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Brilliant and Tough, They Are. So Is *ID*



The gemstone for the 35th wedding anniversary is emerald. It is brilliant green, with a highly polished shine.

Emeralds rank high on the Mohs scale for identifying a gemstone's relative hardness. Yet they rate low on toughness because of imperfections that make them brittle.

Joanne Hayes-Rines and Louis Foreman are brilliant *and* tough.

They've had to be. It's no small feat to oversee a printed publication—especially a niche publication—in this digital era as advertising and sponsorship dollars stream to online. And it's an uphill climb to advocate for the independent inventor, as court rulings too often side with corporate giants.

In her November 2016 *Inventors Digest* cover story, Hayes-Rines admitted to an intimidating learning curve when she joined the then-quarterly bulletin in 1987. She eventually became deeply involved in legislation to protect the small inventor with her late husband, Robert Rines. That passion played out during her 20-year tenure as editor of *ID* (13 years as publisher).

It can be argued that Hayes-Rines is the most noteworthy female champion for the independent inventor in modern history.

So it's fitting that our 35th anniversary issue has a photo of a female inventor on its cover. *Inventors Digest* has been among the leaders in promoting more involvement by women and in STEM-related fields that foster innovation.

When Hayes-Rines retired in 2007, she was careful to pass the *ID* torch to someone who had a similar commitment to the independent inventor: product development titan and inventor supreme Louis Foreman, founder of Charlotte-based Enventys Partners.

Foreman has a prominent role in many national IP-related organizations and is a frequent public speaker on behalf of patent-related interests.

He's in his 14th year as publisher, having seen *ID* through the Great Recession that began in 2008.

Thirty-three of *ID*'s 35 years have been led by these two giants in the inventing world, who have made countless sacrifices to ensure you are holding this publication in your hands. Their luster is bright and enduring.

—Reid

(reid.creager@inventorsdigest.com)



Current *Inventors Digest* publisher Louis Foreman and his predecessor, Joanne Hayes-Rines, have been champions for the small inventor.

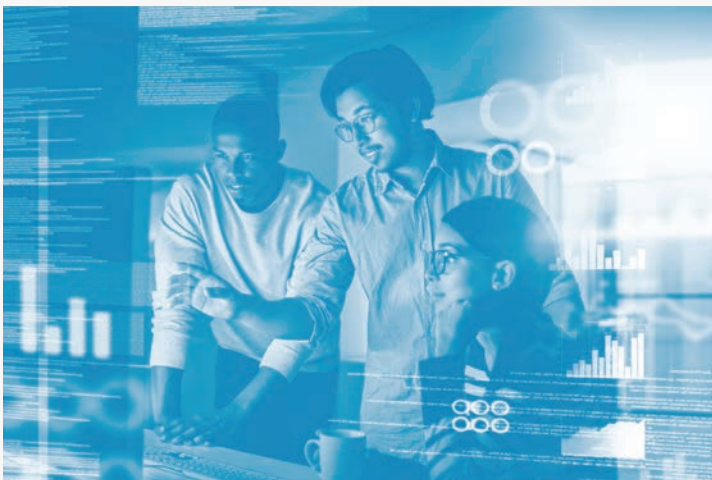
American innovation needs to hit the gym



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.

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AMERICAN
INVENTOR**



Contents

January 2020 Volume 36 Issue 01

32



10



18



38



16



ON THE COVER
Leila Kashani, CEO of wellness brand Alleyoop;
photo by Cacá Santoro

Features

- 26 Happy 35th to Us**
Inventors Digest's History; High-Profile Congratulations
- 32 2020 U.S. Trade Show Calendar**
Key Events for Inventors
- 38 Creativity Trademark**
Insurance Brand Mascots Showcase IP Genius

Inventor Spotlight

- 16 Rising From Falls**
Man's Pads Protect Seniors
- 18 Cleaner Toilet Training**
Couple's Latched Chair
- 22 Beauty Slam-Dunk**
Giving Women More Time

Departments

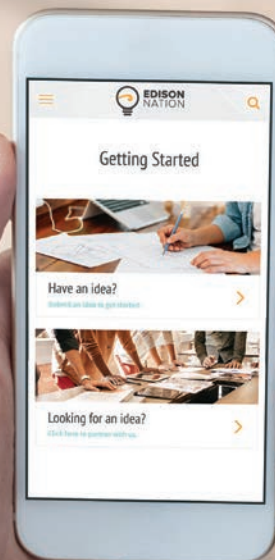
- 7 Everybody's Talking**
Conversation Pieces
- 8 Bright Ideas**
Innovation That Shines
- 10 Time Tested**
New Coke's Old Debate
- 12 Lander Zone**
Inventing's Advances
- 14 Social Hour**
Re-Strategizing for 2020
- 40 Prototyping**
After the Crowdfund
- 42 Patent Pending**
The Case for Buying Patents
- 44 Eye on Washington**
Patent Environment Was Upside-Down in 2019
- 46 Inventiveness**
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

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

I have subscribed to *Inventors Digest* for more than two years, and each issue gets better and better. I never knew much about inventing, but the magazine always has interesting articles that inform and entertain me.

The magazine is also colorful and professionally presented, with a great diversity of content and voices. Keep up the great work!

—PHYLLIS CLEMENTS

"Harnessing the Wind's Power"
(April 2018):

This technology was used by ancient civilization. It means this wind was very helpful to them for everyday life. Same as in the present.

—CHRISTIAN MORALES

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OMG! The NCAA and NIL

On September 30, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law the Fair Pay to Play Act, making it illegal for California colleges to restrict college athletes from being compensated for the use of their NILs. According to *Forbes* magazine, this was done despite NCAA threats exclude to California members from championship competitions.

Some players, organizations and experts took the approach that the NCAA declaration was better than nothing, some move in a new direction. That was the reaction of professor Andrew Zimbalist of Smith (Mass.) College, an expert on the economics of college sports—who also suggested the announcement was largely a PR effort.

"What they're trying to do here is say, 'We get it; you don't have to worry about us anymore,'" he told *Rolling Stone* magazine. "They're trying to puncture a hole in the balloon of legal and political pressure."

Zimbalist is also concerned about a specific clause in the NCAA's announcement, its plan to compensate student-athletes "in a manner consistent with the collegiate model." Those eight ambiguous words were widely ridiculed.

Tim Sullivan of the *Louisville Courier Journal* wrote: "The NCAA embraces change as if it were a cactus. Even now, as federal and state governments prod the organization toward meaningful reforms, foot-dragging continues to frustrate measures that properly belong on the fast track." Yeah, but we will all know what NIL means.

The NCAA has attracted a new wave of skeptics with its recent declaration that its athletes will be able to financially benefit from their name, image and likeness. But at least the heavily criticized governing body for college sports is popularizing an intellectual property acronym that until recently was largely the sole domain of patent and corporate attorneys.

The week of the NCAA's late-October announcement, the letters NIL may have been seen on smartphones as often as OMG, BRB or TMI. Never mind the fact that if you lowercase NIL, you get the answer for what the NCAA's declaration means right now.

It won't be until at least 2021 that college athletes will be able to benefit from their name, image and likeness. And how they will benefit is as muddy as a Washington State football field in November.

The NCAA didn't spell out exactly which rights its athletes will have. All it said was that it is beginning the process of changing its rules on the matter. In its trademark institutionspeak, the NCAA cited its "continuing efforts to support college athletes."

The organization was forced into its less-than-magnanimous declaration by a landmark state law enacted a month earlier.

BRIGHT IDEAS

Heatbox

SELF-HEATING LUNCHBOX

myheatbox.com

Heatbox is a rechargeable, app-connected lunchbox that lets you warm your food anywhere in 8-12 minutes.

The device uses steam; just add 30ml water in the morning. Insert the inner container with food and close it off with both lids (inner and wooden).

Heatbox can heat up to three times a day on a single charge and can charge your phone. It comes with four rubber anti-slip pads.

The lunchbox has a suggested retail price of £169 (\$223 U.S.). Shipping to crowdfunding backers starts in July.



SleekStrip

THIN PHONE STAND AND GRIP

sleekstrip.com

Advertised as the world's thinnest phone stand and grip at 2.9mm, SleekStrip doesn't make your phone look bulky like most phone stands.

The stand is made of premium materials and tested for durability. Its patent-pending design features flexible metal with soft rubber coating for a comfortable grip.

Unlike other phone stands and grips, the device is compatible with most wireless chargers and car mounts. The stand rests at two different angles.

SleekStrip will retail for \$15, with a March shipping timetable for backers.



CIGA Design

MECHANICAL TITANIUM WATCH

cigadesign.my/z-series-watch

A transparent, fully automatic timepiece made from titanium and sapphire crystal, the Z Series reveals its intricate design.

The watch's shell of Grade 2 Titanium is one of the strongest and most distinctive metals. It has strong corrosion resistance and is 40 percent stronger and 30 percent lighter than stainless steel, the current norm for watchmakers. It is also water resistant.

The glass face is fashioned from 1.2mm hyperboloid artificial sapphire for superior scratch resistance. Only diamond is stronger.

The watch will retail for \$380; February shipping is planned for crowdfunding Rewards backers.



**"Contentment:
The smother of invention."**

—ETHEL MUMFORD



SuperMini

CREDIT CARD-SIZED PORTABLE CHARGER

zendure.com/products/supermini

This 10,000mAh portable charger can be easily put in your pocket and extend your phone usage for 2-3 days. 10,000mAh is one of the most popular portable charger capacities.

SuperMini is 30 percent smaller than a traditional 10,000mAh external battery. It uses the 21700 battery cell, providing 5,000mAh of charge capacity. These cells are 50 percent more energy dense than cells used in a typical chargers.

With 18W power delivery, it can fast-charge your iPhone X up to 50 percent within 30 minutes.

SuperMini retails for \$79.

New Coke's Old Debate

WAS COMPANY'S 1985 BLOCKBUSTER A HISTORIC MARKETING BLUNDER, OR GENIUS? **BY REID CREAGER**

USING THE internet's best-known search engine and typing the words "New Coke marketing disaster" recently yielded 2,470,000 entries—another reason to remember that the Web is not the ultimate authority on everything.

The bold launch by the makers of the world's best-selling soft drink came on April 23, 1985, around the time a modest publication called *Inventors Digest* was unveiled. Coke, which outsold chief rival Pepsi 2-to-1 in the 1950s, had seen that margin plummet to a 4.9 percent lead by 1984. It announced a sweeter version of its iconic product that had first been sold on May 8, 1886, at Jacob's Pharmacy in Atlanta.

The big day was the culmination of a project with CIA-level secrecy, known by Coke insiders as "Project Kansas." Under the authority of CEO Robert Goizueta, marketing vice president Sergio Zyman and Coca-Cola USA president Brian Dyson were to create a new flavor for the drink.

"The best soft drink, Coca-Cola, is now going to be even better," Goizueta said at the highly anticipated press conference. He said the consumer "made (the choice). We didn't."

Sour aftertaste

Although blind taste tests showed the revised formula was preferred to Pepsi, public reaction to New Coke was even more bitter than the original drink's taste. Criticism was most vehement in Atlanta, where the changes were seen as a slap in the face to Coke's southern tradition.

A call center set up by Coke received about 8,000 complaints a day. Seattle retiree Gary Mullins formed the organization Old Cola Drinkers of America in May and reportedly received 60,000 phone calls.

Talk show hosts including Johnny Carson and David Letterman ridiculed New Coke on their shows, with Letterman saying: "Coke's decided to make their formula sweeter. They're going to mix it with Pepsi."

This wasn't just an American backlash. In his 2004 book "For God, Country and Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company that Makes It," Mark Pendergrast wrote that Fidel Castro called New Coke a sign of American capitalist decadence.

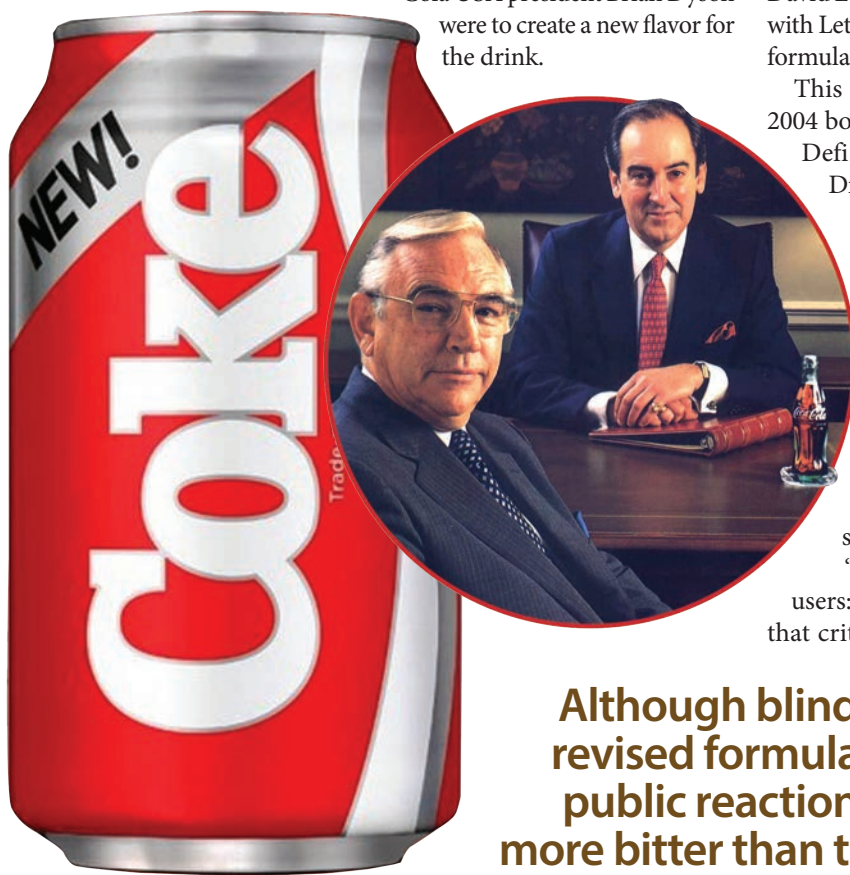
Few remember that New Coke actually was selling well in most of the country after the launch. But 79 days later, the drink was pulled from stores.

Sales turnaround

Marketing experts and industry observers were quick to offer their postmortem second-guessing of the company.

"They didn't ask the critical question of Coke users: Do you *want* a new Coke? By failing to ask that critical question, they had to backpedal very

Donald R. Keough (left) and Roberto Goizueta (right) formed a dynamic duo that helped lead Coca-Cola to huge success in the 1980s and into the 1990s.



Although blind taste tests showed the revised formula was preferred to Pepsi, public reaction to New Coke was even more bitter than the original drink's taste.



quickly,” said Sam Craig, professor of marketing and international business at the Stern School of Business at New York University.

Coke President Donald R. Keough said the company “did not understand the deep emotions of so many of our customers for Coca-Cola.”

Or did it?

The old saw that bad publicity is good publicity was confirmed in a 2011 study by the Stanford Graduate School of Business. It concluded that negative publicity can increase sales when a product or company is relatively unknown.

That’s also true when the company is very well known. Six months after New Coke’s launch, Coke’s sales had increased at more than twice the rate of Pepsi’s—a devastating blow to the rival that had fed reporters negative questions about the new version at the April 23 press conference. (The introduction of Cherry Coke, around the same time as New Coke, was also a key factor in Coke’s rebound.)

Planned failure?

Those claiming New Coke (brought back in limited quantities last May in a cross-promotion with the show “Stranger Things”) was a planned disaster have plenty of ammunition.

When the company announced it was going back to the original formula, Peter Jennings of ABC News interrupted the highly rated daytime soap opera “General Hospital” to tell viewers. Coke embarked on a wave of public forgiveness and took full advantage.

The vintage formula, branded as Coca-Cola for a century, was rebranded as Classic Coke. A reintroduced product with the same old taste gave Coke a high fructose corn syrup shot in the arm when it needed it most.

A marketing analysis by longtime Coke aficionado Joe Turner concluded that New Coke was a win/win for the company.



Above: Although this billboard leveraged the proven psychological draw of the word “new,” Coca-Cola learned quickly that its customers preferred the tried and true.

Above left: New Coke was brought back in limited quantities last May in a cross-promotion with the show “Stranger Things.”

Turner claims that if the new product failed, Coke could bring back the old product with a cheaper sweetener—saving more than \$93 million in production costs—and have the good PR that came with it. If it succeeded, it would still bring back the original with the cheaper sweetener and have two successful brands on the market that would take up more shelf space in stores.

Still, no one can say factually that New Coke was marketing genius, any more than it can be called a marketing blunder.

As Coke’s Keough said: “Some critics will say Coca-Cola made a marketing mistake. Some cynics will say that we planned the whole thing. The truth is we are not that dumb, and we are not that smart.”

INVENTOR ARCHIVES: JANUARY

January 23, 1943: The movie “Casablanca” was copyrighted, the same day it was released in the United States. Producer Hal Wallis had purchased film rights to the play the previous January.

“Casablanca” was shot at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, California, with the exception of one sequence at Van Nuys Airport. Despite its inclusion of frontline stars Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, the movie was not expected to be anything special.

Its world premiere was on Nov. 26, 1942, in New York City. The film was an unspectacular success in its initial run but won the Academy Award for best picture.



Advancing Our Craft

INVENTING HAS SEEN MANY IMPROVEMENTS
DURING THE PAST QUARTER-CENTURY **BY JACK LANDER**

THE YANKEE Inventor Exposition, held in Waterbury, Connecticut, every year, was the East Coast's largest expo for inventors. It was formed in 1994 by Bill Crutcher, a local patent attorney, and was successful until 2008 when the recession hit us hard, exhibitors stayed away, and we lost so much of our capital that we couldn't continue in 2009. (I was its vice president for 23 of those 25 years.)

Joanne Hayes-Rines, then the publisher of *Inventors Digest*, rented a booth at every one of those expos except perhaps the first, as I recall. Joanne was always at her booth and willing to talk.

I introduced myself and proposed a column for *Inventors Digest* at the 1995 expo, and she like the idea. I've written that column, now known as "Lander Zone," for every issue since.

So, I've been active in inventing and in helping other inventors even before I got involved with the Yankee expos and began writing for *Inventors Digest*. And I've seen a number of advancements over the years.

The 3D printer: Foremost is the development of the 3D printer and its partner, the computer, which acts as its brain.

3D printing had been around in a primitive form using a plaster-like powder, onto which was injected a water-based liquid that hardened it. That was in the early to mid-1990s. But the models it produced were mainly for "show and tell," not durable for functions that demanded toughness.

The machine for this system sold for about \$10,000, certainly not practical for most independent inventors.

Other 3D process arose around the same time involving hardened plastic, such as stereolithography (SLA) and selective laser sintering (SLS)—both still in use. These processes are expensive, which limits their use by independent inventors. SLS machines cost about \$10,000, SLA machines several times as much.

Inkjet printing by 3D printers not only lowered the cost of prototypes, it allows inventors to own their own machine and make their own prototypes. Amazon.com shows several 3D printers, some as low as \$100 and others about \$250 and higher.

Th s evolution of technology came about because of advances in XYZ motion technology, desktop three-dimensional motion mechanisms, and the engineering advance from thin ink jetting to the relatively viscous jetting of molten plastic.

The foremost inventing advancement has been the development of the 3D printer and its partner, the computer, which acts as its brain.



If you choose not to own your own machine, check with your library. I've heard that some libraries offer the technology but haven't seen it. In any case, you must know how to draft your invention digitally in order to program the machine.

Easier patent searches: Second on my list of advances in the past quarter-century is the ease with which patents can be searched.

Years ago, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office was designed more for professional use than to accommodate the independent inventor. Searching was discouraging, unless the inventor had patience to persist through the labyrinth until he or she learned how to use the system. It's much better these days.

But today we have Google Search, which is easier to use than the patent office site. Simply type in google.com/patents, then a name or description for the invention we are searching for, or the number of a particular patent we want to read. Very user friendly.

The main drawback about a nonprofessional search is the lack of understanding of how to do an effective search. There's more to it than common sense might suggest.

Amazon sells Nolo's book, "Patent Searching Made Easy," for about \$26. I've found Nolo's books, such as "Patent It Yourself," to be very well written. (I'm biased, of course, because Nolo published my book for inventors, "All I Need is Money.")

Inventor education: The general level of sophistication of the independent inventor has improved. *Inventors Digest* and the many books available have educated inventors on all aspects of inventing.

Years ago, the main question inventors asked was: "What do I do next now that I have this great idea?" Today, the main question is: "How can I find a licensee?" or "How can I produce and market?"

Marketing is the remaining mystery for most of us. There's a parallel here with book marketing.

It's relatively easy to write a book, obtain a professionally designed cover, print a hundred copies, and place it on Amazon. So it is with most other consumer products.

But making it available for sale does not guarantee that buyers will come across it among the tens of millions of books listed on Amazon. We still need to

learn how to advertise and publicize without having to "sell the farm."

The same is true for products other than books, although "hardware"-type products don't encounter anywhere near the competitors that the book market encounters.

Inventor determination: Another aspect that has changed somewhat over the years is the determination of inventors to profit from their inventions. It was typical of inventors, years ago, to obtain a prototype, file for a patent—and after a few letters to corporations offering their patent pending for licensing, they gave up.

This was due to the discouraging response from their prospects, or, more often, due to the complete lack of response. Corporate lawyers often advised their clients to avoid any legal entanglements with inventors by not responding to contacts, especially in writing.

These days, inventors are more willing to make face-to-face contact with marketing directors by attending trade shows, or calling the marketing director's office and arranging a meeting. Meeting at trade shows is often the better approach because you may be able to meet with two or more prospects, improving your odds of success.

Inventors are also more willing to assume full responsibility for producing and marketing than in the past. Producing, especially in small, market-test quantities, is easier due to the greater availability of computer-driven machines. And marketing on Amazon and its competitors is far easier than attempting to enter the mainstream of distributor, wholesaler and retailer, which is no longer the only way to get a product on the shelf of a retailer.

Inventing is still a challenging way to make a buck, but as long as creative women and men are born, it certainly will continue. Thanks to *Inventors Digest*, we're able to keep up with change and exploit it as opportunity. 📖

Jack Lander, a near legend in the inventing community, has been writing for *Inventors Digest* for 23 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.



Refresh for the New Year!

14 IDEAS FOR RE-GROUPING, RE-STRATEGIZING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN **BY ELIZABETH BREEDLOVE**

DOES THE NEW YEAR have you looking for ways to refresh and improve your social media presence? Whether you've just begun to use social media to promote your invention or business, or you've been on Facebook and other platforms for over a decade, there's no time like the new year to re-group, re-strategize and rethink your social media plan. Consider these 14 ideas for giving your presence a refresh.

Set new goals. You likely set some goals when you started on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram or elsewhere, but have you looked at them lately? Look at goals you've set in the past, evaluate your success and set new goals for the new year. Of course, you'll want to make sure you're setting SMART goals: goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

Double-check all the info you've provided about your business. If you haven't looked at the "about" or "bio" sections of your profile recently, now is a good time! Make sure that your business description is accurate and up-to-date, your website URL is correct, your store hours are accurate, your contact information is correct and any other information you've provided is updated.

Add a new series to your content calendar. The beginning of the year is a great time to start a new series—whether it's daily, weekly or monthly. For example, consider posting a behind-the-scenes look at your company at the beginning of each month. If you want a weekly series, try implementing Tip Tuesday, when you give a tip related to your invention each Tuesday. Even if you don't want to stick to a set schedule, you could start posting a new type of content regularly, such as your favorite quotes from historic inventors.

Have a fun contest or giveaway. Have you ever held a giveaway for your followers? Consider giving away

your invention to one lucky follower! Just come up with a few criteria, such as liking a post or tagging a friend, set an end date, and post about it. However, double-check to make sure you are following any platform rules before implementing your contest.

Share more user-generated content. If you struggle to come up with content to post, sharing more user-generated content is a great idea for the new year. There are many ways to do this. You can look at what other users have tagged you in, or you can ask them to post about your invention or business using a specific hashtag that you can then search to find content to repost.

Use more video. Video continues to perform exceptionally well on social media, so if you're looking to rethink your approach to content, consider adding more video. The good news about social media is that it doesn't always require big budgets and high-end editing. It's OK to share a behind-the-scenes look at your company, especially on more casual platforms such as Instagram Stories.

Repurpose your content more often. Don't be afraid to repurpose your content! If you shoot a how-to video for your website, share it on Facebook. If you write a new blog post, pull a few key takeaways from it and share them in multiple LinkedIn posts. Don't post the same content over and over, but consider repurposing and recycling your existing content.

Post more tutorials or how-tos. On that note, if you aren't already posting tutorials and how-to videos, there is no time like the present to begin. This is a great way to bolster your social media content strategy, as well as connect with your customers by ensuring they are able to get the most out of your invention.



The beginning of the year is a great time to start a new series or hold a giveaway for your followers.

Try using Instagram Live or Facebook Live. These platforms make it easy to connect with your followers through a live, two-way conversation. Go live to show what you're working on, answer questions, introduce a new product, give a tour of your space, or anything else. Regardless of the topic, make sure to build in time for questions, as these informal live streams provide a great avenue for a Q&A session with your customers and followers.

Ask people to tag friends. There's no better way to grow your following than to ask for referrals! Whether you're running a contest that involves tagging a friend or two or you're asking your followers to tag someone who would like your invention, there's nothing shameful about asking for help growing your audience.

Take polls. Polls are an easy way to get your followers more engaged. Most of the major social media platforms have a built-in poll feature that you can use. You can keep things more serious and use polls to get feedback about your next invention, or you can keep things casual with a lighthearted question.

Focus on using social media for customer service. Social media makes companies much more easily accessible to their customers. Take advantage of this opportunity to provide great customer service. Make sure you're checking in regularly (at least once every business day, if possible) to answer questions and respond to comments.

Test paid advertising. If you've never used paid social media advertising, why not give it a shot this year? Every major social network has an ad platform, and which one is right for you depends on where you'll find your audience. Facebook is often a great place to start, though. Set aside a portion of your budget to test Facebook Advertising. If you aren't sure how it works or you don't feel confident in your advertising abilities, consider working with a marketing agency that can manage your ads and ensure you're maxing out your advertising dollars.

Try out a new social network. Take some time at the beginning of the year to evaluate opportunities on other networks. For example, if you're only on Facebook, you may want to try Instagram. If you're a B2B business but aren't on LinkedIn, consider testing it. Although you don't want to spread yourself too thin with social media management, you may find another popular social network that is worth testing out in the new year. 📦

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.



Rising From Falls

TEXAS MAN CREATES WEARABLE PADDING SYSTEM TO PROTECT SENIOR CITIZENS **BY JEREMY LOSAW**

IT WASN'T just unfair. Frank Bowles knew it was dangerous.

As a board of advisers member at a Dallas hospital, he appreciates the potentially life-changing or fatal consequences of falls for elderly people and was upset that there was no good solution on the market.

"I was thinking about my parents," says the long-time owner of Dallas/Fort Worth-based Premise Construction Services. "They are the ones who brought me into this world. They are the ones who kissed my boo-boos when I was a little-bitty thing.

"And to think that there are 60,000 people per year losing their lives due to a hip fracture. The more I found out about this, the more determined I was to do something about it."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that on average, one adult dies from a fall or fall-related injury every 19 minutes. Even when falls are not deadly for senior citizens, they can do serious damage to quality of life.

Bowles went to work on a product that would help save lives and be of reasonable cost for people on fixed incomes. After 2 1/2 years he developed a product, HTK Pads, to help older people stay active with confidence.

Launched in mid-2019, the padding system is worn over the top of clothing to protect a user against injury from a fall. It is specifically designed to protect the most vulnerable injury areas: the hips, tailbone and knees (hence the acronym HTK).

The pads are made from a firm rubber that better distributes the loads from a fall. The outer construction of the garment is made from Neoprene, which is comfortable, compliant and anti-microbial. A mix of Velcro and snap connections make the product easy to put on and take off.

HTK pads can be worn in bed as well as outside the home; they come in many different sizes to fit most users. They are available for \$389-\$409, depending on size, from the company website.

Prototyping process

Once he had the bug to solve the issue of hip injuries, Bowles started prototyping a solution. He noticed his fiancée's workout mat lying around the house and could not help himself. He cut up the mat to make some pads for testing.

After sewing together some prototypes and doing some testing, he realized that the soft foam pads were not going to be sufficient to prevent major injury. Additional research on soft foam padding showed that it was only minimally effective against major injury.

With additional research, he found that he could layer together soft and hard pads to create a composite cushioning system that would distribute the load during a fall and prevent concentrated loads from getting to the bones.

Now that Bowles had a pad design, he needed to house them in a comfortable garment.

He found a local sewing manufacturer that specializes in parachute sewing. With its industrial-grade equipment, it created the pant-like structure of the HTK pads garment—combining the composite pad structure inside the neoprene exterior.

Frank Bowles created HTK Pads (mainly protecting the hips, tailbone and knees) as a tribute to his parents and others.



"The more I found out about (the high number of injuries and deaths to seniors from falls), the more determined I was to do something about it." —FRANK BOWLES

Although reducing hip injuries was the primary goal, he realized that with minimal design changes, the product could be made to easily protect the knees and tailbone as well. "That's when I thought ... while I am doing this, I am going to try to put a 3-in-1 system together."

The parachute company finally shed making a prototype, and it was ready for testing.

Early raves

The first user of the pads was a 97-year-old woman in Bowles's community. She had suffered many falls, and had bruises and the lack of mobility to show for it.

The woman was initially intimidated by the product. But after a few minutes of use, she was wearing it comfortably and forgot she had it on.

HTK Pads also gave her the confidence to walk by herself. Her walking posture changed from hunched over, bracing for a fall, to upright. It was a great first test for the product and validated the inventor's vision.

Bowles has filed patents on the technology, which has given him the confidence to speak openly about the product and ramp up his marketing. Although the United States is his primary market, he is considering Mexican and other international patents. However, the patent filing process is expensive; additional filings hinge on sales volume to fund the additional intellectual property.

The cost of the product was a primary factor in choosing a manufacturing partner. Bowles wanted to keep it as low as possible to make it accessible to the masses, including seniors.

He tried to use U.S. manufacturers, including his parachute factory, but the costs were too high. Fortunately, he met someone with a connection to manufacturing products in Mexico who was able to help. Bowles found a suitable facility there, and the cost of the product came in at about one-third of what it was in the United States.

The product got great reviews within a few months. Bowles has been featured on local news stations, radio, podcasts, and has been working with a PR firm to help drive sales. He has even sent samples to Jimmy Carter and his wife in hopes that it will help them during their rehabilitation from recent falls.

He is also working to find other markets for the product. Parkinson's sufferers, children's hospitals, ski schools, and law enforcement are among the audiences interested in adapting the HTK technology. 📍

Details: htkpads.com

Jeremy Losaw is a freelance writer and engineering manager for Enventys. He was the 1994 Searles Middle School Geography Bee Champion. He blogs at blog.edisonnation.com/category/prototyping/.



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Cleaner Toilet Training

COUPLE'S CHAIR FEATURES CHILD-PROOF LATCH, SECURE WASTE BOWL **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

TOILET TRAINING a squirmy, antsy toddler is rarely easy. And inquisitive little minds often want to check on their deposits, hoping they can reap praise from proud parents or caregivers. It's often messy until the child has perfected the science.

Here's a great new toilet-training device that helps prevent those messes.

In 2017 I was judging products and counseling inventors at a trade show, where I met Stacy and Colt Hall. I felt it was a little too early in their product development to write about their invention, Potty Safe; I like to conduct my interviews once a product is on the market. Well, two-plus years later, it is!

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Why is Potty Safe different from or better than standard children's potty seats?

Stacy Hall (SH): Potty Safe is the first and only potty-training chair to feature a patented child-proof latch. Our waste bowl securely affixes to the base so that children cannot remove it and make a mess.

Our innovative latch still allows parents to effortlessly remove the waste bowl for easy cleaning. Potty Safe's latch eliminates spills and the spread of germs. The product also features a built-in splash guard and rubber feet to prevent sliding.

EGT: What led to this invention?

SH: Potty Safe was born while potty training our daughter. She loved to be a big helper and help dump the potty herself.

She also loved to remove the waste bowl and carry it around to show off her accomplishments. This led to some pretty nasty spills all over her and the floor. When we couldn't find a "child-proof" potty chair where she couldn't remove the waste bowl, we took matters into our own hands and made our own!

EGT: Can you share your process in obtaining a patent?

SH: We originally tried to do a patent search ourselves to see if somebody had already patented it. When we were not able to find anything similar, we hired a patent lawyer to do the search just to be sure we hadn't missed anything.

After obtaining the same results, we had them file our provisional patent (application). We wanted to go ahead and file for the utility patent, but our lawyer said it wasn't possible to get one.

Potty Safe's waste bowl securely affixes to the base so that children cannot remove it. The latch (opposite page right), which eliminates spills and the spread of germs, allows parents to remove the waste bowl for easy cleaning.



“We didn’t know anything about getting a product from an idea to market, but by the power of prayer, research and Google, we have navigated plenty of uncharted waters.” —STACY HALL

During the year of our provisional patent application, we ended up finding a new patent lawyer by mutual acquaintances while at an inventors show, INPEX, in Pittsburgh. With our new lawyer, we had drawings made up and filed a non-provisional patent in September 2017.

Our first patent application was rejected because of a few things. Once we fixed those and countered against the examiner’s claims, we resubmitted our revised application. In January 2019 our utility patent was awarded.

EGT: How many prototypes did you make before you had the perfect one, or the one closest to how it is manufactured?

SH: We ended up having four prototypes in total. Two of the four were handmade. For the other two, we had CAD designs made and tested (two) 3D-printed prototypes before having our molds manufactured.

EGT: Have you done any crowdfunding?

SH: We have not done any crowdfunding. We have financed our entire operation from our personal funds and loans.

EGT: Do you have just one style for now? Is it available in colors?

SH: While we have more ideas in mind, we currently only have one style of the Potty Safe. It is currently available in light gray, pink and yellow.

EGT: Are you manufacturing in the USA, or overseas?

SH: Potty Safe is manufactured in the USA. It was important to us to keep the jobs in the USA, if at all possible. Though connections we made at trade shows, we found a great manufacturer in Iowa.

EGT: What kind of production safety testing or certification is required for Potty Safe? Does it require CPSIA

(Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act) testing?

SH: Potty Safe is a juvenile product and does require CPSIA testing. Potty Safe has been tested and passed for all required testing.

EGT: What obstacles, if any, have you found during product development?

SH: We have encountered plenty of obstacles launching Potty Safe. We didn’t know anything about getting a product from an idea to market, but by the power of prayer, research and Google, we have navigated plenty of uncharted waters.

One obstacle that stands out was with our first 3D-printed prototype. We noticed that we needed to make some changes to the splash guard and the release tabs. Prototypes are not cheap to get printed, so it was disappointing to print another one. However, we wanted to make sure Potty Safe was perfect for parents before going into production.

We also needed to make sure the cuts for the rubber feet were just right so that they would fit properly. Once you are making a product, you are so anxious to get it to market. It really takes a lot of patience to get it just right before you go into production.

EGT: Do you have any plans to increase your product line?

SH: We have some exciting things in mind. However, right now we are focusing on launching Potty Safe.

EGT: Where is Potty Safe sold?

SH: Potty Safe is currently sold at our website, and at Walmart.com and Amazon.com—as well as in specialty stores Forever Yours in



Colt and Stacy Hall came up with the idea for Potty Safe while toilet training their daughter Emma, shown behind her brother Ty.





Potty Safe is currently available in light gray, pink and yellow.

Cassville, Missouri, and Buttercup Baby in Pasadena, California. Our locations are growing every day!

EGT: Has Potty Safe won any awards?

SH: Potty Safe has been awarded a utility patent, trademark, and has also received the 2019 Family Choice Award, 2019 Creative Child Product of the Year, and 2019 Baby Maternity Top Choice Award. Potty Safe has also been

named a "Must Have Product" by Baby Maternity Retailer magazine for multiple months. It was also featured on "The Mother Side" segment on ABC7 in Washington, D.C.

EGT: Any advice for novice inventors?

SH: Our advice to novice inventors is to ask questions! You won't learn anything if you never ask. We have gotten so far in this process by completing lots

of research and reaching out to people to ask questions to learn all that we can. Also, share information you learn with others.

It is scary to start a business. One of our favorite mottos is "I would rather try and fail, rather than fail to try." We didn't want to look back on life and wonder "what if" we wouldn't have tried.

We also have people reach out all the time wondering about how we have gotten a patent, or wonder more about the process of launching a product. We are always happy to share any advice we can with people. 📧

Details: pottysafe.com

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (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.



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Convenience Slam-dunk

WOMAN'S ALLEYOOP BRAND REVOLUTIONIZES
THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY **BY REID CREAGER**

LEILA KASHANI carries a fake cockroach in her purse. “On everyone’s first day at work, I prank them,” she says. “I put one in the bathroom, or in their desk drawer. I also use it often in my day-to-day life, just to have a little fun.”

“I just used it the other day to scare a friend when she was trying on clothing in a dressing room. I wish I recorded it. I got a hanger thrown at me, but it was worth it.”

Kashani can laugh at herself, at others, and at outdated conventional practices. In the latter case, she has found a solution for some of the time-consuming habits women have been anchored to by the

beauty industry. Her Alleyoop wellness brand is devoted to convenience—a precious commodity in this fast-and-faster world.

“Every industry has figured out a way to give us our time back,” she says. “Postmates delivers food when we don’t have time to go out and get it ourselves; Drybar allows us to get our hair washed and done while we catch up on our emails; Venmo helps me pay my friends back quickly and efficiently.”

“Convenience is happening everywhere, except for the beauty industry. We’re pressured to buy more tools, keep up with new trends, follow more steps, and spend more time on our routines than we practically have time for. It’s just getting out of hand.”

Alleyoop products “are created to give you your time back so you can get back to focusing on what matters most to you, things that really fill you up inside.”

Leila Kashani’s products “are created to give you your time back so you can get back to focusing on what matters most to you, things that really fill you up inside.”

Launching strong

In basketball, an alley-oop is an assist that leads to a slam dunk. Kashani promotes Alleyoop as the assist to slam-dunk a woman’s life goals.

Launched last August with her husband, David Manshoory, her company had 13 items at the time of this interview and two more scheduled for launch by the end of 2019. The brand has raised \$3.25 million—led by Trail Mix Ventures, Ludlow Ventures and Wavemaker Ventures. Those entities are known for backing other female-led and/or consumer-focused companies including Figs, The Wing, Andie Swim, Casper, MindBody, Blue Bottle and Scentbird.

Each Alleyoop product is designed to save time or solve a problem by addressing a need that is specific to the buyer.

“I’ve been asked: ‘Why don’t you make a Buy All button on your site? Because everything is so useful in the collection,’” Kashani says. “But that’s the opposite of what we stand for. We want you to buy only what works for your lifestyle and think about what you actually need before making a purchase.”



"Some people value saving time, while others value saving space in their bag. Some people use brushes, while others use their fingers to apply makeup, etc. Everyone has different needs."

She says the brand's best sellers of late are PenPal and Multi-Tasker.

"We asked women: 'If you could carry four makeup items that come in a pen form and nothing else, what would they be?' They replied back with an eyeliner, brow pencil, highlighter and lip liner, which is what led us to create the Alleyoop Pen Pal.

"It's a makeup pen that has everything you need to get a full look when you don't have much time to get ready. It's also a perfect backup to keep in your bag to be prepared for wherever the day might take you, while barely taking up any space in your bag."

Multi-Tasker is a brush with a compact, 4-in-1 design. It was conceived after the company asked women which four products they use most frequently to apply makeup.

"We heard so many complaints about having to carry so much stuff in their makeup bags, never having the right brush on hand, or having to dig through their bag to find the right brush they were looking for. ... Now you only have to carry one brush instead of many to apply all of your makeup."

Lucky 'oops' moment

Such products are a natural extension of Kashani's background. After coming home from college—she majored in marketing and communications at the University of California San Diego—she began doing experiential marketing for companies that included Nike and Columbia Sportswear.

"I was kind of obsessed with changing the way people experienced either their shopping behaviors or engaged with brands," she says. Her job also had her traveling a lot, so convenience became even more important.

Kashani's first product, the 4-in-1 razor, came from an embarrassing moment in 2014 when she was presenting a new line of toys at Target for a company.

"I looked down and realized I had just shaved one armpit—whoops! We laughed about it, and I joked that I clearly had no time that morning to shave both armpits.

"I started to create prototypes of a razor that has everything you would need for a quick, showerless shave. I was excited to change the way we expect a traditional shower razor to look."

Kashani's first prototyping effort was a challenge. She worked with a prototype design company that had little to no manufacturing experience, so some of its design recommendations were not always scalable or easy to manufacture. "I've learned that looping in the factory earlier is always better," she says.

Fortunately, her early prototype landed in the hands of an Ulta buyer who loved the concept and unique form factor and decided to take the product nationwide.

She says prototyping "changes each time. Internally we do the first napkin drawing of our ideas, then we work with product designers with manufacturing experience to create specs that are then shared with one or two potential factories to create prototypes for us. We then test these prototypes with our customers to make any necessary tweaks before we put them into mass production."

The 4-in-1 razor has two patents, and a few other of the company's products are pending. Alleyoop has an extensive IP portfolio across the United States, Europe and several other major international markets.

Alleyoop's best sellers of late are PenPal and Multi-Tasker (opposite page left).

Crowdsourcing coup

As a start-up, Alleyoop's biggest challenge could be seen as a positive one: not enough inventory to keep up with demand.

"Before we launched, we had to be conservative with inventory because we really couldn't anticipate the growth we're experiencing today," she says. "We ran out of inventory on a few of our products pretty quickly.

"Most of our products take anywhere from 2-4 months to manufacture, so we're working hard to get ahead of our inventory needs and nail our projections."

With her husband, Kashani crowdsourced the first release of product innovations by working with a group of 200 women across the United States for eight months in 2019. She interacted with them daily via Slack to consider their feedback on product features and benefits, packaging and branding.

Kashani's first product, the 4-in-1 razor was originally designed with a single-blade razor cartridge. But the early feedback from customers was that women wanted to use it for fuller shaves, which required more blades and a pivot head.



Asked about the crowdsourcing experience with her husband, she says: "I threw him into the crowd to crowd-surf at a concert, and he survived. Just kidding ...

"When we first launched the razor, it was designed with a single-blade razor cartridge. I assumed everyone would use it for small, missed spots or for touch-ups just like me. But the early feedback from customers was that women wanted to use it for fuller shaves, which required more blades and a pivot head.

"We realized we shouldn't assume how people will use products; we should ask. So we reached out to 10,000 e-commerce customers and asked them to fill out an application if they wanted to get involved in product R&D with us. ... 2,600-plus women applied in the first 48 hours! We narrowed it down to a couple hundred."

One disappointment has been knock-offs. "But when I was crying to a friend about it, she said that if people are knocking you off, that means you're doing something right. Fortunately, we have a great legal team that has helped us manage this and stop them as they pop up." 📞

Details: meetalleyoop.com



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INVENTORS DIGEST SURVIVES AND THRIVES

INVENTORS DIGEST SURVIVES AND THRIVES

TO GET AN IDEA of how enduring and dependable *Inventors Digest* has been, it began publishing before Bruno Mars, Carly Rae Jepsen or Michael Phelps were born.

Ronald Reagan had just begun his second term as president. The world's first commercial cellphone, made by Motorola, had been approved by the Federal Communications Commission just 18 months earlier—and unless your bank account had seven figures or more, you didn't own one. The internet? A rumor.

But maybe the best indication of *Inventors Digest*'s long history is that its first issue was produced by an electric typewriter.

At that stage in spring 1985, *ID* was an eight-page newsletter that was printed using cold type. Anytime there was an error on the page, the printer would have to physically cut or remove that piece of type from the page before it was typeset.

John Farady, founder and president of the Affiliated Inventors Foundation, created the newsletter after seeing a need to educate the public about the inventing and patent process. *Inventors Digest*'s first editor was Adrienne Walker.

Joanne Hayes-Rines took over as editor in spring 1987 (also becoming publisher in 1994) during a 20-year run in charge of the magazine. She became the face of the magazine—and in many ways, the face of the independent inventor—as she fought against changes in legislation that would favor corporate giants.

Rines's publication was more a quarterly newsletter than a magazine for the first five years, but her tireless efforts helped it grow in physical stature as well as relevance. After she sold *Inventors Digest* to Louis Foreman in 2007 (see this month's Editor's Note), the magazine was printed every other month; it became a monthly publication beginning in 2008.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the world's longest-running magazine on inventing—a publication that has doggedly educated and protected independent inventors through a major stock market crash, an unprecedented terror attack on U.S. soil, a historic recession, and six U.S. presidents.

Here's hoping you are as thrilled by this anniversary as we are, and that you continue your loyal support for another 35 years and beyond. —Reid Creager



MILESTONE DATES

Spring 1985:

First issue.
John Farady, publisher;
Adrienne Walker, editor.

March/April 1992:

Inventors Digest becomes the Official Publication of the United Inventors Association.

July/August 1994:

Hayes-Rines's first issue as publisher.

January 2007:

Mike Drummond named editor.

January/February/ March 2007:

Hayes-Rines's last issue as publisher. Sold magazine to Louis Foreman, product development and innovation expert who is founder of Enventys Partners.

June 2015:

Cama McNamara's first issue as editor.

Spring 1987:

Joanne Hayes-Rines becomes editor.



1998:

National Inventors Month is established by *Inventors Digest*, the United Inventors Association and the Academy of Applied Science. Originally celebrated every August, the occasion was switched to May in 2011.

January 2008:

Magazine becomes a monthly.

February 2012:

Mark Cantey's first issue as editor.

June 2016:

Reid Creager's first issue as editor.

OUR CELEBRITY PIZZAZZ

A list of famous people in the entertainment and sports world who have graced the cover of *Inventors Digest*:

- Johnny Bench
- Bill Klein and Dr. Jennifer Arnold (TV's "The Little Couple")
- John Ratzenberger (Cliff on "Cheers")
- Cal Ripken Jr.
- Maria Sharapova
- Ben Stiller (a copy of *Inventors Digest* appeared in the movie "Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian")
- Burt Ward (Robin on the 1960s TV show "Batman")



Happy Birthday to Us!

Congratulations, *Inventors Digest*!

I began my subscription in November 1992 and have read every copy since that time. Keep it coming; it's the only thing out there that's worthwhile for inventors.

—DAVID A. FUSSELL,
inventor, president of
VenturSource Consulting

Happy anniversary, *ID*! We have grown up together, and as I reflect, *Inventors Digest* has been a consistent source for everything invention.

From novice to veteran, thank you!

—THEY,
prolific inventor

Congratulations to *Inventors Digest* on celebrating 35 years! It has been an honor to play a small role over the years contributing articles to the flagship independent inventor publication.

ID has meant so much to the inventor community and has been an unwavering guiding light for an industry constantly in need of a sentinel.

—GENE QUINN,
founder of IPWatchdog,
patent attorney

"Intellectual property literacy is essential for all inventors, visionaries and entrepreneurs hoping to thrive and achieve long-term competitive advantage in the knowledge economy. *Inventors Digest* plays an important role in bringing that literacy to the innovators of tomorrow— helping them to better understand the IP protections necessary for creating and scaling solutions to society's biggest challenges."

—DR. GARY MICHELSON,
founder, Michelson 20MM Foundation,
renowned surgeon

Sustaining a successful niche publication for 35 years is no mean feat. It takes dedication, creativity and passion, which are the same attributes that define the independent inventor.

Having shepherded *ID* for 20 years, I've been thrilled to watch it continue to thrive and grow and be more valuable to the inventor community than ever before. Hats off to publisher Louis Foreman and editor Reid Creager and the entire team for their wonderful work. Here's to another 35!

—JOANNE HAYES-RINES,
Inventors Digest editor from 1987 to 2007

Inventors Digest has supported the work of independent and small inventors for 35 years, and the United States Patent and Trademark Office congratulates the magazine on this milestone anniversary.

Thank you for chronicling the inspiring stories of inventors who worked hard, took risks, persevered, and ultimately overcame tremendous odds to succeed. Thank you for continuously fueling and showcasing the ingenuity of those participating in America's innovation ecosystem.

—ANDREI IANCU,
under secretary of commerce for
intellectual property and director,
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office



ID has given us so many wonderful insights into businesses and people who have made a difference in so many lives.

This ty-five years is a testimonial to the quality and dedication to the writers, editors and staff for continuing the highest standards for their readers and sponsors! Congratulations.

—JOHNNY BENCH,
baseball Hall of Famer,
inventor of anti-bullying app



Congratulations and many thanks to Louis Foreman, publisher, and Reid Creager, editor-in-chief, for publishing *Inventors Digest* every month and thereby enlightening the community of inventors.

The world depends on American innovation. Keep up this important work. We need you.

—JACK LANDER,
inventor, mentor, author

I'm thrilled to see there are so many more female inventors in 2020 than there were in 1985. I hope my contributing to this vital publication (for the past 20 years) has helped, even if in a small way.

Whenever possible, I like to feature women inventors in my interviews. My goal is to encourage female readers to have the confidence, tenacity and perseverance required to develop those inventions! And thanks to Joanne Hayes-Rines for helping to start it all. Happy birthday, *Inventors Digest*!

—EDIE TOLCHIN,
writer, editor, author

OUR STAYING POWER

The digital age has created a challenging atmosphere for print publications. A 2009 report by Crain's said that in that year alone, 367 U.S. magazines went out of business.

At 35 years, *Inventors Digest* has outlasted hundreds of magazines and compares well with other noteworthy national print publications.

- The original incarnation of the iconic weekly **LIFE** magazine lasted 36 years (1936-72).
- Another iconic magazine, the biweekly **LOOK**, lasted 34 years (1937-71).
- **Disney** lasted 40 years (1965-2005).
- **Details** lasted 33 years (1982-2015).
- **National Lampoon** lasted 28 years (1970-98).
- **PC** lasted 27 years (1982-2009).
- **Asiaweek** (Time Inc.) lasted 26 years (1975-2001).
- **Musician** lasted 23 years (1976-99).
- **Omni** lasted 20 years (1978-98).
- **Inside Sports** lasted 19 years (1979-98).
- **Nickelodeon** lasted 19 years (1990-2009).
- **Vibe** lasted 17 years (1992-2009).
- **Mental Floss** lasted 15 years (2001-16).





Congratulations on 35 years, *Inventors Digest*! You keep the dream alive and motivate inventors to achieve their goals.

Thank you for being such a great resource for all of us. You are a wealth of information and inspiration!

—LILY WINNAIL,
inventor, entrepreneur, actress

I first came across *Inventors Digest* in the library about 30 years ago. It was a great find, and I still read the magazine today. It has great advice for the new inventor as well as the experienced inventor.

No one invention strategy works every time, and *Inventors Digest* is constantly alerting readers to the new tools that are working today.

—DON DEBELAK,
founder of One Stop Invention Shop,
author and *ID* contributor

I remember it well, the creation of *Inventors Digest*. John Faraday, Joanne Hayes-Rines and I later talked about what the future would be like and how *ID* could be of real value to inventors everywhere.

Surviving 35 years in anything is a noteworthy accomplishment.

I have had the good fortune to have several articles published in the magazine and even had my photo on the cover of the August 2014 issue.

Every lecture I give across America to audiences—students to seniors, for the USPTO or LES (Licensing Executive Society) or at universities—I always hold up a copy of the latest issue and expound upon its great value. Here is wishing you another 35 years. Keep up the great inspirational work you are doing for the creative inventors across America and beyond.

—LAWRENCE J. UDELL,
founder/chairman, California Invention Center

1985: THE WORLD IN OUR FIRST YEAR



NEWS EVENTS

- Mexico City earthquake kills 9,000
- First successful artificial heart transplant
- Wreck of the Titanic discovered by U.S.-French salvage team
- First version of Windows is released, Windows 1.0
- Mikhail Gorbachev becomes de facto leader of the Soviet Union

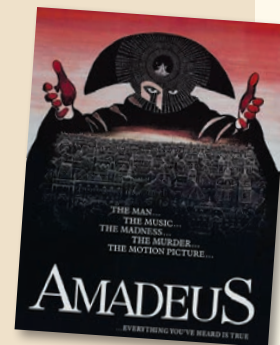
POP CULTURE

Television

- No. 1 show: "The Cosby Show," followed by "Family Ties"
- VH1 begins broadcasting on U.S. cable
- ABC broadcasts its 2,311th and last daytime episode of "Family Feud" after nine years
- Nick at Nite is launched on U.S. cable

Movies

- Academy Award, Best Picture: "Amadeus"
- Academy Award, Best Actor: F. Murray Abraham, "Amadeus"
- Academy Award, Best Actress: Sally Field, "Places in the Heart"
- Highest earning: "Back to the Future," \$381 million



Music

- No. 1 album: "Born in the USA," Bruce Springsteen
- No. 1 single: "The Power of Love," Jennifer Rush
- Grammy winner, album of the year: "Can't Slow Down," Lionel Richie
- CDs are introduced
- Popular U.S. music stars sing "We Are the World" to raise money to help starving people in Africa
- Madonna begins her first tour



SPORTS

- Kansas City Royals win the World Series for the first time, beating the St. Louis Cardinals
- Chicago Bears win the Super Bowl, led by Walter Payton and William "The Refrigerator" Perry
- Los Angeles Lakers beat the Boston Celtics to win NBA Finals

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.

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For more information, call 704-333-5335 or email info@inventorsdigest.com.



2020 US Trade Show Calendar

TOP SHOWS, MEETINGS, MAKER FAIRES OF INVENTOR INTEREST

THAT REMOTE you use to change the channel on your favorite show—somebody or some company invented that (and somebody else improved it). They also likely built a prototype; got a patent; had to decide whether to sell it themselves or license it; and found a manufacturer, distributor and retailer, among other challenges.

The same with the fob that unlocks your car, the bathroom faucet handle you turn to wash your face, the microwave that heats your food, and millions of inventions we take for granted.

Trade shows involving a world of products and services are often instrumental for finding essential contacts to help guide us through the myriad layers of the inventing and entrepreneurial process. They also provide a glimpse into what your competitors are doing and what you may need to succeed.

That's why *Inventors Digest* adds more entries to our U.S. trade show list each year—to provide as many highly attended options we can think of to put you in front of the right person or people who can help turn your idea into a slice of the American Dream. This year, we added a significant number of events that are either the largest in the United States in a particular category, or the largest in North America.

For the rest of 2020, the magazine will list each month's major show events in the back of that issue. Meanwhile, keep this list for reference throughout the year, or access it at inventorsdigest.com.

Another handy reference point is the short story that regular contributor Don Debelak wrote with the list we ran in the January 2019 issue. "Go, or no? 7 tips to decide if a trade show is right for your product" is a must-read. See inventorsdigest.com/articles/go-or-no/



International Consumer Electronics Show (CES)

Texworld USA

JANUARY

January 7-10 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES)

*World's largest
technology trade show*
Las Vegas Convention Center
866-233-7968; ces.tech
Not open to the public.

January 13-15 A3 Business Forum

*Robotics, vision
and imaging, motors*
Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek
734-994-6088
a3automate.org

January 16-19 National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM)

Anaheim (Calif.)
Convention Center
760-438-8001; namm.org

January 19-21 Texworld USA

*North America's largest
apparel fabrics show*
Jacob K. Javits
Convention Center
New York City
678-564-6310
texworld-usa.us.
messefrankfurt.com/
new-york/en.html
Also July 22-24.

January 21-23 NAHB International Builders' Show (National Association of Home Builders)

Las Vegas Convention Center
202-266-8610
buildersshow.com

January 21-23 KBIS (Kitchen & Bath Industry Show)

Las Vegas Convention Center
770-291-5434; kbis.com

January 21-24 PGA Merchandise Show

Orange County
Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
800-840-5628; pgashow.com

January 21-24 Racquet & Paddle Sports Show

Orange County
Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
203-840-5613
racquetpaddlesports
show.com



Left to right: Global Pet Expo, South By Southwest Conference & Festival, American International Toy Fair

FEBRUARY

February 1-6
SPIE Photonics West
(Society of Photographic Instrumentation Engineers)
Biophotonics for brain research and health care; lasers; core optical components for consumer products
 Moscone Convention Center
 San Francisco
 888-504-8171; spie.org

February 3-5
AHR (International Air-Conditioning, Heating and Refrigerating Expo)
 Orange County Convention Center
 Orlando, Fla.
 203-221-9232; ahrexpo.com

February 4-6
IPC APEX Expo
Printed board electronics manufacturing
 San Diego Convention Center
 877-472-4724
 ipcapexexpo.org

February 4-6
International Roofing Expo
 Kay Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center
 972-536-6415
 theroofting xpo.com

February 4-6
Intersolar North America
 San Diego Convention Center
 508-743-8536; intersolar.us

February 11-13
Medical Design & Manufacturing West (MD&M West)
Medical technology, from prototyping to full-scale manufacturing
 Anaheim (Calif.) Convention Center
 310-445-4200
 mdmwest.mddionline.com

February 11-13
World AG Expo
 International Agri-Center
 Tulare, Calif.
 800-999-9186
 worldagexpo.com

February 12-16
Developer Week 2020
Artificial intelligence
 Oakland (Calif.) Convention Center
 Submit form online
 developerweek.com

February 13-17
Miami International Boat Show
 Miami (Fla.) Marine Stadium Park & Basin
 954-441-3220
 miamiboatshow.com

February 22-25
American International Toy Fair
 Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
 New York City
 212-675-1141; toyfairny.com

February 26-28
Global Pet Expo
 Orange County Convention Center
 Orlando, Fla.
 Submit form online
 globalpetexpo.org

MARCH

March 13-22

South By Southwest Conference & Festival

Technology, start-up ideas, pitch competitions
Austin, Texas
512-467-7979
sxsw.com/attend

March 14-17

The Inspired Home Show

McCormick Place, Chicago
847-292-4200
housewares.org

March 16-20

Game Developers Conference (GDC)

Video games
Moscone Center
San Francisco
866-535-8997; gdconf.com

March 17-20

ISC West (International Security Conference & Exposition)

Physical security industry
Sands Expo & Convention Center; Las Vegas
800-840-5602; iscwest.com

March 30-April 3

International Wireless Communications Expo (IWCE)

Las Vegas Convention Center
800-927-5007; iwceexpo.com



WasteExpo

APRIL

April 8-10

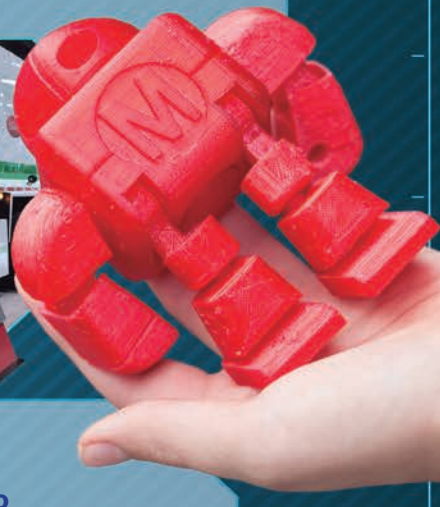
National Academy of Inventors (NAI)

Sheraton Grand
at Wild Horse Pass; Phoenix
813-974-4438
academyofinventors.org

April 20-23

RAPID + TCT

3D manufacturing
Anaheim Convention Center
800-733-4763
rapid3devent.com



Maker Faire Bay Area

MAY

May 4-7

IBM Think 2020

Technology
Moscone Center
San Francisco
888-426-4409
ibm.com/events/think

May 4-7

WasteExpo

Solid waste, recycling
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans
203-358-9900
wasteexpo.com

May 5-7

National Hardware Show

Las Vegas Convention Center
888-425-9377
nationalhardwareshow.com

May 15-17

Maker Faire Bay Area

San Mateo (Calif.) Event Center
No phone contact for show
makerfaire.com/bay-area/

May 19-21

Sweets & Snacks Expo

McCormick Place
Chicago
833-336-3206
sweetsandsnacks.com

May 19-21

Licensing International Expo

World's largest licensing trade show
Mandalay Bay Convention Center
Las Vegas
888-644-2022
licensingexpo.com

May 28-30

International Franchise Expo

More than 400 proven franchise opportunities
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
New York City
201-226-1130; ifeinfo.com

May 31-June 4

Cisco Live

Technology
Mandalay Bay Convention Center
Las Vegas
866-405-2508
ciscolive.com

JUNE

June 8-11

BIO International Convention

Biotechnology
San Diego
Convention Center
No phone contact for show
convention@bio.org
convention.bio.org

June 9-11

E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo)

Computer and video games
Los Angeles
Convention Center
Submit form online
e3expo.com

June 9-11

International Floriculture Expo

Floral industry
Miami Beach
Convention Center
207-842-5508
flo_iexpo.com

June 9-11

Medical Design & Manufacturing East (MD&M East)

Medical technology, from prototyping to full-scale manufacturing
Jacob J. Javits
Convention Center
New York City
No general phone number
advancedmanufacturing
newyork.com

June 13-19

InfoComm 2020

Largest professional audio-visual trade show in North America
Las Vegas Convention Center
703-273-7200
infocommshow.org

June 23-25

FIME

Largest international medical trade fair in the U.S.
Miami Beach (Fla.)
Convention Center
877-394-9749
fimesh_w.com

June 28-30

Summer Fancy Food Show

Largest specialty food industry event in North America
Jacob J. Javits
Convention Center
New York City
212-482-6440
specialtyfood.com/
shows-events/
summer-fancy-food-show/

June 29-July 1

TechConnect World Innovation

Commercializing lab innovation
Gaylord National
Hotel & Convention Center
National Harbor, Md.
925-353-5004
techconnectworld.com

June 29-July 1

Cosmoprof North America

Leading business-to-business beauty trade show event in the Americas
Mandalay Bay Convention
Center; Las Vegas
800-468-2274
cosmoprofnorthamerica.com

Below: InfoComm
2020 and IFT20
Annual Event &
Food Expo



JULY

July 12-15

IFT20 Annual Event & Food Expo (Institute of Food Technologists)

McCormick Place; Chicago
800-438-3663; iftevent.org

July 14-17

ICAST (International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades)

Orange County
Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
703-519-9691; icastfishin .org

July 17-20

AWFS Fair (Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers)

Las Vegas Convention Center
800-946-2937; awfsfair.org

July 26-30

AACC Clinical Lab Expo (American Association for Clinical Chemistry)

Laboratory medicine, technology
McCormick Place; Chicago
800-892-1400; aacc.org

AUGUST

August 11-13 Independent Garden Center Show

McCormick Place; Chicago
ShowInfo@IGCShow.com
igcshow.com

August 31-September 3 SuperZoo Show

Pet industry
Mandalay Bay
Convention Center
Las Vegas
626-447-2222;
superzoo.org

SEPTEMBER

September 14-17 Solar Power International (SPI)

Anaheim (Calif.)
Convention Center
703-738-9460
solarpowerinternational.com

OCTOBER

October 3-7 WEFTEC (Water Environ- ment Federation Technical Exhibition & Conference)

Morial Convention Center
New Orleans
800-666-0206; weftec.org

October 13-15 ABC Kids Expo

Products for juveniles
Las Vegas Convention Center
210-691-4848
theabcshow.com

October 28-30 MWC Los Angeles (Mobile World Congress)

*Core mobile technologies,
IoT-related applications,
more* Los Angeles
Convention Center
Submit form online
mwcamerica.com



ABC Kids Expo

NOVEMBER

November 8-11 PACK EXPO

*North America's largest
packing and processing show*
McCormick Place; Chicago
Submit form online
packexpointernational.com

November 18-19 ISC East (International Security Conference & Exposition)

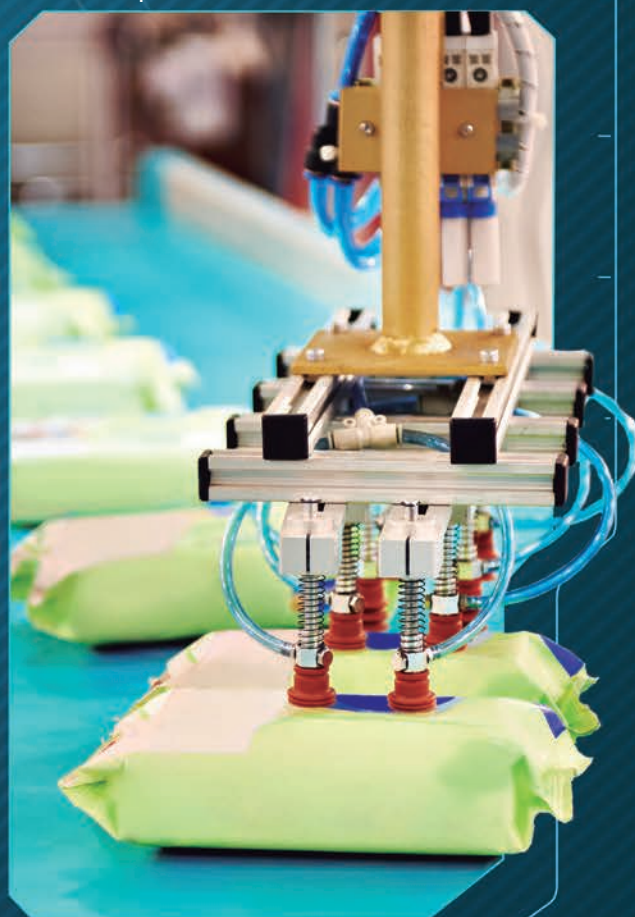
Physical security industry
Jacob K. Javits Convention
Center; New York City
800-840-5602; isceast.com

DECEMBER

December 8-10 POWER-GEN International

All forms of energy
Orange County
Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
Submit form online
power-gen.com

*Note: Contact shows to
ensure those events are
open to the public.*



PACK EXPO

CREATIVITY IS THEIR Trademark



5 HUMAN BRAND MASCOTS IN THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY ARE STROKES OF IP GENIUS BY RENEE C. QUINN

AS A **BRANDING** and marketing professional, I enjoy seeing how advertising has evolved over the years. Gone are the days of boring, ho-hum advertising campaigns.

With modern technology such as DVRs, consumers no longer have to sit through commercials. Though the widespread reach of internet and social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, not to mention the highly anticipated and super-expensive Super Bowl commercials, advertising campaigns have had to become more creative and fun to catch the attention of their target consumers.

I find that not only are people not fast-forwarding through commercials, they are looking forward to when their favorites air.

I once wrote about The “Most Notable, and Sometimes Creepy, Restaurant Mascots, Characters, and Personalities.” So this time I thought I’d focus on a different type of brand mascot—real people—and highlight the top five trademarked advertising personalities within the insurance service industry.

1 **Geico’s cavemen** (2004–2010)

No longer on the air, the Geico cavemen commercials were brilliant in terms of creativity. Here you have Neanderthal-like cavemen trying to live in the modern world.

These cavemen are intelligent and have their own homes, social lives and careers. The commercials took you through their inability to cope with Geico’s “offensive” use of the slogan “So easy a caveman can do it.”

Originally created in 2004 by Joe Lawson and Noel Ritter while working at The Martin Agency, the first three Geico commercials to feature cavemen were “Apartment,” “Apology” and “Boom Mic.”

“Apology” features the line, “I’ll have the roast duck with the mango salsa.” In “Airport,” no words are spoken; we see a caveman on a moving walkway who sees a sign with the hated “So easy” slogan. His demeanor says it all.

And of course, there’s the television news interview in which the anchor asks the caveman, “How can (the slogan) be offensive if it’s true? Historically, you guys have struggled to adapt.”

To which the caveman responds in an exasperated tone: “Yeah, right! Walking upright, discovering fire, inventing the wheel, laying the foundation for all mankind. You’re right. Good point. Sorry we couldn’t get that to you sooner!”

The Geico cavemen were so popular, they spawned a TV series, “Cavemen.” Alas, the series was canceled after less than 6 weeks.

2 **Progressive’s Flo** (2008 to present)

Flo from Progressive was created by the Boston-based agency Arnold Worldwide, via copywriter John Park and art director Steve Reepmeyer.

The character, portrayed by actress Stephanie Courtney, debuted in 2008. She is recognized by her extreme enthusiasm, prominent nametag, sparkling white uniform, upbeat personality and retro hairstyle.

Flo became so popular through the years that in

November 2014, Progressive aired its 100th Flo ad with the introduction of her other family members—which included her mother, father, brother, sister, and grandfather. All of the characters were also played by Courtney.

The ad was designed to build a deeper connection to the character, tap into a relatable moment and showcase the campaign's range. From a branding standpoint, this campaign is brilliant.

A character that is recognizable, relatable and approachable, Flo in 2011 was named the No. 1 brand icon by EW.com. A Flo Halloween costume became the top-selling costume on Amazon.

3 Farmers Insurance professor Nathaniel Burke (2010 to present)

Farmers Insurance professor Nathaniel Burke of the University of Farmers is played by actor J.K. Simmons. The ad campaign takes place in the fictional University's Hall of Claims.

Most of these commercials begin with Professor Burke walking through the Hall with a potential client: "At Farmers, we've seen almost everything, so we know how to cover almost anything. Even a..."

After we see the story, we are taken back to the Hall where the professor points at a statue, wall plaque or display commemorating the event and says: "Talk to Farmers. We know a thing or two, 'cause we've seen a thing or two."

4 Allstate's Mayhem (2010 – hopefully forever)

Launched in June 2010, Allstate's Mayhem, played by actor Dean Cain, was created by ad agency Leo Burnett in Chicago.

The campaign is loosely based on the character Mr. White from the 1992 Quentin Tarantino film "Reservoir Dogs." It was developed in response to being ranked fourth in advertising spending behind Geico, State Farm and Progressive.

This campaign came on the heels of the "Our Stand" campaign featuring Dennis Haysbert, who happens to be the featured voice at the end of every Mayhem commercial as well. And by mid-2011, Allstate had won some 80 industry awards for the campaign.

The ads all follow a similar formula. Each one starts with Mayhem stating what risk he is—such as, "I'm a raccoon living in your attic"; "I'm a hot babe out jogging"; "I'm your GPS"; "I'm a teenage girl"; "I'm a car thief"—and one of the newest is, "I'm a tailgater tailgating to get to my tailgate."

Mayhem then shows what could happen as a result of these risks, ending each commercial with some version of "And if you've got cut-rate insurance, you

could be paying for this yourself. So get Allstate and be better protected from Mayhem ... like me!"

5 Gabe Gabriel from State Farm® (Late 2018 to present)

One of the newest ad campaigns from State Farm was created by the full-service ad agency Doyle Dane Bernbach (DBD) and creative directors Katie Bero and Brian Culp. This campaign focuses on the State Farm agent with a twist.

The ads feature David Haydn-Jones as Gabe Gabriel, the insecure and highly jealous sports agent for Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers. Beginning with the first commercial, "Two Agents," it is clearly evident that Gabriel has an ongoing, self-inflicted and tumultuous relationship with his perceived rival and real-life State Farm agent Patrick Minnis.

In "Season 2: Agent v. Agent," Gabriel brings in his second client, "My New Homey, Patrick Mahomes," to make Rodgers jealous while Mahomes starts toying with Gabriel at the same time.

Unlike typical insurance company commercials, in these ads State Farm agents simply state what the company has to offer. But by adding the storyline of a jealous and insecure sports agent who seemingly is going off the deep end, the ads are engaging, light-hearted and fun.

Honorable Mention:

Jake from State Farm (2011–2015)

Jake from State Farm is played by actor Jake Stone. In the commercial, a husband is on the phone at 3 a.m. His wife walks down the steps behind him to hear him say in what could be misconstrued as a rather seductive voice, "Yeah, I'm married. Does it matter? You'd do that for me? Really? I'd like that!"

To which his wife angrily says, "Who are you talking to?"

He replies, "It's Jake, from State Farm." The wife snatches the phone out of her husband's hand and says, "Jake from State Farm? At 3 in the morning? Who is this? What are you wearing, (air quotes) Jake from State Farm?"

His only part in the commercial consists of 2 1/2 seconds of air time and two spoken words. He says, "Ahhh, khakis?" 📞



Renée C. Quinn is the chief operating officer of IPWatchdog, Inc. She holds a Masters of Business Administration in e-commerce with expertise in marketing and brand development. She is an author for IPWatchdog.com, public speaker and corporate educator.



After the Crowdfund

FINAL PROTOTYPING IS AMONG THE MANY STEPS BEFORE YOUR INVENTION IS FLOWING TO CONSUMERS **BY JEREMY LOSAW**

IT IS an immense achievement to have a successfully crowdfunded product: coming up with the idea, having the audacity to chase it, and spending hundreds of hours of prototyping and iteration to get it just right to show the world.

Your marketing was spot on, and your customers love it. It is a euphoric feeling to get to the finish line.

However, in the immortal words of “As Seen on TV” legend Billy Mays: “But wait. There’s more.”

Having a fully funded campaign is a fantastic beginning to a journey of making your product real, but the work is not over. There are months and potentially years ahead to finish development, manufacture, and ship your product to loyal backers.

Product development

Typically, prototypes shown in crowdfunding videos and photography are great but not ready for manufacturing. They have what we call the “Goldilocks Quality”: They are just good enough to function and look beautiful but not fully engineered for production.

So, Step 1 is to finish the engineering work. If the product is going to be made via a molding process, CAD files must be modified so that the parts have as even a wall thickness as possible and can be removed from the tooling.

Electrified products will need the printed circuit boards refined, or designed from scratch if the prototype uses developer circuitry such as Arduinos or other microcontrollers. Any parts harvested from off-the-shelf products, such as electric motors or switches, can be found in catalogs or custom-made from suppliers.

All updates to the design of the product must then be tested in another round or more of prototyping to validate the changes. It can be hundreds more hours of iteration before the product is ready to see a factory.

Sourcing

This is the task of finding the factory or contract manufacturer to mass produce your product. Typically, the first consideration is determining in which part of the world you want to manufacture.

Though it is often a goal for American innovators to manufacture domestically, higher labor costs often make it impossible even with the benefits of

shared language and time zone. Most electronics and soft goods products are more economically made in Asia. China and Taiwan are the best for electronics and consumer goods, with more emerging nations such as Vietnam and Cambodia offering good options for garments and textiles.

Finding a reputable factory can be daunting. Sourcing sites such as Alibaba can be a great way to browse, but it is important to verify a factory’s capabilities by either visiting yourself or paying a third party to check it out.

Trade shows usually draw a good crowd of manufacturers; many reputable factories will invest in exhibiting at shows in the United States. This is a great way to meet factory representatives firsthand. Of course, do not share any design files until you have non-disclosure agreements or confidentiality agreements in place.

Tooling and sampling

The first step in mass manufacturing is creating the tooling for the product. This can be molds, forms, patterns, dies, masks or any other bespoke apparatus needed to make the components of the product.

Many products have injection-molded parts, and the tools are usually cut from blocks of hardened steel that take weeks to machine and are often one of the biggest capital expenses of a manufacturing program.

For printed circuit boards, the tools are the photoetching masks used to make the copper traces on the board and solder masks that are used to precisely place solder paste for the electronic components. Each product will have a unique set of tooling that depends on the specifics of the product.

Once the tools are made, the first samples of the production-grade product can be made. These samples are prototypes that are used to test the manufacturing tooling and assembly techniques to confirm that mass production runs will be done correctly.

Each major iteration is given the designation “T” for “tooled sample” starting at T1. The T1 sample may be the wrong color or texture, and may even have functional issues. However, with each revision, you specify all the areas that need improvement, and each revision gets better until a sample is approved that will be the reference for the mass production run.



Manufacturing

This is where the hard work of sourcing and sampling pays off, and you finally make the mass production run of the product.

The machines are prepared with the tooling in its final form, assembly lines are created, and the product is assembled and put into its packaging.

It is an exciting and nerve-wracking part of the process, because any mistake made here is not isolated to just one prototype. It is likely to affect thousands. Thus, it is imperative to have done as many sample iterations as possible to work out the kinks, as well as create a quality control process that will ensure all finished goods will be working and in good shape when they make it to the hands of your customers.

Once completed, the finished goods are placed in master cartons, which are multi-packs of your product, and then palletized to prepare for shipping to a warehouse or distribution center.

Many crowdfunded products are made overseas and need to be properly shipped from the loading dock of the factory, across international borders, and to your warehouse. Specialty shipping companies can handle all details. It is highly recommended using one to navigate the paperwork and the duties.

Shipping and fulfillment

Shipping products to customers is often done by a professional fulfillment house called a 3PL (third-party logistics) company. There are 3PL warehouses all over the world so it is usually easy to find one conveniently located, but it can take some research

and negotiation to find one that is right-sized for your product and can scale with you.

It is crucial to understand the fee structure for receiving orders, monthly warehousing, pick and pack, and the shipping cost itself. It is also important to ensure that the 3PL software integrates with the e-commerce or other sales system you are using to make sure orders are shipped correctly.

The choice of 3PL should be made before the manufacturing run is completed, so shipment from factory to warehouse will be seamless. Particularly frugal or intrepid entrepreneurs may choose to warehouse and fulfill the product themselves out of a garage, but this technique often leads to frustration beyond the cost savings it may yield.

Scaling

Manufacturing and fulfillment usually gets easier after the first run. The factory is already chosen, and the quality control systems are in place. New orders can be placed easily with known lead times.

However, if the product is a hit, you may start taking purchase orders for quantities beyond the capabilities of your current manufacturing solution. If the quantities must be ramped up, you may have to create multi-cavity tooling to make more of each part (think a 6-tray muffin tin over a single), find new supplies for key purchased components, and expand assembly lines.

With some due diligence upfront, you may find a factory at the outset that can scale with you. However, it is not uncommon to scale out of the original factory or have to bring on additional factories to help satiate the sales volume. 🏠

The Case for Buying Patents

IT'S A GOOD DEFENSIVE STRATEGY THAT PROVIDES VARIOUS FREEDOMS AND FLEXIBILITY **BY LOUIS CARBONNEAU**

HAVE OFTEN written about the multitude of reasons it makes little sense for patent owners to sit on patent assets (while paying expensive maintenance fees), with no thought to long-term strategy. Whether the goal is to monetize non-core assets, let someone else assert the patents without any of the risks of retaliation or bring some non-dilutive capital while avoiding the long and expensive march of litigation, the reasons to sell one's patent abound.

But when you flip the narrative and look to why someone is looking to acquire, the answer is not always as clear. The reasons differ from one buyer to another.

Here are some reasons to acquire patents.

Avoid a lawsuit: An obvious motivation to acquire a patent portfolio is for an infringing (or soon-to-be infringing) company to avoid the costs, risks and reputational damages of being sued for patent infringement.

This strategy allows the company to obtain a valuable corporate asset (rather than a mere license to practice), which can in turn be monetized if it is also infringed by others. The cost for buying a given portfolio is usually less than it would cost to defend a lawsuit and challenge the validity of the patent(s) in question, without any of the uncertainty built into litigation.

In most cases, this is preferable to other alternatives. It's surprising that so few companies avail themselves of this opportunity. The assets are most always offered at a much lower price than a patent owner will later require taking a license in the context of a lawsuit, and don't forget about the potential for significant damages should it make it to trial.

Monetize assets directly: This is the classic play by a non-practicing entity (NPE)—a person or company holding a patent or process but with no intention of developing it. An entity, preferably a well-funded one, essentially becomes a proxy for the inventor who does not have the appetite and resources to take on large companies that may be infringing his or her patents.

The NPE takes all the risk, invests millions it may take to drive a successful campaign, and—assuming it is successful—shares in the net proceeds with the inventor. On the other end of that spectrum, we see defensive aggregators buy patents to then license their members and prevent them from being on the receiving end of an assertion claim. Both types of entity play a valid and necessary role in this ecosystem.

Acquire freedom to operate: Another solid reason to acquire patents is to dredge a path that will allow an operating company to innovate and bring new products in a given space. This strategy provides peace of mind to the acquiring company, knowing it can build on a solid IP foundation that will leave it substantially risk free for the foreseeable future. This is particularly well suited for someone acquiring a portfolio of a certain size that is related to a specific area the company is entering.

Build a solid portfolio overnight: It takes well over a decade to organically build a decent patent portfolio.

I remember when I joined Microsoft in 1995; despite its size and market dominance, the company was still filing a hundred or so patents a year and only a few of the ones filed in the previous years had already issued. This left the company ill equipped when the likes of IBM came knocking at its door to discuss cross-patent licensing terms.

One way to speed this lengthy process and bulk up rapidly is to acquire strategic patents on the open market, with an eye to portfolios that comprise key assets reading on the most likely competitors or applicable products.

Secure international coverage: Many companies make the same mistake of filing most, if not all, of their patents in only one main jurisdiction—often where they are usually located (e.g. United States, Germany, etc.). These companies that want to enter new markets find their relative IP protection in their domestic market does not extend globally, and other patent owners are waiting for them.



Uber, which had virtually no patents a few years ago, then embarked on a rather aggressive acquisition program before it went public.

Acquiring strategic global patent portfolios can provide cover in foreign markets where the company wants to enter. That's why we have witnessed many Chinese companies lately, such as Didi or Oppo, splurge on patent acquisitions with strong international coverage.

Diminish the IPO target: Most fast-growing startups reach the milestone of going public years before any patent strategy they may have has time to materialize. (That assumes they have any patent strategy at all.) Yet the moment they announce their upcoming initial public offering, some smell blood and start asserting their patents while this has some perceived artificial leverage.

However, the smart ones make sure they acquire a core foundation of patents before making any such announcement. A good example of this strategy is Uber, which had virtually no patents a few years ago. It then embarked on a rather aggressive acquisition program before lifting its foot from the gas pedal about two years ago—after amassing a critical mass of assets in combination with its internal portfolio, which was starting to contribute as well. Uber did all of this before going public.

Buy and hold: Finally, many buyers acquire patents for defensive reasons. They do not really need those

rights, but the assets read on some of their direct competitors and they want to have some ammunition should they later face a patent assertion claim from one of them.

Sometimes, they also make the speculative bet that these patents will become quite strategic over time (e.g. Standard Essential Patents) and they may want to have some leverage in the industry.

Regardless of why companies acquire patents, there is a need for a more liquid market and more certainty over the asset class. Based on discussions with several buyers on a weekly basis and some recent trends (such as fewer inter partes reviews in court, more favorable rulings and a clear push in Congress to resolve patent subject-matter eligibility), we predict that transactions will start accelerating again while valuations continue their upward path.

That should be good news not only for sellers, but also for buyers who should be happy to trade a few more dollars for a more valuable and certain asset. 📦

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.






Upside and Upside-Down

IN 2019, THE STATE OF U.S. PATENTS SHOWED
CONSISTENTLY MIXED SIGNALS **BY DAN BURI**

ASK 10 PROFESSIONALS for their attitude on the state of patents in 2019, and you'll receive 10 distinctly different opinions—ranging from the incredibly negative “patents-are-dying” attitude to the overly optimistic “everything is fine.”

The consternation of it is that each of those professionals would be correct in their estimations, and entirely wrong. That was the patent world of 2019: Everyone was wrong, everyone was right, because no one knows which way is up anymore. We have officially entered the upside down.

2 steps forward, back

For every positive indication of an improving U.S. patent system in 2019, there was an equally negative counter-signal from the market, along with multiple nonsensical signs. For every \$200 million patent infringement verdict, there was an about-face of a \$500 million verdict in a decade-long disagreement.

When U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Director Andrei Iancu released official guidelines for patent subject-matter eligibility—presumably in an effort to reestablish certainty within the U.S. patent system—the courts simultaneously undermined any rational person's ability to place his or her feet on firm patent ground.

It has taken intellectual property investment and innovation traveling outside of the United States before any kind of majority began to take notice.

In an effort to re-strengthen patent rights for America's innovators, a U.S. Senate Subcommittee

was revived early last year. In recent hearings, Sens. Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) provided testimony along with 43 other experts to the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property, most of which advocated for stronger patent rights.

The senators' stance is clear: The patent system has been hijacked by large tech companies and needs repair. As the senators wrote, “[the patent system] is now at risk, because our patent laws have become overly complicated, riddled by uncertainty, and, frankly, hostile to innovation.”

The existence of the subcommittee seems to be a positive indication that change is on the horizon. Yet here we stand at the beginning of 2020, seemingly on the same marshy patent ground we were sinking in at the beginning of last year.

Portrait of perplexing

Let me illuminate you with an anecdote.

An inventor of mobile phone-related technology tried to sell his patent a few years ago. After years of toiling over his invention, multiple false starts trying to solve how to develop a company around his innovation, and tens of thousands of dollars of personal investment, he decided it was time to let go and sell his patent.

He was willing to sell his valuable patented innovation for as low as five figures but was given the cold shoulder from every tech company from California to Massachusetts, from the UK to Japan. No one would consider his patent seriously.

Here we stand, seemingly on the same marshy patent ground we were sinking in at the beginning of last year.

The inventor grew depressed. A passion in which he had invested for many years was vanishing right in front of him. He let his patent expire.

But this is where the current system doesn't make sense.

Early in 2019, the inventor was approached by a group that felt he was handed a raw deal. The group saw value in his patent, even as an expired asset. They agreed to help the inventor salvage whatever they could of his decades of effort.

Filing a few lawsuits for past infringement to defend his rights in the United States, the inventor soon found that a large multinational phone and electronics company wanted to sit down with him. It was offering to take a non-exclusive license to his patent, mind you, after being specifically approached to consider purchasing the patents very recently. The company offered to take a license on the patent for mid-six-figure value, and the inventor accepted.

So, rather than purchasing and owning the patent outright, this company elected to take a non-exclusive license to the patent for 10 times the price. Ethical discussions aside, are we sure the economics of efficient infringement are sound?

Get cozy

So, while all is not lost, all is also not right. Inventors are disillusioned. Start-ups aren't sure if they should be investing in patents or ignoring them completely.

Patent attorneys are confused—as are the courts, which are doing very little by way of extricating us all from this inanity. Large tech companies are equally perplexed, some no longer sure of the significance of their patent investment over the years, while others are entirely dismissive of patents altogether.

Everyone is wrong. Everyone is right. And no one knows which is which.

Welcome to the upside down. Get cozy, because who knows when we'll have the clarity this system needs? ☺

Dan Buri is a published author and patent attorney. He is CEO of Vitek IP, a patent consultancy, brokerage group and IP software company. One of his books was an Amazon No.1 best-selling collection of short fiction.



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Best wishes, Jack Lander

IoT Corner

Two laws relating to IoT devices that took effect on January 1 have the goal of protecting consumers' data and devices.

The California Consumer Privacy Act aims to safeguard and keep transparent any data that are shared and sold by data-driven IoT companies. Under this statute, consumers have full transparency on data collected, are allowed to fully delete their data upon request, and prevent their data from being sold.

The second is **SB-327**, the IoT Device Security Act. SB-327 requires IoT devices being sold in California to provide "reasonable security features." The result will be more secure device usage and control of data for the consumer but may cause headaches for device manufacturers, which may have to change the way passwords are handled or even modify their chip designs to handle the increased security regulations. —Jeremy Losaw



Wunderkinds

Even in elementary school, **Jaylin Macerinskas** likes to be able to fit in with her classmates. She wears two cochlear implants and loves how they help her hear, but "people stare at me. It's just a little embarrassing." So she invented a smaller, more discreet version of her implant and won last year's MED-EL USA Ideas4Ears invention competition as an 8-year-old. Her grand prize was a trip (with her mother) to MED-EL's international headquarters in Innsbruck, Austria.

"I would like being deaf to be more invisible so you can choose who you tell," Jaylin says. "I think it would give deaf people more confidence about their deafness."



What IS that?

It's April Fool's, year round! **Prank Gift Boxes** feature depictions of bizarre products like this one, although those products are not contained in the box. You simply put a real gift inside and watch the recipient's puzzled look as he or she looks at the box and fakes bewildered gratitude.

20%

The estimated percentage of the genes we share that have been patented by companies. **Gene patenting** goes back more than 100 years.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

1 According to 24/7 Wall St., the world's oldest corporate logo still in use is:

- A) Stella Artois (a Belgian pilsner)
- B) Shell Oil
- C) Bass Ale
- D) None of the above

2 True or false: Although he's best known for his lightning rod, Ben Franklin said his invention of bifocals gave him his "greatest personal satisfaction."



3 True or false: The first New Year's Eve Times Square ball was built by a Jewish immigrant.

4 In which century was the game of basketball invented—1700s, 1800s, or 1900s?

5 What is the oldest U.S. trademark still in use?

- A) Remington
- B) Brooks Brothers
- C) JP Morgan Chase
- D) Samson

ANSWERS: 1.A. Dating to 1366, the year the company was founded. 2. False. It was the glass armonica, a musical instrument he designed in 1761 that was inspired by English musicians who created sounds by passing their fingers around the brims of glasses filled with water. 3.True. Metalworker Jacob Starr built the first ball, lowered for the first time in 1907. 4. 1800s (1891), by Dr. James Naismith. 5.D. Samson, which originally depicted a drawing of a man and a lion, was registered on May 27, 1884, for use on cords, line and rope.

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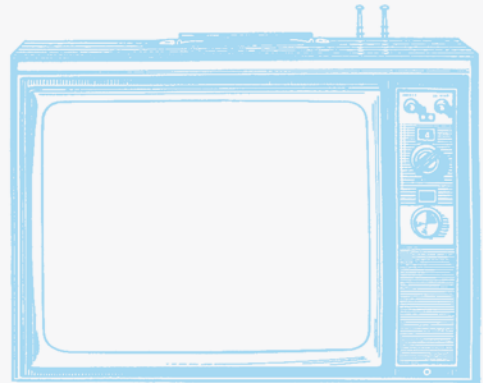
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