

# Inventors

APRIL 2020 Volume 36 Issue 04

DIGEST

## MASTER STROKE

Billionaire Bob Parsons'  
Latest Entrepreneurial  
Triumph: PXG Clubs



### IP Offices Scramble

COVID-19 SPARKS CHANGES  
AROUND THE WORLD

### It's Time for TikTok

USING APP AND PLATFORM  
FOR SHORT-FORM VIDEOS

### Money for Operations

DECISION: HOW MUCH  
OWNERSHIP FOR YOU?

\$5.95

FIRST CLASS PERMIT 38  
FULTON, MO  
US POSTAGE PAID

# SAY HELLO TO INNOVATION

At Eventys Partners, we build new products, create new brands and breathe new life into existing ones using an efficient, collaborative approach. We believe there are two ways to grow your business: introduce innovative new products or sell more of the products you already have. Whichever approach fits your needs, we can help you thrive with a proven strategy that delivers quantifiable results.

**Put simply, we build new products and then help you market them.**

## WHAT WE DO



Product Development



Industrial Design



Engineering & Prototyping



Sourcing



Market Research



Crowdfunding



Digital Marketing



Public Relations

For more information and to view samples of our work, visit [eventyspartners.com](http://eventyspartners.com) or call us at 704-333-5335.

EVENTYS  
PARTNERS

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
REID CREAGER

**ART DIRECTOR**  
CARRIE BOYD

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
ELIZABETH BREEDLOVE  
LOUIS CARBONNEAU  
DON DEBELAK  
ALYSON DUTCH  
JACK LANDER  
JEREMY LOSAW  
GENE QUINN  
EDIE TOLCHIN

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
JORGE ZEGARRA

INVENTORS DIGEST LLC

**PUBLISHER**  
LOUIS FOREMAN

**WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR**  
ELIZABETH BREEDLOVE

**FINANCIAL CONTROLLER**  
DEBBIE MUENCH

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**  
LOURDES RODRIGUEZ

© 2020 Inventors Digest, LLC. All rights reserved. Inventors Digest, LLC is a North Carolina limited liability company and is the publisher of *Inventors Digest* magazine. INVENTORS DIGEST and INVENTORS' DIGEST are trademarks of Inventors Digest, LLC. Reproduction or distribution of any materials obtained in this publication without written permission is expressly prohibited. The views, claims and opinions expressed in article and advertisements herein are not necessarily those of Inventors Digest, LLC, its employees, agents or directors. This publication and any references to products or services are provided "as is" without any expressed or implied warranty or term of any kind. While effort is made to ensure accuracy in the content of the information presented herein, Inventors Digest, LLC is not responsible for any errors, misprints or misinformation. Any legal information contained herein is not to be construed as legal advice and is provided for entertainment or educational purposes only. Interested parties and inventors seeking legal advice should consult a lawyer.

Ad rates, subscriptions & editorial content:  
520 Elliot Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202  
info@InventorsDigest.com  
www.InventorsDigest.com  
reid.creager@inventorsdigest.com



## Now, Inventing Is Life and Death

When the word “inventing” is mentioned, some people mentally summon a geeky-looking person tinkering in his or her basement or garage after a brainstorm that may or may not be useful for a lot of people.

How’s that stereotype looking now?

The mission to invent and innovate has never been more essential with the explosion of the COVID-19 virus, possibly the largest widespread threat to human health in the past century. As this magazine was going to print in late March, the earliest forecast for a possible vaccine in the United States was this winter.

The same importance holds for intellectual property, a fact that has been hammered home in recent editions of *Inventors Digest* with the help of the Michelson 20MM Foundation. Michelson 20MM says it is “dedicated to supporting and investing in entrepreneurs, technologies, and higher learning initiatives that seek to transform lives.”

Without the right of exclusivity that IP provides for those technologies—especially in the form of patents—efforts to develop and commercialize impactful inventions in the disciplines of science and medicine are slowed or stymied. Absent these freedoms, hope for medical cures is severely limited.

Right now, no one has a medical solution for stopping COVID-19.

But maybe its sudden emergence and destruction will motivate world governments to place more of an emphasis on innovation in science and medicine.

On March 10, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget announced it was relieving some regulatory requirements for agencies awarding grant money for research on the coronavirus, pegged to the 90-day public health emergency declaration by the Department of Health and Human Services.

This was an important short-term action, but in the larger picture it was a baby step.

The coronavirus shines an even brighter spotlight on the perpetual urgency for government agencies to fund scientific grants. Some of these organizations include the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and large corporations. We taxpayers directly and indirectly foot the bill for some of this, too.

Expect a (hopefully) nonpartisan push to increase the number of and dollar amounts for federal grants in the arenas of science and medicine, and that it could become a prominent theme during this U.S. election year. We have never needed inventing and innovating more.

—Reid  
(reid.creager@inventorsdigest.com)

# American innovation needs to hit the gym



Weakened patent protections have reduced the value of American inventions. To strengthen American innovation, support the STRONGER Patents Act—legislation designed to restore strong Constitutional patent rights, limit unfair patent challenges, and end the diversion of USPTO fees.

**Make your voice heard now at**  
**[SaveTheInventor.com](http://SaveTheInventor.com)**

**SAVE THE  
AMERICAN  
INVENTOR**



# Contents

April 2020 Volume 36 Issue 04



20



42



10



**ON THE COVER**  
PXG founder Bob Parsons;  
photo courtesy of PXG

## Features

- 24 Long Drive**  
Bob Parsons' Life Journey  
To Billionaire Inspiration
- 29 Master Stroke**  
PXG Marries Elite Design,  
Technology in Golf Clubs

## Inventor Spotlight

- 20 Why All the Fuss?**  
Woman's Baby Product

## Departments

- 7 Everybody's Talking**  
Conversation Pieces
- 8 Bright Ideas**  
Innovation That Shines
- 10 Time Tested**  
The Rubber Trash Can
- 12 Lander Zone**  
Are You an Entrepreneur?
- 15 Inventing 101**  
Doing the Legwork
- 16 Launching Pad**  
Money for Operations
- 18 Social Hour**  
It's Time for TikTok
- 34 Prototyping**  
Let's Get Small
- 36 IP Market**  
Major Momentum
- 40 Patent Pending**  
Getting an EPO Patent
- 42 Eye on Washington**  
Offices' Changes Due to  
Coronavirus Pandemic;  
The Piracy Plague
- 46 Inventiveness**  
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

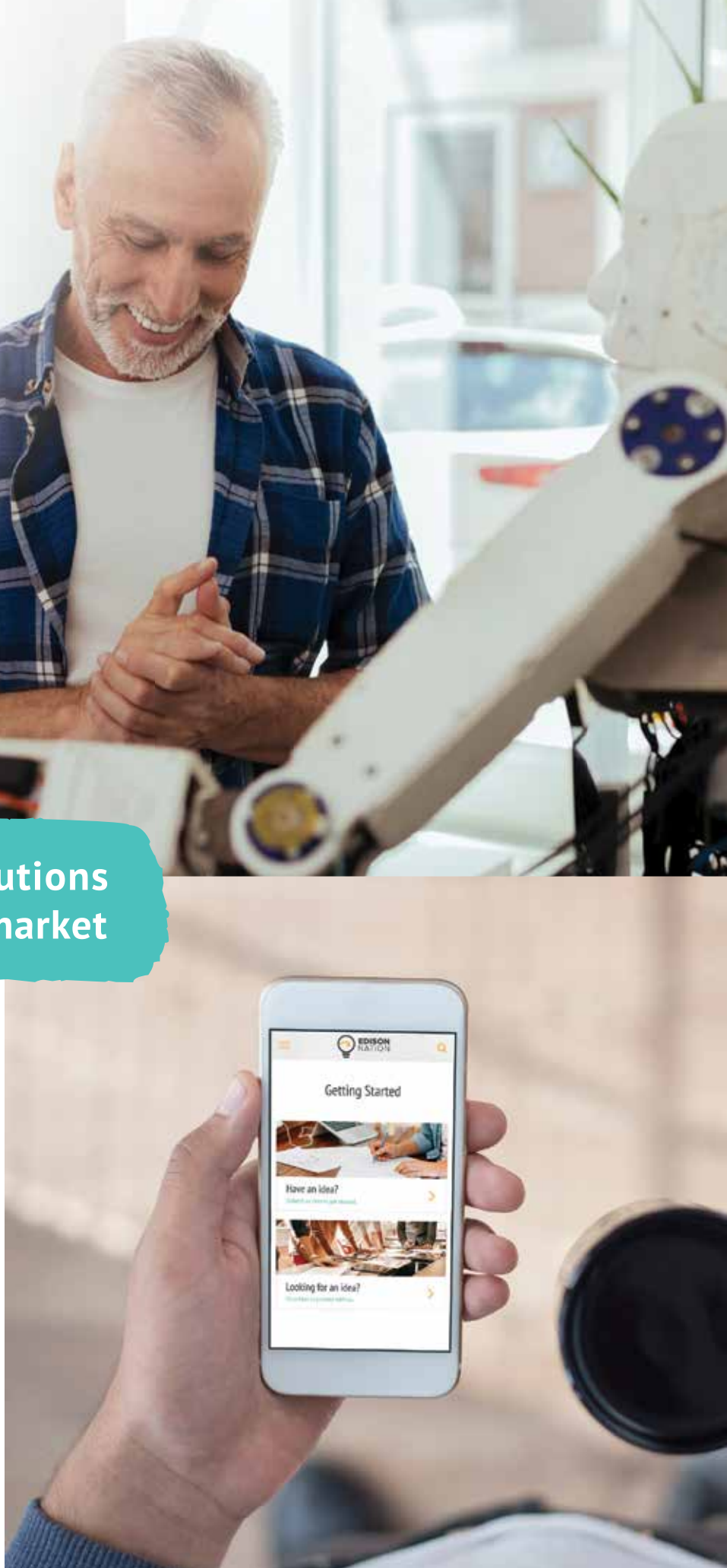
# YOU HAVE THE IDEAS

We have the most solutions  
to bring your idea to market

Edison Nation is the only innovation partner that has multiple channels to take inventors' product ideas to consumers worldwide.

JOIN US TODAY

[www.EdisonNation.com](http://www.EdisonNation.com)



## CORRESPONDENCE

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

“Roger Shiffman: He Picks Winners” (April 2017):

So what's the best way to go about an invention if you don't have any money?

—CECE, VIA EMAIL

Your question, in connection with our “Toys and Games” issue, is subject to many factors. Assuming this is your invention category, how far along is your idea/invention/innovation? Have you researched prior art and are satisfied your invention is original? Do you have a prototype? Will you sell it yourself, or will you seek a licensee? If you are at a finished stage and seeking a patent, see Gene Quinn's excellent how-to, “Patenting on a Budget,” in our February 2020 issue.—Editor

“Crowdfunding Tips and Tricks” (August 2019):

Thank you for the tip to keep your backers and potential backers updated via social media and mailing lists. I'd personally like to try making an indie video game, but I don't exactly have the capital for some of the art assets. I'm thinking of crowdfunding in order to get the project off the ground.

—LEVI ARMSTRONG

Crowdfunding is an attractive option; just know that not every crowdfund is successful. Good luck!—Editor



## CONTACT US

### Letters:

*Inventors Digest*  
520 Elliot Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202

### Online:

Via [inventorsdigest.com](http://inventorsdigest.com), comment below the Leave a Reply notation at the bottom of stories. Or, send emails or other inquiries to [info@inventorsdigest.com](mailto:info@inventorsdigest.com).



## MUSIODATA

## SONGS BECOMING A TOY NAMED SUE?

If you're a songwriter, musician or music publishing company, adding insurance is an increasingly good idea.

As you've read recently in *Inventors Digest*, music copyright cases are growing in notoriety and dollar amounts. Katy Perry and Led Zeppelin are among two headliner acts that have been subject to court challenges—the latter emerging victorious in a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling announced on March 9.

*Rolling Stone* recently reported that the uptick in music infringement challenges is making the industry so nervous that in some instances, tens of thousands of dollars are being spent on insurance policies.

It's more than ironic that in December

2018, recording artists Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams were ordered by a judge to pay nearly \$5 million in a copyright case involving their song “Blurred Lines” and Marvin Gaye's 1977 hit “Got to Give It Up.” Because especially in music, there are many blurred lines before it's determined that an alleged offender “Got to Give It Up.”

At what point does a similar or identical notes pattern in two different songs cross the line into copyright infringement? How can it be proved that an artist or group was previously aware of a song with similar characteristics?

So people like **Sandy Wilbur** are becoming important adds to music companies' phone lists. The president of Musiodata, Wilbur is a longtime musicologist who has been a consultant in numerous music copyright cases and an expert witness in several court trials.

The scariest part is, these massive lawsuits are being decided by people who wouldn't know a C clef from CNN.

Wilbur told *Rolling Stone* there's a lot of confusion about what is permissible because cases are decided by “the average listener, who is not an educated musicologist or musician.”

Last year, singer/songwriter Perry lost a \$2.7 million infringement lawsuit over her hit, “Dark Horse.” (She was responsible for \$550,000.) Led Zeppelin has now won in court twice, even though the case may still not be over.

On March 9, the Ninth Circuit ruled that Led Zep's Robert Plant and Jimmy Page did not lift the opening guitar riff in “Stairway to Heaven” from the rock band Spirit's 1968 instrumental, “Taurus.” The case dates to 2014.

A jury threw out the case in 2016, but in 2018 that ruling was overturned when a three-judge panel ruled there were errors in jury proceedings. Even with the new ruling, the plaintiffs' attorney said the fight will continue to the Supreme Court if necessary.

# BRIGHT IDEAS

## Prompt

### ORGANIZING TIMEPIECE

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

With no numbers and no hour or second hand, Prompt is designed to keep you organized.

There is no screen or connection to WiFi or Bluetooth; the minimalistic design lets you wear the piece on your wrist, keep it in your pocket or hold it in your hand.

Touching the smooth concave glass lens triggers between one and four vibrations. One vibration means you're within the first 15 minutes in the hour, two vibrations for the second 15 minutes, and so on. To get the precise time, glance at the LEDs around the circumference of the timepiece and activate by pressing on the lens for three-plus seconds.

Prompt will retail for \$230, with a planned August shipping date for crowdfunding Rewards backers.



## POSSIBLE DELAYS

Coronavirus-related factors may result in changing timetables and later shipping dates than companies originally provided.



## FORGO

### LIQUID HAND WASH FROM POWDER

[forgo.se](http://forgo.se)

FORGO is an environmentally friendly hand wash powder that contains no throwaway plastic bottles or bags. One small paper sachet contains the essential ingredients needed to turn regular tap water into a full bottle of foaming hand wash in less than one minute.

Even the packaging is limited to its bare minimum—only what is required for the bottle not to break in transport.

For now, FORGO will ship only to North America and Europe; it has a shipping timetable of June. A starter kit—including a glass bottle and three foaming hand wash sachets—was made available to Kickstarter backers for about \$36. The future retail price is not available.





**ZipBag**  
REPLACEMENT FOR  
PLASTIC BAGS  
*twopillars.io*

ZipBag® is a patent-pending storage container made of 100 percent platinum silicone for keeping leftovers fresh. It replaces plastic containers and plastic bags to allow you to store more inside your refrigerator.

The product, with a secure zipper closure, features a reusable hot/cold pack, bamboo spork and storage pouch. It has a dial for tracking leftovers and a writeable surface.

ZipBag is microwave, oven and freezer safe. When not in use, just hang it by its silicone loop.

One sandwich ZipBag set will retail for \$20, with shipping slated for July to crowdfunding backers.

**“It is the genius of our Constitution that under its shelter of enduring institutions and rooted principles there is ample room for the rich fertility of American political invention.”**

—LYNDON B. JOHNSON



**Clicbot**  
EDUCATIONAL  
ROBOT  
*kickstarter.com*

Clicbot is intended to teach your child how to code. It has 200 different reactions.

The robot's personality depends on how it is built and coded. Each setup (more than 1,000) has its unique combination of use cases. Kids can build the robot to climb, dance, crawl, drive, and much more.

Children can grasp robotics by clicking pieces together to assemble Clicbot. They can assign movement directions or record a sequence. Clicbot comes with six games out of the box, with more to come.

Made by KEYiTECH, Clicbot will retail for \$449. Shipping for Rewards backers is set for June.



# Purposeful Repurposing

INNOVATOR/DESIGNER CHARLES HARRISON IMPROVED THE TRASH CAN, HUNDREDS OF EVERYDAY ITEMS **BY REID CREAGER**

**W**HEN A MAJOR LEAGUE Baseball controversy unfolded this past winter, you have to wonder what Charles Harrison would have thought about one of his signature innovations being the source of so much negative attention.

A Bing search on the words “Houston Astros trash can” during spring training yielded a staggering 2,420,000 results—the byproduct of a historic cheating scandal in which it was determined that the 2017-18 Astros relayed signs to their hitters by banging on trash cans. It didn’t take long for a heckling fan to bang on a trash can during one of the team’s spring workouts.

Harrison, who died in November 2018, obviously had a quietly different purpose in mind.

Known as “the Jackie Robinson of industrial design,” Sears’ longtime chief product designer and first African-American executive made a career of rethinking inventions. Theroot.com called him “the most important person you never heard of,” adding:

“He is unquestionably the most prolific product designer in American history and changed American life and culture so much, even he couldn’t name every single product for which he was responsible.”

Harrison reinvented and/or developed more than 700 products, with one standing out as his proudest achievement—and standing out weekly in the drive-ways of millions of American homes.

## A quiet bang

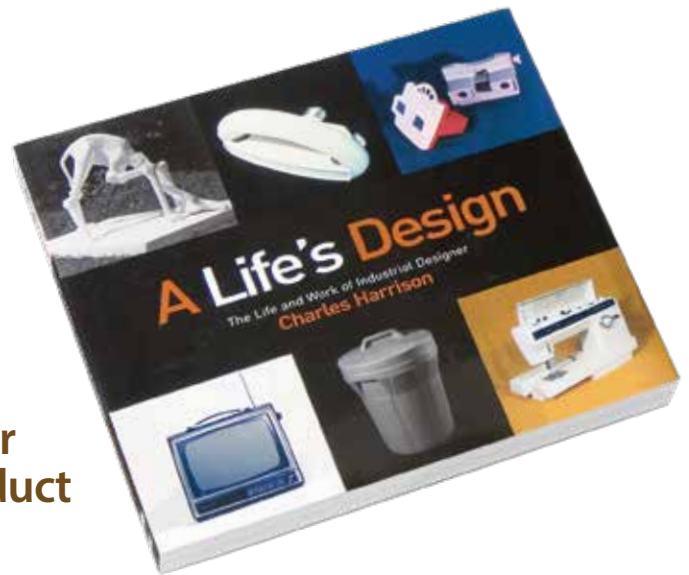
The hard rubber trash can, often with wheels, became a U.S. consumer staple after decades of clunky, metallic predecessors. Harrison’s 1963 innovation was quieter and more functional, featuring a design that enabled the cans to nest inside one another for easier storage and transport.

In his 2006 memoir, “A Life’s Design: The Life and Work of Industrial Designer Charles Harrison,” he wrote: “When that can hit the market, it did so with the biggest bang you *never* heard” (until the Houston Astros came along, anyway).

Harrison’s many loud impacts were the result of not just creativity but determination. He excelled



**Theroot.com called Harrison “the most important person you never heard of ... the most prolific product designer in American history.”**



at City College in San Francisco even though he was dyslexic and got his master's degree in art education at Illinois Institute of Technology.

The rampant discriminatory policies still in force in the 1950s initially held him back. He tried to get a job at Sears, Roebuck & Co. but reportedly was denied because of his race. However, one of his undergraduate professors, Viennese architect and designer Henry P. Glass, helped him find freelance design work.

One of Harrison's career turning points came in 1958 when he was working for Robert Podall Associates and was asked to redesign some popular toy binoculars. The View-Master, introduced by two inventors at the 1939 World's Fair, allowed users to click through striking 3-D images.

Harrison led a team that streamlined the View-Master by making it plastic, lessening the bulk of its batteries and improving its functionality. They added a lever system for changing the images and an orange color that kids loved, making the toy a classic with robust sales for decades.

### Historically prolific

Sears hired Harrison in 1961, the start of a historically prolific 32-year career. He not only redesigned the electric sewing machine into its current version, he designed 8-12 different sewing machine models every year for 12 years.

Many now-ubiquitous products in homes worldwide are the result of Harrison's work: the see-through measuring cup, riding lawnmower, cribs, hedge clippers, steam irons, shoe buffers, portable turntables, blenders, stoves, toasters, electric frying pans, consumer power tools, circular fluorescent light bulbs, wheelbarrows, cordless electric shavers, hearing aids and more.

He retired from Sears in 1993. In 2008, the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design

Museum gave Harrison a Lifetime Achievement Award “in recognition of an individual who has made a profound, long-term contribution to contemporary design practice.”

Harrison's omission from the National Inventors Hall of Fame is curious, especially given his pioneering status as an African-American innovator and designer. Yet he never lamented his general lack of notoriety.

He wrote that “As an industrial designer especially, your audience is neither history nor fame.”

## INVENTOR ARCHIVES: APRIL

**April 15, 1452: Leonardo da Vinci** was born.

Best known as a painter, da Vinci was also an inventor and innovator whose detailed sketches were the first to show the possibilities of concepts that included human flight, armoured cars, scuba gear and self-propelled carts. His designs also led to important improvements in the clock and the anemometer (which measures windspeed), among other inventions.

Da Vinci's drawing of a 33-barrelled organ, known as his machine gun drawing, has been described by some as a forerunner to modern weaponry.

**April 19, 1939:** John Steinbeck's “**The Grapes of Wrath**” was copyrighted.

In 2006, U.S. judge Richard Owen ruled that the rights to Steinbeck's most famous novels, also including “Of Mice and Men,” could be taken from his publisher and given to his descendants. He ruled that Penguin Books must forfeit the copyright of 10 of Steinbeck's works, even though the novelist had signed away the rights 67 years earlier.

The novelist's granddaughter, Blake Smyle, and his son Thomas Steinbeck fought against Penguin Books and Paramount Pictures for the rights. The judge said U.S. copyright law acknowledges that young authors could not know in advance “the high stature they would attain,” so it was fair to allow them or their descendants to renegotiate copyright agreements.



# Are You An Entrepreneur?

TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES,  
YOU MUST KNOW WHO YOU ARE **BY JACK LANDER**

**M**Y OLD GRANNY often spoke in old sayings. “All that glitters is not gold” was one of them. (Actually, Shakespeare used it in his play, “The Merchant of Venice.”) And many inventors bear witness to that truth.

We imagine a great invention, rush to conclude a patent search, and discover that our invention was preceded by another inventor—perhaps in 1999 or before. It happens more frequently than finding our way clear to file for a patent on the basis of what we first believe to be our novel claims.

In this case, so long as the prior patent has exceeded its 20-year life, you are free to produce and sell the other inventor’s invention. The decision to produce or not depends on your objective. Do you want to become an entrepreneur, or do you want to remain an inventor and go on to your next invention?

## Clues in tribal origins

So, how do you decide? First—and this is very important—you must know your own personality, not be sucked in by vague dreams or false hopes, and know the core that guides you. We are all born with certain skill sets that took root in our genes, our DNA, during our 90,000 years as modern Homo sapiens.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow said this about personality: “When we ask what a man wants out of life, we deal with his very essence.” This essence took root when we lived in tribes as modern Homo sapiens (wise humans).

At some point, we discovered that the division of labor into specialties significantly increased tribal efficiency. And evolution, which will mindlessly grab hold of any tactic that works to perpetuate the species, co-evolved specialists to fulfill the divisions of labor.

For example, a specialist invented the stone tip to improve the less effective wooden spear. Humans also invented attaching it with pitch, and binding it with sinew. The labor division we might broadly call the artisan was fulfilled by the specialist who today we call the inventor.

The point is that if your “essence”—your archetype—is that of the true inventor, it is deeply embedded, not some fickle brainstorm that may or may not visit you in the future.

Psychologist Carl Jung states it this way: “They (the archetypal forms) are ineradicable, for they represent the foundations of the psyche itself.”

I’m not trying to convince you that you should not choose the entrepreneurial option. I merely want to emphasize that the importance of your success will depend heavily on your truest essence.

## The role of personality

Let’s examine the entrepreneurial essence. The tribe needed a person who could define a goal, plan to achieve it, schedule the intermediate steps, and carry out the mission.

Of the 12 archetypes that Jung defined, the alpha male or alpha female appears to fit entrepreneurship best.

Many inventors work alone, but the successful entrepreneur more often forms a team—Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, for example. Sometimes the team is a single partner at the start, but even in sole proprietorship, an association with accountants, vendors, and sellers becomes a kind of loosely affiliated team.

I suspect that the alpha personality is less common than the artisan. A tribe having an optimum size of 150 needed only one alpha (usually a male) to lead it, but it may have needed several artisans to keep up with making and improving spear and arrow tips, spear shafts, bows, atlatls, hide scrapers, axes, cooking vessels, needles, etc.

Thus, the inventor personality may have evolved to outnumber the entrepreneurial personality.

If my assumption is correct, true entrepreneurs may be significantly fewer than true inventors. And the inventor who impulsively decides to embark on the entrepreneurial option without a realistic assessment of his or her innate personality is likely headed for failure.

Entrepreneur



Inventor



## Those who believe they have sufficient discipline to take on the role of entrepreneur, even though their heart is with inventing, may ultimately fail.

Also, those who believe they have sufficient discipline to take on the role of entrepreneur, even though their heart is with inventing, may ultimately fail. Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, “Our vanity desires that what we do best should be considered what is hardest for us.” Vanity is not a legitimate mentor.

Is there any practical self-analysis we can count on to reveal our entrepreneurial qualities? That’s a tough question.

### Frying pan inspiration

I can speak from personal experience, but I’m not sure that applies to everyone. I came up with my first invention when I was about 10.

My mother had a heavy, cast iron frying pan. She complained that it was too heavy to serve from, so I invented a thin metal disk with holes in it and a handle. She was supposed to lift the food out using the insert.

I didn’t explain how to prevent the grease from dripping through the holes onto the table or floor, however. It wasn’t a practical invention, of course. Neither are a lot of items invented by mature persons.

Anyway, I went on from there, inventing all kinds of impractical things until I invented a thermally conductive mounting means for high power transistors, U.S. Patent No. 3,820,592. This device enabled my employer to win a naval contract for power supplies used on the DD963 destroyers.

My story does not end there, however. I had dreams of starting my own business in order to have a facility in which to manufacture products that I would invent and produce. I planned for a small factory, a.k.a. a job shop, that would produce precision sheet-metal parts for electronics manufacturers.

I bought machinery on credit, borrowed \$5,000 from a relative, combined it with my own savings, and formed Shortrun Precision Fabricators in Laverne, California. What I had overlooked was that the demands of running a job shop that had up to 12 employees left almost no time for inventing or developing proprietary products.

True, I had developed three novel products, but I failed miserably at marketing them. There was no Amazon in those days.

After five years of meeting payrolls, and even though the business was reasonably successful, I had become dissatisfied. I unexpectedly received an offer I couldn’t refuse. I sold the business and went back into product development engineering and manufacturing engineering.

I had learned the hard way that on the spectrum of inventor at the left end and entrepreneur at the right end, I leaned well left of center.

My experience is not suggested as a model to help you decide whether or not to produce and sell. But if I had thought more seriously about whether I had the right stuff to be a producer first and inventor second, I may not have been tempted to start a job shop.

**Telltale traits**

However, I have noticed certain traits about inventors and entrepreneurs that might be of some help to you.

I recall long ago reading a book written by Joseph Sugarman, a very successful mail-order seller. He claimed that he cleared his desk every evening before leaving for home. (That should have been a clue that I should stick with inventing. My desk must have papers from at least a decade ago at the bottom of the pile.)

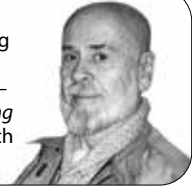
So, are all entrepreneurs neat? I suspect they are, but I don't know. Still, they probably always remember birthdays and anniversaries; never forget a doctor's appointment; have the latest iPhone with entries of appointments six months in the future; shave every day whether or not they're going to meet anyone; and mainly have no preconceived affection for any certain product.

The thrill of producing, selling and earning a profit because strangers buy whatever it is they have to sell is their main incentive in life.

Inventors, on the other hand, are generally not neat about their workspace; they lose track of time, even days; they might wear socks that don't match, if a man; lunch time has a range of about six hours; they hate to hear the phone ring; have been known to make a prototype before doing a patent search; carry a purse the size of an overnight bag, if a woman; and given the choice in a licensing agreement between \$5,000 upfront and a national publicity article about their invention will choose the latter. (We live for validation.)

You'll recall that bit above about all that glitters is not gold. But Shakespeare also wrote, "This above all: to thine own self be true." 🎯

**Jack Lander**, a near legend in the inventing community, has been writing for *Inventors Digest* for 24 years. His latest book is *Marketing Your Invention—A Complete Guide to Licensing, Producing and Selling Your Invention*. You can reach him at [jack@inventor-mentor.com](mailto:jack@inventor-mentor.com).



**THE SOURCE FOR YOUR INVENTION'S SUCCESS**

Work with an industry expert who has achieved documented success as an inventor.

- Holder of MULTIPLE PATENTS — one product alone has sold 60 million worldwide
- Over 35 years experience in manufacturing, product development and licensing
- Author, public speaker and consultant to small enterprises and individuals

**SAMPLE AREAS OF EXPERTISE:** Microchip design, PCB and PCBA Design and Fabrication, Injection Tooling Services, Retail Packaging, Consumer Electronics, Pneumatics, Christmas, Camping, Pet Products, Protective Films, both Domestic and Off-Shore Manufacturing

**VenturSource**  
 David A. Fussell | 404.915.7975  
 dafussell@gmail.com | ventursource.com

The Rogue Front Pocket Wallet in Genuine Bison Leather.



Traditional, thick wallets are poorly designed. To give you a better fit and a more comfortable everyday, we reimagined what a wallet could be.

With a rounded shape to perfectly fit your front pocket, our Rogue Front Pocket Wallet is possibly the most comfortable wallet ever made. One quarter inch thin, with room for up to 12 cards. \$55. Made in Maine.

[rogue-industries.com](http://rogue-industries.com) | 1-800-786-1768

# Doing the Legwork

THESE SIMPLE RESEARCH METHODS CAN HELP PREVENT PRODUCT DESIGN PITFALLS **BY DON DEBELAK**

**W**HEN CONSIDERING the viability of your invention's design, research the history of similar products that have been in the market to see how they worked and how they fared. This may help you determine which pitfalls to avoid.

Markets have many preconceived notions about product design, often based on products that have come before.

Product design, including producing prototypes, is expensive. So it behooves you to learn all you can before locking in a significant investment.

**Products patent search:** One way to discover competitive products that have been in the market is to conduct a competitive products patent search, which is easy to do at either Google Patents or the United States Patent and Trademark Office website. Simply input a short description of your product in the search box and see the patents that come up.

When you find a patent in your category, go the end of the patent and look for patents under the Cited By category. These are patents that came later than the invention you first found in the search that cited that invention's prior art documents.

Look up patents that are somewhat similar to your product and see which ones have been assigned to a corporation. You should contact these companies.

**Trade magazines/trade show directories:** You can also find current competitive products in trade magazine product directories. Find those magazines through internet searches.

Industry trade shows are typically sponsored or at least covered by trade magazines or websites. The magazines typically have an issue with an industry product directory where you can find competitive products.

Many trade magazines also have an industry trade show schedule on their website. Call the show in that schedule and ask for last year's directory. Competitive products, if being actively sold, should be listed as a source for your research.

**Phone and in-person Interviews:** Contact salespeople of companies to whom a patent is assigned; salespeople at companies who have been exhibiting at trade shows; retailers in your product category;

trade magazine writers and editors, and independent sales representatives.

Call one of your targeted companies and ask for a salesperson, then request a copy of a brochure for the product of interest to you. But also ask whether the product has been successful, where it is or was sold, and about any improvements after introduction. If the product wasn't introduced, ask if the salesperson know why.

Once you get the brochures, talk to retail store managers and see which products they have sold, sell, or considered selling. Ask what they liked and disliked about the products and what kind of consumer feedback they received.

I've found trade magazine writers and editors to be knowledgeable and helpful. But you should be well prepared to talk to them.

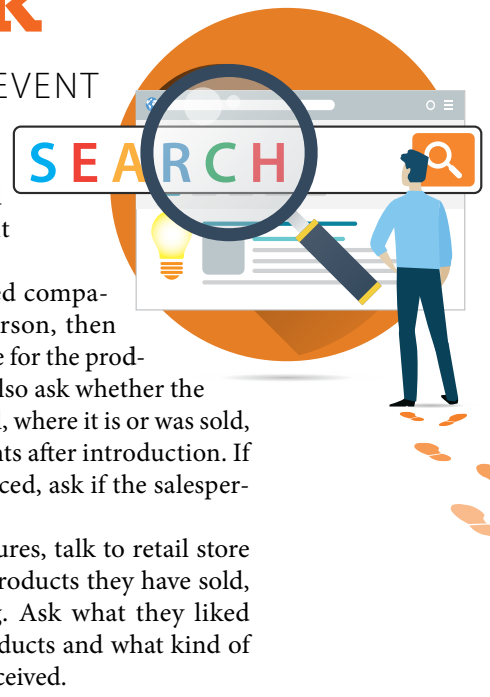
By now, you should have three or four products in your product category that have been in the market. If you tell writers that you are looking into this product category and mention the products you are most interested in, you should be able to ask which features set apart each product and whether any of the products encountered significant problems—either feature, quality or market issues.

Also consider contacting independent sales reps or manufacturer's sales representatives. Sometimes you can get a list of reps from a trade magazine, or from a trade show directory.

Otherwise, you can look at the websites of many of the companies you have identified and see whether they post their sales reps list.

Independent sales reps sell many products, typically 10 to 15. The reps know the market well and often give lots of feedback if they know the product category. ☞

**Don Debelak** is the founder of One Stop Invention Shop, which offers marketing and patenting assistance to inventors. He is also the author of several marketing books, including Entrepreneur magazine's *Bringing Your Product to Market*. Debelak can be reached at (612) 414-4118 or [dondebelak34@msn.com](mailto:dondebelak34@msn.com).





# Money for Your Operations

WHEN SEEKING CAPITAL, YOU MUST DECIDE HOW MUCH OWNERSHIP YOU WANT **BY ALYSON DUTCH**

**MONEY.** It's a loaded word (pardon the pun), because there are so many beliefs about it:

- “Money is the root of all evil.”
- “Money doesn't grow on trees.”
- “Rich people are greedy.”

We all have thoughts about money that unconsciously lurk in our brains. They are different for every human—and they are all based on our past experiences, scars, fears.

The beliefs listed above are ridiculous. Money is not a thing with a personality that is “good” or “bad,” it's simply an energy and our current system of exchange.

Based on my POM Principle (P for product, O for operations and M for marketing), money is a very important part of your operations. You need money to run a business, and some businesses that are more capital intensive than others.

This is a primer on your choices.

## Bootstrapping v. financing

How to choose? Do you go after money first so you can hire who you want, build an office and have money for prototypes, manufacturing and marketing? Could you sell your services with your own investment in a minimum infrastructure and market slowly until it builds?

Your choices depend on:

- How much ownership of your company would you like to retain?
- Are you willing to give away partial ownership—and how much?
- How much risk are you willing to take?
- Do you have credit?
- Are you willing to write a business plan that forces you through the planning, competitive landscape, financial forecasting and marketing budgets?
- If you did raise money, how would you spend it?
- If you maxed out your credit cards to start up, when will you see a return?



Personally, I would rather use my own credit, seek money from a bank and retain 100 percent control. As wonderful as partners may appear on the surface, it's very hard to share the creation and growth of a business with another human.

Think about how hard personal relationships are, add in the beliefs people have about money, throw some gasoline on it and then imagine what it's like to light a match.

You can always hire human capital; you don't need to give away your ownership.

The easiest route is a bank with which you already have a relationship. For a small business, I cannot stress enough the importance of this.

When you can pick up the phone and say: "Hey, I need your help, or I need 24 hours for a deposit to get through the gateway and other checks are out there about to hit my account," amazing things can happen. I've met bankers who spent hours with me, teaching me things that I cherish.

Bank loans are usually the cheapest and have less strings attached. Sometimes you can find revolving credit lines or factors who will provide upfront cash based on invoices you've procured.

The Small Business Association does loans; just call your local SBA office.

I also love credit unions. They are very small and personal.

### Grants and other means

Another consideration: grants.

At Consumer Product Events, we just started a scholarship grant for kids who are in entrepreneurship programs in U.S. universities as part of a new award program called Consumer Product Marketing Awards. Because we are giving the money, we can dictate how it is used and where it goes. There are grants out there in every industry, for every type of ethnicity and lots of other reasons; go find them!

Friends and family are always a great resource because they believe in you. The tough part is how those relationships may be affected if your venture fails.

Make sure you treat this money as you would any other legal arrangement and have agreements in place. They should include clauses on risk and how you agree to failure. Contracts are made for "when" and "if," not when everyone is feeling good about things. Use them.

If your credit is bad, there are options—albeit very expensive. There are lots of "hard money lenders" out there. Some are big companies such as OnDeck and other private groups with cash that just want a huge return. Their terms might be as high as 12 percent

to 30 percent, and they require repayment on a daily or weekly basis in auto debits.

For some businesses, these companies serve as a bridge loan and can usually be done quickly. We love a company called Fora Financial.

Crowdfunding on sites such as GoFundMe, Kickstarter or Indiegogo is a unique animal you might choose for lots of reasons—other than a place to find money. It's good for search engine optimization; you may even choose to use it as a selling platform or a place to test your product to find early adopters and get opinions.

You may raise a few bucks, but don't expect this to be a sole manner of fundraising. It's a small-potato universe.

Most companies start with "friends and family rounds." Sometimes this is called "seed funding" or "angel investment": The amount you ask for is based on what your product is, what it costs to make it, get it to market—and spend at least 1-2 years of marketing. That could be from \$50,000 to \$5 million.

With investors on board, you must use their money for your business—not your rent, dinners, or personal life. There is a very heavy penalty (read: prison) for those who misuse this money.

### The next phases

Series A and Series B are the next rounds of tranches that are usually sought after a company has proven viability.

Series A is the second stage of start-up financing and the first stage of venture capital financing. B is a type of equity-based financing, which investors are provided with preferred shares in exchange for their money.

This kind of funding method usually is leading up to a desired IPO—which is the sale of shares that makes it a public company—and of course with that comes loss of control as well, boards of directors and big-boy/girl business time.

The thing about investors is, they invest in people. The only time they keep the entrepreneur onboard is if that person is smarter than the investors.

Entrepreneurs should stay focused on the reason they started: to make money. But first, you need money to make it go. 📌

**Alyson Dutch** has been a leading consumer packaged goods launch specialist for 30 years. She operates Malibu-based Brown + Dutch Public Relations and Consumer Product Events, and is a widely published author.



# It's Time for TikTok

APP AND PLATFORM FOR SHORT-FORM VIDEOS  
CAN BE A GREAT HELP FOR INVENTORS **BY ELIZABETH BREEDLOVE**

**T**IKTOK, one of the newest social networks, is quickly gaining popularity in the United States and abroad. Consider these statistics from walla-roomedia.com:

- TikTok has an estimated 800 million monthly active users, including an estimated 60 million in the United States.
- Worldwide, TikTok has been downloaded more than 1.5 billion times.
- The average TikTok user opens the app eight times per day and spends an average of 52 minutes per day on the platform.

So TikTok is clearly an incredibly active platform. But what exactly is it?

TikTok is an app and platform used to create and share short-form videos. If you're familiar with Vine, the discontinued video app, TikTok will sound familiar; the two have many similarities.

Meme culture and virality are a big part of the TikTok experience. In other words, many of the videos shared through TikTok are re-creations of viral videos and memes. TikTok videos are up to 15 seconds long, though you can string together individual clips for up to 60 seconds of video.

TikTok was introduced in China as Douyin in September 2016; it came to the United States and other countries under the name TikTok in 2017. Later in 2017, TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, purchased Musical.ly for up to \$1 billion. The two companies merged in August 2018, consolidating all accounts and creating a larger community under the name TikTok.

In October 2018 it was the most downloaded app in the United States, the first Chinese app to achieve this. Last year, TikTok hit 1 billion total downloads across the globe and became the seventh-most downloaded app of the decade.

The app was available in 75 languages and more than 150 markets as of 2018.

## Should you be on TikTok?

Ask yourself a few questions:

Is your demographic on TikTok? Sixty percent of TikTok users are female. In addition, 60 percent are ages 16-24, and 80 percent are 16-34. So if your invention is for Gen Z young women, it might be worth creating a TikTok account.

Do you have the capacity to manage a TikTok account? Consider your (or your team's) current workload. Do you have the time and energy to devote to another social media account? To get the most out of the platform, you'll need to spend time creating and publishing content and interacting with other users nearly every day. If you can't devote this time to managing the account properly, you're likely better off staying away.

Do you have content to share? Even if your target audience is on TikTok and you're able to manage it, make sure you have content to share. The good news is, you almost certainly do, or you can easily create content! There are no rules as to what can and can't be shared on TikTok, though users frequently share videos of dancing, lip syncing and comedy sketches. You don't need to be a professional video editor. TikTok makes it easy!

Are you looking for new advertising opportunities? TikTok introduced its ad platform in mid-2019, offering several options for businesses to advertise. In addition to more traditional social media advertising, such as in-feed ads, TikTok offers platform-specific opportunities. For example, one popular type of content and ad format is TikTok challenges, which encourage users to share a short video of them—many times using a specific song, dance move or



## Sixty percent of TikTok users are female. In addition, 60 percent are ages 16-24, and 80 percent are 16-34.

activity. Users tag these challenge videos with a specific hashtag for each challenge.

### How inventors can use it

So, how can inventors use TikTok to promote their invention?

First, let's look at how other brands are using TikTok.

Many companies in a variety of industries, such as Pepsi, TurboTax, the NFL and Universal Pictures have run branded hashtag challenge campaigns. These branded hashtags show up in the "Discover" page.

This type of sponsored content isn't cheap, but it can have a big return. You may even want to use the shoppable Hashtag Challenge Plus option, which allows users to easily shop websites from right inside the app.

Many brands, such as Maybelline, rely on more traditional in-feed ads. Users can still interact with in-feed ads, just as they would with organic ads. When Maybelline used this option in one campaign, it earned more than 48,000 new likes in a single day.

Additionally, companies can brand in-app features such as filters, lenses and songs, which users can then use in their own videos. Companies such as Home Depot and Oreo have seen great success with these types of campaigns.

Some companies choose to partner with influencers to promote their brand. For example, Amazon

created a #FoundItOnAmazon hashtag campaign, then partnered with an influencer to promote it.

If your invention's target audience is aligned with TikTok's demographic, you have a huge opportunity to promote and sell your product. Look for inspiration in what other brands are doing on the platform.

For example:

- If you have a fun, young team, participate in trending challenges.
- If you want to take it a step further, create your own branded hashtag challenges.
- Create funny, eye-catching videos to use as in-feed ads.
- Look for opportunities to create branded content that other users can use to create their videos.
- Find a good influencer (or more than one!) to work with; make sure to consider their audience to ensure it aligns with yours.
- Create fun, behind-the-scenes videos of you, your team, your office, your projects or your inventions.

My biggest piece of advice if you decide to create an account on TikTok? Have fun with it! 🎵

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





# Why All the **Fuss?**

WOMAN'S LINE OF PRODUCTS DESIGNED TO CALM NEWBORNS—AND PARENTS **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

**W**HEN I STARTED working with inventors almost 30 years ago, it was quite uncommon for women to be identified as inventors. It still is.

But there is hope in the words of an old Bob Dylan song, “The Times, They Are A-Changin’.”

Here are two products from Tranquilo Mat inventor Melissa Gersin that are intended to help calm fussy babies, which can help exhausted parents get some ZZZs.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT):** How did the Tranquilo soothing mats come about?

**Melissa Gersin (MG):** I was working as a maternity nurse in a Boston-area hospital when I completed a training as an infant crying specialist with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. During that training, I learned the science of calming crying babies by mimicking the sounds and motions of the womb.

At that time, there were no products on the market that effectively did both things—and nothing portable and versatile for the modern, on-the-go parent. One night, while trying to simultaneously soothe three fussy babies in my hospital’s nursery all in different

settings, I had an epiphany and the idea for the Tranquilo Mat was born.

**EGT:** Have you had any difficulties manufacturing, as well as obtaining CPSIA (Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act) certifications?

**MG:** Like any company starting out, we did run into at least one or two small issues with manufacturing, but I feel fortunate they weren’t major issues nor insurmountable problems.

As for CPSIA certifications, I was diligent about contacting multiple experts to confirm the rules and regulations for a unique product like ours. My meticulous research meant obtaining all the proper safety certifications wasn’t hard!

**EGT:** Please share your patent process.

**MG:** I took a book, “Patent it Yourself,” from my library and after reading it set about adequately researching existing patents before finally venturing up the gusto to submit the provisional patent application to the United States Patent and Trademark Office myself.

Fortunately, I had a college friend whose husband was a patent attorney and he handled my patent submission for a very discounted rate. His firm also provided me with free trademark and international patent application submissions. About \$15,000 and four years later, we are a patented product and trademarked brand!

The Tranquilo Mat (above) emerged from the premise of calming babies by mimicking the sounds and motions of the womb. The Baby Soothe massager (below) is the first to mimic a mother’s fingertip massage.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MELISSA GERSIN

**EGT:** Did it take many prototypes before you came up with the current product?

**MG:** Between myself and our factory, it took over 10 prototypes before our beta-product was delivered to our Indiegogo backers in December 2015. With a few more minor tweaks, we launched our product and we've been learning from customers ever since! We are currently finalizing development for the next version, a Bluetooth-enabled device with a few other often requested features.

**EGT:** How is the Tranquilo Mat packaged? Where are they sold?

**MG:** The product is rolled into a tall square box and sold online as well as in stores at a variety of locations: our website; Amazon.com; in store or online at buybuyBABY; Target.com; Walmart.com, or at more than 100 independent baby boutiques.

**EGT:** Who handles your PR? What has worked and what hasn't?

**MG:** We handle our PR ourselves, focusing more on a grassroots effort. We mainly work with influencers and partner with other synergistic baby brands to do giveaways and share marketing resources. We've found today's mom is almost 100 percent online using social media and other online resources to learn about products before buying. We market directly to moms on social media.

**EGT:** You were on "Shark Tank." Tell us about it.

**MG:** That experience was amazing! The show reached out to me in late June 2016, asking if we'd be interested in applying. I sped through the process and was flown to Los Angeles for filming in September 2016. I felt very prepared for the show and found it to be a pretty great experience.

The Sharks were much nicer than they seemed on TV. My pitch was about an hour. Overall, we shook hands with Robert Herjavec and when our show aired in February 2017, the response was incredible.

We sold out of 2,000 units in less than 24 hours and went on to over \$1 million in sales for 2017, mainly from the show's exposure and connections alone. It's how we also launched into big-box retailers that same year and grew the business before selling in November 2018 to Baby Brezza. I'm now working with them to continue to grow the Tranquilo brand and product line.

**EGT:** You have another product featured on your website, the Baby Soothe™ massager, which launched last September. Who invented them? How did they come about?

**MG:** Baby Soothe is the first baby massager meant to mimic Mom's fingertip massage, a well-documented natural soothing aid. Baby Brezza was working on developing Baby Soothe with inventor Lauren Piccirillo when we started the process to sell Tranquilo's assets to them.

Once they acquired us, they decided to launch her product under the Tranquilo brand name as they work to create a full line of innovative sleep and soothing products to complement their line of feeding products.

**EGT:** Can the battery pack on either product get hot?

**MG:** Neither product has ever had any issues with the battery pack getting hot. We designed the product to use simple AA batteries instead of lithium ion batteries to avoid this issue. We also work with a factory that makes FDA-grade medical devices and rigorously test each batch to ensure they are as safe as possible for our smallest, most precious consumer—babies!

**"It's a long road to developing and launching a baby product, so do ample research to figure things out but do it step by step and don't get overwhelmed."**

—MELISSA GERSIN





Mom Lauren Piccirillo invented Baby Soothe.

**EGT:** Do both products come in different sizes? What are the age ranges for the Tranquilo Mat and Baby Soothe?

**MG:** The Tranquilo Mat is recommended for babies up to 6 months but can also work well for babies 6 to 18 months old with known sleep issues—not sleeping through the night, difficulty with crib transition training, and so on. It comes in two sizes, large and small, but the large is our best seller as it's best for any sleep and soothing settings—crib, bassinet, activity mat, stroller, and so on. The small is best in a car seat or baby carrier, two very specialized uses.

The Baby Soothe only comes in one size, but the belly band included is adjustable to fit a variety of babies. It can be used for babies of any age but is recommended for those up to 12 months.

**EGT:** Are you manufacturing these massagers together with Lauren Piccirillo, or are you manufacturing separately?

**MG:** Manufacturing is all done under the Tranquilo brand name, but the factories used for the products or parts of the products may differ. We try to work with the best factory for each product, even if that means working with more factories.

**EGT:** Can you share advice with novice inventors, especially for manufacturing a baby product?

**MG:** Follow your curiosity and take things one step at a time. It's a long road to developing and launching a baby product, so do ample research to figure things out but do it step by step and don't get overwhelmed by how much there is to do. ☺

*Details: Inventing or product development-related questions, [mgersin@beteshgroup.com](mailto:mgersin@beteshgroup.com); products, [TranquiloBaby.com](http://TranquiloBaby.com)*

Books by **Edie Tolchin** ([egt@edietolchin.com](mailto:egt@edietolchin.com)) include "Fanny on Fire" ([fannyonfire.com](http://fannyonfire.com)) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



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

### 1 GET IT MADE

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

[www.EGTglobaltrading.com](http://www.EGTglobaltrading.com)  
 EGT@egtglobaltrading.com  
 P.O. Box 5660 - Hillsborough, NJ 08844  
**845-321-2362**

### 2 GET A WEBSITE!

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

[www.widgetsontheweb.com](http://www.widgetsontheweb.com)  
 kenrbnsn@widgetsontheweb.com  
 614 Van Liew Court - Hillsborough, NJ 08844  
**908-963-2447**

Get more BANG for your BUCK from two professionals with a combined total of over 60 years of experience!



Whether you have a conceptual idea, stick-figure diagram, full-scale prototype or market-ready product, we want to hear about it.

	<b>10K+ HOURS OF FILM PRODUCED</b>	<b>150+ PROTOTYPES MADE</b>	
	<b>OVER \$200MM SALES WORLDWIDE</b>	<b>500+ HOURS SPENT ON PRODUCTION OF EACH CAMPAIGN</b>	
	<b>25% HIGHER SUCCESS RATE</b>	<b>50+ RETAILERS STOCKING OUR PRODUCTS WORLDWIDE</b>	

Day after day, thousands of people like you, trust Edison Nation's "As Seen on TV" team to develop their ideas into great products that are successfully marketed worldwide.



## Recently successful brands



Submit an idea today at [www.edisonnation.com/ASOTV](http://www.edisonnation.com/ASOTV)

# LONG DRIVE

BOB PARSONS' LIFE JOURNEY FROM INNER-CITY BALTIMORE TO BILLIONAIRE INSPIRATION **BY REID CREAGER**

**T**he acronym in Bob Parsons' YAM Worldwide stands for "You're a Mess." The shorthand for his Arizona-based stable of entrepreneurial operations captures the personality of a billionaire businessman and philanthropist who seldom takes himself seriously, the subject of a seriously fascinating and inspirational life story.

The 69-year-old juggernaut, best known for founding GoDaddy, has a relaxed disposition that's as engaging as his palpable passion for excellence. One of his latest ventures—PXG (Parsons Xtreme Golf)—offers a full lineup of custom golf clubs that are used and endorsed by some of the sport's biggest names. It reflects that intensity even in the context of what Mark Twain called "a good walk spoiled."

There seems to be no halfway for Bob Parsons. Not when it comes to standards. Not when it comes to determination. Not when it comes to giving. Not when it comes to fun. Not even when it comes to failure.

And not when it comes to gratitude for the turning point in a made-for-TV-movie life.

"I owe everything I've ever accomplished to the Marine Corps," Bob Parsons says.

## **Early failing, flailing**

The son of a homemaker and Montgomery Ward furniture salesman in the inner-city East Baltimore neighborhood of Highlandtown, "I was terrible at school," he said. "If I were a kid in school today, I would be pumped full of Ritalin."

He failed the fifth grade at St. Elizabeth's of Hungary. At the end of the school year, "I didn't hang around waiting for Sister to come back and pronounce me dead. I took off and told my parents I passed, and the school never got in touch with them.

"All summer long, I died about a thousand deaths thinking about it. The first day of school, I went and got in line with the sixth-graders. ... The sister who had my class, Sister Saint Thomas, pulled me out of line and told me: 'The other sister told me you failed but didn't wait around for her to take care of it, and she didn't know what to do. So she passed you!'"

Young Bob had escaped his parents' displeasure, but he knew his lucky break was a Band-Aid ready to peel off.





## BOB PARSONS

**Occupation:** Entrepreneur, philanthropist

**Born:** Baltimore, Maryland

**Home:** Scottsdale, Arizona

**Married:** Renee, 2009

**College:** University of Baltimore, graduated magna cum laude

**Businesses:** PXG, Scottsdale National Golf Club, YAM Properties, YAM Capital, The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, Harley-Davidson of Scottsdale, GoAZ Motorcycles, GoAZ West, GoAZ Cottonwood, GoAZ Flagstaff, BigYAM, The Parsons Agency, Sneaky Big Studios, Spooky Fast, Southern Thunder Harley-Davidson, YAMWood Foundry, Hedge Fund

**Military service:** United States Marine Corps, Vietnam War veteran

**Service awards:** Purple Heart, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Combat Action Ribbon

**Honors:** "A Marine for Life," by Manhattan's only Marine Corps Ball

**Hobbies:** Golf, motorcycles, reading

**Favorite movie:** "Summer of '42"

“I went into sixth grade with fourth-grade skills, and it was like that most of the time. Senior year of high school I was failing everything except gym. This is back in '68 at the height of the Vietnam War.

“I had two buddies who said they were going to join the Marine Corps ... I joined with them. We all got our orders. I showed mine to all my teachers. A number of them teared up. They knew what I was headed for.”

### **‘A different guy’**

Parsons graduated high school—“They changed all my grades to slightly passing; emphasis on slightly passing”—and reported to Parris Island. He was assigned to the 26th Marine Corps Regiment, part of the 1st Marine Division.

In 1969, Parsons served with the Delta Company of the 1st Battalion in the Quảng Nam Province. He was wounded and evacuated.

His service earned the Purple Heart Medal, Combat Action Ribbon and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. But like so many other Vietnam veterans,

his talk about the war is brief: “I was wounded in combat and eventually rotated home.”

He worked for about a year as a laborer in a steel mill, then attended the University of Baltimore because it had a deal for veterans under the GI Bill.

Amazingly, his struggles in school were gone.

“I surprised everybody and graduated magna cum laude” with an accounting degree in 1975. “Took the CPA exam, passed it the first time.

“I was a different guy.”

Parsons credits a singular force for his transformation from addled, directionless young adult to driven, mature young man. Rather than talk about what the war did to him, he likes to talk about what the Marine Corps did for him.

“I owe everything I’ve ever accomplished to the Marine Corps,” he said.

“The Marine Corps, they taught me discipline—and not discipline in the form of punishment, although there was plenty of that,” he said with a laugh. “They taught me the importance of responsibility and commitment. If

**Before graduating high school, Parsons joined the Marines and got his orders to report to Vietnam. “I showed mine to all my teachers. A number of them teared up. They knew what I was headed for.”**



Parsons says he made about \$4 billion on the sale of GoDaddy, the world's largest domain registrar.



you have something that you're committed to do, you need to see it through. You don't have to like it or be comfortable doing it, but you definitely have to do it.

"They taught me I have a right to be proud, that I could accomplish way more than I ever dreamed I could. The Marine Corps molded me. Had I not been in the Marine Corps, I would have accomplished none of this."

### Ahead of his time

"This" began not long after graduating college. Parsons used his newfound dedication and relentless curiosity to unforeseen advantage while the computer revolution was in its infancy.

He taught himself how to program a computer. His professional life would never be the same.

"I had 12 hours to kill after one of my accounting jobs in Redwood City, California, and bought a book called 'Programming in the BASIC (Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) Language.' I wrote my first program or two on the flight back. It just so happened that the company I worked for, Commercial Credit, was owned by Control Data, one of the first computer data companies."

Parsons was hooked. He bought an IBM personal computer in 1980 and wrote a program to do money management. "And I bought an Apple when the first IIC came out in 1984 (Apple's first portable computer) and taught myself how to program on that. I got to be pretty good at that."

Good enough that in 1984, he started software company Parsons Technology in his basement. Now the former Marine was the one giving the marching orders—and his accounting and computer acumen drove some spectacular results.

When Parsons Technology was sold to Intuit, Inc. in 1994 for \$64 million, the company had nearly 1,000 employees, \$100 million in annual revenue and 3 million customers. "I had about 40 grand in it," Parsons said.

### A high-profile Go

In 1997, Parsons started Jomax Technologies "for something to do" and changed the name to GoDaddy in 2000. With the help of some high-profile and controversial Super Bowl commercials beginning in 2005, the company became a household name and is now the world's largest domain registrar.

Parsons' personal fortunes soared as well. He re-married in 2009; his wife, Renee, had extensive experience working in hospitality and sales for some of the United States' premier hoteliers. She joined GoDaddy and launched its corporate events department. In 2010, she built and led the company's corporate giving program.



## GODADDY'S SUPER SERENDIPITY

Bob Parsons says GoDaddy.com became an industry leader thanks to unrivaled customer support, fair policies and strong pricing.

But the company's greatest visibility came via its provocative Super Bowl ads. Its first one resulted in a "wild lucky break" that was instrumental in growing the brand and helping turn the game's commercials into an annual attraction.

Parsons said that in late 2004 "We had a 16 percent market share worldwide, but we weren't growing. I hired a market research company and they told me what I needed to know: 'People don't know who you are.' I had a \$10 million war chest, so I bought my first Super Bowl ad (30 seconds for a reported \$2.4 million)."

Given the usual penchant back then for people to take a break during commercials during the game, "I knew I needed an ad that people would remember and want to act on." One night he saw a provocative TV commercial for Mike's Hard Limeade. Parsons hired the company that produced it (New York-based the Ad Store).

The plan was to spoof the famous Janet Jackson wardrobe malfunction of the previous year's Super Bowl. Given the newly cautious climate, the commercial was heavily vetted so as not to be too revealing.

"So it's finally approved, and a week before the Super Bowl we got a call asking if we wanted to run another spot. The first one was in the first quarter, and the second time we ran it, it would be up against the 2-minute warning. We got a deal on it.

"The ad (which features a woman whose tank top strap breaks in front of a congressional committee but reveals nothing) shows and the building shakes, but it doesn't fall down."

The GoDaddy team was excited about seeing it again near the end of the game. When the time came—and viewership at a peak during a close game between the New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles—a Fox Network promo for "The Simpsons" was shown instead.

The GoDaddy ad did not reappear. NFL executives objected to running the ad again.

An angry Parsons called Fox the next morning and came to an agreement: Not only would he not have to pay for the ad that wasn't shown, he got his money back for the one that aired. He only had to pay production costs, an estimated \$1 million.

Parsons put the ad on his blog, and the ad was picked up everywhere "over and over and over again. I did interviews that whole next week from before sun-up till long after sundown.

"The ad value was zillions, and we hadn't paid for any of it. Our market share went from 16 percent to 25 percent in a week—and held."

So Parsons and GoDaddy.com got an estimated \$12 million in free publicity because of a decision to censor an ad that was making fun of censorship.

Parsons visits with kids in Les Cayes, Haiti, at schools supported by The Bob and Renee Parsons Foundation.



Parsons sold a majority stake in GoDaddy in 2011, a deal that valued the company about \$2.3 billion. “I made about \$4 billion on that,” he said. He resigned from the GoDaddy board last year.

He and his wife founded The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation in 2012. It has awarded more than 364 grants to charitable organizations.

Meanwhile, Parsons has remained active in entrepreneurial pursuits that include shopping malls, motorcycle dealerships, an ad agency and Parsons Xtreme Golf, his most recent passion. He has spent nearly \$600 million buying up real estate in Arizona.

“We always knew we would get there,” Parsons said of his unlikely rise to celebrated achievement, fortune and generosity. “We just didn’t know when. But it’s finally there.” 📍

Parsons serves as parade viewing officer, PRO, at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego.



## ‘WE DEAL IN HOPE’

Parsons credits all of his success to the United States Marines. He pays this forward in his typically spectacular way.

On February 26, Semper Fi Fund and America’s Fund (the Fund) announced its annual Double Down for Veterans campaign raised more than \$20 million – including a \$10 million matching contribution from The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation. It was the eighth straight year the Parsons foundation matched donations to the annual campaign.

The foundation also donates \$1 million annually to Headstrong, which provides cost-free mental health treatment to post-9-11 victims and their families, and \$1.2 million a year to the families of policemen who fall in the line of duty.

“We’re moving to charity \$1 million every 14

days,” Bob Parsons said. He and his wife, Renee, have given away more than \$190 million to charities since 2012.

In 2013, Parsons cut the ribbon on The Bob Parsons Veteran Center at the University of Baltimore, his alma mater. It offers academic advising, guidance on financial aid and counseling to veterans at the university. He donated \$1 million to fund the project.

And when a U.S. tax relief plan was signed into law in late December 2017 that would cut the corporate rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, Parsons wasted no time in sharing those gains. He announced that he would give his 725 YAM Worldwide employees a total of \$1.3 million in additional bonuses.



# MASTER STROKE

PXG MARRIES ELITE DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOLF CLUBS

**D**isplaying a deftness that belies his imposing frame, Bob Parsons says chipping and putting are the strengths of his golf game. Overall, the 13-handicap golfer says he is “slightly better than middle of the road.”

Problem is, the detail-oriented billionaire entrepreneur is not good friends with middle of the road. They aren’t even on speaking terms.

So his latest passion is a snug fit for the game he loves. PXG (Parsons Xtreme Golf), the company Parsons launched in 2014, created unprecedented state-of-the-art golf clubs endorsed by an all-star cast of PGA and LPGA pros.

As sports inventions go, the PXG clubs—designed by Parsons with engineers Mike Nicolette and Brad Schweigert—are a hole-in-one of futuristic technology, easy comfort and confident power in your hands. Given Parsons’ lifelong love for the game and his unrelenting standards, the only question is why the clubs were so long in coming.

## Elastomer eureka

He started playing as a young child at Clifton Park in Baltimore. “My father was a golfer, and he used to

take me and my brother to the range. I knew enough where I knew how to swing and grip a club, but I could not really hit it much.

“When I was in my 30s and I got successful with technology, I started playing a lot of golf.” So the elite businessman’s merging of these two elements was as organic and inevitable as clear spring sunshine in Augusta.

An easy, folksy storyteller, Parsons remembers when his design collaborator Nicolette sent some PXG clubs to PGA Tour star Ryan Moore. This story is short and succinct.

“He asked Moore, ‘So what do you think of the clubs?’ Ryan answered, ‘I put them in my bag, and they are not coming out.’”

Parsons said this love affair is triggered by the clubs’ unique design. In the original PXG 0311 GEN1 irons, the key feature developed by the PXG CEO and senior engineers Nicolette and Schweigert

PXG’s 0311 GEN3 irons are made from top-quality 8620 soft carbon steel, forged five times to tighten the grain structure and form the club head.





The hallmark of the company's flagship product, its 0311 irons, is a high-performance core coupled with the world's thinnest club face (0.058 inches thick) designed to deliver incredible ball speeds and more distance without sacrificing feel, sound and accuracy.

PXG's unprecedented state-of-the-art golf clubs have an all-star cast of PGA and LPGA pros as endorsers.

was a thermoplastic elastomer, a kind of synthetic rubber injected into the hollow-bodied iron. This resulted in the club's hallmark: a high-performance core coupled with the world's thinnest club face (0.058 inches thick) designed to deliver incredible ball speeds and more distance without sacrificing feel, sound and accuracy.

The elastomer is "the butter on the bun," Parsons says. "It did three things for us: It made it feel good. It made it feel soft. It allowed us to introduce the thinnest club face in golf.

"We are the only guys who have this technology in golf. The face will not collapse. It is reinforced by the elastomer."

#### Quality par for the course

As with many high-quality products, PXG's exclusive features are about attention to detail. Little wonder that PXG has more than 360 globally issued patents.

The company's commitment to innovation is especially evident in PXG 0311 GEN3 irons, which hit the market in January 2020. They are powered by a new, patented Impact Reactor Technology and DualCOR system.

The DualCOR system fuses a high-strength polymer outer core for structural stability with a soft polymer inner core that delivers maximum energy to the ball at impact.

GEN3 irons are made from top-quality 8620 soft carbon steel, forged five times to tighten the grain structure and form the club head. The back of the club head is then CNC milled to create a precise body design.

"Our competitors say their club is forged, but for most of them only the face is forged," Parsons says. "For us, the whole thing is forged. And to boot, we also mill it for accuracy. Nobody does that.

"If you cut our clubs open, the workmanship is



#### PXG PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The roster includes many of golf's biggest stars: Zach Johnson, Pat Perez, Ryan Moore, James Hahn, Wyndham Clark, Jason Kokrak, Joel Dahmen, Scott Langley, Lydia Ko, Anna Nordqvist, Brittany Lang, Celine Boutier, Austin Ernst, Christina Kim, Katherine Kirk, Haley Moore, Ryann O'Toole, Gerina Piller, Jennifer Song, and Linnea Strom.

astonishing. With our competitors you don't see that as much."

Parsons spent \$350,000 on clubs one year in his quest to study and deliver the perfect club. He's not afraid to spend money on excellence; he and his wife, Renee LaBelle Parsons, purchased what is now Scottsdale National Golf Club in 2013 and renovated to make it one of the world's most exclusive golf properties. He estimated he has put about \$300 million into Scottsdale National.

Asked who was the most important person in PXG's final design, the man who wears a diamond-stud earring with PXG lettering says: "Me."

He told senior engineers Nicolette and Schweigert "exactly what I wanted and how I wanted it. ... It was definitely a three-way collaboration. If any one of us wasn't there, the club would not have happened."

Parsons said it took the better part of a year to finalize the prototyping process, after several iterations. The first prototype in particular was not pretty. "A lot of the time you don't know where the prince is, but you've got to kiss a lot of frogs."

### Star-studded backers

The first-production, custom-fitted clubs were sold in June 2015. It didn't take long for novice and professional golfers to notice.

"What they comment most about is how they feel, how forgiving they are," Parsons says. "And how far they go."

Many golf club makers engineer the product to meet a specific price. Not here. The goal was unconditional, uncompromising performance.

"This was the main thing we did differently," Parsons says. "When you do that, the cost of the club is significantly more. After paying for research and development, overhead numbers, how to sell it and distribute it, et cetera, it worked out to about four and a quarter (\$425) per GEN3 iron (about \$3,400 for a set).

"They are custom fitted, of course. We believe we are making the finest golf club there is."

He would get no argument from 2007 Masters champion Zach Johnson, who told *USA Today* in 2016: "I felt like it was love at first sight, if you will, with a little bit of lust there, too, if you will—but you have to still work at it. And the love has continued to grow. To me, the key is the driver."

LPGA star Gerina Piller was so set on her clubs that her agent talked her into trying the PXG clubs. After hitting fewer than 10 balls, she was sold.

"They are pretty amazing," she said in the same *USA Today* story. "I was actually blown away and impressed by how I hit them. I love how they go through the turf.

My chipping has improved, like night and day. They are awesome."

Another female player who stands behind the clubs is Parsons' wife, Renee. She's the president and driving force behind the design and development of PXG Apparel.

In late 2018, she helped lead a collaboration with PXG's Korean partners to form PXG Apparel Worldwide. Her vision is to create a style movement for golfers on and off the course that is edgy, performance-driven and modern.

She is also a force on the course, her husband says. "She is excellent, quite a player. Her nickname is the Shark. You don't want to gamble with her."

### One more story

Despite all the Parsons' other business holdings, PXG is not a lark. They take it very seriously, as does the business world.

Last year, PXG made *Inc* magazine's list of "Fastest-Growing Privately Held Companies." It was Bob Parsons' third business to make the list; Parsons Technology and GoDaddy were earlier entries.

Meanwhile, the innovating and storytelling continue.

"I had a guy come into town on business," Bob Parsons says. "He struck a deal with a jewelry store for an engagement ring for his fiancée.

"When he got here, the jewelry store wasn't open yet that day. He came in and got fit and started hitting our clubs and took the jewelry store money and bought a set of PXGs. Canceled the ring, broke off with his girlfriend, and now he's happy as can be." — Reid Creager

## MILITARY TRIBUTES

PXG for Heroes™ is designed to provide the world's finest golf equipment and gear to the men and women of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMTs. All current and past military, veterans and first-responders are invited to purchase PXG clubs at a very special price.

The clubs are named after Marine Corps job codes, Parsons' nod to the military branch that changed his life. For instance, the irons were christened 0311, code for rifleman—his position in the Marines.



# Be an IP Visionary

1ST ANNUAL KNOWIT EVENT WILL BRING TOGETHER  
EXPERTS FROM AN ARRAY OF FIELDS

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has begun. How can innovative minds and IP professionals be visionaries about the business, social and cultural changes in our world during the next generation of the 21st century?

That's the mission of "KnowIt: Intellectual Property in a Digital World."

KnowIt 2020, a groundbreaking annual event that debuts May 11-14 this year, will bring together the community of creators, protectors of intellectual property and other innovative outputs for an unprecedented discourse and collaboration. Its deep roster of speakers will include inventors, lawyers (in-house and outside counsel), academics, authors, brand creators, cybersecurity and privacy professionals, leaders in government, regulators, start-ups, tech companies, nonprofits, media and more.

Panels at the 100 percent livestream virtual event will discuss an array of issues connected to IP—including patents and innovation in the past, present and future; the ethics of innovation; and the survival of trademarks in an increasingly mechanised world.

Cheryl Slipski, KnowIt's founder and CEO who was an intellectual property lawyer for many years, says it's not enough to respond to the Fourth Industrial Revolution: "What we need to do is bring the entire ecosystem together to get in front of it.

"We're trying to be the thought leaders as we enter this revolution, with technology moving at such a rapid pace. We want to look ahead and take control of the narrative and say, 'Here's where we want to go.'"

Along those lines, KnowIt 2020 will discuss intellectual property but transcend it to include all human (and artificial) intellectual output. It will involve lawyers and matters of law but transcend law to include the business and science of creating and protecting innovations. It will include panels and speakers but transcend passive listening experiences to facilitate actionable exchange and collaboration.

KnowIt 2020 will also add exciting interactive features such as polls, Q&A, and prize giveaways.

**For more information and to get your online ticket, go to [knowitevent.com](https://knowitevent.com).**

## AMONG THE DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS:



**Sherry M. Knowles**

Principal at Knowles IP Strategies, LLC



**Dale Hunt, PhD, JD**

Patent attorney and founder  
of Plant & Planet Law Firm



**Patrea L. Pabst, JD**

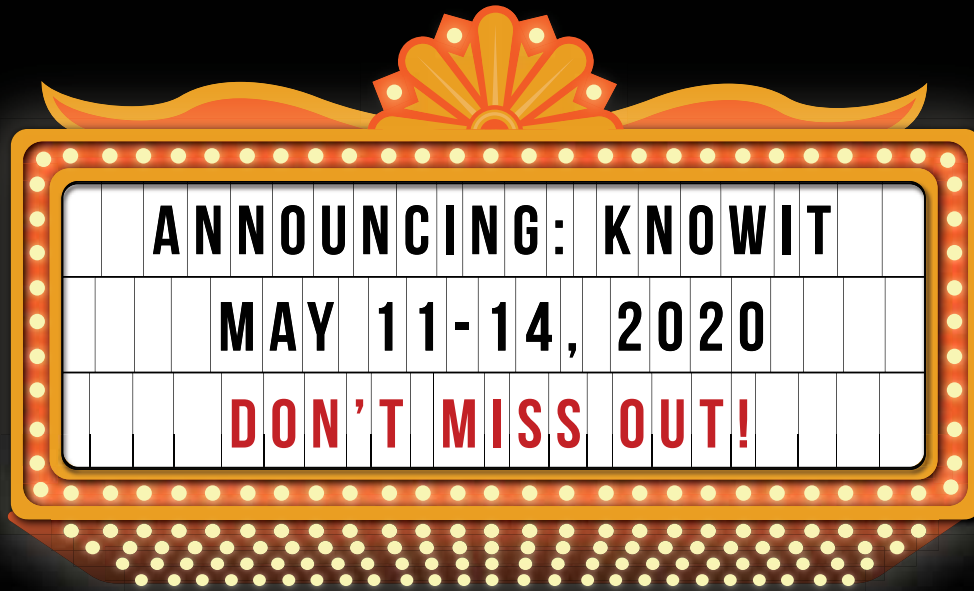
Partner at Pabst Patent Group



**KnowIt**

May 11-14, 2020

**INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
IN A DIGITAL WORLD**



- ★ Flagship Event Uniting Members of the Intellectual Property and Innovation Communities
- ★ 3 Tracks Spanning 40+ Topics covering Patent, Trademark, Trade Secrets, Copyright, Cyber Security, and Data Privacy
- ★ Final Agenda will include 100+ Speakers

**MEET SPEAKERS FROM:**



**GO TO [KNOWITEVENT.COM](https://knowitevent.com) TO GET YOUR TICKET**

Save \$100 – Use Discount Code “INVENT100”

# Let's Get Small

TRY THESE TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS WHEN WORKING WITH TINY PARTS FOR PROTOTYPES **BY JEREMY LOSAW**

**HAVE ALWAYS** been fascinated by miniature versions of things.

As a kid, I built scale model cars and played with Hot Wheels and Micro Machines. I never drove a full-scale race car but was obsessed with racing 1/10th scale R/C cars.

Fast-forward to the present day and I love watching the Tiny Kitchen videos on YouTube, in which a voiceless and faceless person makes tiny but edible versions of common dishes like pizza and pho.

In prototyping, building small things is fun but requires some special tools and techniques. As a consumer product designer, I work on products that are often between the size of a loaf of bread and a baseball—a manageable size for constructing prototype parts.

So, what do you do when you need to make really small devices or tiny parts that go into a bigger device? Consider these tools and techniques you can use to build tiny parts for your next prototype.

a work mat with edge walls to keep parts from falling if they move by accident. You can make one out of wood or plastic, but silicone versions have molded-in trays that are great, too.

Holding onto small parts can be a challenge; having a table-top vise is a must. They can usually be found for less than \$20 and often come with a suction cup base so you can keep them locked down to your workspace. I also like keeping a ball of clay around on my work mat to help keep parts steady or a temporary place to put spare parts.

## Tools

One of the big problems with processing small parts is doing it gently enough. Cordless drills and standard-size tools do not provide the fidelity of motion or force that are required for detailed work.

Fortunately, there is a whole suite of tools to support the watch and jewelry makers that can be leveraged.

Many people have a kit of eyeglass screwdrivers around the house, and these are a good start. They are perfect for dealing with small screws. It is helpful to add some small hex drivers to your toolbox as well.

For drilling, a pin vise is a must-have. It is about the size of a pen with a small collet to hold drill bits.

You make a hole by twisting the shaft by hand. This gives you the force feedback to keep from bending or breaking fragile and thin parts. Jeweler's saws are great for cutting small pieces of raw material because they have ultra-small blades and teeth to cut detailed parts.

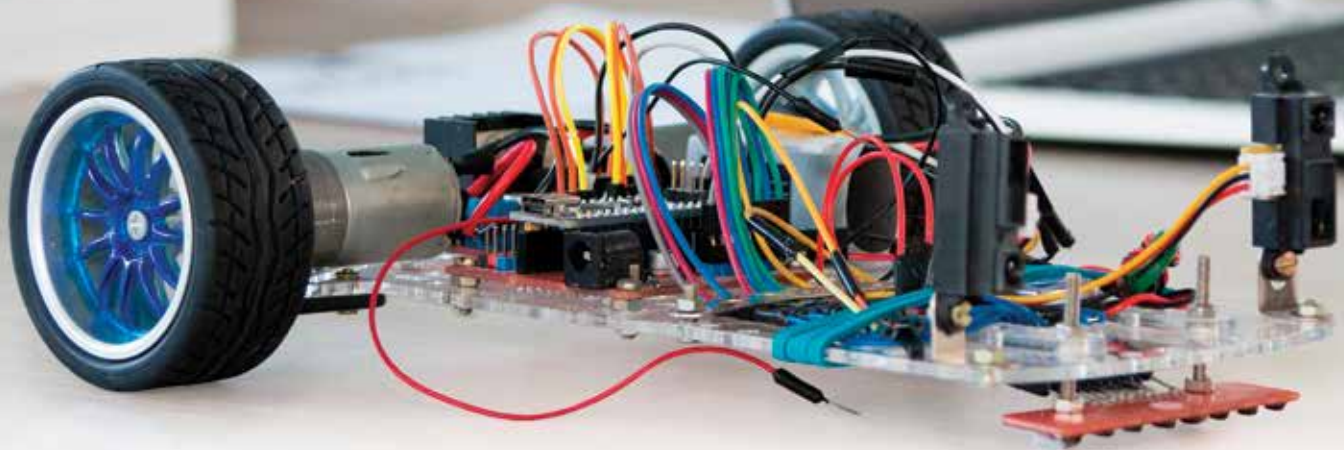
## Workspace

Before doing any work on small parts, it is important to have a workspace that is amenable to the challenges of manipulating tiny parts.

Small parts can move around easily from vibration or just breathing, so it is helpful to have

**It is helpful to have a work mat with edge walls to keep parts from falling if they move by accident. Having a table-top vise is a must.**





### 3D Printing

This is a great way to produce miniature parts, and the technology is accessible to inventors. Although FDM printers (the ones that require rolls of plastic filament) are limited in resolution, stereolithography or light-cured 3D printers can make small parts with high fidelity.

Formlabs is one of the best producers of desktop stereolithography machines. Its Form 3 boasts a resolution of 25 microns and layer height of 25-300 microns, which is perfect for making small and detailed parts. The Form 3 system starts at \$3,500 and material cartridges are \$150 per liter, which makes it a slightly high-end but reasonable tool for a garage shop.

If DIY stereolithography is out of your price range or expertise, a number of service bureaus can print high-fidelity parts for you.

Shapeways and Xometry are websites that allow you to upload parts and order directly. They offer many different materials and printing processes to support the creation of small parts. If you are confused about material choice, sales representatives can help guide you to suitable offering.

### Advanced equipment

Some small parts are too complex to be made by hand, but fortunately there are some specialized equipment and processes to help.

For 2-dimensional parts, micro water jetting is a great option. This is a refined version of standard waterjetting, using a micro abrasive that can produce parts with an accuracy of .01mm. The equipment is not readily available but can be sourced out from websites such as microwaterjet.com.

Wire EDM is a great tool for making small high-precision 3D parts. EDM is short for electrical discharge machining—a process in which material is burned away by passing high current between the tool electrode and the workpiece.

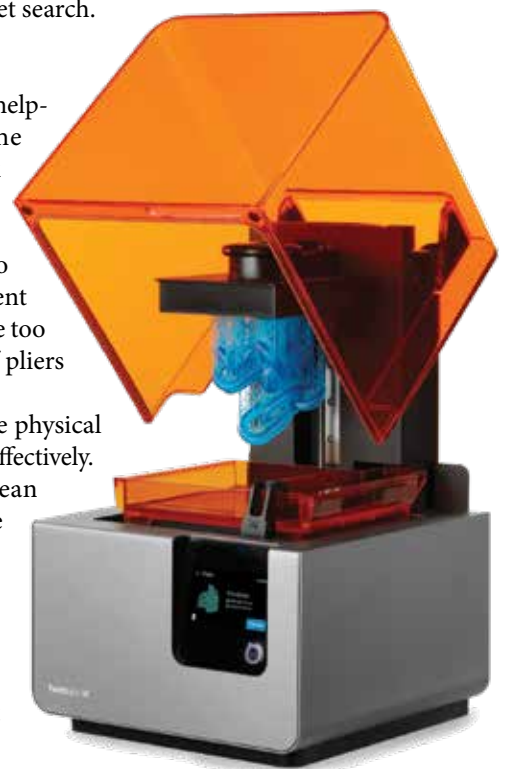
This only works for materials that are electrically conductive, like metals, but it is a non-contact technique that can yield tolerances in the .0002-inch range that also have a great surface finish. Wire EDM shops are all over the country and can typically be found with a quick internet search.

### Mentality

Tools and techniques are helpful, but it also takes the right mind-set to work on small prototypes and devices. Small parts can be lost or broken easily, so it is important to be patient while you work. Just a little too much force with a pair of pliers can crush hours of work.

Make sure you have the physical and mental space to work effectively. Keep a meticulously clean work area so as not to lose parts and think through the consequences of each action before you make a move. Being deliberate, patient and slow reaps dividends when working at small scale. 🧘

The Formlabs Form 3 system is perfect for making small and detailed parts.





# Major Momentum

BEFORE COVID-19, PATENT OWNERS COULD BE ENCOURAGED BY CLIMBING MARKET ACTIVITY **BY LOUIS CARBONNEAU**

*(Editor's note: This report was written before the widespread outbreak of the coronavirus that has at least temporarily changed the market climate.)*

**WE CONTINUE** to see more interest from traditional market buyers as well as new buyers, and a level of activity that we have not witnessed in several years. We are also encouraged by a few huge patent awards lately that must give pause to people on the receiving end.

This is quite heartening overall for patent owners, although don't expect the forces at work to let the patent market come back without a fight. We can see this happening in Germany as we speak (see below).

For those who need their daily dose of news, follow us on LinkedIn or Twitter where we post regularly.

## Buyers and sellers

One recent patent transaction that stood out involved **Charter Pacific** acquiring biometric security patents in a **Securicom** liquidation. The winding down of small companies is an area that is often overlooked and where one may find good patents at a modest valuation.

In our experience, many of these failed start-ups are sitting on excellent portfolios that they developed when they were the first entrant in a given niche market, so their patents may be foundational in a field or at least quite broad and less likely to be invalidated.

Tangible IP is looking at a few of those in the robotics telepresence field and helping another client acquire some in the flow battery space. However, if you are the buyer, you must do your due diligence: These patents are often drafted and prosecuted on a "shoe string," and the resulting work product varies greatly. ...

News that received a lot of attention lately was **IBM** joining the LOT Network, a big coup for that organization after recently welcoming **Microsoft** as well. *(Editor's note: The LOT Network is a nonprofit community of companies committed to protecting*

themselves in the long term against patent assertion entities and their patent lawsuits—i.e., patent trolls.)

**Toyota** also joined recently and automotive supplier **Aptiv** left—apparently a first departure since 2014.

What is less known is that before bringing its massive portfolio under the LOT license, **IBM** had discreetly sold hundreds of enforceable patents last year to Xperi subsidiary **Tessera**, some of which were then used by Tessera to target fellow LOT Network member **Uber** in a new West Texas infringement suit.

This is a bit like rear-ending your cousin's parked car before joining him at a family reunion. Wait until he finds out who did it! ...

Finally, patent assignments recorded in the past months show that **Nokia** transferred 100 U.S. patent rights to Chinese phone maker **Vivo**. Documents show that the portfolios changing hands are global in nature, including assets across the major patent jurisdictions of Europe and Asia as well.

## Winners and losers

This is no contest: During a recent span, **Apple** both lost an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the \$440 million award slapped against it in the **VirnetX** case AND was on the receiving end (along with chipmaker **Broadcom**) of a \$1 billion jury award in a patent lawsuit brought in by the California Institute of Technology.

It was a huge victory for Caltech, although I would not count on getting free tuition there anytime soon. We will likely see the usual appeals and delay tactics from both defendants. After all, the initial award against Apple in the VirnetX case happened eight years ago. ...

**Samsung** also had a rough go if rumors are confirmed: A U.S. court is reportedly scheduled to deliver a ruling ordering the payment of \$200 million in compensation for Samsung Electronics' unapproved use of mobile patent technology for which companies such as Apple and Intel are currently paying millions of dollars in usage fees. Samsung Electronics plans to appeal the ruling. ...



## The winding down of small companies is an area that is often overlooked and where one may find good patents at a modest valuation.

Tech companies apparently got their mojo back. A new report by IP CloseUp shows that the world's top 100 innovators spent \$316 billion on research and generated 145,000 inventions last year.

The study examined 14,000 businesses. Thirty-nine U.S. companies made the top 100 for 2020; 38 percent of companies in the top 100 innovators are focused on hardware and electronics. ...

A Delaware jury awarded **Wasica Finance** more than \$31 million in damages against **Schrader International** over the infringement of tire pressure sensors patents.

### I'll see you in court

Who would have foreseen a few years ago that **Google** would one day be sued for infringing ... a thermostat?

Well, it just happened. **EcoFactor** says Google technology that changes a thermostat's temperature based on whether a building is occupied and compares internal and external temperatures to determine when to turn an HVAC system on or off infringes four of its patents. ...

**Samsung** and **Apple** also added a new case on their busy docket: British nanotechnology company **Nanoco** filed a patent infringement lawsuit against the Korean behemoth in a district court in Texas relating to quantum dots; Ireland-based **Neodron** is suing Apple and other tech giants for infringing patents, specifically those related to capacitive

keyboards and sensors used on devices such as the iPhone and the iPad Pro. ...

Finally, in a rare act of foreign aggression coming on the eve of its own criminal trial for trade secret misappropriation, Chinese giant **Huawei** hit U.S. carrier **Verizon** with a patent lawsuit. Huawei alleges that Verizon infringes upon 12 of its patents covering a number of technologies including computer networking, download security and video communications. None of the patents involves 5G technologies.

### On the legislative front

It appears that the recently introduced **Inventors Act** on which we commented a few times is gaining some traction, if only judging from the number of times we see it mentioned and the fact that its supporters are playing the smart game of lobbying elected officials one by one to tell them their story. ...

There is also some noise that Congress might have another look at the very surgical bill dealing with Section 101 issues only (*Editor's note*: the part of U.S. patent code that addresses subject-matter eligibility) that almost passed last year before being killed in part by the pharma lobby. ...

Meanwhile, ironically, six years after the landmark Supreme Court *Alice* ruling that had such a negative effect on software patents, 62 percent of U.S. patents issued in 2019 were "software related"—up 21.6 percent from 2018. Are patent applicants not reading the news, or they are just a bunch of eternal optimists?



**Around the world**

In the aftermath of the Brexit and the Mexit, the **United Kingdom** has now completed the trifecta with a Paxit!

The big recent news was the announcement that the UK will not be seeking involvement in the Unified Patent Court despite the country's ratification of the underlying agreement in April 2018 by the previous government led by Theresa May. In practice, the news means that the central division of the court with responsibility for life sciences cases that had been allocated to London will have to be relocated to another city in Europe. So will the jobs. ...

**Germany**, which also has its own legal issues dealing with the UPC, has also made public some proposed elements of patent reform it is working on. This, among other things, would make obtaining an injunction in Germany in patent cases subject to a higher threshold, whereby an injunctive relief might be refused in particular circumstances when the granting of an injunction would be disproportionate in view of the hardship it would inflict on the infringer.

This would remove the leverage that patent owners in Germany have enjoyed to force large infringers to the negotiations table. Take that away, and China will be the only major country left where you can get an interim injunction against an infringer....

Finally, there are some geopolitical patent politics brewing in the IP world as **China** is pushing for a Chinese national, Wang Bingying, to become the next leader of the World Intellectual Property Organization when the vacancy opens soon. Wang is currently the deputy director and the obvious next in line.

The United States is getting a taste of its own medicine and appears to have problems with China playing a greater role in IP matters. Even United States Patent and Trademark Office Director Andrei Iancu has joined others who share concern about giving the keys to WIPO to a Chinese national. ☹



**HANDSHAKES**

U.S.-based company and patent licensing powerhouse **TiVo**, after merging with **Rovi** a few years ago, announced recently that it was merging with non-practicing entity **Xperi** in what will create a \$500 million licensing giant. (*Editor's note: An NPE is someone holding a patent for a product or process but has no intention of developing it.*)

Although TiVo is the indisputable leader in DVRs and TV streaming, Xperi focuses on tech licensing with a particular strength in the semiconductor space—which leaves a lot of questions unanswered as to how synergistic the combined company will be. ...

It appears that **Huawei** and NPE **Optis Wireless** may have come to terms to end a trial in which the Chinese phone maker was sued for allegedly infringing upon four patents involving video encoding technologies. The trial division had already awarded more than \$13 million to Optis in damages, and Huawei appealed the verdict. This would mean that the parties have agreed to a lower number that will protect both sides from an adverse decision on appeal.

**Louis Carbonneau** is the founder & CEO of Tangible IP, a leading IP strategic advisory and patent brokerage firm, with more than 2,500 patents sold. He is also an attorney who has been voted as one of the world's leading IP strategists for the past seven years. He writes a regular column read by more than 12,000 IP professionals.



Have an innovative product?  
Want to bring it to Japan?

**We are looking for the next  
big million-dollar hit!**



**Shop Japan**

Over 25 years of omni-channel  
brand building in Japan.

Experts in advertising and media planning.

For more information visit our website

[www.oaklawninvent.com](http://www.oaklawninvent.com)

**NEED A MENTOR?**

Whether your concern is how to get started, what to do next, sources for services, or whom to trust, I will guide you. I have helped thousands of inventors with my written advice, including more than nineteen years as a columnist for *Inventors Digest* magazine. And now I will work directly with you by phone, e-mail, or regular mail. No big up-front fees. My signed confidentiality agreement is a standard part of our working relationship. For details, see my web page:

[www.Inventor-mentor.com](http://www.Inventor-mentor.com)

*Best wishes, Jack Lander*

# Climb the Charts

Since 1985, **Inventors Digest** has been the world's most consistent and trusted friend to the independent inventor.

**No. 1** in inventor resources.

**No. 1** in education.

**No. 1** in inventor news.

**No. 1** in inspirational and entertaining stories.

**No. 1** in the most innovative and useful products.

We have always been a labor of love, depending on the financial support of benefactors who are as invested in the future of inventing as we are.

Please consider a sponsorship at one of the following levels:



Your sponsorship comes with attractive advertising opportunities in the magazine and at [inventorsdigest.com](http://inventorsdigest.com), as well as other possible perks.

## PLATINUM SPONSORS

ENVENTYS  
PARTNERS

SAVE THE  
AMERICAN  
INVENTOR

## GOLD SPONSOR



## SILVER SPONSOR

THE MICHELSON INSTITUTE FOR  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

**Subscribers:** Pledge \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500, or \$1,000 a year to help support the world's longest-running magazine devoted specifically to inventors and inventing. We'll include a mention of your name or the name of your organization each time we run this notice, and at **[inventorsdigest.com](http://inventorsdigest.com)**. Thank you for helping to keep alive the spirit of innovation.

For more information, call 704-333-5335 or email [info@inventorsdigest.com](mailto:info@inventorsdigest.com).

# How to Get a Patent at the EPO

8 TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR INVENTION IS PROTECTED IN EUROPE, AND WORLDWIDE BY GENE QUINN

**P**ATENT PROSECUTION can sometimes seem to be a rather byzantine process.

As with anything, the more you understand, the better prepared you are for strategic decisions that lie ahead. Some will result in a streamlined patent approval, but that will also raise the overall cost of getting the protection you want.

In this regard, the patent process is full of trade-offs. For many, getting a patent quickly is very important—as is the case with high-tech start-ups and small-to-medium-size enterprises seeking reputational advantages, additional funding, licensing opportunities and partnerships.

With this in mind, here are eight tips co-authored with the Morningside IP team and specifically aimed at those applicants filing at the European Patent Office who hope to get a strategically reasonable set of patent claims with a streamlined patent application approval process. (*Editor's note:* Partly due to confusion over patent subject-matter eligibility in the United States and rulings that too often favor infringers, many are seeking to get patent protections abroad. Per EPO statistics, last year U.S. companies and inventors filed more than 46,200 patent applications through the EPO, an increase of 5.5 percent from 2018. With a share of 25 percent of all patent applications, the United States remains the most active country of origin for patent applications with the EPO.)

Of course, following these tips can also pay dividends with respect to getting your patent approved in other patent offices around the world.

## 1 Narrow your patent claims to the core invention.

Examiners generally prefer straightforward, strategically narrow claims—particularly when they are considering an application or innovation/technology for the first time.

Patent examiners tend to view their job as issuing patents on innovations not heretofore known and protecting the public domain. Due to a lack of familiarity, and a purpose associated with guarding the public domain, caution is typically the rule the

first time an examiner is presented with an invention.

For that reason, it is generally easier to achieve an allowance with narrower patent claims. This strategy can raise cost overall to get the desired protection, but it can result in a streamlined allowance of a first patent.

## 2 Claim related inventions separately.

A patent containing multiple related inventions can create problems.

Essentially, a patent application must relate to only one invention. It is possible that closely related inventions will be considered the same invention, but it is equally possible, if not probable, that even related inventions will be considered to lack unity of invention and thereby require separate patent applications and separate examination.

The lack of unity of invention may be directly evident “*a priori*,” (i.e., before considering the claims in relation to any prior art), or may only become apparent “*posteriori*,” (i.e., after taking the prior art into consideration).

Although it is sometimes viewed as raising costs, it can be quicker, easier and less costly to make a separate claim for each invention in separate applications.

## 3 Claim additional applications of each invention separately.

Examiners see it as their job to prevent unnecessarily overbroad claims, because such claims take away from the public domain. To avoid submitting such overly broad claims, plan to file additional patent applications for protection of an invention's secondary innovations after securing a patent for the primary innovation.

If you want a patent portfolio and not a single patent, you will want multiple patents anyway—and this and other strategies that create bite-size applications with narrower focus can make it easier for examiners to say yes.

## 4 Clearly present a claim's novel and non-obvious features.

It's crucial to ensure that your application contains a clear explanation of your invention's novel and non-obvious features.





## Last year U.S. companies and inventors filed more than 46,200 patent applications through the EPO, an increase of 5.5 percent from 2018.

If the invention leverages computer implementation, it is also critical to define a technical solution for the technical problem being addressed.

### **5 Include all necessary supporting documentation.**

Avoid unnecessary delays by ensuring the EPO has all it needs to process the application, including required translations. The patent process is long enough as it is; interjecting unnecessary delays ultimately does nothing but raise costs in the long run.

### **6 Craft one clear version of explanatory text, avoiding multiple expressions.**

Alternative expressions are a funny thing. “It slices or it dices ...” Well, which is it? Does it slice or does it dice?

The truth is, you probably meant it slices *and* it dices. This is a very simple example, but it illustrates the point.

It can be tempting to explain something in different ways, but done improperly this can lead to uncertainty for the examiner and can pose issues in defending the patent later.

Make sure you say what you mean. A reader with less familiarity expecting a concrete explanation later might find it confusing.

### **7 Consider all necessary prior art with your claim.**

If prior art is discovered later, your claim could become invalidated—and almost certainly will if the patent winds up covering an innovation that is commercially valuable. A failure to consider all prior

art that could reasonably be found before filing is a recipe for disaster.

Describing what you allege to be innovative without context of the best prior art available means you miss easy opportunities to point out clear differences and important nuances. It also means you risk characterizing your innovation in a way that sounds too much like the prior art.

### **8 Request a meeting with your examiner.**

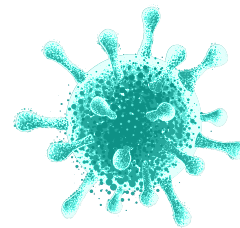
Email is great for some things and decidedly not great for others. It often leads to misunderstandings, particularly when nuances and technology differences need to be discussed and appreciated.

If you must communicate with your examiner, ask for a meeting (either face-to-face or over the phone) and make sure you’re fully prepared to satisfactorily resolve any questions the examiner may have. This process is more likely to move an application forward.

You may also be surprised what you learn when speaking with a patent examiner. A word here or comment there that he or she would never put into a written communication can provide great insight that makes all the difference. 📞

**Gene Quinn** is a patent attorney, founder of IPWatchdog.com and a principal lecturer in the top patent bar review course in the nation. Strategic patent consulting, patent application drafting and patent prosecution are his specialties. Quinn also works with independent inventors and start-up businesses in the technology field.





# World IP Offices Scramble

COVID-19 FORCES TEMPORARY CLOSURES,  
CHANGES FOR HEARINGS AND MEETINGS **BY GENE QUINN**

**W**E LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES. No corner of professional or personal life seems untouched in at least some way by the latest coronavirus and the disease it causes (named “coronavirus disease 2019” and abbreviated COVID-19).

Governments around the world are either demanding or suggesting that people quarantine themselves or engage in social distancing. The intellectual property world is no different.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office, European Patent Office, World Intellectual Property Organization, European Union Intellectual Property Office, IP Australia, the German Patent and Trade Mark Office and the UK Intellectual Property Office are some of the offices that issued COVID-19 guidance to inform stakeholders of how they will handle workflow and meetings during this global health emergency. *(Editor’s note: The following reflects changes made through March 19. Please consult these organizations for their most up-to-date plans.)*

## USPTO

The USPTO announced on March 13 that patent examiner and trademark examining attorney interviews, Patent Trial and Appeal Board, and Trademark Trial and Appeal Board oral hearings (as well as other similar in-person meetings with parties and stakeholders scheduled to take place at the patent office) would be conducted by video or telephone until further notice. Parties scheduled to have interviews, meetings or hearings will receive further instructions on how to participate by video or telephone in advance of the interview, hearing or meeting.

On March 15, the USPTO announced that all of its offices would close to the public beginning Monday, March 16, and remain closed until further notice. The USPTO announced this move as a precaution and did not cite any particular case or specific event that led to the closure decision.

USPTO offices will, however, remain open for employees, contractors and those with access badges. USPTO operations will continue without interruption.

In the March 15 announcement, the USPTO also specifically stated that patent and trademark application deadlines and other deadlines will not be extended.

On March 16, the USPTO announced that it considers the effects of coronavirus to be an “extraordinary situation” and that it is waiving petition fees in certain situations for customers affected. For example, the official notice explains the petition fee to revive an application will be waived if the failure to file a reply was due to the effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

## EPO

The EPO announced on March 18 that it postponed all scheduled oral proceedings in examination and opposition proceedings until March 27 unless they have already been confirmed to take place by means of videoconferencing.

During this time, the EPO was to explore options for further facilitating the use of videoconferencing in oral proceedings, and send parties separate notifications about this postponement as soon as possible.

To guarantee that all parties are informed in due time, the EPO may use additional means of communication, such as email. The EPO invites parties to check the respective files online via the European Patent Register, where the notice of postponement will be available shortly after its dispatch.

The EPO said that search, examining and opposition divisions would continue with their other activities, as well as holding oral proceedings that have been confirmed to take place via videoconferencing.

The EPO’s website explained that time limits expiring on or after March 15 are extended until April 17. If the disruption should continue after April 17, the EPO may publish another notice informing users about further extensions and remedies in respect of time limits.

## WIPO

As of March 16, WIPO initiated remote working arrangements for most of its staff, with only essential staff still working on WIPO premises. The



## United States Patent and Trademark Office offices were closed to the public but remained open for employees, contractors and those with access badges. USPTO operations were to continue without interruption.

International Bureau and the IB as a receiving office remained open for the purposes of filing and processing Patent Cooperation Treaty applications.

WIPO postponed all events and meetings it organized or co-organized during March and April.

So far, according to WIPO, it has been able to continue to process applications filed through the PCT, the Madrid System for the International Registration of Marks and the Hague System for the International Registration of Industrial Designs, as well as administer other IP and related systems.

### **EUIPO**

The EUIPO, which is responsible for administering trademark and design rights throughout the EU, announced on March 16 that all time limits expiring between March 9 and April 30 would be extended. This extension effectively extends time limits until Monday, May 4 because Friday, May 1 is a public holiday.

The EUIPO also activated the office's business continuity protocol, which means effective March 16 all EUIPO staff will work from home. To the extent possible under the circumstances, the EUIPO said business will proceed as per usual, although the EUIPO headquarters will remain closed until further notice. "Trade mark and design applications will continue to be received, examined and published, and the Office will continue to send communications and set deadlines," the latest update reads.

The EUIPO had previously postponed all meeting and events involving a "high number of external stakeholders" through the end of April.

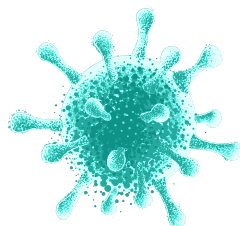
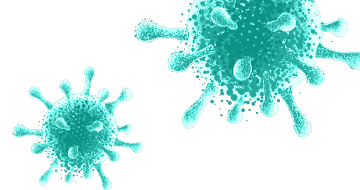
### **IP Australia**

IP Australia, the government agency in Australia that administers intellectual property rights and legislation, had a brief notice on its website dated March 13 stating that it was monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak and will take appropriate actions as necessary. Those seeking more information are directed to the Australian Department of Health website.

### **CIPO**

The Canadian Intellectual Property Office remained open as of March 17, but the office was notifying stakeholders that they should expect significant delays in all services. Furthermore, the commissioner for patents, the registrar of trademarks and the minister designated the COVID-19 outbreak as an unforeseen disruption beginning on March 16 and ending on March 31. The importance of this is that time periods falling within these designated dates are extended.

CIPO noted it may decide to extend the period designated as an unforeseen disruption and encouraged stakeholders to use online solutions that are available 24/7 to file and correspond with the office.



**DPMA**

On March 10, the German Patent and Trade Mark Office extended time limits it set—but as with the USPTO, it explained that it could not extend time limits specified by the law. Nevertheless, any person who did not observe a time limit imposed by law without any fault could subsequently follow provisions concerning the re-establishment of rights and be placed in the same position as if they had observed the time limit.

On March 16, the German Patent Office announced that information centers and research rooms would remain closed until further notice, and there would be no on-site consultations or initial inventor consultations. Further, the arbitration board extended all open pleading deadlines until May 15 without the need for filing an extension of deadline request.

**Italian Patent and Trademark Office**

According to the Hogan Lovells IP & Media Technology team, the Italian government recently adopted a number of extraordinary measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The Italian Patent and Trademark Office issued a decree providing for a stay of all official deadlines between March 9 and April 3. The stay concerned all deadlines involving any activity with the office—excluding mandatory deadlines in opposition proceedings, as well as the mandatory deadlines to bring action before the Office Board of Appeal.

Many officers are working remotely to ensure the functionality of the system. “Given that the majority of activities may be carried out online, we do not expect significant impact on IP matters,” said Hogan Lovells. 🐕

**NEW DATES FOR IPWATCHDOG CON2020**

This premier discussion and networking event, originally scheduled for March 15-18 in Dallas at the Renaissance Richardson hotel but postponed due to COVID-19 precautions, is now set for September 13-15. More than 90 invitation-only speakers are planned for the event.

**Details:** [con2020.ipwatchdog.com](http://con2020.ipwatchdog.com)

**Classifieds**

**CHINA MANUFACTURING**

“The Sourcing Lady” (SM). Over 30 years’ experience in Asian manufacturing— textiles, bags, fashion, baby and household inventions.

CPSIA product safety expert.  
Licensed US Customs Broker.

Call (845) 321-2362. [EGT@egtglobaltrading.com](mailto:EGT@egtglobaltrading.com)  
or [www.egtglobaltrading.com](http://www.egtglobaltrading.com)

**INVENTION DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

Market research services regarding ideas/inventions. Contact Ultra-Research, Inc., (714) 281-0150. P.O. Box 307, Atwood, CA 9281

**INVENTION TO LICENSE**

Fantastic pet system that has no rivals. See us at [PETS-LLC.com](http://PETS-LLC.com) and Pets LLC on Facebook. Fully patented and working prototypes. I am looking for a person or company to build and market this for a licensing fee. Please reply to [alan@pets-llc.com](mailto:alan@pets-llc.com)

**PATENT SERVICES**

Affordable patent services for independent inventors and small businesses. Provisional applications from \$800. Utility applications from \$2,200. Free consultations and quotations. Ted Masters & Associates, Inc.

5121 Spicewood Dr. • Charlotte, NC 28227  
(704) 545-0037 or [www.patentapplications.net](http://www.patentapplications.net)

**CLASSIFIEDS:** For more information, see our website or email us at [info@inventorsdigest.com](mailto:info@inventorsdigest.com). Maximum of 60 words allowed. Advance payment is required. Closing date is the first of the month preceding publication.

**TRADE SHOWS APRIL 2020**

**Editor’s note:** Safety precautions due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic have postponed or canceled many public events. When referring to the 2020 U.S. trade show calendar published by *Inventors Digest* in January, please contact show organizers to determine their status.

# The Piracy Plague

TO PROTECT INVENTORS, CONGRESS MUST  
FOCUS BEYOND COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

BY GENE QUINN

**A** RECENTLY released report from the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation argues that although there is no easy solution to the ongoing scourge of digital content piracy on the internet, we need voluntary agreements between copyright holders and payment processors, advertising networks, domain name registrars, search engines, and other stakeholders to serve as an important complement to legislative and other efforts by governments.

“Experience shows that legitimate players with an interest in preserving an innovative, prosperous digital economy can work together to make life harder and costlier for illicit operators who profit from piracy,” said ITIF Associate Director for Trade Policy Nigel Cory, who authored the report. “These voluntary agreements target the supply side of the digital piracy equation, such as by getting sites with infringing content blocked or removed so they can’t operate and profit as if they were legitimate businesses.”

ITIF explains that voluntary agreements among stakeholders are not a replacement for government action and that governments may need to legislate to address certain aspects of the digital piracy problem. Notwithstanding, ITIF believes that history demonstrates that robust, cooperative and voluntary efforts have a meaningful effect on consumer behavior, which will reduce piracy and increase legal sales.

## Will industry step in?

The position of the ITIF is fundamentally correct. At least in the United States, Congress always prefers when industry comes together to solve industry-wide problems without the need for government intervention—or at least comes together in a way that minimizes the need for a heavy-handed government activism.

Sports fans recall members of Congress holding public hearings admonishing and publicly scolding commissioners and other representatives of the major sports leagues regarding performance-enhancing drugs a number of years ago, with some members specifically coming out and saying that either the leagues needed to solve the problem or Congress would step in and solve the problem for

them. Ultimately, the leagues solved the problem by enacting much stricter drug testing policies, with much heavier penalties handed out for those caught using performance-enhancing drugs. Congress stood down because the industry acted.

With respect to digital piracy, the question is whether and to what extent the industry will be able to respond in a cooperative and comprehensive manner to any level that will make a difference, and whether it is too late. Rampant digital piracy is not new, no truly acceptable industry solution has surfaced, and major technology corporations have been commercializing copyright infringement.

The monetization of copyright infringement has been at the root of the problem and has caused angst and distrust. These companies have processes in place to address copyright infringement—but in the meantime, while the infringing content is on their platforms, they monetize the infringement. Ultimately, when tortious accounts are shuttered the platforms still retain their share of advertising revenue generated while the infringing content was in place.

The game of chasing infringers on platforms goes on like Whack-A-Mole. And although a different issue, other technology giants are similarly making billions of dollars in what can be described only as being complicit with widespread counterfeiting of epic proportions. And if chasing copyright infringement is a game of Whack-A-Mole, chasing counterfeiters is like a game of Whack-A-Mole on steroids.

## Time to act

Industry groups coming together to work out solutions that work for the industry is good politics because it can keep politicians on the sidelines and achieve a solution the industry itself dictates and accepts. Unfortunately, history shows that with this issue, the industry has had many years to come to suitable voluntary, collaborative agreement that didn’t require congressional action.

It is long past time for Congress to take action to protect content creators in the 21st-century digital economy. 🗣️



## IoT Corner

The British Broadcasting Corporation announced plans to launch its own virtual assistant.

Dubbed **Beeb**, the system can be deployed across a range of smart speakers, TVs and mobile phones without its own specific hardware. The system allows for recognition of the wildly variable regional accents across the United Kingdom; BBC staff's voices are being used to train the artificial intelligence.

Beeb will also give the BBC its own platform to try new features without having to lobby existing platforms for access. The service is set to launch this year, with the initial rollout restricted to the UK. There, it will compete with other voice assistant products such as Amazon's Alexa and Google Home. —*Jeremy Losaw*



## Wunderkinds

A smart jacket invented by five smart students won first place and best of show at San Antonio's first Invention Convention in March. Tenth-graders Alberto Alvarez, Elise Escobar, Savanna Martinez, Kiara Zamora and Natalie Zepeda from **CAST STEM High School** will compete against 500 other students from 25 states and 11 countries in the national competition, which will be online only because of the coronavirus. The team invented a multi-use jacket designed to protect homeless people via built-in smart weather-sensing technology. The jacket can be converted into a tent jacket, a backpack, an umbrella and more.

## What IS that?

It's Casper the trendy ghost. It's a homemade Halloween costume. No, it's **The Face Blanket**, a large piece of cloth with a hole cut out that is supposed to keep you warm. "Great for camping and winter. Save money on heating costs," the product description says. It's on Amazon.com. Really.

**195** The number of phonograph-related inventions patented by Thomas Edison, though he was best known for his innovation of the first practical incandescent light bulb. Of his 1,093 patents, 389 were for electric light and power.



## WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

**1** Bill Nye, "The Science Guy," owns U.S. Patent 7,245,904 for an improved:  
**A)** Ballet toe shoe  
**B)** Hacksaw  
**C)** CD player  
**D)** Tape measure

**3** Which actor innovated an improved bucket seat, U.S. Design Patent D219584?  
**A)** Steve McQueen    **B)** Burt Reynolds  
**C)** Clint Eastwood    **D)** Sylvester Stallone

**4** In which decade was MP3, the coding format for digital audio, invented: 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s?

**5** **True or false:** The 8-track tape was not invented for use in cars.

**2** **True or false:** To have a copyright on your work, you have to register it.

**ANSWERS:** 1. A. His design features extra support with a "toe box" located "in the toe of the toe shoe, an upper and an outer sole." 2. False. You have copyright protection as soon as a work is created and fixed in a copy or recorded for the first time. 3. A. The patent was approved in 1970. 4. 1989, by Karlheinz Brandenburg in Erlagen, Germany. 5. True. It was invented in 1964 by a group led by Bill Lear of Lear Jet Corp.

# DON'T MISS A SINGLE ISSUE!

Whether you just came up with a great idea or are trying to get your invention to market, **Inventors Digest** is for you. Each month we cover the topics that take the mystery out of the invention process. From ideation to prototyping, and patent claims to product licensing, you'll find articles that pertain to your situation. Plus, **Inventors Digest** features inventor pros and novices, covering their stories of success and disappointment. Fill out the subscription form below to join the inventor community.



## Inventors DIGEST

**ORDER ONLINE NOW**  
[WWW.INVENTORSDIGEST.COM](http://WWW.INVENTORSDIGEST.COM)

TO PLACE NEW ORDERS OR RENEW SUBSCRIPTIONS BY MAIL FILL OUT CARD, OR CALL 1-800-838-8808 OR EMAIL US AT [INFO@INVENTORSDIGEST.COM](mailto:INFO@INVENTORSDIGEST.COM).

NAME (please print)

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

E-MAIL

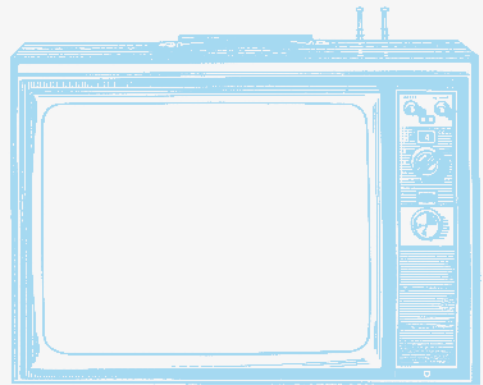
PHONE

referral code/referring subscriber (if applicable)

1 YEAR \$42.00 U.S.  2 YEARS \$78.00 U.S.

Make sure to enclose payment and send to  
INVENTORS DIGEST 520 Elliot St., Suite 200  
Charlotte, NC 28202

# Keep American innovation from becoming a couch potato



Weakened patent protections have reduced the value of American inventions. To strengthen American innovation, support the STRONGER Patents Act—legislation designed to restore strong Constitutional patent rights, limit unfair patent challenges, and end the diversion of USPTO fees.

**Make your voice heard now at [SaveTheInventor.com](http://SaveTheInventor.com)**

**SAVE THE  
AMERICAN  
INVENTOR**

