Invention:



Bosu Ball

Date of the invention:

2000

Industry invention is related to:

Fitness Equipment

Inventor's personal email address:

info@bosufitness.com

Company name:

Bosu Fitness

Bosu Global

Company area code and phone number:

Bosu Fitness/Weck Method - (619) 222-2604

Bosu Global - (800) 810-6528

Inventor's full name:



David Weck

Company Full Address

BOSU® Official Global Headquarters 1 Hedstrom Drive Ashland, Ohio 44805

BOSU® Fitness, LLC 3434 Midway Drive, Suite 2008 San Diego, CA 92110

Weck Method 5485 GAINES ST. San Diego, CA 92110

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

- David Weck supported his acting career as a personal trainer. He believes in creating a "better athletic foundation to improve movement and performance".
- Prior to his invention, David fell victim to a severe lower back strain while
 trying to lift his motorcycle. He was in pain constantly, and all of the
 traditional methods of therapy were not giving him relief. It wasn't until he
 began training with a large athletic ball that he found any relief. He would
 stand on the ball often to strengthen his core and improve his balance this
 would help to alleviate the pain.
- One day, he fell off of the athletic ball nearly causing himself more injury. It
 was then that he vowed to never stand on the ball again. While he slept the
 next night, he awoke with his genius idea and put it to the test the very next
 day.

Top Challenges

- David's original product prototype had a very unfinished look about it. His own father went on to say that he was probably only deserving of a C- if it were graded in an academic setting. The fitness equipment industry is extremely competitive, and if David couldn't even sell his product to his own father, the future was already grim.
- Once David's father stood on the prototype and began to understand the benefits
 of his invention he immediately offered up his investment and became David's
 partner. David's father was retired from running his own consulting firm and had
 invaluable expertise on the subject of bringing a product to market. He suggested
 a "Top-Down" approach, meaning selling the product to major industry
 stakeholders and professionals to develop a positive reputation. They were
 challenged with choosing the perfect athletic organization for the initial
 introduction of their product.

- After setting their sights on the U.S. Olympic Ski Team as their audience, they
 arranged a meeting to pitch the invention. They met with <u>Andy Walshe</u>, former
 U.S. Ski Team Assistant Athletic Director, and realized that their idea to sell to
 premium athletes was not original. Walshe had equipment all over his office that
 was sent to him for evaluation from other inventors just like David. It was then
 that David knew that this pitch was going to be challenging.
- David's product was taking off. He had named it the Bosu Ball, short for "Both Sides Utilized". The U.S. Ski team and its affiliates were placing hundreds of orders, and David was still confined to producing them in his father's garage. He needed to begin mass producing the Bosu balls. The challenge to design them for full production was just as hard if not harder than the original design. He consulted with engineers and design professionals to create a cost effective quality product. The professionals generally were not able to provide him with the solution he needed, so he set out to find it himself. With a little lesson in physics, David realized that the inside of the ball needed to be cone shaped in order to meet the pressure requirements of the sphericle design. That "Ah-Ha" moment gave way to the cost-effective design that he needed.
- Now that David had a quality, mass produced, product he needed to educate the world. Especially with fitness equipment, consumers are not likely to buy a product if they do not understand how it works or its benefits. David met this challenge by attending over 25 trade shows a year, and by constantly meeting with fitness professionals to educate them on the benefits of the Bosu Ball.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when David was about to either quit or lose all of his money and his invention?)

There are very few battles that can be won against physics. Due to the spherical shape of David's invention, he needed to find a base material that would not cave to the pressure of the air inside the ball. He spent thousands of dollars working with engineers and professional product designers to solve this fundamental

issue. It was, what David describes as, the "Eleventh Hour", and he still did not have a prototype cost effective enough for mass production. While he continued to fill as many orders as he could from his father's garage, he feared he might lose out on major opportunities and stain his reputation if he could perfect the prototype for the next step of production.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave David the Hope And His Ultimate Success

After successfully selling to the U.S. Olympic Ski team, David's father suggested that they pitch to all of the professional athletic teams slated to win their championships that year. This campaign put a Bosu ball at the highest level of every professional sports team within a few months.

David's First Major Sale That Started The Path To His Success

David's father provided sound advice through the entirety of the development process for the Bosu Ball. He suggested selling the invention from the Top-Down. David identified the U.S. Olympic Ski team as an ideal pick due to the benefits they could reap from his product and their influence over the athletic industry. He approached Andy Walshe, the assistant athletic director at the time, and despite its homemade appearance, David sold to him both of the balls he brought with him along with an order of 12 more. Even with all of the other products constantly being pitched to Walshe, he was able to see the benefits the Bosu Ball would provide the athletes he trained.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

Bosu Global company sells Bosu balls in a variety of colors and configurations.

Along with the balls, they also sell fitness DVDs and storage equipment for the Bosu ball.

Bosu Fitness, David's primary company, sells the Bosu balls along with other unique pieces of equipment designed by David. He features the <u>RMT Club</u> for functional strength training. He also sells a fitness method called the Weck Method that focuses on body mechanics and functional strength.

The First Year Sales Totals

The first year sales figures were not mentioned on the show. However, David claims to make 8 figures annually.

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

3 million Bosu Balls sold to date

Resources & Contacts

Andy Walshe

http://andywalshe.com/

Twitter: @drandywalshe

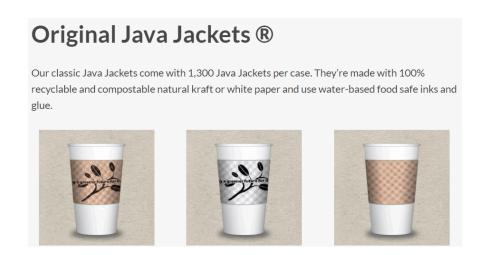
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Invention:



Breathe Right Nasal Strips

Date of the invention:

1991

Industry invention is related to:

Health and Wellness

Inventors personal email address:

Consumer.Communications@gsk.com

Company name:

GSK Group

Company area code and phone number:

(800) 858-6673

Inventors full name:



Bruce Johnson

Company Full Address:

GSK Headquarters 5 Crescent Drive Philadelphia, PA 19112

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Breathe Right Nasal Strips?

Chronic congestion, deviated septum's, and other issues that block nasal passages plague millions of people every night who are just trying to get a good night's rest. Tossing and turning, they will turn to many ineffective products on the market, desperate to wake up alert and well rested. Bruce was among this population who were unable to slumber comfortably due to his own case of chronic congestion. Waking up with headaches every day

due to the only position that allowed him to sleep, he was determined to find the solution once and for all.

Top Five Challenges:

- Remembering his father's solution to opening up his own nasal pathways, Bruce decided to use his homemade design as a jumping off point. It was a simple paperclip, opened up into a "U" shape, and inserted into the nasal opening to create a brace for ever closing passages. Understanding that this was not a marketable idea or attractive for that matter, he was desperate for a design that works and will stay in place all night. Finally, the revelation comes to him that he should be focusing on opening the airways from the outside of the nose, rather than the inside.
- Using only supplies found around his house, Bruce went through many prototype and testing phases before discovering what materials would work best for his idea. Structurally, he needed a material that had a "spring" to it, so that even when he would roll over in his sleep the strip would keep its shape. However, the strip couldn't spring back to shape too forcefully resulting in nonadherence. It consumed nearly two years of Bruce's life before he found the perfect materials.
- Before Bruce could claim his product was beneficial, he needed scientific proof. Partnering with CNS Medical Equipment allowed him access to a wide array of industry professionals for product evaluation.
- A product that claims to have health benefits requires extra hoops to jump through. They needed <u>FDA</u> approval before it could be sold by retailers. The FDA is notorious for taking copious amounts of time before approving a product. It the case of Breathe Right Strips, they waited over 18 months before approving them for sale.
- Due to Breathe Right Strips being the first of their kind, the consumer market was skeptical, to say the least. Bruce knew he had to find the perfect niche consumer that desperately needed his product. In a last ditch effort to turn his sales around, Bruce sent samples of his

strips to all of the head coaches of all of the NFL teams. Eventually, a player for the Philadelphia Eagles decided to try the strips in lieu of decongestant medication and found how effective the strips really were.

Darkest Hour:

The aid of CNS Medical Equipment for the manufacturing efforts meant that Breathe Right Strips could hit the shelves in a big way. However, the strips were a completely new idea, and consumers didn't know what to think of them. Without much in the way of marketing or physician backing, the sales for the strips went south almost immediately and flopped.

Breakthrough:

Bruce needed the science to prove that his invention really did work. He sought out and arranged a meeting with the CEO of CNS Medical Equipment. Lucky for Bruce, the CEO of CNS also suffered from chronic congestion. Due to their familiarity with medicinal products, CNS jumped on board with Bruce to help him bring Breathe Right Strips to market. Ultimately, they headed up the manufacturing effects and guided Bruce through the FDA process. The faith that CNS had in Bruce's invention was exactly the feedback that he needed to know that he had a winning product.

First Major Sale:

A well-known player for the Philadelphia Eagles had terrible nasal congestion due to a cold at practice one day. Having received Bruce's samples, his trainer offered one to the player in lieu of a decongestant. They provided the relief needed, and he sported the strips during the next game in which he scored two touchdowns. Generally speaking, products that aid in physical performance often begin trending once major athletes find them useful. As Breathe Right Strips became more and more popular throughout the NFL, consumers started putting their faith into the product. The free publicity was a testament to the effectiveness of his product, and Bruce's product was even worn by a player on the cover of sports illustrated.

First Year Sales Totals:

200 Million strips in just the second year. \$2.8 Million.

Total Sales To Date:

Over \$250 Million annually

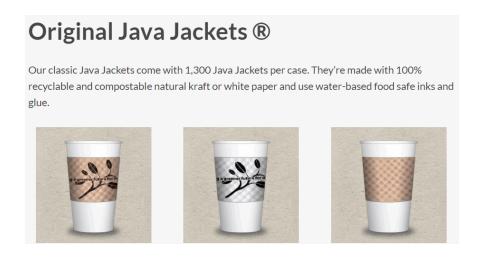
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Invention:



The **ChordBuddy**

Date of the invention:

2010

Industry invention is related to:

Musical Instruments

Inventors personal email address:

https://www.linkedin.com/in/trperry

Company name:

ChordBuddy

Company area code and phone number:

877-699-6188

Inventors full name:

Travis Perry



Company Full Address:

ChordBuddy 2868 E Cottonwood Road Dothan Al 36301

What was the problem or opportunity that sparked the idea for the CordBuddy?

Struggling musician and educator, Travis Perry knew the statistics. Almost 70% of first-time guitar players quit within the first two months of learning to play. Even his own daughter threatened to give up her guitar lessons. He knew there had to be a better way to learn.

Coined the "two-month hump", the biggest challenge for a guitar music educator was to keep their students motivated through the troublesome time before the muscle memory, hand-eye coordination, and calluses build up. Teetering on the edge of bankruptcy due to the mortgage crisis of 2007, Travis needed to retain his students in order to keep a roof over his family's heads. His brilliant idea to teach guitar with baby steps came to him while trying to teach his own daughter to play the guitar.

Top Five Challenges Travis experienced:

- Travis knew exactly what his product needed to accomplish, and so he went to work creating a very crude prototype out of popsicle sticks and rubber pieces he found around the house. Using a rubber band, he attached it to his guitar and was able to sound a chord. He was confident that this idea was going to work, but no one he pitched it to could see the potential. For quite some time, all he found was dead end after dead end. Eventually, though, his perseverance paid off. Troy Mason, a product designer with Impulse Product Development heard Travis out, and, in an unprecedented fashion, told Travis that they would back his development process.
- Travis and Troy began working immediately to design his invention. The
 whole process was very difficult for Travis. With a background in real
 estate and music education, he didn't know the first thing about
 materials, design, and production.
- They spent many, many hours just looking at drawings and CAD images before they even made the first prototype. Troy notes that it was Travis's positive outlook that made the process far less arduous. The precision necessary to make his idea work was measuring just fractions of millimeters at a time then testing and retesting. It took nearly a year and a half before they had a working prototype.
- In October 2010, the first ChordBuddy rolled off the assembly line. Travis now realizes that the joy of having his working product in hand has ended and reality must now kick in; it was time to bring it to the

marketplace. Travis rode around from town to town showcasing his ChordBuddy to every music shop in the area. When his idea was just an idea, his peers seem very interested and claimed to want one. However, now that the ChordBuddy actually existed, people in the industry were hesitant because they didn't know what to think of it.

 There was a six-month wait before Travis's Shark Tank Episode would even air. In that time, Travis was selling minimal amounts of product. Racking up debt, prepping for his big debut was a risk. Though he had high confidence that once the episode aired he would have enough sales, it still pushed his entire family's resources to the limit.

Darkest Hour

Travis spent almost a year and a half designing, developing, and prototyping the ChordBuddy. Finally, when the first batch of his product rolled off of the assembly line, he took it to the market. Before the product was actually created, Travis pitched his idea to other music educators. His peers always responded with positive feedback, and a voiced a genuine hope that this product would become available. Once Travis actually showed it to other music educators, their response had taken a complete 180-degree turn. They weren't interested in what they didn't understand, and their skepticism kept Travis from making any sales. Travis eventually traveled from town to town, from music shop to music shop, giving away his product in the hopes that someone, anyone, would see his products potential.

Breakthrough

Struggling to pique the interest of his fellow music teachers, Travis needed a big break to showcase the ChordBuddy. On a whim, he submits an application to be on the show Shark Tank. As is turned out, the producers of Shark Tank thought that Travis would be a great fit for the show. It came

with a catch, though, due to the nature of the show, Travis had the chance to get "hooked" by a shark (a corporate tycoon) who could complete sink him. Travis described it as a very stressful 90 minutes. He was didactically questioned about the efficacy of the ChordBuddy as they tried to take him down. One of the Shark Tank members even challenged him to teach him the guitar on the segment. Taking on this challenge was risky, at best, but when the member gave him a suitable offer at the end of the show it was the confirmation that he needed. His product worked and was appealing, even to a Shark Tank tycoon.

First Major Sale

In order for ChordBuddy to even stay in business, they would need to sell 1,000 pieces after the Shark Tank episode aired. If they wanted to pay off their immediate debt, they would need to sell 3,000 pieces. Ultimately, they set their hopes on 5,000 sales to consider their efforts a success. As it turns out, the consumers had more interest than they originally assumed, they sold over 12,000 ChordBuddy's when their episode aired. They were so busy, that they had to add 30 people to their assembly line which originally only consisted of 3.

What other products or brand extensions came after the first idea?

ChordBuddy retails a variety of ChordBuddy packages along with acoustic guitars and learning tools.

Total sales to date:

Over \$1.5 Million and growing

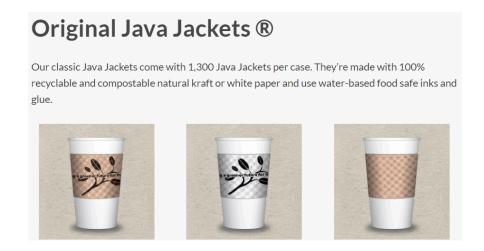
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Invention:



Coolest Cooler

Date of the invention:

Invented: November 2013

Released: July 2015

Industry invention is related to:

Seasonal Recreation

Inventors personal email address:

support@coolest.com
info@inventorsblueprint.com

Company name:

Coolest Cooler

Inventor's Blueprint, LLC – Ryan's Personal Company

Company area code and phone number:

855-646-8368

Inventors full name:



Ryan Grepper

Company Full Address:

Inventor's Blueprint, LLC 7327 SW Barnes Rd #404 Portland, OR 97225

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Coolest Cooler?

Seasoned backyard inventor, Ryan challenged himself to invent new and interesting devices for his annual summer party. He would tinker around his garage, and eventually come out with something somewhat useful, but definitely entertaining. One summer he picked out an old cooler and decided to create the ultimate cooler.

Top Five Challenges:

- Once Ryan began to view his cooler project as more than just a
 backyard party showpiece, he had to begin researching. He found
 that the cooler industry is a billion-dollar industry, and there isn't
 much variety. Most of the market consisted of the same rectangular
 boxes with very little distinction from brand to brand. Since all of the
 coolers on the market were backed by big corporate money, he knew
 he would have to design his cooler to stand out from the crowd.
- It didn't take long before Ryan had decided on the premium features his cooler would sport. However, to produce coolers with this much complexity, he would need capital and resources. As crowdfunding, like <u>Kickstarter.com</u>, grows in popularity, Ryan turns his sights towards the public for seed money. He sets up his Kickstarter account for an aggressive \$120,000 in the hopes to have enough to bring his product all the way to market.
- Kickstarter has a notorious all or nothing policy where once you set your goal, your backers have to meet that goal to the penny before that funding is released. If your backers do not reach the goal, then you receive nothing. When they began their campaign, they had a lot of energy and were on track to reach their goal, but as they approached the end of the campaign they momentum slowed significantly and they feared they were going to fall short. Ultimately, they missed their goal.
- Ryan came to the conclusion that his prototype just wasn't quite right yet. Having taken the advice from crowd funding commenters, he, quite literally, took it back to the drawing board. He needs to add value to his product and make it generally more appealing. As it stood, it was just a souped up normal rectangular cooler. He needed to make it stand out. Inspired by the 1950's car era, Ryan wanted to give his invention a high powered look. He now needed to seek the help of an industrial engineer. This would require investing \$15,000 of his own equity on a risky bet.

 After the success of Ryan's second Kickstarter campaign, the real work began. Ryan had to manufacture and deliver over 62,000 coolers in 9 months to his backers. He was not familiar with the type of project management that was required to take a product this elaborate to market. Ryan found himself "in over his read". With multiple components, he needed to find multiple manufacturers and an assembly facility to bring it all together.

Darkest Hour:

Crowdfunding is a valuable tool for bringing ideas and inventions to market in the modern world. Ryan hit the ground running and began a Kickstarter.com campaign for \$120,000; a lofty goal. He worked hard to gain an audience and started off with a lot of momentum. If that energy had continued, then Ryan would have had no problem reaching his ambitious goal. However, with only around \$20,000 to go, and nearing the end of the campaign timeline, Ryan just could not inspire enough backers to take it to the end. Despite Ryan's disappointment and lowered confidence, he invested resources of his own and took it all back to the drawing board.

Breakthrough:

Ryan came back with a vengeance. He incorporated everything he learned from his first failed Kickstarter campaign and inspired the public to back him wholeheartedly. He had completely redesigned the project, changed the timing of the campaign, and while he was redesigning his product he continued to grow his audience keeping the public interested. He launched his second campaign during the peak of summer retail purchasing, and he set the goal to a more attainable \$50,000. His campaign went viral. In the first 48 hours of his campaign, Ryan received over \$1 million in pledges from backers. His product was featured by celebrities and media outlets. He was interviewed left and right. By the end of the campaign, Ryan had sourced over \$13.2 million, a Kickstarter record.

First Major Sale:

When they finally delivered the Coolest Cooler to many of the Kickstarter backers, despite the wait, the response was overly positive. Pictures of the coolers began showing up on social media stating that the final product was even better than they expected.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

Ryan is still in the midst of filling the original 62,000 Kickstarter backer's orders. However, he does run his own business, Investors Blueprint, where he provides an educational resource to other inventors.

First year sales totals:

\$13.2 Million

Total Sales To Date:

\$13.2 Million, due to crowd funding. As of yet, they have produced only 35,000 of the original 62,000 for backers. Once their prior commitment is fulfilled they will begin selling it at will.

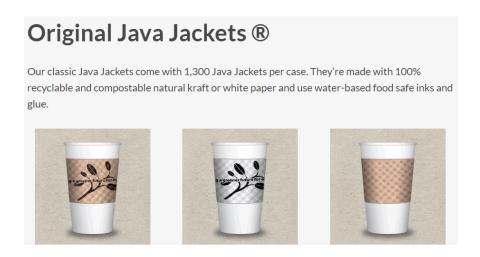
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Invention:



Cronut

Date of the invention:

2011

Industry invention is related to:

Food and Beverage

Inventors personal email address:

info@dominiqueansel.com

Company name:

Dominique Ansel Bakery

Company area code and phone number:

(212) 219 2773

Inventors full name:



Chef Dominique Ansel

Company Full Address:

Dominique Ansel Baker 189 Spring Street New York, NY 10012

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Cronut?

Over half a billion donuts are sold annually in the United States alone. Though donuts are available in a variety of flavors, the process and recipe are relatively unchanged since the donuts original conception in the mid-1800's. Dominique always had the dream of opening his own business, and in 2011 he opened his own bakery. His creation was made out of necessity. If he was going to find success in the already crowded food industry as a small New York City business owner, then he was going to need a signature item uniquely his. Fusing the American culture's donut with his French heritage hallmark, the croissant, was the answer he responded with.

Top Five Challenges:

- The food industry is notorious for failure among small businesses.
 Opening day of his new bakery brought in a lot of buzz and curiosity for what Chef Dominique was going to serve up. He knew, however, that the buzz would not last if he didn't develop a signature item to keep his customers returning.
- Dominique employed a team of professional pastry chefs and they brainstormed, a lot. They considered new and different ingredients and concepts to bring a truly unique creation to the table. A member of his team suggested recreating the donut. Dominique agreed, the donut was a great idea. However, Dominique is French and donuts are an American specialty. He didn't even have a recipe for donuts. Instead of recreating the American donut, he decided to fuse the croissant with the donut to create a more decadent masterpiece.
- Dominique worked on the Cronut recipe for 3 months. He considered all aspects of his creation. Bringing together the two very different techniques needed to create a donut and a Croissant was not an easy feat; it needed to be both layered and cohesive. He and his team made several attempts at the Cronut before settling on a recipe he was ready to serve to the public.
- After a blog about the Cronut from Grub Street New York Magazine went viral, Dominique needed to focus on the newly found popularity. On the very next day after the article, before they even opened, 50 people were lining the city block waiting for a taste of the Cronut. Being such a small bakery, meeting such demands was going to require planning and adjustments.

Due to the fame and popularity of the Cronut, Dominique was offered the opportunity to commercialize his product. However, Dominique sees the idea of commercializing his product as selling out. He believes that his future would entail walking the lines of a factory making thousands and thousands of Cronuts and never really living his dream of being a chef.

Darkest Hour:

Dominique took an American favorite and fused with his own cultural heritage and came up with a product that was both imaginative and new. As it turned out there was a blogger from the very popular Grub Street blog in New York Magazine at his bakery on the day he presented his masterpiece. Due to sheer luck, the internet took ahold of the creation and made go viral. Aside from budgeting his time for media outlet interviews and late night talk shows, Dominique never reveals a time where he felt all hope was lost.

Breakthrough:

Once Dominique was satisfied with his recipe, he produced a trial batch for customers to try. On the day that he presented his new Cronut to the public, there just so happened to be a blogger from <u>Grub Street</u> New York Magazine who decided to write a piece on the Cronut. Much to his surprise, the blog went viral. The good news came when the blogger called Dominique to warn him that he would have a big turn out the next day and to be prepared with many more Cronuts to serve.

First Major Sale:

On the first day after the Cronut blog went viral there were over 50 people lined up outside of his shop waiting to have a taste of the new Cronut. By the third day, the numbers were unimaginable. The media went wild for his newest creations. He was showcased on Good Morning America, Steve Harvey, and even late night show with Jimmy Fallon. The imaginative idea had every talking; the food critics, the media, and the public.

Brand Extensions After the First Cronut?

As a full bakery, the Dominique Ansel Bakery offers a variety of pastries and confections. Utilizing his knack for fusion he has created many other highly sought after delicacies. In line with being a chef, Dominique has also published a book titled "The Secret Recipes".

Total Sales To Date:

Over 35,000 people line up every year for a taste of the Cronut.

Resources & Contacts

Grub Street New York - Blog

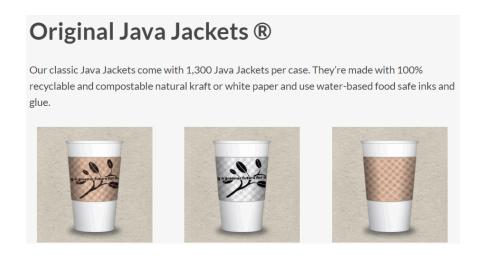
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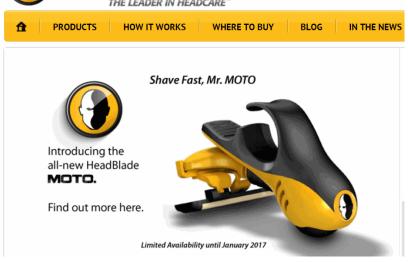
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Invention:



Dodocase

Date of the invention:

2010

Industry invention is related to:

Technology Accessories

Inventors personal email address:

thenest@dodocase.com

Company name:

DODOcase

Company area code and phone number:

1-877-920-3636

Inventors full name:

Patrick Buckley



Company Full Address:

DODOcase HQ 2525 3rd Street San Francisco, CA 94107

What was the problem or opportunity that sparked the idea for the invention?

January 2010 the iPad was announced and the world went "banana's", according to inventor Patrick Buckley. Like the iPhone before it, the iPad was expected to dominate the market. Along with the actual iPad's the billion-dollar market also led to success for peripheral products developed for Apple devices. Patrick Buckley wanted a piece of the market, and being no stranger to inventing, was easily inspired to develop an invention for the iPad market.

Top Five Challenges:

- Being the son of an author, Patrick was very familiar with the full publication process for books. His idea was to build an iPad case that paid homage to a well-crafted hardcover book. Albeit, fully dedicated to his idea, he had to commit to designing and producing his invention within a short two-month period. A difficult feat for even the most seasoned inventor.
- With such a small window to bring his product to the marketplace,
 Patrick had to begin prototyping immediately. Unfortunately, prototyping
 took up all of his time, and he also needed to begin marketing his
 invention simultaneously. He decides to bring in friend and colleague
 Craig Dalton, a marketing expert and now director so that he does not
 fall behind on his timeline.
- When Apple announces a product, they have a tendency to keep the specifics a secret until the actual launch. Patrick doesn't even have the physical dimensions of the new iPad in which to create his new case to fit. With nothing but a photograph of the iPad being held by an average sized man, he needed to create his product in such a way that even if his guessed measurements are off a little, then the iPad will still fit in the case
- Patrick contacted a number of bookbinding companies to find someone
 to recreate the feel of a well-bound book for the outer case. After
 securing the manufacturing of the outer case for his prototype, he
 needed to find a way to secure the iPad within the case. He got to work
 in a carpentry shop and tested a variety of different wood types before
 settling on the perfect material, bamboo. There were many benefits to
 using bamboo. It was eco-friendly, something his consumer market
 would appreciate, yet strong enough to keep the valuable iPad safe.
- Finally, with a prototype in hand, Patrick and Craig were ready to reap the opportunity that the Apple market provided. Having finished the product prototype at the literal eleventh hour, they would not have enough time to setup a full e-commerce infrastructure. Instead, they

would have to employ an almost genius guerrilla marketing strategy. They were able to gather 12 Apple enthusiasts in 12 different markets to distribute flyers to consumers waiting in line to buy iPads. For each purchase made from the flyers, the distributors were able to cash in on a small commission.

Darkest Hour:

Patrick spent thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours developing his prototype so that it was just right. On the day of the iPad launch, he was one of the first purchasers. He immediately attempts to fit it into his created Dodocase, and it did not fit. Since Apple is so secretive with their product specifics prior to market launch, Patrick was forced to guess at the dimensions of the iPad, and it turned out that he had guessed wrong. Patrick and his team would need at least a couple of weeks with the newly acquired iPad before they could really hone the case in on the specific dimensions. However, due to their launch day marketing efforts, they already had sales coming in. Luckily, they told consumers, at the time of purchase, that it would take 6-8 weeks for delivery.

Breakthrough:

Through a sheer stroke of luck, one of the Dodocase flyers ended up in the hands of a few bloggers. The bloggers from Engadget, one of highest regarded tech blogs of the time, reached out to Patrick and the Dodocase team with interest in the product. Patrick quickly sent them a prototype for review. As the very influential bloggers wrote an exemplary review on the Dodocase, their sales skyrocketed. At first, they were holding steadily at 10 orders per day. After the review from Engadget, they began to receive over 1,000 orders per day.

First Major Sale:

Their first major sale was kin to their breakthrough. The bloggers from Engadget propelled the Dodocase towards their ultimate success. From

there, they noticed the Dodocase popping up everywhere. It could be seen at coffee shops, on airplanes, and even in the Oval Office.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Product?

The Dodo case has been recreated for all of the newest Apple handheld products. They can be fully customized, and pair well with the many accessories they also have for sale.

First Year Sales Totals:

Once the Dodocase was a full production strength, they were able to generate around \$1 million in just the first 3 months.

Total Sales To Date:

\$25 million in sales to date.

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Invention:



Doggles

Date of the invention:

1997

Industry invention is related to:

Pets

Inventors personal email address:

info@doggles.com

Company name:

Doggles, LLC

Company area code and phone number:

(530) 344-1645

Inventors full name:



Roni Di Lullo and Midnight

Company Full Address:

Doggles, LLC 6192 Enterprise Drive Unit A Diamond Springs, CA 95619

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Fatheads Eyewear?

Roni Di Lullo and her dog Midnight are avid Frisbee players. Roni throws Frisbees over great distances, and Midnight is able to catch them at virtually any level of difficulty. One-day Midnight wasn't catching as many Frisbees as usual. On this sunny summer day, Roni notices that Midnight was squinting. Without protection for his eyes, he was unable to see and catch the Frisbee. This observation led her to a million-dollar invention of doggie sunglasses.

Five Top Challenges:

- After an in-depth online search, Roni comes to the conclusion that sunglasses for dogs are not available in the marketplace yet. She gathers some supplies and decides to make a pair from scratch on her own. She experimented with many types of goggles; expanding the nose piece and adding an extra headband to accommodate the very different shape of a dog's head.
- Roni showcased her new idea by bringing Midnight to the park sporting his new goggles. Due to a very positive response from other park goers, she decided to post a picture online of his new look. She began to generate a lot of interest in her product. It wasn't until people began requesting goggles for their own canines did she realize that she was really onto something. Even veterinary professionals reached out to Roni due to their need for her product. She now would need a plan to bring her invention to consumers.
- Prior to the internet publicity on Daily Candy and her story on CNN, Roni was keeping up with orders with no issues by handmaking the Doggles in her garage. After her story hit the public she was no longer able to fulfill all of these orders on her own. She now needed a new method of manufacturing, and to find a good balance between quality and price that consumers are willing to pay.
- Finding a manufacturer who was willing to take on the Doggles
 production was a large hurdle. The idea of doggie sunglasses didn't
 sound like a product that was going to sell very well, and
 manufacturing companies didn't want to take on the risk. Once Roni
 did find someone to take on the project, she incurred a long process
 developing the molds and materials needed for production.
- Now that Roni was able to produce Doggles on a larger scale, she decided it was time to approach major pet supply retailers to carry her product. With absolutely no experience in presenting a new product

to retailers, she begins by cold calling. She immediately contacts the largest retailer in the industry, PetSmart, and successfully gains an order for 3,000 Doggles.

Darkest Hour:

Aside from the manufacturing hurdle, Doggles fall into the category of things pet owners never knew they even needed. Every step of the way, was more eye opening than the last for Roni. As portrayed on Million Dollar Genius, Roni never fell victim to a darkest hour.

Breakthrough:

A website called <u>Daily Candy</u>, who had 200,000 avid followers, posted an article about Roni's Doggles. This article generated more sales than Roni had ever seen. However, it wasn't until CNN ran a story about the Doggles that her product really took off. Now, bringing in more orders by the hour than she had by the day previously, she needed a new production method.

First Major Sale:

Doggles were finally coming off of the lines from the manufacturer and Roni was able to fill her back orders. Once she was completely caught up she decided it was time to take her product to major pet supply retailers. Not having any contacts in the industry, she began cold calling. Using only the 1-800 number for PetSmart, she was able to gain the product buyer's contact information and submit her Doggles for consideration. About two weeks later, she received a letter in the mail stating that her product had been accepted and they ordered and unprecedented 3,000 pieces.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

The Doggle brand now extends well past just eyewear for dogs. They offer toys, bedding, and a variety of animal safety equipment for dogs who are on the go and working hard every day.

First Year Sales Totals:

\$1,000 per year prior to selling through major pet supply retailer PetSmart

Total Sales To Date:

\$4 Million annually.

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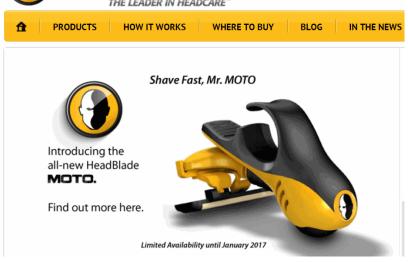
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Invention:



Fatheadz Eyewear

Date of the invention:

2004

Industry invention is related to:

Eyewear

Inventors personal email address:

customerservice@fatheadz.com

Company name:

Fatheadz Eyewear

Company area code and phone number:

(888) 383-1199

Inventors full name:



Rico Elmore

Company Full Address:

Fatheadz, Inc 1125 W. 16th Street Indianapolis, IN 46202

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Fatheads Eyewear?

Rico Elmore, a car salesman from Indianapolis, truly does enjoy wearing sunglasses. However, having a larger sized head meant that he wasn't always able to find sunglasses that fit comfortably. While on his honeymoon in sunny Las Vegas, Rico stopped to purchase a new pair of sunglasses. He tried on pair after pair and nothing fit. Realizing that he can't be the only man out there with this issue, he decides to coin the name Fatheadz and quite literally make eyewear for people with "fat heads". The average piece of eyewear is 5.5" across, in order for a pair to fit comfortably Rico would need a pair closer to 7" wide.

Top Five Challenges:

- The developing stage can be difficult for any inventor. Rico was confident that he could blaze through this particular step. He knew what he wanted. He contacted an engineering firm first. Much to his surprise, the engineering firm didn't call him back after his initial inquiry. When he reached out to them they just weren't interested in the project claiming it just wasn't a good enough idea.
- In order to protect his idea, as many inventors do, he approached the patent agency. In line with the engineering firm they too deemed his idea not good enough, they refused to patent his invention.

- With the assistance of web designer Eric Prentiss, Rico goes live with the Fatheadz website. He and Eric hone down the logo and are ready to take orders. Rico realizes that he needs to create a buzz about his product before the orders will happen. He begins by approaching every high profile customer group that he thinks will appreciate his product. His local Indianapolis, Super Bowl winning, Colts agreed to a free publicity shoot to showcase his product.
- Being backed by professional athletes opens the door to many customers, but Rico wanted to pique the interest of more than just sports fans. His second customer was a local Indianapolis police officer who was overjoyed that Fatheadz had come to market. Considering everything that an officer might face in the line of duty, they put their sunglasses design to the test. This testing phase would highlight a major design flaw which causes the frames to fail over time.
- Time was of the essence for Rico. He wasn't able to foot the bill for a brand new mold, so he needed to find customers and fast to pay for the costs at his newly contracted manufacturing company. He had to reach out to as many media outlets as he could. Expecting more let downs in line with those he's becoming more and more accustomed too, he finally receives an opportunity to be the focus of an article in the Indianapolis Star.

Darkest Hour:

While testing production run versions of Fatheadz frames, Rico discovered a major issue. The production mold that Rico has spent the better part of his life savings on was built incorrectly. The curve of the lens socket was the wrong shape, and over time would cause the frame to break. Rico is out of money and options. He estimated that it would take around \$100,000 to correct the issue.

Breakthrough:

After the Indianapolis Star newspaper runs their article on Fatheadz, they opened it up for use by the associated press. The article was picked up by

the USA Today, and Fatheadz made the front page of the money section. The buzz around Fatheadz began growing tremendously. Rico was even invited onto the CNBC's Squawk Box. One year they had products in 300 stores, and after all of the buzz, by the next year, they had products in 3,000 stores.

First Major Sale:

Rico brought his product together with his brand and set off to Las Vegas. There, he attended a trade show to introduce his product. At the time, he didn't even have a production sample. With only handmade pieces, he gained a lot of positive feedback. After just the first day of the tradeshow, they began receiving only orders. Marking it the big kick off for Fatheadz.

As it turns out, the free Colts publicity paid off. When the first order arrived, Rico contacted the buyer to find out how they heard about their product. The buyer was professional football player Lincoln Kennedy of the Raiders.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

Fatheadz has several different designs for sunglasses that they offer. They have also expanded into the big business of prescription eyewear.

First Year Sales Totals:

The first year Fatheadz was sold in retail stores, they offered 3 different products in only 300 locations.

Total Sales To Date:

\$15 Million in sales to date

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Invention:



Folding Bike

Date of the invention:

1973

Industry invention is related to:

Sports and Recreation

Inventors personal email address:

contact@dahon.com

Company name:

Dahon North America, Inc.

Company area code and phone number:

(626) 305-5264

Inventors full name:



David Hon

Company Full Address:

Dahon North America, Inc. 833 Meridian Street Duarte, California, U.S.A. 91010

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Folding Bike?

Bicycles haven't really changed all that much over the last century, and they are a pretty simple design. They grew widely popular in the 1970's when fuel because scarce. Between declining trade agreements and international duress, the cost of fuel was ever rising. Due to the crisis, David developed a vision where bicycles could integrate with mass transit. This invention would be a lightweight, folding bike that would aid commuters in their travels.

Five Top Challenges:

- David was well employed in the Aerospace industry during the 1970's fuel crisis; business was booming. After David had his vision of designing a new style of bicycle, he began to look for investors. One investor, his brother, offered him \$20,000. David took it as a good sign and went into business with his brother. Though \$20,000 in the 1970's was a decent sum of money, it wasn't enough to sustain him for long. Nonetheless, he quit his lucrative job and put everything at risk to go all in.
- The bicycle industry is a tight niche. Many of the major stakeholders have large portions of the market and David did not have any knowledge of the industry as a whole; he knew even less about designing and manufacturing an entirely new concept bike. They had a lot of qualities to engineer into the new design to meet the criteria for an easily carried folding bike. It has to easily fold, ride like a regular bike, be lightweight, be low-cost, be safe, and most of all, it has to look good.
- Just because David and his brother thought the folding bike was a good idea, doesn't guarantee the consumers will think that it is a good idea. Instead of going in blind, they put together a comprehensive market survey and distributed it to potential buyers. Much to their surprise, 25% of those surveyed agreed with David's idea; 25% being a relatively large part of the market potential.
- Henry, David's brother, took the newly designed prototype to a major trade show in New York City. He was given the opportunity to present and demonstrate their new product and nearly laughed off of the stage. Many of the retailers who attended the show thought the idea was absurd. David and Henry realized that they would have to create a buzz around the product before it could be accepted.
- David packed up his things and moved all the way to Taiwan, forced to leave his family behind, because he was so determined to produce the folding bike. By 1982, they had nearly \$3 million dollars from

investors to bring the invention to market. With that money, David opened a factory, hired a team, and started down the long road ahead of him. David worked such long days designing a production ready prototype that he even slept at his factory. It cost them nearly \$1 million per year just during the design phase.

Darkest Hour:

In order to bring their folding bike to production, the needed the support of sales from retailers. The very competitive bicycle industry just wasn't ready for the folding bike. They thought it was a novelty and wasn't going to sell. Without the support from retailers, David set off to Taiwan to open a factory on his own. His dedication to the project was so deep, that he even slept at the factory. It cost them nearly \$1 million per year, and nearly 2 years to bring their prototype to production standards.

Breakthrough:

Their failed attempt at revealing the folding bike at the New York City trade show barely staggered their confidence. They began using guerrilla marketing tactics to showcase their product. They stood outside of television studios demonstrating the folding bike, and eventually caught the eyes of the reporters exiting the building. From there, they went on to being featured on the Tonight Show and That's Incredible! with their invention. This attracted the eyes investors which gave them the resources they needed to bring the bike to production.

First Major Sale:

This time around, the brothers decided to focus their marketing efforts towards catalogs. In an era before the internet, catalog sales were a major outlet for putting their product out there. The bicycles start selling immediately. From there, the brother's success only continued. They expanded their marketing efforts beyond the sporting and outdoor markets all the way to RV, boat, and small aircraft owners.

Brand Extensions After the First Bike?

Dahon Folding Bikes has kept to the bike industry. They sell their folding bicycles along with related gear all over the world.

The First Year Total Sales:

6,000 units in the first 6 months

Total Sales To Date:

Over 7 million Dahon folding bike sold to date

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Invention:



Morpher Folding Bike Helmet

Date of the invention:

2012

Industry invention is related to:

Cycling Safety

Inventors personal email address:

info@morpherhelmet.com

Company name:

Morpher Helmet

Company area code and phone number:

+852-23323886

Inventors full name:



Jeff Woolf, OBE

Company Full Address:

The distributor of the Morpher Folding Bike helmet:

Strategic Sports Ltd.
Suitd 1102, Woon Lee Comm. Bldg.
7-9, Austin Ave.
TST, Kowloon, Hong Kong

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Morpher Folding Bike Helmet?

After narrowly avoiding death in a cycling accident Jeff became a helmet advocate for cyclists. Knowing first-hand the dangers of not wearing a helmet, he was concerned for other cyclists well-being. He noted, the human head is only built for impact at walking speeds and in no way is it sufficient protection for the brain as a faster speed. He surveyed cyclists, and much to his dismay, he noticed most didn't wear a helmet on a regular basis. When he asked them why most responded that helmets were too

bulky to carry around all day. In his journey to keep fellow cyclists safe, Jeff decided to create a helmet that was easier to carry around.

Top Five Challenges:

- Jeff barely survived a serious bicycle accident. His doctors told him
 the only reason he had survived was the fact he was wearing a
 helmet. This drove Jeff to become a vocal supporter for helmet
 safety. He traveled the UK trying to raise awareness of the benefits
 of wearing a helmet while riding your bicycle.
- Most cyclists avoided wearing helmets because they were too bulky. Jeff was faced with the task of developing a more compact helmet. He knew that a folding helmet was the key, but the material still had to be a certain thickness to be effective, the helmet wasn't any less bulky than before. Jeff had the idea of an interlocking tooth design, inspired by a dog's mouth, where the side would fold into each other like teething allowing the helmet to fold into a thinner shape.
- Although he had a great idea, Jeff lacked the knowledge of how to design a new helmet. He contracted an engineering and design firm to create a helmet that could fold and still be strong enough to protect someone in the event of an accident.
- Poor tooling at the manufacturer resulted in the original helmet being much larger than an average human head. The design was fundamentally flawed and the manufacturer was unwilling to reinvest in the re-tooling to correct the issue.
- Jeff was running out of funds after the failure of the original production model of the Morpher helmet. The engineering firm was on the verge of walking away from the whole project when Jeff decided he had to do new fundraising to keep the project alive. He started a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo, with an initial goal of \$35,000. After a slow start, he eventually raised over \$225,000 by the deadline of the campaign.

Darkest Hour:

Jeff had found a manufacturer in China not only willing to produce the Morpher helmet, but willing to pay for the tooling and help bring it to market through his sales network. When the first helmets came off the line, they were the wrong size. Every helmet was too big and completely unsafe. The manufacturer was unwilling to pay for anymore re-tooling and Jeff was running out of funds fast. He turned to crowdfunding to save his invention.

Breakthrough:

After turning to crowdfunding through Indiegogo, Jeff raised over \$225000, well over his initial goal of \$35,000. Jeff returned to the manufacturer, and after presenting them with proof of the amount of interest the public had in his product, they agreed to re-tool and start production from scratch. The new helmets were perfect.

First Major Sale:

The Morpher helmet received a lot of publicity as an Indiegogo campaign. As a result, sales were high and regular from the outset of the first successful round of production. It has won many awards for safety and innovation from notable trade shows and organizations.

Other Products or Brand Extensions:

As inventor by trade, Jeff has developed other products. Most notably, the award-winning Micomap.

Total Sales To Date:

Over 2,000 orders from 58 countries.

Resources & Contacts

Strategic Sports

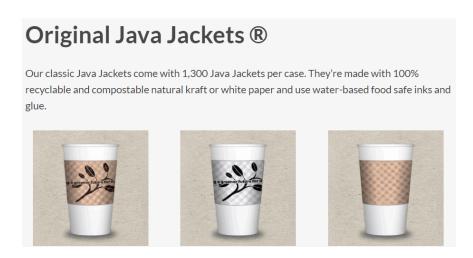
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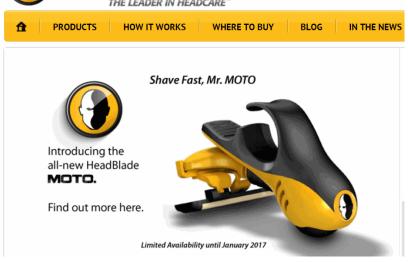
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Invention:



Fox 40 Pealess Whistle

1.) Date of invention:

1987 - First Used at the Pan Am Games in Indianapolis, Indiana

2.) Industry invention is related to:

Sports and Recreation Gear

3.) Inventors email address:

Company address: foxinfo@fox40world.com

4.) Company name:

Fox 40 International

5.) Company area code and phone number:

(905) 561-4040

6.) Inventors full name:



Ron Foxcroft

7.) Company Full Address

Corporate Headquarters

340 Grays Road Hamilton, Ontario Canada L8E 222

US Headquarters

4645 Witmer Industrial Estate Niagara Falls, NY 14305

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

The original Pea Whistle was the industry standard at the time Ron was a referee. As a referee for the sport of basketball, Ron found the Pea Whistle the have 3 major flaws:

- It was hard to hear.
- The cork pea would stick to the side and cause the whistle to fail.
- On occasion, the sides of the whistle would burst, causing the whistle to fail indefinitely.

Top Challenges

Throughout the invention process, Ron faced many challenges.

- Ron did not have the required education to design his invention on his own.
 He would need to invest a large amount of capital and seek guidance from a design professional.
- Ron knew from the beginning that a large amount of capital was going to be needed to design and produce the Pealess whistle. However, the banks denied him, and he was forced to spend against his existing logistics company and his own personal assets in order to fund the project.
- Finding design professionals interested in his proposals proved to be challenging. Even Chuck Sheppard, the industrial designer who ended up helping Ron, turned him away at first.
- Once the prototype was completed, Ron went out on a sales venture. Not a single sports shop would buy or even consider his invention.
- During the mass production phase, the original material intended to make the Pealess whistles would not mold to the required specifications causing his invention to fail.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Ron was about to either quit or lose all of his money and the invention?)

Ron had accrued more than \$150,000 in debt before he had anything to show for it. Upon arriving home, his wife was less than impressed with the cost of his invention. Ron agreed to pay off his debt by refereeing full time. However, during the time he claimed to be refereeing, Ron was actually out trying to sell his new whistle to sports stores. When he didn't come back with even one sale, he was forced to face the facts, and actually commit to refereeing to pay off his debt.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Ron Hope And His Ultimate Success

During the design process, Ron and Chuck were challenged to find a sound that was powerful enough without a pea. After realizing they were

actually developing a well-tuned instrument, they began to find inspiration in other instruments, such as the pipe organ. Chuck developed the core idea of bringing together three pitches to create the powerful sound they needed, but they were unable to create them in an instrument the size of a whistle. After three and a half years of prototyping they had nearly given up, but then they experienced the breakthrough. If they designed the whistle with 3 folded pipes, they would be able to greatly reduce the size.

Ron's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

In the spirit of a true entrepreneur, Ron would go to the ends of the earth to sell his product. At the 1987 Pan Am games, where he was officiating, Ron woke up in the middle of the night with a genius idea. While dorming with 400 other sports referees, Ron stepped out into the hall at 2am and blew his Fox 40 whistle. Ron found himself surprised when many of those who woke up were not angry, instead were interested in where they could buy a such a whistle. For the next 5 days, Ron set up shop on a picnic table and took down nearly 20,000 orders.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

Originally intended for the sport's referees, the Fox 40 Pealess Whistle was further utilized for dog training, lifeguarding, and other industries that required a whistle. After an article in Sports Illustrated, the whistle became the industry standard. The Fox 40 line product line now includes more than just whistles. It includes whistle attachments, Fox 40 gear, Pro Coaching Boards, Mouth guards, Marine and Outdoor products. Fox 40 continually invests in new technologies and continues to grow their brand. One statistic shows that every 8 seconds a Fox 40 whistle is sold. Currently, there are 10 different base model Fox 40 whistles.

The First Year Sales Totals.

The Fox 40's first-year sales are unknown as of yet, but today 10,000 whistles are sold across 140 countries daily.

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

Ron put a \$6 price tag on his invention initially. His reasoning was that the typical pea whistle sold in a, roughly, \$6 12-pack. Within that 12-pack, possibly a 2 or 3 would work. Though Ron sold his whistle at \$6 each, he could guarantee that the Fox 40 would work every time.

Resources & Contacts - List contact information and name of website URL of any industrial designers, plastics manufacturers, buyers, or distributors who ordered the product or were featured in the show.

Chuck Sheppard – Industrial Designer

Carmine Santarelli – President of Nordica Plastics

Nordica Plastics 1905 Sismet Road Mississauga ON L4W 1W8 info@nordicaplastics.com

Tel: 905-624-5504 Fax: 905-624-2950

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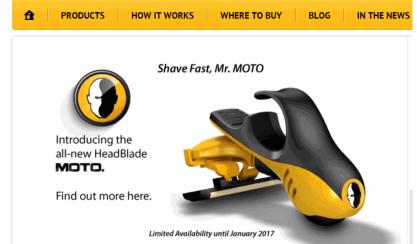
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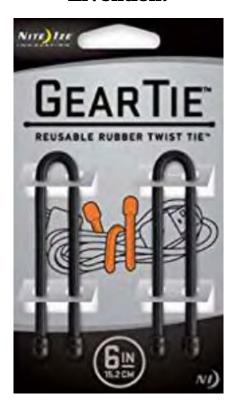
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Invention:



Gear Ties

Date of the invention:

1998

Industry invention is related to:

Hardware and Sporting Goods

Inventors personal email address:

Manufactured: info@xtrudex.com

Distributed: info@niteize.com

Company name:

Manufactured: Xtrudex

Distributed: Nite Ize

Company area code and phone number:

Manufactured: (763) 280-7522

Distributed: (303) 449.2576

Inventors full name:



Dan Martinson

Company Full Address:

Xtrudex 21801 Industrial Blvd Rogers, MN 55374

Nite Ize, Inc. 5660 Central Avenue Boulder, CO 80301 USA

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Gear Ties?

Dan Martinson enjoyed his time at his cabin in the woods. He often traveled the landscape with his gear tied to the back of an ATV. Trying to attach his gear one day, he was trying to pinpoint the best way to secure it. The bungee cords would hold the bag too tight and harm the contents in the bag, but the rope he had on hand was not securing it tight enough. He went to his garage and found some thick scrap wire and used it to hold the bag in place while not putting too much pressure on the contents inside. He hypothesized that with a better gripping texture his wire tie idea could solve a lot of modern day cargo issues.

Five Top Challenges:

- As Dan is fully forming his idea for his invention, he would need to test out as many options as he could find. He needed a wire that could bend and re-bend over time without losing its integrity. He also needed a wire that could react the same in all types of elements, whether it is high heat or below freezing temperatures.
- Concrete-tie-wire was the base material he decided that would hold up to his quality standards. After easily sourcing a distributor of tiewire out of North Carolina, he moved on to the outside rubber coating portion of his product. He needed to find a facility that could extrude rubber cylinders to his specifications. To his surprise, the responses he received were far less than enthusiastic to work with him. He spent months trying to source the rubber housing. However, without any idea of the type of volume he would need or a timetable, no one wanted to work with him. Most of all, no one wanted to work with a start-up of any kind.
- The only way Dan was going to produce his product was by starting production on his own. He invested hundreds of thousands of dollars on his invention; his invention that he didn't even know if he could sell. He researched equipment auctions from closing production facilities to save a few dollars, but ultimately he still invested over \$500,000 to start production on the Gear Tie.

- Dan now has a production facility, but he hasn't figured out one of his main components, the rubber casing. He needed a rubber that was soft enough to grip together, but he also needs it to be strong enough to stand up to outside influences, like saltwater and oil. He had to consider every type of failure potential.
- With a market ready product, Dan approaches major home improvement retailer Menards. Dan quickly realizes that he wasn't as ready as he thought. The product buyer he met with immediately begins to pick apart his product packaging and requires Dan to make a multitude of changes before they will even consider carrying the Gear Ties. He shares a word of advice, "If you're going to stumble and fall, don't do it with someone like Menards, or Home Depot" He now had to redesign his packaging concept, and completely rethink his distribution strategy.

Darkest Hour:

Half a million dollars in, he finally begins production. He immediately has a major issue. The rubber casing would give way to the tie-wire inside, and break apart every time. He spent months, and more resources, experimenting to find a solution. He even considered that, maybe, his idea could be put into production. Finally, after scouring the market, he comes across a common adhesive that was generally used in the food industry to seal food bags. Adding this adhesive to the rubber allowed for it to fully seal around the tie-wire, and perform as intended.

Breakthrough:

When Dan failed to distribute his Gear Ties through Menards, he took the packaging design back to the drawing board and brought in a professional graphic designer, and friend, Jason Smith. Jason revamped the logo to include an image of a Gear Tie, gave the whole package a clean black and white look, and replaced the images Dan had photographed himself with simple, yet clear, line images. They were ready to take Gear Ties to the people. Instead of approaching a big retailer this time, he decided to market his product through Amazon. Watching with great anticipation, their sales came pouring in. After the successful campaign on Amazon, Dan

approaches Menards again and snags the sale; they order 50,000 Gear Ties.

First Major Sale:

There was a lot of production just to complete for this first purchase order from Menards. However, if the sales were going to continue to come in, Dan would have to continue the marketing efforts. There simply was no way for Dan to head up his small production line, and bring all of the product to market. Dan set out for another solution. He cold calls Rick Case, CEO of Nite Ize. During their meeting, Dan realizes Nite Ize has the infrastructure and the marketing team he needs. They strike a deal where Dan would continue the production while Nite Ize would handle the marketing and distribution. Within 12 months of striking the deal with Nite Ize, Dan was producing millions of Gear Ties.

Brand Extensions After the First Product?

Nite Ize brings on new items often, however, Dan's manufacturing company, Xtrudex sticks to producing Gear Ties.

The First Year Total Sales:

1 Million Units

Total Sales To Date:

Over 7 Million Units Sold Annually.

Resources & Contacts:

Rick Case, CEO of Nite Ize

Jason Smith, Graphic Designer

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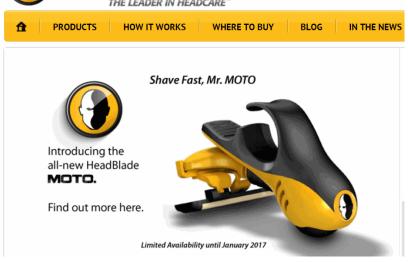
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Invention:



Grillbot

Date of invention:

January 13, 2014

Industry invention is related to:

Backyard Grilling

Inventor's email address:

info@grillbots.com

Company name:

GrillBots

Company area code and phone number:

(800) 854-1576

Inventor's full name:



Ethan Woods

Company Full Address

Grillbot, LLC 87 East 116th Street, Suite #202 New York, NY 10029

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Grillbot?

- Ethan Woods wasn't much of a backyard griller. He had just moved out of New York City to an upstate New York cabin in the woods. On a particular occasion when he did decide to grill, he found the cleaning brushes he had on hand were virtually unusable.
- In his garage, he found a power drill and an attachment he believed was originally intended for paint stripping. After seeing how well his concoction worked, he had his first "Ah-Ha" moment and went to work on creating a robotic grill cleaner.

Top Challenges

- Ethan often had ideas for inventions. He would propose them to his wife, and she would undoubtedly turn them down. His robotic grill cleaner was no exception. He presented her with all the industry facts; nearly 80% of the U.S. population owns a grill, and 15 million grills are sold each year in the U.S. alone. There surely was a market for his invention, but still, she turned it down. Without the support of family, the road ahead was seemingly grim, but Ethan was determined.
- Putting the gears in motion, Ethan contacted many industrial engineers. None of whom would take the project. There were too many variables and potential issues. Issues such as, it would become clogged with grease, or there's no way the robotics would hold up against the heat.
- Finally, a California company, known for robotic pool cleaners, agreed to take on the project. They delivered prototype after prototype. Ethan describes these prototypes as merely "batteries and wires". They were nowhere near his expectations. The two major issues he points out are:
 - They weren't actually cleaning the grill.
 - They would not move correctly over the grill surface.
- Other notable issues were motor fires and constantly breaking gears. The concoctions were no more that safety hazards and not even close to a final product.
- After realizing the California company was not delivering, Ethan had taken his business to a Chinese engineering firm. They assured him, that for one price they would deliver a working prototype, no matter how long it took. Three years later, and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent, Ethan still did not have a working prototype. Upon the eve of the International Home and Housewares Show in Chicago, the biggest housewares trade show in the world, Ethan received one last batch of prototypes from the Chinese engineers to his hotel room. The fear had really set it. He was very unsure about how these prototypes would hold up in the show.

His success at the trade show was jaw dropping. He had made over 1,000 orders. Now, he had to figure out how to manufacture them. He was already \$1.5 million in debt, and he would have to pay for all the equipment necessary to manufacture prior to a single GrillBot coming off the line. This required him to put up every last asset he owned. Luckily, he was already generating an enormous amount of sales, not to mention fame, so this gamble had very little risk.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Ethan was about to either quit or lose all of his money and the invention?)

Ethan entered his darkest hour when he was 3 weeks away from the biggest international housewares trade show in the world. He and his good friend had set a goal to be completed, with a working prototype, by the time of the trade show. However, he was still experiencing major prototype issues; the brushes would fall off constantly, and it just wasn't cleaning well enough. It wasn't until after he checked in his hotel in Chicago that he received the final prototype, the one he was to showcase at the trade show. He feared the worst. He questioned if it would even stay together. His confidence was at an all-time low.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Ethan Hope And His Ultimate Success

Despite all of his doubts and fears, the GrillBot performed very well at the trade show. He describes "feeling like a rockstar" with all the paparazzi around them. People gravitated towards his invention and he placed nearly 1,000 orders. The GrillBot even won the Innovation Award from the trade show judging committee. After leaving the trade show, their phones were continually ringing. The press wanted to cover his invention from every angle. He had over \$300,000 in orders just from that first day.

Ethan's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

(Describe what method of sales the invention was first successful in that started the path to success).

Ethan merely had to put his product on stage in front of the right market and he was in business. From the minute he opened up his prototype at the trade show, he was inundated with interest. In 2015 he sold 14 shipping containers worth of GrillbBots, and each one was sold before it was even unpacked from the container. The GrillBot virtually sold itself.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

The GrillBot is available in 4 different colors along with accessories such as a case, extra brushes, and an extended warranty. GrillBot has yet to expand to other products, but they are still a very new invention just trying to keep up on orders.

The First Year Sales Totals

In 2015, 14 shipping containers of GrillBots were sold.

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

\$6 million in sales to date.

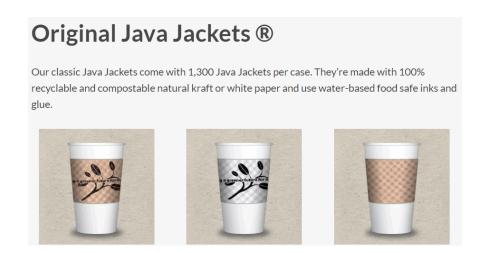
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Invention:



HeadBlade

Date of invention:

Fall of 1999

Industry invention is related to:

Health and Beauty

Inventor's email address:

todd@headblade.com

Company name:

HeadBlade, Inc.

Company area code and phone number:

(877) 427-2067

Inventor's full name:



Todd Greene

Company Full Address

HeadBlade, Inc. 1516 W 132nd St Gardena, CA 90249 US

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

 Todd, like many men, suffered from early hair loss. In his twenties, Todd decided to begin shaving his head to combat the hair loss issue. Luckily for Todd, and the millions of men afflicted by early hair loss, in the 1980's shaved heads had become a popular mainstream choice for balding men.

- Though sporting a bald head may have been the best choice for Todd, the actual shaving process was arduous.
- Todd ran into two major issues when shaving. The first was he constantly nicked his head with razor blades that weren't the right shape, and the second was he wasn't able to reach all the places he couldn't see with his dominant hand.

Top Challenges

- Todd felt he had a great idea, and took the design process as far as he could. Due to Todd's love for cars he had the groundbreaking idea of a suspended second point of contact. Now, Todd needed a professional. He sought out Richard Jarel, prototype engineer, to bring his idea to life. Richard was most accustomed to prototype projects with budgets that exceeded \$100,000, but Todd did not have that large of a budget. Todd mentions he only had around \$1,000 to see this product through. Todd took to his great salesmanship, energy, and enthusiasm to sell Richard on the project, despite Richards doubts.
- Todd and Richard had very different objectives for the prototype, which led to many disappointing times along the way for Todd. Todd wanted a product with a great appearance, whereas Richard was entirely focused on functionality.
 Through many evolutionary steps, they were able to design a super simple product that had both a great appearance and was entirely built on functionality.
- After the design and patent process was completed, Todd had tallied up around \$70,000 in debt. However, he still had the costs of production and marketing to consider. With nowhere left to turn, Todd asked his father for a loan. Todd's father happily loaned him \$85,000 to continue the project. Noting that there is no one else in this world he would rather help than his own son.
- The first production run of the HeadBlade delivered a batch of 500 pieces. Todd set out to the busiest beach in California, Venice Beach, to set up shop. He and his friend/early investor, Josh Borris, handed out flyers and approached anyone with a shaved head. At the end of the day he had only sold 10 out of the 500

HeadBlades. If he was going to find success, he was going to need sales, and fast!

• Todd was desperately trying to spread the word about his invention, but he found himself stuck in a catch-22. He needed press coverage. So, he sent his blades out to popular magazines to write an article on them. The magazines said that they could not write about his invention because it was only sold on his website; he would need to sell them at a major retailer. However, major retailers wouldn't sell his invention because there wasn't any press on the product.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Todd was about to either quit or lose all of his money and his invention?)

Todd's darkest hour surfaced when he realized that he couldn't sell the HeadBlade. He needed press coverage to sell his product through major retailers, but the press wouldn't write about his product until it was sold through a major retailer.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Todd Hope And His Ultimate Success

Around the holidays one year, Todd received a phone call on his business telephone line. It was Time Magazine. They asked him a few questions for an undisclosed reason and promised that he would be very happy with the outcome. The very next month, Todd and his HeadBlade were featured in Time Magazine as one of the Top 10 inventions in the world.

Todd's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

The first major sale of the HeadBlade came after being featured in Time Magazine. Suddenly, Todd went from no orders to receiving daily orders in the thousands of pieces.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

Stemming from the original design of the HeadBlade, the company has redesigned it a few times over to meet growing trends. Aside from the redesigns, HeadBlade also carries a line of HeadSlick shave cream.

The First Year Sales Totals

Unknown

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

\$40 Million in Sales to date.

Resources & Contacts

Richard Jarel – Prototype Engineer

Email: Richard@jareldesign.com

Phone: (541) 772-4207

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- 9. K'Nex
- 10. X-hose
- 11. TRX
- 12. Slanket
- 13. Coolest
- 14. Gear Ties
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- 16. Under The Weather Shelter
- 17. Two Men and a Truck
- 18. Cronut
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- 20. Fatheadz
- 21. Doggles
- 22. Waboba Ball
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29. Knork 30. Jenga

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Invention:



Jenga

Date of the Jenga Invention:

1982

Industry invention is related to:

Toys and Games

Inventors personal email address:

info@oxfordgames.co.uk

Company name:

Oxford Games

Company area code and phone number:

+44 1865 351007

Inventors full name:



Leslie Scott

Company Full Address:

Oxford Games Limited Upper Woods Farm, OX3 9TF UK

What Was the Problem or Opportunity That Sparked the Idea For Jenga

Leslie Scott, growing up in Ghana, spent her time as a child playing blocks with her little brother, as many children do. While building with a common children's block set, Leslie, and her brother, developed a game where they would build a tower, remove a block from the middle of the tower, and place the block on the top of the tower, all without knocking the tower down. Later in life, Leslie moved to England, where she introduced her game to friends. The game became the center of entertainment for friendly gatherings and dinner parties. On one occasion, Leslie brought her game to a fundraising event, and players were so entertained that they began asking her where they could purchase a set of blocks for themselves. That was the point when she knew that her game had a marketable quality about it, and began pursuing her invention further.

9.) List top five challenges inventor experienced:

- Realizing the potential her wooden block game had, Leslie needed to make a difficult choice. If she was really going to follow through with her invention, then she needed to divert all of her attention toward it. At the time, Leslie was employed by Intel, and in the 1980's Intel was leading the way in technology development. This wasn't a job that she could just give up on a whim. Leslie, however, was so confident in her invention that she took the bold step and quit her job with Intel.
- A key element to Leslie's block game required all of the blocks to be slightly different in shape. The variation in the block sizes allows for the game to be different and challenging every time it's played. Manufacturing game pieces to be identical is something that mass production had mastered, however, manufacturing game pieces to have slight variations was substantially more difficult. Leslie took her challenge to a local carpenter who was able to work out the details with relative ease. By planking the unfinished wood, before the pieces were cut from it, with slight, yet continuous variations, the game pieces would, in turn, create the variations in game piece size that Leslie was looking for.
- Gearing up to bring her newly coined game, Jenga, to the 1983
 London Toy Fair, Leslie would need to produce a substantial amount

of game sets to present. Without the financial resources, Leslie would only be able to show her prototypes. Luckily, Leslie was able to secure a bank loan to fund the production of 1,000 sets prior to the trade show; along with loaned resources from her friend Jerome and her parents.

- Unsure of what do to after Jenga flopped at the London Toy fair, she found herself at a point of no return. She was accumulating debt quickly, and without any income, she knew she had to act quickly. Based on reactions of friends and family who played Jenga, Leslie thought that the only way she was going to generate sales was if she was able to get people to actually play the game. Leslie reached out to a local television broadcaster to cover a Jenga tournament that she sponsored. This coverage caught the eye of the toy buyer from Harrods, a major retailer, who made the first retail order.
- The success of the tournament kicked off the sales for Jenga. Now, being sold at Harrods, Leslie needed to continue her marketing efforts. She realized that she could not be everywhere at once demonstrating the product, but she was unable to devise a plan successfully market Jenga in another fashion.
- Irwin Toys, the largest toy company in Canada, at the time, caught Jenga in their sights. They were so impressed that the made an offer to buy the exclusive rights to the game from Leslie. Knowing full well that she would not be able to sell her game to its full potential, Leslie made the difficult choice to sign on with Irwin Toys, and let them exclusively market Jenga under their name.

Darkest Hour

At the 1983 London Toy Fair, the largest toys and games trade show in the world at the time, Leslie was unable to make a single sale. All of the trade show attendees's just passed by her showcase booth, completely unenthused by her new game. Losing confidence, and feeling extremely deflated, Leslie didn't know where to turn next. She feared that she had

completely miscalculated the gaming market, as the rise of digital gaming was taking over, and any non-digital game had very little chance in the marketplace going forward.

Breakthrough

A brother to one of Leslie's friends decided to sell Leslie's Jenga game in Canada. To increase interest, he held Jenga tournaments in shopping malls and invited the public to participate. On one occasion, a buyer from Irwin toys picked up a set of Jenga blocks as he passed through. He brought his new find back to Irwin toys, the number one Canadian toy company at the time, and pitched it to George Irwin, the owner, himself. Irwin toys were so impressed by the game, that they made an offer to pick up the exclusive rights to the game.

First Major Sale

After signing on with Irwin Toys, Jenga was showcased at the 1986 Toronto Toy Fair. In order for the Jenga to succeed, it's positive perception, under the Irwin umbrella, at this trade show would be paramount. Luckily, Jenga was a complete hit. Irwin walked away with over 100,000 orders for Jenga, which was an unprecedented success for Irwin. In a final push to take Jenga to the top, Irwin took the game to Hasbro Toys and partnered with them to facilitate the worldwide distribution of the game.

What other products or brand extensions came after the first Jenga?

Leslie's Company, Oxford Toys, sells a full complement of British classic/vintage games.

Total sales of the invention mentioned in the show to date:

Over 60 Million games sold worldwide

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Invention:



K'NEX

Date of the invention:

1992

Industry invention is related to:

Toys and Games

Inventors personal email address:

email@knex.com

Company name:

K'NEX Industries Inc.

Company area code and phone number:

(215) 997-7722

Inventor's full name:



Joel Glickman

Company Full Address:

K'NEX Industries Inc. 2990 Bergey Rd, Hatfield, PA 19440

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

- Joel Glickman was recently retired from a plastics company that he built from the ground up. He often found himself bored in his retirement. While he was attending a wedding with his wife, he found himself suffering from a severe case of boredom and asked the server for some plastic straws to occupy his time.
- During his time playing with straws, he began building and constructing leading him to the fundamental design of K'NEX.

Top Challenges

The original design for K'NEX included connectors and rods. It was pretty simple, yet the outcomes were infinite. While playing with his initial prototypes, he discovered a major flaw in their design.

He intended for the building pieces to create structurally sound constructions, but currently, his design required for rods to fit around connector ends.

This wouldn't allow for structural supports to be added without undoing prior design work. He sat with this design flaw for many days until he had an "Ah-Ha" moment.

He developed the idea of snap fitting the rods into place with the connectors. This would allow for support rods to be added during construction without dismantling hours of work.

- The toy industry has very high standards of quality, and no detail could go untested. Joel realized the utter importance of quality testing after bringing home his first prototype. He handed the first rod and connector to his wife and asked her to pull them apart. Instead of pulling it apart, she broke the rod. Joel then brought it back to the drawing board and pinpointed every potential flaw and tested accordingly.
- Joel spent nearly 3 decades building up his plastics manufacturing business. Though they were well versed in production, they were not privy to toy manufacturing. Joel knew if his invention was going to take off that he was going to have to put his business all in. In order to do that, he would have to stop taking new orders and dedicate his facility to producing K'NEX. By taking this action, Joel was risking his livelihood, his family's livelihood, and his employee's livelihoods. It was rumored around the facility that, perhaps, Joel was a bit off his rocker, so to speak.

- Throughout the entire process, Joel's endgame was to take his invention and sell
 it to a major toy company, like <u>Mattel</u>. After a unanimous rejection from the entire
 industry, Joel was forced to figure out how to sell the product on his own.
- Joel's factory was a plastics manufacturer. They didn't have any experience, at all, in marketing and sales. He would have to approach toy retailers on his own.

They knew the only option was to find their way into <u>Toys R Us</u>; they were the only toy retailer that mattered. After summoning up a contact who had prior experience with the major toy retailer, they were afforded just 15 minutes with the buyer for building toys to make the sale. He was already extremely unreceptive of the idea.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Joel was about to either quit or lose all of his money and the invention?)

Joel had the benefit of having production and design resources at his disposal during the development phase of his invention. What he lacked were marketing and sales professionals. He saw the solution as a simple one. He would just sell his invention to a major toy company while he handled the production side of the business. However, Joel couldn't make a sale to a single toy company. He was left with his invention and no way to sell it.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Joel the Hope And His Ultimate Success

Despite the doubts of those around him, Joel goes through with converting his entire facility to producing the K'NEX. Once the pieces began rolling off the lines, something magical happened. His employee's all began playing with the toys. As

they watched their creations come alive in front of them all of their doubts subsided. Everyone finally believes in Joel's vision.

Joel's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

Joel went through all of his contacts looking for someone with ties to the toy industry. He came across a colleague who had a product that was sold at Toys R Us. His colleague contacted the VP of Toys R Us at the time who agreed to arrange a 15-minute meeting for Joel with their buyer of building toys. The buyer was less than enthusiastic to meet with Joel.

Upon scheduling the meeting he claimed that it was merely going to be a waste of everyone's time. Joel knew he had to make the sale of a lifetime. When he entered the meeting, they both stood in silence as Joel presented a few constructions made of K'NEX. After what Joel considers as the longest 2-minute time period, the buyer turned his opinion around and spent the next 2 hours explaining to Joel how the buying process worked.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

K'NEX hasn't designed any new toy brands from the ground up since their conception, but they have taken on the construction of classic toys such as Lincoln Logs and Tinker Toys.

The First Year Sales Totals

\$44 million in sales revenue.

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

\$2 Billion

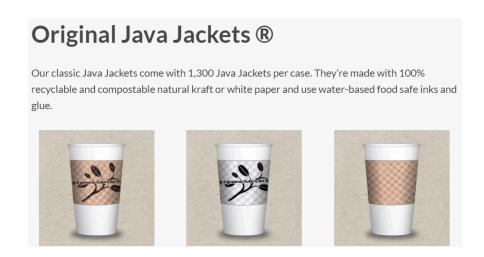
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- 28. Chord Buddy

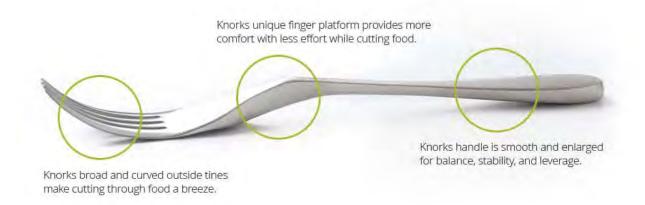
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Invention:



Knork

Date of the invention:

2000

Industry invention is related to:

Food and Beverage

Inventors personal email address:

email@knork.net

Company name:

Phantom Enterprises

Company area code and phone number:

1-877-566-7548

Inventors full name:

Mike Miller



Company Full Address:

101 S Evans Newton KS 67114

What was the problem or opportunity that sparked the idea for the Knork?

Mike Miller was always an inventor at heart. He spent his childhood tinkering, trying to figure out how things worked. When Mike was 13 at a friend's pizza party, wearing the nicest clothes he owned at the time, he contemplated how he was actually going to eat the pizza. His first option was to pick up the slice and risk a mess on his nice clothes, and his second choice was to use a plastic party fork to try and cut through the pizza. With the intention of impressing the girls at the table, Mike went with the safe route and attempted to use the fork to cut through the pizza. The plastic fork was not a suitable tool to cut through the pizza, and Mike knew there had to be a better way. Noticing a man slicing pizza behind the counter, Mike takes note of the rocking action he used to slice through the pizza and immediately see's the solution.

Top five challenges inventor experienced:

- Mike was slated to study medicine in college. However, the night before he was supposed to make the decision to go to medical school, he realized that it just wasn't his passion; he was an inventor. Though he was confident in his aspiration, he was worried about letting his father down, who had worked so hard to give a college education to each of his children. Fortunately, Mikes father was complete in his understanding and actually encouraged Mike to pursue his dream of inventing.
- Traditional utensils have remained relatively unchanged for the past millennium. If Mike was going to follow through with his knife and fork combination design, then he would have to put his all into it. He didn't want to just develop another gimmick, he intended to create a new utensil that changed the way consumers currently perceived them.
- In order to create a fork that was also a knife, Mike had to experiment with the sharpness of the knife portion. It would have to cut effectively, but it couldn't be so sharp that it would cut the inside of the mouth. His original inspiration came from the pizza cutting tool called the "mezzaluna". The mezzaluna utilizes a rocking motion to slice pizza and does not require a sawing action like the traditional table knife.
- Utilizing Bondo, a filler used to reinforce metal, Mike went into action designing his product with a regular kitchen fork. He shaped the Bondo onto the fork and sanded it down to a basic prototype. Due to the texture of the Bondo, once Mike sanded it to the desired thickness, it was then to brittle to function properly. He was unable to create a working prototype on his own. He took a rough design to a metal shop where they were able to make a silicon mold. They were then able to make a solid prototype for Mike to test.
- Having declined the offer of the college education, Mike was without a
 job and the resources to fully bring the Knork to market. Luckily, his
 grandparents believed in his product and funded the first \$10,000 Mike
 would need to begin the process. Using the funding to create a saleable

prototype, his parents were then impressed enough to hand over his college fund for him to bring the Knork all the way to the marketplace.

Darkest Hour

Mike had overcome a lot of obstacles during to the prototyping process. He and Jeremy Weinman, of <u>Rapid PSI</u>, continuously redesigned the Knork until it was just right; adjusting just fractions of millimeters at a time to complete it. When Mike finally had the perfect design, he sent it out for full-scale production. He funded the mold production, and they starting flying off of the production lines. Mike opened the first case of Knorks and noticed that the knife edge was sharper than he intended. Though the knife was supposed to be capable of cutting, it was also supposed to be dull enough to not cut the inside of the consumer's mouth. As it turned out, his first run was a failure, and he would have to begin the production step again.

Breakthrough

The Knork had been on the market for a while, picking up steam where ever it went. In 2011 the Knork really made its big debut into popular culture when it was featured on the popular cooking show, <u>Top Chef.</u> It was here that the Knork finally made the change from being a gimmick or gag gift, to being considered a genuine utensil that made consumers question the traditional way of using a fork and knife.

First Major Sale

The sales for the Knork started out slow. Beginning at just \$45,000 in sales for their first year, they needed to lay a lot of groundwork for consumers to accept the new utensil concept. They sold directly to restaurants and restaurant chains, retailers, and through food and beverage trades shows. Slowly, but surely, their sales began to take off. In the following years, the Knork began to show sales figures of 6 and 7 digits. Though they made some great sales along the way, it was genuine perseverance that ultimately sold the product.

What other products or brand extensions came after the first idea?

Currently, Knork brand extends to multiple lines of flatware and cutlery, including plastic ware.

What were the first year sales totals

Started off with \$45,000 in sales.

Total sales to date

Over \$8 Million

Invention:



Life is Good

Date of the invention:

1989

Industry invention is related to:

Apparel and Design

Inventors personal email address:

goodstories@lifeisgood.com

Company name:

"Life is Good"

Company area code and phone number:

(888) 339-2987

Inventors full names:



John and Bert Jacobs

Company Full Address:

Lifeisgood.com 15 Hudson Park Dr. Hudson, NH 03051

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Life is Good?

Upon completing their college degrees the Jacob brothers set off to figure out their respective futures. Their ever-underlying dream, as with many artists, was always to make a living selling their artwork. John and Bert were not the types of artists that produced high-end fine art, they were more interested in introspective art that was seemingly difficult to market. While they were in college, they dabbled in t-shirt design as a hobby, and on a whim, they decided that this would be an appropriate medium to enter the marketplace. More than just the t-shirt business, they recognized that consumers are constantly inundated with negative messages; the media is the driving force behind spreading negativity. Being the optimists that they were, they wanted to use their t-shirt brand as a rallying cry for optimism; create something that was the polar opposite of what consumers were used to.

Top Five Challenges:

- Their original t-shirt designs would sell on occasion, but it was hardly enough to call a living or even keep gas flowing into their van. Instead, they realized that t-shirts are excellent tools for communication. What the wearer of the t-shirt feels on the inside will often reflect through their choice of t-shirt on the outside. The would need to build a brand with a message that consumers could "get" behind and support.
- Searching for that perfect branding message took time. Even their close friends were concerned that they were still working on the t-shirt "thing". They knew the message they delivered had to be absolutely perfect before taking the brand any further. Looking for inspiration everywhere they went, it finally occurred to them the inspiration was actually in the past. A simple dinner time ritual conducted by their mother would act as their, much needed, springboard.
- Bunkering down in Boston, the brothers used their newly acquired apartment as their design studio. They used the empty wall space as the drawing board and invited friends to provide feedback on their artwork. Ultimately, they used that feedback in choosing their brand logo.
- The brothers had officially been in the t-shirt business for 5 years, and yet they only had \$78 between the two of them. They were genuinely failing at their business. They needed to get their design and slogan out there into influential markets to spread their word of optimism.
- They were confident with that message "Life is good" would resonate with their target market. However, often, when the brothers tried to pitch their product to potential retailers they were not taken seriously and frequently turned away. They were not seen as professionals; they were unconventional in their ways and genuinely didn't look the part.

Darkest Hour:

After spending 5 years shuffling their t-shirt project along, the brothers didn't have much to show. Between the two of them, they only had \$78 total. The business was failing despite having just developed and designed their new logo and slogan. Taking everything had, the pulled together just enough resources to create a new batch of t-shirts and bring them to a street fair in Cambridge, MA.

Breakthrough:

The brothers developed the character Jake and the "Life is Good" slogan on the walls of their apartment with the help of input from friends and neighbors. They took 48 t-shirts with Jake and his life is good slogan to a street fair in Cambridge, MA. All 48 shirts sold within 45 minutes. They noticed that people of all ages and walks of life bought their shirts and realized that they had a brand with wide appeal. After making a consignment deal the brothers began taking orders for shirts depicting Jake doing the things people said they loved to do such as biking, eating ice cream, fishing, and add "Life is Good."

First Major Sale:

John and Bert were able to set up a meeting with sporting goods retailer Galyan's. They were worried that their offices would seem unprofessional, and drive the Galyan's reps away, as the office was also the brother's apartment. Instead of backing down, they prepared a pasta dinner for the businessmen and "talked about 2% business and about 98% life." At the end of the meal, they had a big order from Galyan's.

Products or Brand Extensions:

The "Life if Good" brand has extended to apparel for the entire family, even the dog. Also, they sell a variety of home décor and accessories.

Total Sales To Date:

100 million dollars to date

Resources & Contacts

In 2004, Galyan's was acquired by Pittsburgh-based <u>Dick's Sporting</u> Goods.

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Invention:



Micro Scooter

Date of the invention:

1999

Industry invention is related to:

Sporting Goods

Inventors personal email address:

info@microkickboard.com

Company name:

Micro Kickboards

Company area code and phone number:

888 236 5657

Inventors full name:

Wim Ouboter

Company Full Address:

Micro Kick Boards 5090 Kendrick Ct SE Grand Rapids, MI 49512

What was the problem or opportunity that sparked the idea for the invention?

One evening in Zurich, Wim Ouboter and his wife were interested in going out for a meal. However, they did not want to walk a great distance or deal with the complications involved with driving to the location. Driven by a need for a simple solution to travel over short distances, he looked to his past for inspiration. When Wim was a young boy, the scooter was a popular toy in his family. He began to formulate his big idea of a smaller, more practical version of his beloved childhood toy.

Top Five Challenges:

Recreating a child's toy for adults is a challenge in itself, so Wim began
by evaluating all the different aspects and variations of the scooter.

Taking inspiration from other wheel equipped products, he decides to
use the solid wheel concept from inline skates to create his first
prototype. Using parts found in his garage, Wim creates a very crude
prototype of which he was not very pleased with. His wife remembers it
as being ugly and heavy. Despite its unappealing appearance, the
prototype wasn't a complete failure. Wim continued his design towards
a better model.

- Wim experimented with various design ideas. Some were more successful than others. His ultimate goal was to create the "laptop" of the scooter world. He wanted it to be small, light, and functional. By shortening the deck and reducing the size of the wheels, Wim finally had a prototype he was happy with. It was a little challenging to maneuver, but, he notes that it was a lot of fun to ride. He then took his prototype and showcased it to his friends and colleagues. When none of them shared his enthusiasm, Wim was discouraged; unsure of whether his should continue his project.
- After the positive response from the children in his neighborhood, Wim decided to continue his product. Wim, however, didn't know the first thing about manufacturing and production. He didn't know where to have his product produced or who to work with. Instead of heading up these tasks, Wim set out to find a big company who would want to take the Micro scooter on. With a lot of luck, Wim sets up a meeting with Mercedes-Benz. In the meeting with around 25 people, Wim wins them over and received a resounding acceptance.
- The shakedown at Mercedes-Benz ultimately kept them from picking up the Micro scooter as a product line. Despite the disappointment, Wim now had the confidence in his product to bring it to the market on his own. With a lot of starts and stops along the way, Wim successfully began production and was now ready to show the world his new toy.
- As with many new inventions, the knockoffs began to take over. Other manufacturers flooded the market with new cheaper, almost most identical foldable scooters, and the Micro scooter was having trouble holding onto even the smallest slice of the market share. With over \$7.5 million worth of product in his warehouse, Wim had to find a way to unbury himself from the market crash. Prior to the flood, Wim had already been working on a children's only scooter, called the Micro Mini. The Micro Mini was a big hit, allowing them to cross the enormous debt hurdle, and stay in business.

Darkest Hour:

As a banker by trade, Wim didn't know the first thing about bringing a product to the marketplace. So, instead of heading up the manufacturing efforts on his own, he sought a big a company to back his product first. With a stroke of luck, Wim set up a meeting at the big time car company, Mercedes-Benz. He won the backing of the company with relative ease and was on his way to completing his project. This was until Mercedes had a complete corporate restructuring. Wim notes that people were being fired left and right, and the company as a whole was in question. This brought all of Wim's hopes and dreams crashing down in an instant. The ultimate in disappointments.

The Breakthrough:

Wim had completely given up on his fold up, lightweight scooter. Until, one day, a few children from his building spotted his prototype and asked Wim if they could test it out. After a while, Wim had lines of children waiting every day to try out this new toy. Although the children weren't the consumer market he had hoped for, he then realized that this could be the next big toy, and decided to continue his project.

First Major Sale:

With product in hand, Wim took the new Micro scooter to the <u>ISPO</u> trade show for sporting goods in Munich. Under the direction of his new marketing director, Hans-Peter Bolliger, Wim showcased his new globally branded Micro scooter. Noting the expression "fake it 'til you make it", Wim acted like the leader of a global company, and so he was treated as a leader of a global company. The response was unprecedented. Almost 380 companies inquired about selling the Micro scooter from the trade show alone.

What other products or brand extensions came after the first idea?

Micro Kickboard has expanded their product line to include scooters for children and adults or all ages. They even offer balance bikes and ride on toys for children ages 1-5.

First Year Sales:

Upon beginning manufacturing, they were producing 1,000 pieces. After the ISPO tradeshow, their production went up to 80,000 pieces per day to meet the sales demands. Hans notes they did almost a half a million dollars in turnover in just the first year.

Total Sales of The Invention

Micro is in 87 countries and brings in over \$60 million in sales annually.

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Invention:



Olloclip

Date of invention:

May of 2011

Industry invention is related to:

Technology - Digital Photography

Inventor's email address:

support@olloclip.com

Company name:

Olloclip LLC

Company area code and phone number:

(714) 497-0007

Inventor's full name:



Patrick O'Neill

Company Full Address

Olloclip, LLC 16291 Gothard Street Huntington Beach, CA 92647

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

- Patrick would describe himself as an amateur photographer, his family
 might call him a fanatic. Even at his daughters local sporting events, Patrick
 would take upwards of 200 photos for 4 minutes of play time. He would go
 hiking and pack a bag with all of the photography lenses he could ever
 need.
- With the invention of the iPhone 4, he realized that his dream of a compact clip-on lens could finally become a reality. Smartphones, like the iPhone 4, added many new amateur photographers to this already a widely popular hobby. He wanted to deliver professional grade lenses to this booming industry.

Top Challenges

- The first challenge Patrick and his design team met was how to fit a compact lens onto a smartphone. Without a complete working knowledge of smartphone technology, even Chong Pak, the Director of Design, was doubtful that this project would ever launch. The easiest solution was a magnetic connection between the lens and the phone, but Apple strictly banned the use of magnets due to the interference with the devices. Despite this challenge, they came to a simple solution that was cost effective; 3D printed clips would sufficiently hold the devices in place.
- The tech gadget industry is highly competitive. I mere whisper of his new clip-on lens beyond his design team could compromise its success. He couldn't even tell his family. His family knew he was working on something, as they saw the 3D printed clips around their house, but the application was a mystery. Keeping this secret was not an easy feat for Patrick.
- Patrick was fully invested in his invention, literally. He mortgaged his house and even dipped into his daughter's college fund to keep it going. Failure was not an option, according to Patrick, because he would lose everything. This high-risk also had to be kept secret from his own family for fear that the invention might leak.
- Despite having put up everything he owns to continue the Olloclip, he still ran out
 of money. He made it all the way to an acceptable Apple quality prototype before
 the well ran dry. At the time, <u>Kickstarter</u>, a crowd funding platform, had just begun
 to gain in popularity. He set up a campaign to raise \$15,000. The continuation of
 his product depended on hitting this goal. If he was even a dollar short, then
 Kickstarter wouldn't pay out a dime.
- After the success of his Kickstarter campaign, he now had to deliver 7,000
 Olloclips to the early investors in a 2-month time span. He wasn't in anyway
 ready for mass production. He set up shop in his own home, and, with the help of
 his daughter and her friends, met the ambitious deadline.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Patrick was about to either quit or lose all of his money and the invention?)

Patrick gambled everything. He would lose even the roof over his head if the Olloclip didn't succeed. Even worse, though, he had gambled everything in secret. Even his design team didn't know how deep he was in debt to this project. When his daughter would press the issue of college, Patrick would avoid the topic or discourage schools with hefty price tags.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Patrick Hope And His Ultimate Success

As the Olloclip was approaching it's \$15,000 funding goal on Kickstarter, the team received some great press. <u>Engadget</u>, a web magazine for new tech and gadgets, covered the Olloclip in an article. This great press pushed the project over its \$15,000 goal and ended with just over \$70,000 in crowd funding. The KickStarter crowd, after receiving their Olloclips, grew the momentum even more by sharing their results on social media and encouraging more interest.

Patrick's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

(Describe what method of sales the invention was first successful in that started the path to success).

Though they had sold many Olloclips already, the big day came when they received a call from <u>Apple</u>. As far as they were concerned, Apple was the only retailer that mattered. Apple invited the design team to meet with them out at

their headquarters, they provided great feedback, and just 2 weeks later the Olloclip was approved to be sold in Apple stores.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

The Olloclip lenses have evolved over time based on the changing technology and demand. In addition to the Olloclip, they offer specialty smartphone cases and accessories to aid in the use of the Olloclip lenses.

The First Year Sales Totals

By June of 2014, the Olloclip was being sold in Apple stores in over 90 countries, and by 2014 they had shipped their 1 millionth lens.

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

\$70 Million.

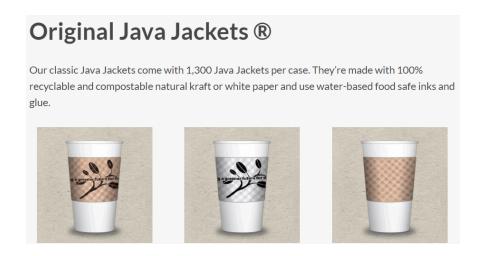
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Invention:



Quikpod

Date of invention:

2006

Industry invention is related to:

Digital Photography

Inventor's email address:

info@quikpod.com wayne@frommworks.com

Company name:

Quikpod

Company area code and phone number:

(800) 567-0878 - (USA & Canada)

(905) 737-7000 – (USA, Canada, International)

Inventor's full name:



Wayne Fromm

Company Full Address

Fromm Works Inc. 1300 Military Road Buffalo, New York USA 14217

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

- Wayne Fromm is an avid photographer. He and his daughter travel often and take a wide variety of photos.
- Whenever they wanted to take a photo that captured both of them they
 would have to ask a stranger for help. This posed a lot of risks; the stranger
 could mishandle the camera causing damage or even steal it. Also, Wayne
 often noticed people taking selfie pictures with extended arms.

 This lead to off center and low-quality pictures. Wayne saw this as an opportunity to greatly improve the art of taking selfies.

Top Challenges

- Even prior to inventing the Quikpod, Wayne worked closely with <u>Vincent Lotempio</u>, Registered Patent Attorney. Wayne was a seasoned inventor and knew the importance of securing his inventions. Prior to taking his design to fruition, he was faced with the challenge of weighing his risks against the potential rewards. He had to question whether his invention would "flop". Before even selling the first unit, he would have to front all the costs for travel, legal needs, engineering fee's, and manufacturing.
- Once Wayne committed to the project, he had to endure the prototyping phase.
 Wayne wanted the end product to be just right. It was intended to be an all in one
 handheld photo taking tool; it needed to be compact, durable, waterproof, and
 TSA friendly. Wayne worked around the clock to find the right design. The right
 design also included finding the right materials. The materials had to be effective,
 yet budget friendly for the consumer. Wayne made a remarkable amount of
 prototypes before settling on the best design.
- Often, when an inventor launches a new product, they do so with the aid of marketing agencies and promotional design teams. Along with his daughter Sage, a recent Marketing graduate, Wayne launched his product independently.
- After launching the Quickpod, Wayne noticed that when his invention was
 demonstrated properly he always made the sale. However, when the Quickpod
 sat on a shelf, consumers didn't understand what it was for. This made sales
 without demonstration virtually impossible, and, since Wayne couldn't be more
 than one place at a time, it drastically limited his selling opportunities.
- The Quikpod was such a useful tool, that after displaying it internationally at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, local manufacturers began selling knockoffs of subpar quality. Wayne approached a vendor displaying a version of the Quikpod at an undisclosed trade show inquiring about the inventor of such a device. The vendor took the credit as the inventor. At this point, Wayne had invested a large sum into

legal actions against knockoff manufacturers but found that his attempts made no effect. Instead of continuing his legal efforts, Wayne offered the knock off manufacturers the opportunity to manufacture for him. This way, he could eliminate some of the lower quality knockoffs from his competition and continue selling his quality product.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Wayne was about to either quit or lose all of his money and his invention?)

Wayne decided it was time to take the Quikpod internationally after their hit TV debut on QVC America. So, they prepared to bring their product to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Their sales gained a lot of momentum to start, but then they began to notice knockoff Quikpods were being sold on every corner.

The knock off manufacturers even used their packaging designs and images to present the product as the same. Often, it wasn't until the packaging was opened that the poor quality product could be identified as a knockoff.

The product was beginning to take on a life of its own, and it was entirely out of Wayne's hands. It widely became known as the "Selfie Stick". His lawyer, Vincent, began fighting the arduous legal battle which was consuming, expensive, and generally unsuccessful.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Wayne Hope And His Ultimate Success

Wayne recognized that the consumer public was generally unaware of the purpose of the Quikpod using only the packaging as a reference. He knew that he needed a platform in which to demonstrate his product to a large

audience at one time. His big break came when he was offered a spot on QVC Ideally reached over 93 million Americans, and Wayne was offered a great time slot allowing him to reach the maximum amount of buyers. His special sold out, and the popularity of his product began to rise.

Wayne's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

(Describe what method of sales the invention was first successful in that started the path to success).

The <u>Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas (CES)</u> is the biggest of its kind in the America's. Wayne booked a booth at CES and packed 1,000 product sample bags for the show. He handed out each sample to people of influence as an advertising strategy.

The response was phenomenal. The Quikpod was featured on the Jay Leno show, along with influential politicians and athletes, and it even made it into Oprah's magazine. The gross sales from this marketing strategy allowed him the opportunity to take his invention to the international market.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

The Quikpod company is still limited to poles and photo taking accessories, but Wayne is still inventing on his own. He has branded inventions such as a kid's milkshake maker with companies like <u>Disney</u> and <u>Nesquik</u>. He also has a variety of branded kids toys and collectible inventions.

The First Year Sales Totals

\$500,000

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

2 million Quikpod's sold to date

Resources & Contacts

Vincent Lotempio

Kloss, Stenger & LoTempio Attorneys at Law 69 Delaware Avenue Buffalo, New York 14202

Kloss, Stenger & LoTempio Attorneys at Law 9545 Main St. Clarence, New York 14031

Toll-Free: (877) 351-5547

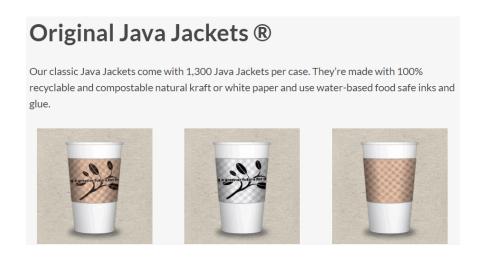
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Invention:





Rollerblade

Date of invention:

1980

Industry invention is related to:

Sporting Goods

Inventor's email address:

info@scottolson.com

Company name:

Rollerblade

Company area code and phone number:

(603) 298-6348

Inventor's full names:

Scotty and Brennan Olson



Company Full Address

Rollerblade USA 19 Technology Dr. West Lebanon, NH 03784

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For The Invention?

 Scotty and Brennan Olson were hockey fanatics. They wanted nothing more than to play hockey year round. While Scotty was up in Canada playing semi-professional hockey, he noticed an advertisement for Super Street Skates, a 1970's California inline skate company. Seeing that he was very interested in the idea of inline street skates, he made mention of it to his brother.

- As it turns out, Brennan had already purchased a pair of the Street Skates at a local retailer who was selling them at closeout prices due to low demand. Scotty and Brennan bought the remaining skates and resold them to their hockey buddies for a profit. The Super Street Skates left a little to be desired. They were inefficient and slow.
- Using their business capital from the inline skate resales, Scotty and Brennan noticed the opportunity in inline skating industry and set out to make a better skate.

Top Challenges

- Originally, Scotty and Brennan had intended to merely be the salesmen for the Super Street Skates. They went from retailer to retailer trying to sell the skates. They were turned away by most shop owners because no one thought this fad would last.
- Realizing that the Super Street Skates were slow and inefficient, Scotty and Brennan set out to improve the design. They successfully developed an adjustable frame to better fit each size boot, and they were able to send their frames out for production. When it came to the wheels, they just didn't have the resources to design better wheels. The wheels, however, were the biggest issue of all. Their solution was to take the already high-quality roller skate wheels already in production and modify them to fit the inline design.
- Scotty had to market their new design on a shoe-string budget. They didn't have
 the cash for sophisticated marketing campaigns. This, however, was Scotty's
 specialty. Scotty would take to the skates and simply skate through the front door
 of retail shops to pitch their new product. Instead of the shock and awe they
 expected, they were met with a lot of resistance and unimpressed retailers.
- While Scotty and Brennan were off promoting their newly designed Rollerblades, they hired a business manager to keep the rest of the business in line.
 Eventually, the business came to a point where they were selling a lot of product, but they didn't seem to be making any money. Scotty could see positive cash flow, but they didn't see a profit. As it turns out, the business manager they hired

was embezzling the profits and evading taxes. This left the business in a bad position.

 In order to keep the Rollerblade business from going under, Scotty was forced to reach out to big investors. After major legal battles, Scotty was faced with the ultimate in challenges. In order to keep Rollerblade alive, he would have to resign.

The Darkest Hour. (The point when Scotty and Brennan was about to either quit or lose all of his money and the invention?)

Rollerblade was selling an enormous amount of product after it took off, but they didn't have anything to show for it. While Scotty handled marketing and promotions, they brought in a business manager that took it all out from under them. In a single "Ah-Ha" moment, Scotty realized that his business, the one he had his name all over, was no longer going to be his anymore.

The Breakthrough Action That Gave Scotty and Brennan Hope And Their Ultimate Success

The Olson brothers had a lot of breakthrough moments during their development process. They found a simple, yet successful, way to redesign wheels in order to stay on budget and increase the skates efficiency by over 150%. They also realized the missing piece to their design, the brake, which made it possible to market to a wider variety of customers. The brake also provided a safety mechanism, thus making them less dangerous.

Scotty and Brennan's First Major Sale That Started The Path To Success

(Describe what method of sales the invention was first successful in that started the path to success).

The Rollerblade never really had one big sale that was a game changer. Their sales came due to Scotty's perseverance. He handed out skates to anyone with influence; from rock stars to movie stars, his ultimate goal was to get everyone on a pair of skates. Also, now that they had produced a quality street skating product, the door opened for extreme sports athletes to pick up the action. Once the trend of inline skating began to pick up, Rollerblade was met with endorsements and sales went through the roof.

Other Products or Brand Extensions

Rollerblade has held strong to inline skating products and accessories. Along with the inline skates, they sell helmets, wheels, and safety gear.

Scott Olson, albeit discouraged, is an inventor at heart. The latest of his inventions is Sky Ride Technology (SRT). SRT combines the thrill of an amusement park and the health benefits of a whole body work out.

The First Year Sales Totals

First-year sales totals were not mentioned on the show.

Total Sale Of The Invention To Date

\$350 Million in Peak Sales

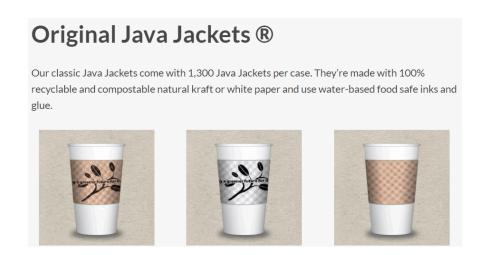
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Invention:



Short Order Grill

Date of the invention:

1994

Industry invention is related to:

Small Home Appliances

Inventors personal email address:

Unpublished

Company name:

Spectrum Brands, Inc.

Company area code and phone number:

1-800-231-9786

Inventors full name:

Michael Boehm



Company Full Address:

Consumer Support Center (Spectrum) 23645 Mercantile Rd., Ste B Beachwood, OH 44122

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For the Short Order Grill?

Michael, an industrial engineer, was employed by a company that simply created new and original products. His assignment was to design the next small appliance for customers likes Cuisinart and Coffeemate. Michael enjoyed the challenge of developing new and exciting concepts and taking them all the way to the marketplace.

The key is to develop original and interesting products that will ultimately grab the market's attention on their own. The 1990's was a time where consumers lives were becoming more hectic while healthy living trends were increasing. Strategically evaluating his market allowed him to create the perfect appliance.

List top five challenges inventor experienced:

- The first product Michael developed was called the steam grill. It was picked up by <u>Hamilton Beach</u>. They were convinced that it was going to be the next big thing for small appliances. Michael offered his aid in finding a spokesperson, but Hamilton Beach declined. This caused Michael a lot of frustration, as Michael always intended to bring his products to market. Hamilton Beach developed a marketing campaign around a hot new chef from Los Angeles, and the campaign, as a whole, failed to catch the market's attention.
- After failing to sell the steam grill, Michael was still driven to develop the
 next greatest small appliance. He had a development process that
 gained him market insight. Michael would approach customers
 shopping for appliances and ask them questions about their intended
 purchase and what they would like to see it do. This allowed him to gain
 perspective about the market needs, wants, and gaps.
- Michael developed the basis of his new grill idea and made a quick prototype with an electric grill supported by a brick. Not only was his idea practical, it was also visually appealing. Being able to see the unwanted fat run off the grill would be a visual representation of its effectiveness. Knowing that his product was going to be a success he now had to focus on the cornerstones of mass market success:
 - Cost
 - Convenience
 - Simplicity
 - Size

He wanted it to be "goof-proof". That meant that it wouldn't have any switches or long instructions; anyone should be able to use it with ease.

• By the fall of 1994, Michael had a fully functional prototype. Having used all of his resources to develop this product, he now had to pitch his idea. He took the newly named "Short Order Grill" to 13 major appliance companies, and at each of the companies he fully demonstrated his

product. He was met with notable amounts of criticism from each company and was unable to sell to any of them.

After contacting a number of appliance companies, again and again,
 Salton decided to give Michael an opportunity. However, the opportunity
 came with a catch. Michael would need to find a suitable spokesperson
 to back his product. He needed someone that consumers would
 recognize and trust. Also learning from his first failed product, he didn't
 want a chef that nobody could relate to.

Darkest Hour:

With a working prototype in hand, Michael set out to 13 major appliance companies to pitch his Short Order Grill. Despite a full demonstration, each of the companies returned with negative responses. Most stated that due to the slanted design, the Short Order Grill was a safety hazard, and they weren't going to take on the risk. Michael wasn't detoured, he continued to knock on doors, some multiple times until he peaked some interest. Finally, <u>Salton</u>, a Canadian small appliances company returned with a little hope for Michael. They stated that as long as he found a quality spokesperson to back the product, then they would take it on.

Breakthrough:

At the time, Salton was the market leader in direct TV sales for small appliances. Due to their marketing methodology, Michael would need to find a suitable spokesperson for the Short Order Grill. Expert Nora Rifon, or MSU, notes that a quality celebrity endorser, spokesperson, must possess recognizably and appeal to the public to be effective.

Just because a someone is a celebrity, doesn't mean they are liked or influential over the intended market. Michael performed extensive research on the celebrities of the time and overwhelmingly decided that George Foreman was the perfect fit. George was an athlete, a "hamburger nut", and a family man.

Consumers would ultimately trust his endorsement. Michael reached out to Foreman's camp and sent them a prototype for evaluation. After months of

waiting for a reply, Foreman finally tests the prototype and realized that this product is exactly the type of thing he wanted to endorse.

First Major Sale:

In 1995, Salton releases the "George Foreman Lean Mean Fat Reducing Grilling Machine" culminating in a nationally broadcasted memorable infomercial. Utilizing Foreman's personality and charisma, consumers were able to connect with him.

Within weeks, the orders were pouring in. Salton had to contract multiple manufacturing facilities to meet consumer's demands. The success of the George Foreman grill paid Foreman more than he had ever made in boxing. It was the ultimate of successes for all parties involved.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

The George Foreman Cooking brand is currently held by Spectrum Brands, Inc. They have an enormous small appliance portfolio including Farberware and Juiceman. Michael, though still an inventor at heart, hasn't made a notable splash in the small appliance market since the Short Order Grill.

Total Sales To Date:

450 Million Units Sold to date totaling over \$2 Billion in sales. The George Forman (Short Order Grill) is the second most purchased home appliance ever, after the television.

Resources & Contacts:

Professor Nora Rifon – Consumer Psychology Expert MSU

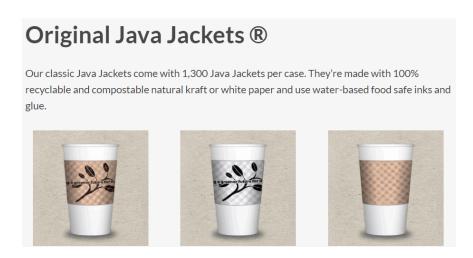
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Invention:



Slanket

Date of the invention:

1998

Industry invention is related to:

Home Goods

Inventors personal email address:

Gary (Inventor) gary@theslanket.com
Jeff (Partner) jeff@theslanket.com

Company name:

Slanket Loungin, LLC

Company area code and phone number:

Unpublished

Inventors full name:



Gary Clegg

Company Full Address:

Unpublished

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Slanket?

As a college freshman in cold and snowy Maine, Gary sought the ultimate in comfortable dorm attire. Having the luxuries of the bottom bunk in his dorm room also came with a cost; it meant he was also responsible for controlling the television. Since his remote control would not work through the blanket, he would have to remove his arm from the warmth while just trying to change the channel. One day, he and his roommate cut a hole in his blanket allowing the remote to work properly and also allowing Gary's arm to stay warm. Gary knew there had to be a better solution to this problem, but at the time he did not realize how lucrative that solution would be.

Top Five Challenges:

- For Gary, the Slanket was merely the ultimate in comfort and convenience. Recognizing the potential his invention had in the marketplace did not come easily to him. He spent his 4 years in college enjoying his creation before noticing it was marketable.
- Once Gary and his co-founder, and brother Jeff, decided to test the
 waters with the Slanket, they used friends and family as a focus
 group. The group had nearly 50 members. Despite their
 relationships with the focus group members, they were still met with a
 lot of criticism. They were constantly battling the notion that the
 invention was little more than just being lazy. It wasn't until the focus
 group members actually tried the Slanket that they understood it's
 potential.
- Gary's brother Jeff contributed \$20,000 of seed money to help the project lift off. He considered it no more of a risk than taking his money to a casino. In the meantime, Gary had applied for a patent. He was notified by the patent office that the only type of patent available for this type of product was a design patent. This meant that anyone could come along, slightly change the design, and steal his idea. He would have to choose whether or not his idea was worth the risk.
- Since the Slanket was not going to be covered by a patent, time was
 of the essence. Gary and Jeff were going to have to decide how to
 manufacture, market, and sell their product on an accelerated
 timeline.
- Jeff was a software engineer by trade. He put together a website and they decided to go with an e-commerce sales strategy. Unlike today, where the art of making sales online has be perfected, in 2004 webmarketing was still in its infancy. They would have to devise and

execute a marketing plan to reach as many actual buyers as possible before someone inevitably stole their idea.

Darkest Hour:

While Jeff managed the website, Gary put his college degree to work. He wrote as many press releases as he could and sent them to nearly 1,000 publications. The responses he received were far less than encouraging. Of the responses he actually received, generally, their opinion was that the Slanket was ridiculous and no more than a gimmick.

In addition to their struggles while trying to break into the market, after the Slanket hit the market, big companies with big budgets swooped in a took a major slice of the pie. With only a design patent, the brothers could not fight against these knockoffs and even dropped to being the lesser known brand as the "Snuggie" swept through and took the majority share hold in both America and Internationally.

Breakthrough:

Jay Graves, a friend to the Cleggs, had heard about a trending website called Digg.com. Currently operating as an article site, at the time was a site where users would post about items in the marketplace that were the best or the worst. Jay created a post voting the Slanket as being the best for video gaming. This caught the eye of the notoriously high-spending video gaming community, and the Slanket's popularity improved exponentially. They finally had a foot in the door and began selling at an unprecedented rate.

First Major Sale:

Though their sales were going up due to the gaming community, they still needed to put their product out there to the fullest in order to capture as many sales as they could before knockoff manufacturers got a hold of it. They bought a booth at the Chicago Home and Housewares International trade show. While at the show, a national television station covered their booth. Their product was showcased for the entire country to see. They gained an enormous amount of sales over the duration of the trade show,

but more than that, they received an invite to **QVC America**. They sold out of everything they had to offer on QVC in mere seconds.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

The Slanket company still only sells their hallmark product. However, they have given it new applications, such as Stroller Covers, Tandem Slankets, and a Slanket for every family member.

Total Sales To Date:

\$33 Million.

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Invention:



Tofurky

Date of the invention:

1980

Industry invention is related to:

Food and Beverage

Inventors personal email address:

info@tofurky.com

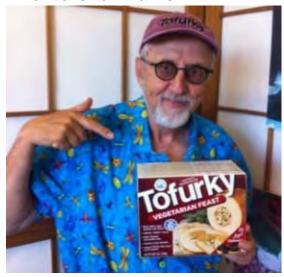
Company name:

The Tofurky Company

Company area code and phone number:

800-508-8100

Inventors full name:



Seth Tibbott

Company Full Address:

Tofurky 602 Anchor Way Hood River OR 97031

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Tofuky?

Seth Tibbott, a vegetarian, always wanted to enjoy Thanksgiving as much as the other millions of Americans. However, he would sit down at the holiday table and realize all too quickly that there was nothing of substance for him to eat. He was left with options like salad and mashed potatoes which weren't much for substance and didn't include any proteins. Realizing that he wasn't the only American in this predicament, he set out to create a vegetarian version of the beloved Thanksgiving turkey.

Top Five Challenges:

- Seth's idea of a vegetarian option to turkey was not uniquely his.
 After he discovered the need for such an option, he went to seek help from his vegetarian chef and friend, Hans Wrobel. Hans had already begun working on a tofu stuffed roast as an alternative to turkey. They brought their ideas together and collaborated towards Seth's creation.
- The market for selling a tofu based holiday main course is small, at best. However, Seth realizes that his market is willing to pay more for a quality product and there is no competition. Hans was able to retail his current stuffed tofu roast for \$50 to about 30 customers during the holiday season. Seth recognizes the roasts potential and together they decided to work on a plan to sell it on a larger scale.
- Thousands of frozen turkeys are sold each year. Keeping them frozen allows for them to be stored in bulk until the holiday season arrives each year. The tofu roast, however, was always sold fresh. Their attempts at freezing the roast were not successful at first. The process of freezing the roast would change the texture of the roast significantly. Over several months, they tested a variety of tofu recipes, spices, and additions until the frozen tofu roast had the right taste and the right textures.
- Often times, the name of a product can make or break its success. The name Tofurky came easily to Seth. Despite being told that it was too silly or not serious enough, Seth kept it. The dish was meant to be an easy-going affair. The tofu consumers were ready for the holiday roast option. They saw it as the product they had always hoped for. However, retail outlets weren't ready to carry the Tofurky. Just looking at the name alone before even knowing about the product, retailers didn't even want to take a chance on their product, especially at a \$30 price point.
- Tofu is a very difficult substance to work with. Hans was constantly combatting textural issues like cracking roasts or overly saturated

roasts. The larger the scale of production the more problems Hans would run into. Once the media took hold of the Tofurky, they were inundated with over 100,000 orders. Instituting an extrusion process, processing the stuffing to through the roast, allowed them to bring up production to meet the demands.

Darkest Hour:

Adopting the name Tofurky, admittedly, may not have been the best choice according to Seth. Even when he originally settled on it, he was met with criticism from friends and colleagues. However, Seth stuck with it hoping to give it the identity it deserved. Bringing the Tofurky to market was a difficult feat. Seth would have to convince each marketplace to carry just one Tofurky at a time to test the sales potential. Finally, after retailers began to see his creation actually selling they would double their order, and then double it again. Though the sales started out excruciatingly slow, they picked up exponentially.

Breakthrough:

The Tofurky was being sold in large and small markets up and down the west coast in small qualities. Among those markets was one in downtown Los Angeles where the Today show happened to pick up a sampling. All of a sudden, they were booming with publicity. The Tofurky was featured in the Washington Post, theNew York Times, and even on the Jay Leno show.

First Major Sale:

Until the Today show featured the Tofurky, through hard sales, Seth was bringing their product to market slowly by surely. After the Today show featured the Tofurky, vegetarians of the world questioned how they had ever survived without the Tofurky. The following holiday season they produced 200 times more than they had in their very first holiday season. This fame allowed them to expand to an entire product line of vegetarian options for the entire world to enjoy.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

Due to the success of the Tofurky roast, the brand was able to expand to a wide variety of vegetarian options. They carry vegetarian deli slices, sausages, and even a slow roasted vegetarian chicken. The have expanded internationally and aim to meet the needs of vegetarians in a meat eating world.

First Year Sales Totals:

500 Slow Turkey Roasts

Total Sales To Date:

Over 4 million Slow Turkey Roasts sold to date

Resources & Contacts

Hans Wrobel - Vegetarian Chef

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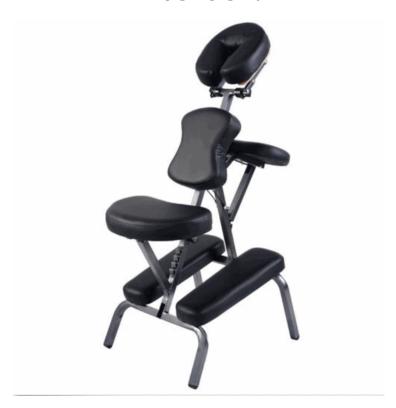
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Invention:



Massage Chair

Date of the invention:

1986

Industry invention is related to:

Massage Therapy

Inventors personal email address:

info@touchpro.com

Company name:

Touch Pro

Company area code and phone number:

415-621-6817

Inventors full name:

David Palmer



Company Full Address:

TouchPro International 153 Buena Vista Avenue E San Francisco, CA 94117

What was the problem or opportunity that sparked the idea for the invention?

David Palmer took over a massage school but was struggling with enrollment. Massage therapy wasn't popular enough at the time to guarantee employment. The general public didn't consider massage to be safe or convenient. It was a luxury item, at best; having to commit the time and money to go get a massage was just out of reach for many. Also, massage was often misunderstood for prostitution. What happened behind those closed doors, was a mystery that many were unwilling discover. He intended to find a solution that challenged all of these misconceptions.

Top five challenges:

- David researched the lengthy history of massage. He came across a
 version of Japanese massage that required the recipient to be seated for
 part of the process. Then, it occurred to him that it might be possible to
 develop a massage method that was fully seated while still wearing
 clothes. He and his students worked on a massage sequence that was
 only 15 minutes in length that would hit all of the problem areas for most
 people.
- Once David developed his 15-minute massage, he had to somehow spread the word. His massage method was now affordable, convenient, and mobile. He began by knocking on doors in office buildings, distributing flyers, and talking to anyone who would listen.
- The successful recurring Apple massage appointments inspired David to make the experience even better. Currently, he was giving the chair massage on drummer's stools. Knowing that this wouldn't allow for the recipient to fully relax, he aimed to find a way to improve the chair's design. His insight and experience told him that he needed to develop a backward chair that fully supported the person. This chair would also double as the branding, an image, that he desperately needed to expand his chair massage business.
- Since chair massage was meant to be a traveling service, David needed to develop a chair that not only could support the full weight of a person but was also able to be completely packed up for portability. He worked with <u>Serge Bouyssou</u>, a furniture designer, to design a product to fit all of his requests. Serge developed the idea of a chair that could fold up entirely into a box which brought David's whole idea to life.
- David believes that daily massage is essential to a person's general
 wellbeing and quality of life. He believes this so much that he decided to
 take his massage chair to production even without the support of his
 industry as a whole. He doesn't have any money for manufacturing or
 marketing so he makes an appointment with the owner of <u>Living Earth</u>
 <u>Crafts</u> to showcase his newly designed massage chair and strike a deal.

Darkest Hour:

The professional massage industry was not ready to accept David's new chair massage. It was seen as a watered down version of real massage, table massage. David was out there offering, a sort of drive through massage to anyone who had 15 minutes. It took away from what was perceived as the whole massage experience. If he was going to further his chair massage brand and bring massage to a more mainstream market, then he was going to need the support of the industry as a whole. Despite being the lone wolf, he still decides to bring his newly designed chair to production.

Breakthrough:

At the time David was knocking on doors in San Francisco in 1983, one of his many flyers made its way into Apple's office building, and he was contacted by one of Apples top managers. Apple was in the midst of finishing up the first Macintosh. With a project of this magnitude, Apple employees were working around the clock to meet their target deadlines. The Apple manager wanted to do something nice for his employees during their time of high stress and hired David and his students to give chair massage as a well-deserved break. Due to the positive response, Apple continued to bring back David and his students week after week. They knew they were in the beginning of something big.

First Major Sale:

In order for David's massage chair to be successful, it would need to be accepted by the massage industry as a whole. After taking on Living Earth Crafts as a partner, David was able to patent and fully produce his chairs. He took the final product to the <u>American Massage Therapy Association's</u> conference and began talking about how his new development has progressed over the last few years, and how it gives the massage industry

the ability to reach more customers. Unsure of how his colleagues would accept his new concept, he was surprised when he received overwhelming support.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

David continues to improve upon his original chair design, but he focuses his attention on teaching chair massage methods all over the world.

First Year Sales Totals:

David doesn't measure his success by the dollar signs or units sold. He believes his invention was a success due to the fact that it gave his students a bright future in the industry.

Total Sales:

Over 300,000 chairs sold and over 250 million massages estimated to date

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Invention:



Rollaboards

Date of the invention:

1990

Industry invention is related to:

Travel

Inventor's personal email address:

Travelpro accepts facebook messages to @travelproproducts and they have contact form available on the website http://www.travelpro.com/contact.cfm

Company name:

Travelpro

Company area code and phone number:

(800) 741-7471

Inventors full name:

Bob Plath

Company Full Address:

Travelpro Products, Inc. PO Box 810755 Boca Raton, FL 33481-0755

What was the problem or opportunity that sparked the idea for the invention?

As a pilot, Bob Plath traveled through airport security often. Though his route was expedited, he still took the time to notice the travelers around him. Security checkpoints at airports are one of the most stressful aspects of traveling. Bob noticed one day that a woman with a cart full of luggage was struggling to unpack and repack her luggage cart. It was very clumsy and time-consuming. He thought to himself that there must be a better way to travel. At the time, the only luggage options available we ones that had to be carried. His cure-all was a luggage bag on wheels with a long collapsible handle.

Five challenges Bob experienced:

• Bob was very confident with his idea of a roll behind suitcase. He knew this was exactly what the market needed. The first real hurdle was developing this bag in such a way that it would travel through airport security with ease. To test his idea, he bought a hard-sided suitcase and permanently attached a small wheeled trolley to the back. When he approached security and they realized that the trolley was permanently secured to the bag they let him put it through the x-ray machine without a hassle.

- The development process was very involved. He had to develop, from scratch, the ideal dimensions, the handle, the locking mechanism, and so much more before his suitcase design was travel worthy. It consumed years of Bob's time and also his financial resources.
- Bob pointed out that the luggage industry is full of "thieves". In order to keep his design and groundbreaking invention safe, he needed to keep his invention a complete secret. He went so far as to manufacture all of the different components in different facilities; the wheels, the handle, and the bag were always kept separate from one another. Assembly was done in a secret factory with a strict policy to keep his idea safe.
- Leonard Sanders, a Canadian importer in the 1980's, is confident that the Rollaboard is the next big item for traveling. He ordered 1,100 pieces from Bob on more than a hunch. Before they even arrived, Leonard began to pitch the product to buyers. Much to his surprise, he was only receiving negative feedback. Retail buyers didn't understand why this product would be popular and they thought it had a lot of useless design flaws. Leonard had to call in a personal favor to a friend and buyer in order to retail his newly acquired Rollaboard's, and despite the buyer's reluctance, they were flying off the shelves.
- The Rollaboard completely changed the luggage industry. Airports and airplanes were even redesigned to accommodate the quickly growing trend. Like many inventions in a crowded market, such as the luggage industry, copycats, and knockoffs immediately followed their success. However, due to the success of the product launch, Rollaboard became the name brand in rolling luggage, allowing them to hold on to a majority share.

Darkest Hour

Leonard Sanders, a Canadian importer, immediately saw the potential in Bob's Rollaboard suitcase. This wasn't just something the travel industry wanted, it was something they desperately needed. With long distance air travel becoming increasingly more popular and affordable, airport security measures were becoming more and more strict. The convenience and

portability of the Rollaboard suitcase were completely lost on the retailers Sanders was approaching to sell it. Having just committed to a large quantity to import into Canada, the sales results in the Canadian market were a mere test of the waters for Bob's product. If it didn't sell in Canada, then where would it sell?

Breakthrough

Bob knew his market, and he knew them well. He targeted pilots and crew members directly through his current employment as a pilot. When he would walk the new Rollaboard past them the inquiries would begin. Bob always made it a point to keep an order notepad with him, and began selling immediately. Also, due to the unique design, he and his wife, a crew member, would also take down orders from regular travelers just as they walked through the airport. Their mail order business was a huge success. He was even able to pay off all of his development debt he incurred bringing the product to the marketplace.

First Major Sale

Bob took his newly developed Rollaboard to a luggage trade show in 1990. At this trade show, his small booth with a singular suitcase on a table was noticed by Leonard Sanders, a retired Canadian Importer. Leonard contacted Bob before the trade show ever ended to inquire about his product. Knowing full well that the Rollaboard was going to be the next big travel item, Leonard made an offer to be the exclusive distributor for the Rollaboard in Canada. The very next day, Leonard put in an order for 1,100 pieces.

What other products or brand extensions came after the first idea?

Rollaboard luggage is now exclusive to the TravelPro brand.

They offer multiple lines of premium luggage.

What were the first year sales totals if mentioned on the show?

\$1.5 Million in the first year

Total sales of the invention mentioned in the show to date:

Over 8 Million Rollaboards sold to date

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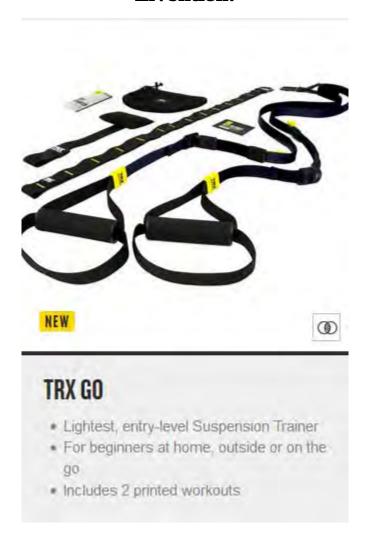
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Invention:



TRX

Date of the invention:

1997

Industry invention is related to:

Fitness

Inventors personal email address:

trxdirectory@trxtraining.com

Company name:

Fitness Anywhere, LLC

Company area code and phone number:

1-888-878-5348

Inventors full name:



Randy Hetrick

Company Full Address:

Fitness Anywhere, LLC 1660 Pacific Ave San Francisco, CA 94109

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For TRX?

Randy Hetrick spent 14 years as a Navy Seal. He was deployed to southeast Asia to help mitigate their growing piracy issue. Being in this hostile environment required that he and his fellow Seals stay in premium physical condition. It was challenging to condition their bodies in the

current location. A man of Randy's descent would be spotted immediately if he were to only go for a run. For fear of becoming a target, he needed to develop a solution. It is paramount that a Navy Seal exercises more than just core muscle groups; their mission depends on it. Randy was most interested in strengthening those muscles required for climbing. He calls the TRX an invention of necessity.

Five Top Challanges:

- To Randy, his strap setup was a means to an end. It enabled him to work out with Navy Seal intensity anywhere he went. Actually seeing its potential was not easily apparent to him. After becoming a civilian, he would take his invention to the gym with him. Professional strength coaches often inquired to the purpose of the straps. Over a long period of time, Randy finally grasped the potential of his need based invention
- In an effort to keep his costs low and utilize all of his expertise, Randy designed, prototyped, and tested all on his own. As a Seal, he was required to be skilled in sewing and to have repair ingenuity. He gave himself, what he thought was, a reasonable 3-month goal to complete the prototype phase. When he still did not have a working prototype by the end of the summer between semesters, instead of giving up, he utilized his graduate program to solve all of the problems he was facing.
- The most logical group of people to point Randy's marketing efforts towards were people on the go who wanted an all-in-one piece of equipment for a full body workout. Though this market probably does exist, Randy wasn't able to gain any sales from it. He would go on sales call after sales call pitching his product to fitness professionals and people of influence within the industry. He would spend 2 maybe 3 hours on each sales call and sell only 1 or 2 fitness straps. He was at a crossroads on how to proceed next.
- When he wasn't making any sales, Randy realized that he needed a new marketing strategy. The fitness industry has great potential, but

is very difficult to tap into, notes Randy. On the outside, his product seemed to be no more than a novelty.

 After Randy's success at the trade show in Los Angeles for fitness trainers, he finally grasped what he was missing. In order for his product to be accepted, he would need to develop an educational component. Though this meant more capital, ultimately, it also meant that he would be able to enter the market with a strong product.

Darkest Hour:

Randy put nothing short of his heart and soul into the fitness straps; not to mention resources. For his own survival, he needed to sell his product, and soon. He originally defined his market as people who travel and still want a full body workout. As it turned out, his target market didn't think of his product as more than a novelty. He would spend 2 to 3 hours pitching his product and only selling one or two fitness bands.

Breakthrough:

The interest that Randy gained during the fitness trade show in Los Angeles surely gave him the most hope. When he realized that, coupled with an educational component, his product had real sales potential he gained the momentum that he needed. However, his big break into the industry happened when Drew Breeze, quarterback for the San Diego football team, was injured. Breeze completely threw out his throwing shoulder during a game and was completely taken off the roster. To bring his should back into peak condition, Breeze used the TRX fitness bands for strength training. TRX then piggybacked on the Breeze's success as he went on to play in the Super Bowl the next year with the Saints. With a major league athlete promoting the TRX, Randy's goal of having the fitness bands in homes and not just at the gym could be achieved.

First Major Sale:

Trainers at the fitness trade show in Los Angeles bought up all of the TRX fitness bands by the end of the show. Due to the enthusiasm of the fitness trainers, Randy even took back-orders to be delivered upon production.

Showcasing how the TRX is to be used along with the many benefits it provides was the kick starter Randy needed.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

TRX offers a variety of different suspension and fitness bands. They also can provide commercial and military fitness solutions such as their Functional Training Locker, a complete workout station.

Total Sales To Date:

Over 150 Million straps sold to date. They bring in an annual revenue of \$50 million.

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Invention:



Two Men and a Truck

Date of the invention:

1985

Industry invention is related to:

Moving and Logistics

Company name:

Two Men and a Truck

Company area code and phone number:

(517) 394-7210

Inventors full name:



Mary Ellen Sheets

Company Full Address:

Two Men and a Truck 3400 Belle Chase Way Lansing, MI 48911

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Two Men And A Truck?

Mary Ellen needed to help her two sons find summer employment before heading off to college. Being a single parent, she didn't have much to offer them. However, her husband had left behind an old pickup truck. Utilizing what assets she had, she put her sons to work doing good old fashioned labor.

Top Five Challenges:

- Running a hauling business meant that Mary Ellen's sons would haul
 just about anything. They recalled a time when they were assigned
 to an old wet basement where even the rats didn't survive. Despite
 the discouraging moments, they needed all the jobs they could find to
 continue.
- After the summer was over, the brothers had to leave for college.
 The booming business caused them to hesitate, but ultimately they
 realized that in order to run a business, then they would need a
 college education.
- Even though her sons had left for college, the phone calls for moving contracts continued to come in. Mary Ellen had no business experience, and no one to actually perform the work. However, instead of turning away potential earnings she takes the advice from her sons to continue the business in their stead. She hired some of her son's local friends to do the work and kept the business running smoothly.
- Mary Ellen put all of her eggs in one basket. She had so much faith
 in her business that she left the security of her federal government
 job along with all of the benefits it provided. As the business
 continued to grow she continued taking on risk by buying more and
 more trucks.
- Running a company that has strict regulations can be a challenge.
 When Two Men and a Truck decided to franchise they would need to
 learn and adhere to all of those regulations instituted by each state.
 As a franchise, they aimed to offer consistent services throughout
 their brand. So, they would need to continuously work with local law
 agencies to keep the business completely legal.

Darkest Hour:

When Two Men and a Truck started to take a significant share of the moving market, big moving business began to attack. The most devastating attack was when they reported the company as being unlicensed. In the beginning, Mary Ellen and her sons had researched how to run a local moving company, and they were in full compliance. However, once the business grew, they never stopped to research again whether or not they were still in compliance. As it turned out, in order to run a moving company that contracts moves greater than an 8-mile distance, they would need a license. Having operated for so long without a license, Mary Ellen could have faced real jail time. Instead, she worked with the state police to gain licensure and continued growing her business.

Breakthrough:

In the beginning, Mary Ellen and her sons charged a relatively low rate as they thought it would be necessary to compete in the marketplace. However, they realized that once they raised their rates they were no longer contracting jobs that were basic dump runs or dirty clean outs, instead they were being contracted for small household moving jobs. At the time, big moving companies were geared towards big moving jobs. The small household move was beneath them. Two Men and a Truck slipped into this untapped market and realized they had a lot of demand and opportunity.

First Major Sale:

After only 4 years in business, Mary Ellen does the unthinkable for such a small business. She decided to take her company cross country. Constantly pushing forward and not accepting the ridicule from competing moving companies, she begins the process of franchising Two Men and a Truck. She took the small town brand, attended franchising trade shows, and attracted potential franchise owners. As franchise owners began to invest, the company expanded tremendously. Now, the company does 9 figures in sales annually with locations in over 30 states.

Brand Extensions?

Currently, Two Men and a Truck are still just a moving company. Instead of expanding into new products and services, they are consistently trying to improve their brand.

Total Sales To Date:

\$460 million annually

Resources & Contacts

<u>Prof Thomas Hult – Franchising Expert MSU</u>

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Invention:

Under The Weather



Date of the invention:

2011

Industry invention is related to:

Sports and Recreation

Inventors personal email address:

support@undertheweatherpods.com

Company name:

Under the Weather

Company area code and phone number:

(513) 399-5551

Inventors full name:



Rick Pescovitz

Company Full Address:

Under the Weather 5218 Wooster Rd Cincinnati, OH 45226

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For Under The Weather?

Millions of children every year participate in outdoor sports. Often times, these competitive sports are played in a variety of weather conditions; rain or shine. While the children may not mind being so exposed to the elements during a game or match, those who spend their time on the sidelines may find it uncomfortable and unenjoyable in times of poor weather conditions. After spending some quality time in a portable toilet

enclosure just to find warmth and comfort, Rick Pescovitz realizes there is a better solution than being exposed to the elements. He intended his invention to keep sideline watchers warm and dry.

Top Five Challenges:

- Prototyping is expensive, yet Rick was determined to continue working on the prototypes until he had absolutely every possible flaw identified and fixed. He would bring each prototype to his son's games, ask different parents to sit in it, and took their feedback back to the drawing table to continue his product development. During this phase, Rick spent over \$100,000 in just prototyping efforts.
- Having a singular mindset may be beneficial to creating a quality product, but it strained Ricks life. His family was frustrated to the point that he wasn't able to gain any more product feedback from them. The project was draining their bank account, which is a strain on any family unit. Most importantly, Rick wasn't able to focus on anything else outside of his product. His children, at the time, were even embarrassed by their Dads invention.
- Recognizing that he needed to hurry up and begin selling his Under the Weather tents before his support system fell down around him, Rick placed an order for 2,500 units from the manufacturer. Due to a misunderstanding from the manufacturer, Rick actually received 5,000 units; doubling the risk he had originally intended.
- Rick now had a warehouse full of Under the Weather tents and needed to sell them immediately to avoid losing it everything. When he really began demonstrating his product to other soccer game attendees, he had to combat all of the jokes and ridicule he faced and showcase the necessity his product had.
- Rick doesn't have any experience actually bringing a product to market. He had battled his way through the prototyping stage, but he wasn't privy to a marketing strategy that would bring in actual sales.
 Consumers would show interest in his product, but he wasn't able to

convert that interest into a sale. Luckily, his wife Kelly was a professional in the marketing industry. Kelly sold her marketing firm and went all in with Rick. They used <u>Facebook</u> and other social media applications as a launch point.

Darkest Hour:

Rick tried a demonstration sales approach. He would bring his Under the Weather tents to various sporting events and set up a few. He would sit in one and invite others to sit in the remaining few. Though his invention was received well, he still wasn't able to capture the sale. At one point he was even offered a lump sum to buy out all of his inventory; the option to sell out and cut his losses was very appealing. However, the deal fell apart and he couldn't make the sale. \$130,000 deep, and quickly becoming the laughing stock at his son's soccer games, Rick was just about ready to throw in the towel..

Breakthrough:

After Rick's wife, Kelly, really began contributing to his efforts in marketing, the Under the Weather tent started picking up steam. The amount of Facebook likes and shares they were generating sent them viral. In the next month, they sold and unprecedented 700 tents. Every tag, post, and share aided their viral marketing campaign for the tents.

First Major Sale:

The breakthrough moment for the Under the Weather tent through social media sent sales skyrocketing. Currently, they still do 90% of their sales through their consumer direct website. They have been approached by many other retailers, but they are selective based on the volume they can produce. Instead, Rick continues to develop new designs for his product producing a return customer base, and they continue to use free social media applications to advertise to their current fan base.

Brand Extensions After the First Tent?

Currently, the Under the Weather brands sell tents and gear for the tents.

The First Year Total Sales:

When The Under the Weather tent went viral, they were able to sell 700 units in that first month.

Total Sales To Date:

\$2 Million to date

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Invention:



Waboba Ball

Date of the invention:

2005

Industry invention is related to:

Toys and Games

Inventors personal email address:

info@waboba.com

Company name:

Waboba

Company area code and phone number:

+46 8-755 90 04

Inventors full name:

Jan Von Heland



Company Full Address:

Waboba 3081 Holcomb Bridge Road Suite C2 Norcross, GA 30071

Problem or Opportunity That Sparked the Idea For the Waboba Ball?

One summer's day while enjoying his pool, Jan was tossing around a Frisbee. He found himself interested in how the Frisbee was able to skip along the water, a kin to bouncing. Noting the Frisbee as a great toy to play with in the pool, he wondered how he could improve upon the idea and make it skip more and bounce higher. All of this lead to his big idea: A toy that can bounce on water.

Top Five Challenges:

 Observing how the Frisbee can skip along, appearing to bounce, on water, Jan was fascinated. He experimented with many objects of varying shapes, sizes, and densities to improve upon the Frisbee. A normal tennis ball would bounce once, maybe two times before settling on the water. Due to the lack of results from the tennis ball, Jan just about gave up on the ball shape for the design of his toy. He found himself pretty attached to the idea of a disc-shaped object. He had prototypes made of wood and plastic, and the only conclusion he came to was that nothing worked the way he had intended.

- Jan was not a scientist, but the physics involved in his new toy invention would require a scientific approach. He researched in depth how an object could bounce on water instead of just float. His research showed that his original disc shape was wrong; he was going to have to change his vision towards making a ball. He even went so far as to study a World War II bomb to understand how it was capable of bouncing across the water towards its target.
- Now that Jan had settled on a ball-like shape for his new toy, he went on to test every ball he could find. He estimates that he tested over 200 different types of balls over a large period of time. He took notes on which balls would bounce on the water and why. Finally, he came across a gel filled stress ball. He finally had a starting point, a prototype.
- Jan contacts the manufacturer of the gel filled stress ball, and much to
 his surprise they were willing to work with him to modify the existing
 product to perform better. He needed the fabric to be softer, an extra
 layer on the inside so that it would not sink, and he needed the stitching
 to be tighter for the bouncing action. Within two weeks, the
 manufacturer delivered the first real prototype.
- His first prototype turned out to be the one. He realized the commercial value in his product, goes for broke, and ordered 15,000 balls. Being a civil servant by trade, Jan didn't know the first thing about sales and marketing. However, once he saw his order, he knew he needed to sell them, and quickly!

Darkest Hour:

It took Jan nearly 25 years to take his idea to market. He experimented time and time again to find the perfect toy to bounce on water. Some say he became obsessed with the project, but his son notes that his dedication was inspiring. After trying a variety of different disc shapes in fundamentally different materials, Jan just couldn't bring his idea to fruition. He had all be given up until one day at the beach with his family he notices a couple of children playing with a ball on the water. Taking notice of the balls qualities, he was finally able to bring his invention from just an idea to an actual product.

Breakthrough:

Jan struggled with the design of his ball that would bounce on water. One day at the beach, he noticed some children playing in the water. They had a ball that they were bouncing back and forth, exactly the way that Jan was envisioning his new toy would bounce. He rushed down to the children and asked to see their ball that would bounce on water. He noticed that the ball had certain characteristics that he hadn't even considered being important. The ball was soft and squishy as a ball meant for juggling, and it was water logged, a quality that didn't even make sence to him at the time.

First Major Sale:

The summer in Sweden was coming to an end by the time Jan received his first shipment of Waboba balls. There simply wasn't enough time to market and sell his product before the season ended. So, Jan took a look at a globe and realized that it must be summer somewhere else; Australia's summer was just about the begin. Jan called the Swedish embassy to inquire about trade in Australia, and they put him in touch with distribution channels to develop agreements with retailers. The Waboba ball was the perfect product for the Australian market, and in that very first summer, he sold over 100,000 units. This lead to distributors from all over the world calling Jan to find out how the can carry his product.

What Other Products or Brand Extensions Came After the First Idea?

The Waboba water ball comes in a variety of styles with different qualities. Waboba has also expanded to land-based balls and water sports accessories. They even sell Waboozies, a drink koosie, made with the hallmark Waboba materials.

First Year Sales Totals:

Over 100,000 units in the very first summer

Total sales:

Over 20 Million Units Sold to date

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Invention:



Xhose

Date of the invention:

2011

Industry invention is related to:

Home and Garden

Inventors personal email address:

customerservice@nationalexpresstv.com

Company name:

National Express Online

Company area code and phone number:

(800) 883-0314

Inventor's full name:



Michael Berardi

Company Full Address:

National Express Online 2 Morgan Ave. Norwalk, CT 06851

What Was The Problem or Opportunity That Sparked The Idea For the Xhose?

Like many American's Michael Berardi frequents the gym. One day, while using a piece of resistance equipment he noticed the webbing around the

resistance chord and wondered what would happen if he ran water through it. He thought that if it could handle the pressure than it would make a great garden hose. Michael's general opinion was that the traditional rubber garden hose was a nuisance; it was heavy, hard to store, and often dirty. He hypothesized that the material on the machine would be a great medium to run water through, collapsible to an easy to store size, and best of all, it would be lightweight.

Top five challenges:

- With his idea in mind, Michael headed out to his local hardware store. Michael picked up some mesh tubing and a chord from an exercise band. Along with other necessities to put it all together, Michael was able to build a successful small scale prototype. In order to really put his product to the test, he would have to figure out how to build a full-size prototype with the same success.
- After building several prototypes of varying lengths, Michael was satisfied that this was a quality product. Now, he had to decide which avenue he should take to bring it to the marketplace. The first option was for him to handle all of the manufacturing, sales, and marketing on his own. This would require time and resources that he and his wife weren't willing to give up. The second option was a licensing agreement with a firm. He sought out a firm that he was already familiar with in Connecticut, named National Express. They would handle almost everything, and Michael would be entitled royalties on the sales.
- National Express hit the ground running. They located a
 manufacturing company to mass produce the, newly named, Xhose.
 Before production could begin, the manufacturer would have to build
 a prototype suitable for mass production. Michael was sent prototype
 after prototype for approval, and none of them would pass even the
 most basic of quality standards. After 2 months of failing prototypes,
 Michael and National Express were forced to make the decision to

cut their losses and seek out another manufacturing company. This put the production of the Xhose back at square-one.

 Despite the manufacturing issues, Michael pushed forward with the plan. He scripted and shot a commercial for Xhose, and successfully aired it in front of millions of viewers. Since they did not have a finished product yet, they would have to hold off on actual sales until they could deliver.

Though, Michael went through all the right legal channels to patent his invention, sometimes bringing your product to the market before the system is done is a risk. With his patent still pending, other manufacturing companies begin selling knockoffs of the Xhose. Months of legal battles, after the patent was secured, led Michael to a solution. If he was going to have a significant share of this crowded market, then he would need to have the best quality product. So he set off the re-engineer his Xhose as a higher quality.

Darkest Hour:

Michael was out to dinner one night with his wife when suddenly his wife begged him not to look at the television. The station being broadcasted was airing a commercial for a knockoff of the Xhose. They were devastated. Though Michael had filed for a patent, it was still pending which made the concept fair game to anyone who could produce it in time. At one point, Michael estimated there were around 40 or 50 companies selling cheap knockoffs of the Xhose. Once the patent was finalized, Michael endured a couple of months of debilitating legal battles. Instead of continuing the losing fight, he decides to re-engineer his product with better quality parts so that he would have the best hose on the market and gain a better market share.

Breakthrough:

Michael is a seasoned in the success of newly invented products. He knows what it takes to sell a new product. He graded his invention against the 4 necessities of success.

- 1.) Able to be Visually Demonstrated
- 2.) Has Mass Appeal
- 3.) Solves a common Problem
- 4.) Reasonably Priced

The Xhose met all 4 requirements in Michael's book. He took the initiative and called a company, he previously had done business with, in Connecticut named National Express. Michael did not mention anything about the product that he was bringing them other than that he considered it special. When he arrived, he set up the Xhose and the National Express representatives were more than impressed. Michael knew that if he could impress people who see new and exciting products every day than his product was ready for the market.

First Major Sale:

Michael had invaluable experience selling new products. He knew exactly what would sell, and how to do it. He scripted and produced the first Xhose commercial. While it was a fun affair, inviting the entire neighborhood to join in, it was also very successful. America saw the need for his product and overwhelmed them with orders.

Total Sales To Date:

\$800 Million or \$1.2 Billion if you include international sales

Resources & Contacts:

National Express 2 Morgan Ave Norwalk, CT 06851 (203) 852-0024

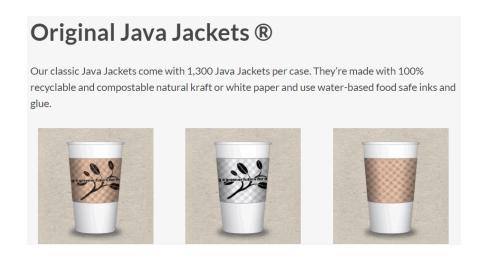
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