for their academic achievement and contributions to the university. He is also chief executive officer of The Cato T. Laurencin Institute for Regenerative Engineering at UConn. He is the first surgeon elected to the four major national academies in the United States (the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Medicine, and the National Academy of Inventors).

He received the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, America's highest honor for technological achievement, from President Barack Obama, in ceremonies at the White House in 2016. He is the recipient of the 2023 Priestley Medal, the highest honor of the American Chemical Society.

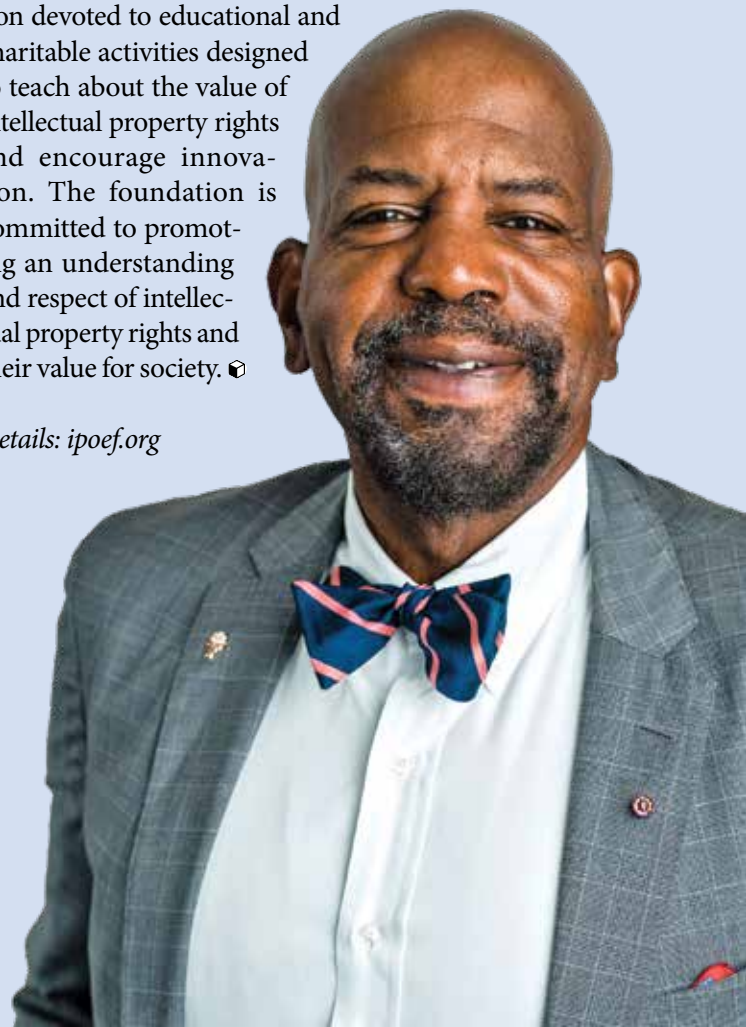
Internationally, his work has been recognized with election to academies throughout the world—including the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Chinese Academy of Engineering, the Indian Academy of Engineering and Academies of Science in Europe, Africa and Asia.

The Inventor of the Year is an annual award presented to the world's most outstanding recent inventors. Previous award winners have included the inventors of CRISPR-Cas9 technologies and the inventors who developed the mRNA technology used in COVID-19 vaccines.

Dr. Laurencin will be presented the 2023 IPO Education Foundation Inventor of the Year award at the 50th IPOEF Awards Celebration on December 6, 2023, in Washington, D.C.

Started in 2000, Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization devoted to educational and charitable activities designed to teach about the value of intellectual property rights and encourage innovation. The foundation is committed to promoting an understanding and respect of intellectual property rights and their value for society. 📖

*Details: [ipofef.org](https://ipofef.org)*



# Ask 20 Experts? **Why?**

HISTORY IS FULL OF EXAMPLES WHERE EXPERTS' LACK OF VISION FAILS US BY BLOCKING POSSIBLE INNOVATION **BY WILLIAM SEIDEL**

**T**HERE IS no danger the Titanic will sink. The boat is unsinkable, and nothing but inconvenience will be suffered by the passengers," said Philip Franklin, vice president of the White Star Line, which built the ship.

"Artificial sweeteners are safe," we have been assured by reputed experts.

These statements were spectacularly wrong.

What you see and hear may be correct, partially correct, or totally wrong—even from experts.

The sources of information are more important now than ever. With the internet so widely available, opposite information is everywhere, and anyone can claim to be an expert. We live in an age of alternative facts.

Expert advice constantly assaults us. Change the channel, and another "expert" is saying the opposite.

Consider expert witnesses saying the opposite from different sides. David Solomon of Bloomberg Law says that if you ask 20 lawyers what makes a good expert witness, you will get 20 different answers.

Acting on expert advice requires great caution to filter the information for your product and business. General and broad statements from an expert, especially outside of his or her field of expertise, can be enormously wrong.

In fact, the word "titanic" has come to mean colossal disaster.

## **Neigh sayers and naysayers**

Lord Kelvin (1824-1907) was a mathematical physicist and engineer, recognized for determining the correct value of absolute zero. Extremely high and extremely low temperatures are expressed in units called Kelvins in his honor.

Because he was a genius in one area, his opinions were sought in other areas in which he was uninformed and uneducated.

Kelvin challenged geologists by saying that Earth is between 20 million and 100 million years old. (It is 4.5 billion years old.) Kelvin predicted, "X-rays will prove to be a hoax." (X-ray technology changed the medical field forever.)

In 1895, Kelvin said, "I can state flatly that heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." The Wright Brothers proved him wrong eight years after his statement.

Horace Rackham, president of the Michigan Savings Bank, recommended that Henry Ford's lawyer not invest in the Ford Motor Co.: "The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty—a fad."

When it is innovative, it changes everything.

Many people, like the president of the Michigan Savings Bank, cannot imagine a world without horses, carriages and buggy whips. They do not have the vision to see what is not, or to imagine what could be. So, they deny it and trust what they know.

## **Atom claims blown to bits**

"The concept is interesting and well formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' the idea must be feasible."

In 1966, a Yale University business management professor said this in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. Five years later, Smith founded Federal Express and a billion-dollar business from a "C" college project.

Robert Millikan, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics, said in 1923: "There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom." The development of the atomic bomb started in 1939.

In 1932, Albert Einstein said: "There is not the slightest indication that nuclear energy will ever be obtainable. It would mean that the atom would have to be shattered at will."

It takes an inventor to see what does not exist and make it. It takes the vision of an entrepreneur and marketer to recognize the value and commercialize it.



Sir Winston Churchill commented, “Atomic energy might be as good as our present-day explosives, but it is unlikely to produce anything very much more dangerous.”

In 1945, Adm. William Leahy told President Harry Truman, “That is the biggest fool thing we have ever done. The [atomic] bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives.”

A few months later, the first atomic bombs were dropped and changed war, politics, energy and ecology forever.

In 1943, Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, said, “I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.” In 1977, Ken Olson, founder of Digital Equipment Corp., said, “There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”

Today, there are over two billion families with a personal computer in their home.

In 1959, Xerox management approached IBM, which said: “The world potential market for copying machines is 5,000 at most.” In 2015 alone, Xerox generated over \$18.2 billion in copier sales, producing 60 billion copied pages.

### **We coddle conformity**

In 1943, Ayn Rand said, “Every great new thought was opposed. Every great new invention was denounced. The first motor was considered foolish. The airplane was considered impossible. Anesthesia was considered sinful.

“But the men of unborrowed vision went ahead. They fought, they suffered, and they paid. But they won.”

It takes an inventor to see what does not exist and make it. It takes the vision of an entrepreneur and marketer to recognize the value and commercialize it.

When change happens, many responses occur: Some deny it, some hide and hope it will pass, some react out of fear, and some figure out how to adapt to the change. When innovation defies beliefs and disrupts conventional business, the resistance is high, with defenses heightened.

Resistance to change is normal. Some change is not healthy, and resistance is usually the accepted policy.

Consumers have a desire for psychological equilibrium. Consumers prefer no change, and any change has the potential to disturb this equilibrium.

The learning process to any new product or innovation is a process of customer readjustment. Consider the readjustment to smartphones and home computers. If the resistance is too high, the innovation fails.

In 1962, Dick Rowe, a senior executive at Decca, dismissed the Beatles: “We don’t like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.” Although he later denied saying this, he committed one of the biggest mistakes in music history.

In 1964, National Review founder William F. Buckley, an unquestionable political authority and best-selling author, proved again the disaster when experts on one thing try to talk like experts on something else. He described the Beatles as “So unbelievably horrible, so



## Introducing the CATERPEELER



[genuinefred.com](http://genuinefred.com)



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appallingly unmusical, so dogmatically insensitive to the magic of the art, that they qualify as crowned heads of anti-music."

### Expect the opposite

In 1957, Dr. Lee de Forest, the father of radio and grandfather of television, said, "Man will never reach the moon, regardless of all future scientific advances." We landed on the moon 12 years later.



In 1876, senior executives at Western Union made the decision that "This telephone has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. It is inherently of no value."

And in 2007, Steve Ballmer, the CEO of Microsoft, proclaimed: "There is no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share. No chance."

As of the second quarter of 2023, over 2.3 billion have sold, with a global market share of 27.6 percent.

It is almost as if predictions from experts, even in their field of expertise, are premonitions for the opposite to be true in time.

When there is true innovation, even expert opinions are worthless because it is simply too early. Until it is developed and tested, no one knows what it is, why they need it, or see the value.

Entrepreneurs and innovators disrupt the process (Elon Musk). It does not help that they are considered misfits, rebels and the ones who see things differently (Richard Branson). They are known for breaking the rules and have no respect for the status quo (Steve Jobs).

It may appear reasonable to expect an accurate assessment from a Yale professor on reliable overnight delivery service, or Thomas Watson's opinion of the world market for computers, or senior executives at Western Union on the future of the telephone. But it is not reasonable.

Inventors solve problems that have never been solved. There are no experts yet, because these solutions do not exist yet. 🎯

**William Seidel** is an author, educator, entrepreneur, innovator, and a court-approved expert witness on marketing innovation. In his career and as the owner of America Invents, he has developed, licensed, and marketed billions of dollars of products.



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# Goodwill Exchange

INVALUABLE CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS FORGED WHEN CHARLOTTE HOSTS YOUNG EUROPEAN BUSINESS LEADERS

BY JEREMY LOSAW

**E**UROPE IS often the first destination abroad for an American. It is easy to see why.

With its endless culture, museums and history, it is a rich tapestry to explore—and easy to see why backpacking across Europe is such a dream. My memories from England, Greece and Holland on my term abroad in college will last a lifetime.

So, when I was approached to host a fellow from Serbia for the YTILI (Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative), I jumped at the chance to try to pay back the wonderful experiences that I had in Europe by hosting a European business owner at Charlotte product launch company Enventys Partners.

The YTILI program is a way for young leaders and entrepreneurs from Europe to experience what business and life is like in the United States and create cross-cultural connections. The U.S. started the program in the mid-2010s to foster enduring connections between Europe and the States, and increase economic and social cooperation.

Similar to the Young Leaders of the Americas program, cohorts of young Europeans are selected to spend about 5 weeks in the United States, where they are paired with American firms to host them.

## A dual crash course

Charlotte welcomed seven fellows from across Europe in April. My fellow was Strahinja Tirnanić from Serbia. He is from the small city of Kragujevac, about a 1½-hour drive south of the capital of Belgrade, where he runs a marketing and social media agency.

Enventys Partners' unique and dynamic combination of marketing and product development services provided Strahinja a perfect

opportunity to see how a design and marketing firm operates in the States.

On his first day, I threw him right into the proverbial fire. Although he had no consumer product design experience, I felt it was important for him to understand this service offering because it is a key part of our business.

I paired him with our industrial design and electrical engineering team and had him conduct some user experience testing on a new consumer product that will be launched in the first quarter of 2024. I then plugged him into the sales and marketing teams, where he was more comfortable.

Strahinja was able to see how Enventys handles lead generation, meetings with clients and potential clients, and see how we structure deals. He was also able to get experience and understanding of our crowdfunding marketing service and how to run a successful campaign.

Of course, the exchange is not all about work. I made sure that Strahinja had some great cultural experiences. It happened to be Charlotte Innovation Week while he was in town, so he was able to network with other professionals at events across the city and attend our local Pitch Breakfast group.

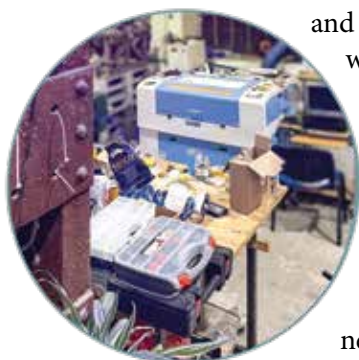
Because he is also interested in cars, I took him to RK Motors to see its classic car restoration business and see some old-school American “muscle cars.” He also took in the local sports teams, attending a Charlotte FC soccer game and a Charlotte Knights minor-league baseball game.

The soccer match was straightforward. But I had some explaining to do about the rules of baseball, which can be a baffling sport for those who do not grow up around it.

## Returning the flavor

The end of his fellowship was not the end of the story.

YTILI offers a reverse exchange for U.S. hosts to travel to their fellow's home country to



The Polyhedra maker space in Belgrade, Serbia, was well equipped.



continue collaboration. I jumped at the opportunity and was grateful to be chosen to for the exchange.

I set off for Serbia in mid-September to visit Strahinja before we both attended a two-day YTILI alumni summit in Slovenia.

When I finally made it to Kragujevac, “Strahi” immediately whisked me away to a local cafe to get some much-needed local food and beer. For the next three days, I spent time at his firm working alongside him and understanding the nature of the day to day of his business. I also met with local innovators.

Unfortunately, Kragujevac has some sad history. It was home to the massacre of thousands of civilians at the hands of German soldiers in 1941. It was sobering to visit the park where civilians’ bravery is memorialized with graves and beautiful sculpture.

Then it was off to Belgrade to experience the big city. We spent three days exploring the “White City,” named for the light-colored stones in the area. The bustling metropolis offered additional opportunities for networking—including visiting local design firms, software developers, and incubators.

A highlight was a visit to Polyhedra, a maker space with a wonderful suite of equipment and a vibrant community working together in tech, art, 3D printing and product design.

### Summit sums it up

The YTILI Alumni Summit was the perfect way to finish the trip.

Nearly 100 European alumni and U.S. hosts descended upon Ljubjana, the capital of Slovenia. The summit theme was “Empower. Elevate. Evolve.”

Two days of speakers and workshops were inspiring, informative and motivating. Topics ranged from business strategy, leadership, corporate culture, marketing, technology and mindset. I was honored to be chosen as a speaker and talked about emerging trends in physical product development.

The speakers were wonderful, but the networking was the highlight. It was a privilege to meet and hear the stories of so many entrepreneurs and innovators, and to have the time to dive deep into their journey.

As YTILI nears a decade from its first cohort, it continues to deliver on its promise to create partnerships and bonds between the United States and Europe. Both fellows and American hosts have been elevated by the experience. They have transformed businesses, created economic opportunities, and spawned cultural understanding and friendships.

It was clear from the conference how valuable it is for the fellows. We will surely continue to see it make an impact. 🌍

The seven YTILI fellows placed in Charlotte: Athanasios Paraschos, Greece; Toghrul Ismayilov, Azerbaijan; Elena Cobianu, Romania; Strahinja Tirnanić, Serbia; Kaisa Hansen, Estonia; David Connolly, Ireland, and Yvonne Knap, Slovenia.

**Strahinja Tirnanić (right) had no consumer product design experience, but I threw him right into the proverbial fire.**





## GOAL: Better Transparency

USPTO PROPOSES RULE TO LESSEN CONCERNS THAT PTAB DECISIONS ARE BEING INFLUENCED BY LEADERSHIP

BY EILEEN MCDERMOTT

*All Eye on Washington stories originally appeared at IPWatchdog.com.*

**F**OLLOWING REVIEW of more than 4,300 comments, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that makes changes to the processes governing internal pre-issuance circulation and review of decisions within the Patent Trial and Appeal Board.

The stated goal of the policy change, announced October 5, is to “promote consistent, clear, and open decision-making processes while protecting judicial independence and increasing transparency of USPTO processes.”

The rule most notably would prohibit review of decisions before issuance by PTAB management judges, the USPTO director and other high-level USPTO officers. As part of the NPRM, the USPTO issued proposed changes to its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP4), adding a part 43.

### Fast response

The office issued the request for comment (RFC) on this topic last year, around the same time the U.S. Government Accountability Office released its report finding that “the majority of [administrative patent] judges (75 percent) surveyed by GAO responded that the oversight practiced by U.S. Patent and Trademark Office directors and PTAB management has affected their independence, with nearly a quarter citing a large effect on independence.”

The final report, issued in December 2022, concluded that increased transparency is needed in the USPTO’s oversight of judicial decision-making.

Under an interim process implemented in May 2022, some PTAB decisions were required to be circulated to a pool of non-management administrative patent judges known as the Circulation Judge Pool before issuance. Decisions required to go before the CJP included America Invents Act

**A December 2022 Government Accountability Office report concluded that increased transparency is needed in the USPTO’s oversight of judicial decision-making.**



institution decisions; AIA final written decisions; AIA decisions on rehearing; *inter partes* re-examination appeal decisions; designated categories of *ex parte* appeal, *ex parte* reexamination appeal, and reissue appeal decisions; and all board decisions (including AIA and *ex parte* appeal decisions) following a remand from the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Now, circulation to the CJP is optional for all decisions.

The USPTO also updated former PTAB Standard Operating Procedure 9 for decisions remanded from the federal circuit, eliminating the requirement for PTAB judges to discuss remanded cases with PTAB management. That SOP has been renamed to SOP3.

### Re-examining director's role

According to the NPRM, representative comments received emphasized the need for judicial independence, reduced influence by USPTO senior management on PTAB panels, and more detail on the CJP.

Proposed Section 43.3(d) of the SOP4 would delegate the director's power to designate and re-designate PTAB panels to the chief administrative patent judge and would also "prohibit the director from directing or otherwise influencing the paneling or repaneling of any proceeding prior to issuance of the panel decision."

The director could, however, issue general paneling guidance for proceedings and direct repaneling according to such guidance when reviewing or rehearing issued decisions.

Management judges would also be barred from initiating communication with panel judges before issuance of a decision. The decision to request input from management judges would be optional and "solely within the discretion of an individual panel member."

The deadline to submit comments is December 5, 2023. The SOP4 may be further revised after consideration of comments received on the NPRM. 🐕

**Eileen McDermott** is editor-in-chief at IPWatchdog.com. A veteran IP and legal journalist, Eileen has held editorial and managerial positions at several publications and industry organizations since she entered the field more than a decade ago.



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Best wishes, Jack Lander



## IoT Corner

Whisker Labs has launched a sensor system that will help monitor the grid and alert when there is risk of fire.

In the system, called **Ting**, the sensor plugs into a normal wall outlet and monitors the state of the home's electrical system. Data are ported to the cloud and analyzed by AI to detect whether there is an issue inside the home, such as faulty wiring.



As the network of Ting devices expands, the devices collectively become a monitor for the grid and can detect wider issues such as trees on lines or other faults. —Jeremy Losaw

## Wunderkinds

An inventing team from Mexico—Ana Yesenia Rojas Medina, Ricardo Arturo Tenango Rendón, Yuritzzy Mariana Maldonado Ramos and Heidi Lisseth Ramírez Iturbide—won the Americas Best of Show Award at the Invention Convention Americas Awards (grades K-12-plus), in connection with the Henry Ford Museum. The invention is a bioplastic film made of materials that would be biodegradable, soluble in water and more cost-efficient than alternatives. The worldwide competition drew more than 170,000 participants.



## What IS That?

**HushMe** calls itself the world's first Bluetooth speech privacy mask. It looks pretty weird when you're wearing it, but so does a COVID mask—and we all got used to those.

## Get Busy!

**TECHSPO Phoenix** is a technology expo November 13-14 at the JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa. The event is for top developers, brands, marketers, technology providers, designers, innovators and evangelists.

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

**1** The Automatic Mashed Potato System—pretty handy for Thanksgiving—was patented in which year?  
A) 1957 B) 1970 C) 1989 D) 2007

**2** **True or false:** James Naismith (born November 6, 1861), who invented basketball, was born in Canada.

**3** Which was invented first—pumpkin powder, or pop-up timers?

**4** The board game Trivial Pursuit was copyright registered on November 10 of what year?  
A) 1975 B) 1981  
C) 1989 D) 1996

**5** **True or false:** The original name for Trivial Pursuit was Genius.



1. D. U.S. Patent No. 7,172,335. Just feed the potatoes through a unit in the upper cavity of the machine. 2. True—Almonte, Ontario. 3. Pumpkin powder, 1879; pop-up timers, the 1960s. 4. B. 5. False. It was Genius.

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