IN COOPERATION WITH Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation

NOVEMBER 2025 Volume 41 Issue 11

Inventors DIGEST

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Inventor of the Year

Nominate the next

IPO Education Foundation Inventor of the Year to recognize today's most outstanding inventors and how their work strengthens the nation's economy and quality of life.

AWARD CRITERIA

Patent:
Must have at least one U.S. patent

Commercialization:
Must be on the market

Your nomination demonstrates how innovations have reshaped industries and societies. Past winners include:

- **Erin & Lee Hanson**, Guardian, inventors of the Guardian Cap and other inventions impacting sports safety.
- **Katalin Kariko** (BioNTech), **Ugur Sahin** (BioNTech), **Ozlem Tureci** (BioNTech), and **Drew Weissman** (University of Pennsylvania) for the development of mRNA technology used in COVID-19 vaccines.
- **Alex Kipman**, Microsoft Corp., inventor of Kinect, Microsoft's motion sensing device developed for Xbox 360.

IPO EF Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation

Submit your nomination by March 2, 2026

IPOEF.org/nominate

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IP Buddy Pops Up Again

IPOEF's educational avatars and IP Made Easy showcased at AUTM conference as part of shared mission

Our beloved IP Buddy, first seen in *Inventors Digest*'s June 2025 cover story, has been on the road again.

This time, the trail led to the Western Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM) conference in September in Salt Lake City—where tech transfer professionals, researchers and innovation enthusiasts gathered to talk shop about moving university discoveries from lab bench to marketplace.

IP Buddy wasn't just passing through. These friendly IP guides were on a mission from the Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation (IPOEF). While attendees networked and discussed licensing deals, IP Buddy was busy introducing conference-goers to IPBuddy.ai and the IP Made Easy curriculum—IPOEF's free, educational powerhouse designed to make intellectual property concepts accessible to everyone.

Tech transfer professionals stopping by the IPOEF booth were pulling up IPBuddy.ai on their phones and tablets: asking questions they've always wondered about patents, trademarks and copyrights—or simply trying to stump IPBuddy and not having a lot of luck.

IP Buddy was there to help them test-drive the interactive platform and discover how these tools could revolutionize IP education at their institutions.

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Pairing is good timing

Tech transfer offices are evolving into comprehensive innovation partners. They need tools that can reach researchers, students and entrepreneurs wherever they are.

IP Buddy recognized that AUTM's meeting was ground zero for connecting with the people who could amplify IP education across campuses nationwide.

The conference buzzed with talk about artificial intelligence and new technologies. And there was IP Buddy, right in the mix, demonstrating how IPBuddy.ai uses conversational AI to make intellectual property education engaging and interactive.

While other AI tools were helping offices match technologies with licensees, IP Buddy was tackling something equally crucial: building IP literacy from the ground up.

Universities and research institutions are hungry for educational resources that don't require massive budgets. IPOEF's offerings—IPBuddy.ai and IP Made Easy—are completely free. No licensing fees, no per-user charges, no hidden costs.

IP Made Easy provides structured curriculum materials ready to drop into classrooms and workshops. IPBuddy.ai offers 24/7 access to IP guidance, answering questions from "What's the difference between a patent and a trademark?" to "How do I know if my invention is patentable?"

A movement's momentum

AUTM members work with inventors daily, run workshops, mentor entrepreneurs and shape how universities approach commercialization. When IP Buddy connects with these professionals and introduces them to IPOEF's resources, the ripple effect is enormous.

Say one tech transfer officer introduces IPBuddy.ai to 10 faculty members. Those faculty members each share it with 20 students. Suddenly, hundreds of future inventors understand intellectual property concepts they might have found intimidating before.

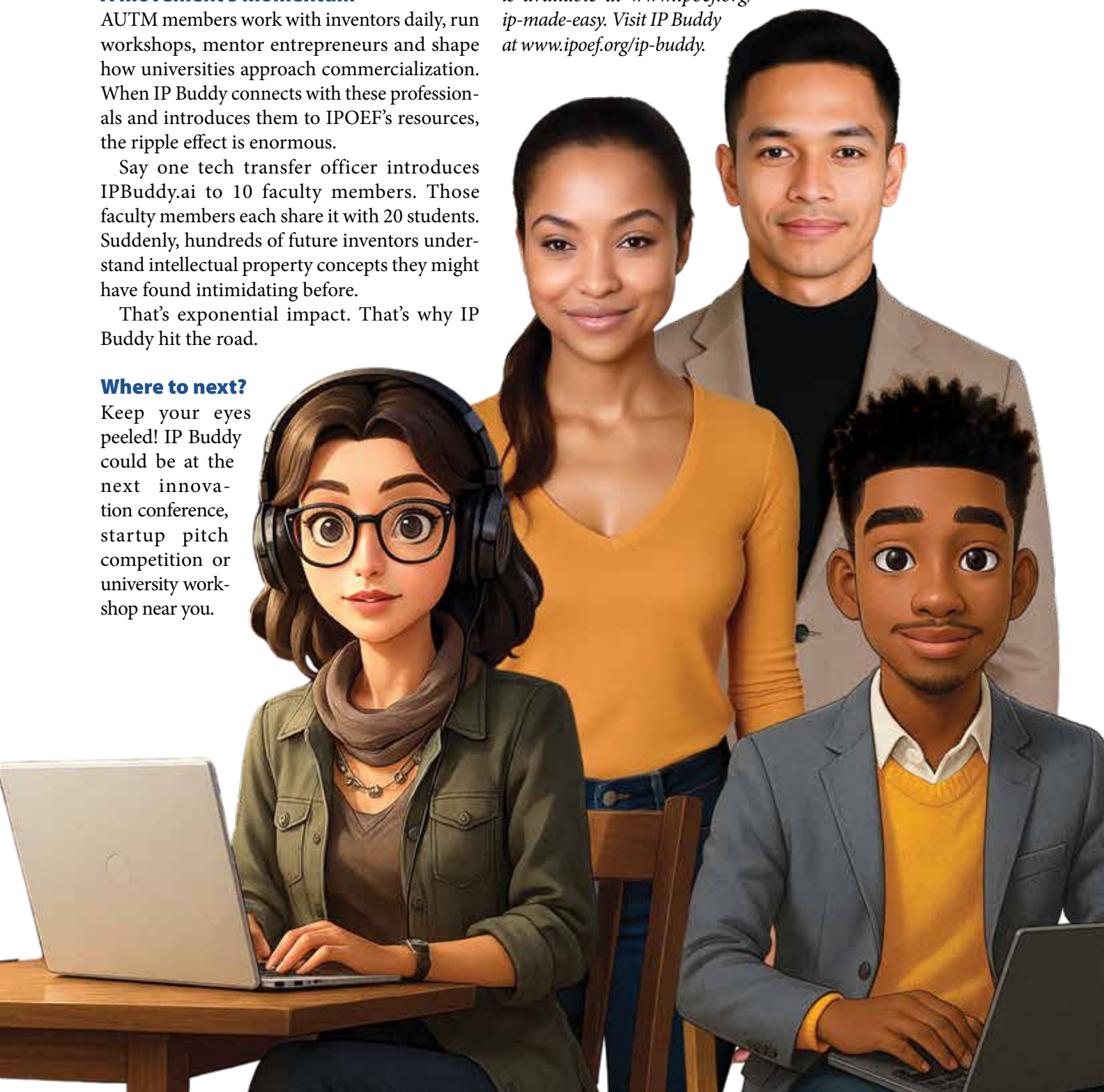
That's exponential impact. That's why IP Buddy hit the road.

Where to next?

Keep your eyes peeled! IP Buddy could be at the next innovation conference, startup pitch competition or university workshop near you.

Want to meet IP Buddy yourself? Visit IPBuddy.ai and start a conversation. Join the growing community who believe that innovation starts with education.

This story was written by the Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation. IP Made Easy is available at www.ipoef.org/ip-made-easy. Visit IP Buddy at www.ipoef.org/ip-buddy.



You're Holding a Revival in Your Hands

When a box of July 2024 *Inventors Digest* issues arrived at her house, Cara Brzezicki's euphoric reaction was an open book.

She cried. A lot.

Although she has had multiple successes as an inventor and children's author, the cover story about her life journey underscored her resilience through years of skeptics who told her—sometimes not very nicely—that her ideas would never work. Now she was holding proof to the contrary in her hands, proof that no webmaster or power outage could take away.

Louis Foreman gets it—and apparently, so does a growing segment of the population. The publisher of this magazine has always said there's nothing like the tactile feel of having reading material in your hands. For many, it represents a more personal and literal closeness to the words, facts and ideas inside.

Physical books and magazines aren't just for Baby Boomers anymore.

The website InkInsight reported in June that between 2009 and 2018, the number of independent bookstores increased in the United States by nearly 50 percent. According to the American Booksellers Association, close to 300 bookstores opened in 2023. A 2025 Media Voices report, "Inside the Print Revival," said that globally, 80 percent of consumer magazine revenues still come from print.

Poetic proclamations such as the following from InkInsight are ironic, coming from that online source:

"In a digital age that prizes minimalism and decluttering, the deliberate act of filling a shelf is its own quiet form of rebellion. It says: 'I value what lasts.'"

"This resurgence isn't just about nostalgia. It's a cultural shift driven by screen fatigue, digital burnout, and a craving for authenticity. In an age of infinite scroll, the analog act of reading a book has become a form of rebellion—a way to slow down, unplug, and reconnect with stories on a deeper level."

One of the greatest attributes of invention is the ability—even the necessity—to disrupt widespread norms and trends. The latest technology is part of that. But ...

Thirty years ago, few could imagine that having a permanent, tangible "friend" on a shelf or table would be a comfortable disruption. And sure, Cara Brzezicki could have excitedly passed her phone to family members when her cover story first appeared online, instead of handing them permanent artifacts they could touch and feel.

It would not have been the same.

—Reid
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CORRESPONDENCE

See the Vision *(October 2025):*
Thank you, Rob and Eric, for this insightful interview and for carrying forward Jerry Lemelson's extraordinary legacy through your work at the Lemelson Foundation.

Jerry's life and mission continue to inspire all who believe in the power of invention to solve humanity's toughest problems. Long before impact investing or social innovation entered our vocabulary, you all saw invention as a force for inclusion, equity and systemic change. You also generously extended this vision beyond the United States to India and across the developing world.

Those who met Dorothy will always remember her warmth, conviction, and the sparkle in her eyes when she met young inventors from India. Jerry and Dorothy's humility, deep curiosity and commitment to stay with difficult problems long enough to create meaningful change define the foundation's spirit. They continue to shape the values and approach of many the foundation has supported along the way, including Menterra.

The Lemelson Foundation remains a living example of what thoughtful, patient and values-driven philanthropy can achieve. We remain deeply grateful for their enduring partnership over the years, and for the inspiration they continue to offer to us and to innovators around the world.

— MUKESH SHARMA, CA, CFA, CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER, MENTERRA SOCIAL IMPACT FUND, BANGALORE, INDIA

The Prototype Post *(October 2025):*
Great article. I have a PPA on a modified electrical unit for electrical panels. I have sent out over 100 sell sheets, it's been seven months, hundreds of LinkedIn shout-outs. electrical companies, and even some government officials. but no traction. Any suggestions how to get interest In this product? — **SARAH GRABOWSKI**

We assume you have utilized social media channels beyond LinkedIn—and it seems a good idea to send to electrical companies, as you have done. But have you thought about contacting proven, respected companies that are specifically in the business of promoting and/or developing invention ideas, including through crowdfunding? Product development companies such as Enventys Partners and Inventions Unlimited—both advertised in Inventors Digest*—are a good place to start. Even if they can't help, maybe they can direct you to others. Good luck. —Reid Creager*

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Online:
Via inventorsdigest.com, comment below the Leave a Reply notation at the bottom of stories. Or, send emails or other inquiries to info@inventorsdigest.com.

BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Look for bonus *Inventors Digest* content online—courtesy of our new **ID Extra** feature that celebrates our popular new, streamlined website.

Check **inventorsdigest.com** for regular posts that supplement the uniquely educational and entertaining magazine for independent inventors, celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025.

USPTO LAYOFFS: HOW WILL THEY AFFECT YOU?

The United States Patent and Trademark Office has announced that about 1 percent, or 140 employees, in the agency's 14,000-person workforce will be laid off due to the U.S. government shutdown that began October 1.

If you have pending business with the USPTO—such as an IP-related application—it is uncertain whether this will cause or add to delays because 1) no information has been released regarding the personnel breakdown of laid-off employees; and 2) as of this writing, it was uncertain how long the shutdown will continue.

A message on the USPTO website regarding the shutdown indicates that "at present, the USPTO will remain open and fully operational until further notice under operating reserves from the prior year's fee collections."

INVENTING 101

Resources You May Not Know

BY DON DEBELAK

INVENTORS I talk to often express that they don't know what to do with their idea but actually have a wide variety of resources available. Here are some of them.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office lists guidelines for describing an invention in a provisional patent application. Whether you pursue a PPA or not, having a clear description of the idea ensures you have a firm grasp on what your invention is.

Those guidelines:

The title of the invention should be brief but technically accurate and descriptive, preferably from two to seven words.

Provide a background—a statement of the field of art to which the invention pertains. You should discuss prior art, including what problems your invention solves in that aspect.

Your summary of the invention should set out its exact nature, operation and purpose. The summary should describe the specific invention being claimed, without speaking in generalities—and appropriately should be described in clear, concise sentences or paragraphs.

A detailed description must be in such particularity as to enable any person skilled in the pertinent art or science to make and use the invention without extensive experimentation.

Prototype sources are plentiful. Many libraries have 3D printers. You may need STL files, but freelancers are available to do the work. Try freelancer.com/find/3d-modelling, or Fiverr—fiverr.com/gigs/stl-file. Or, you can search for freelancers' STL files and find many other 3D modelers.

The many directories for prototype services include:

- The Fabricator lists companies offering prototyping and fabrication services, with a strong focus on metalworking.
- Cad Crowd features directories for freelancers as well as top electronic and consumer product design companies that offer end-to-end prototyping services.
- Uptive, a manufacturing-focused resource, lists top rapid prototyping companies, including those specializing in advanced technologies such as additive manufacturing (3D printing).

Patent searches have gotten easier recently. Now that with Google added AI, I have found that you can do a quick patent search by entering a patent list and description of your product.

When a few products appear, open the patent and you will find a list of patents cited by this application or patent as prior art, as well as a list of patents that have cited this patent as prior art. You can open these patents by simply clicking on them. When a patent is close to your idea, this is a quick way to see if your idea is still patentable.

Check Claim 1. For you to infringe on a patent, you must have every feature in Claim 1. If you don't have them all, you will not be infringing.

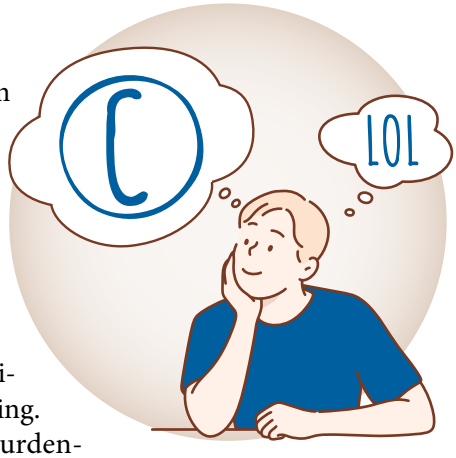
To see if you are patentable, see if you can add something to your Claim 1 that no one else has.

VITAL VOCABULARY

provisional patent*

We tricked you with this one. Because although the term is often (mistakenly) used, longtime patent attorney and IPWatchdog CEO Gene Quinn reminds us there is no such thing. The correct term is **provisional patent application**—a kind of patent placeholder to establish an early effective filing date that allows the term "patent pending" to be applied. It automatically becomes abandoned after one year, at which point a full patent can be pursued.

How to Register a Copyright



YOU JUST made up what you think is the world's funniest joke, so you write it down. Congratulations! You now own the copyright.

But if you think that's sufficient protection, the joke is on you.

Without registration through the U.S. Copyright Office—which ensures your right to pursue legal damages if your work is infringed upon—someone else could be laughing all the way to the bank. Even sadder for you is the fact that you could have had protection without a lot of hard work.

The registration process at copyright.gov is simpler and much less expensive than, say, applying for a patent. It starts with your owning a tangible record of what you have created, allowing you to register it in your name (unless you conceived it as part of your job).

Either online or via paper application, provide information about what you created: title, date, authorship details, what kind of work it is. Sources including Forbes and lawful.com say the filing fee is from $45 to $85, depending on the type of work, number of authors, and whether you're filing online or through the mail.

Submit a copy of your work, commonly referred to as the deposit copy. This can be a digital file, picture or audio recording.

Even the wait time is not burdensome, averaging two months. (Tip: Online applications through copyright.gov's Electronic Copyright Office system with updated digital copies often get faster treatment.) Successful applicants will receive a registration certificate.

If you're not comfortable with registering your copyright yourself, LegalZoom and Trademark Engine are prominent among the many sites offering this service. *—Reid Creager*

Check with a patent professional to verify your findings before spending big money.

As mentioned in this space before, industry trade magazines are a great source of activity in the industry. More important, they have annual directories of companies in an industry, often with key personnel. Trade magazines also often have trade show directories that will list key contacts at companies or at least a contact source.

You will see many ads or press releases in a trade magazine offering free literature. Inquire about literature of pertinent products and you will typically get the name of what could be a helpful contact.

Don Debelak is the founder of One Stop Invention Shop, offering marketing and patenting assistance to inventors. He is also the author of several marketing books. Debelak can be reached at (612) 414-4118 or dondebelak@gmail.com. Don's Facebook page: facebook.com/don.debelak.5.

FREE HELP

If you're an inventor or small business owner, you may be eligible for free legal assistance in preparing and filing a patent application. The USPTO's **Patent Pro Bono Program** is a nationwide network of independently operated regional programs that matches volunteer patent attorneys and agents with financially underresourced inventors and small businesses to provide free legal assistance in securing patent protection.

More information: **www.uspto.gov/PatentProBono**, or email probono@uspto.gov.

GOOD TO KNOW

The USPTO's **Rocky Mountain Regional Outreach Office**, which opened in Denver in 2014, will close permanently.

No date for the planned closure was announced. The action is unrelated to the recent federal government shutdown.

The USPTO said a "typical regional office requires more than $1 million of leased office space and overhead expenses" and that the Denver office employee count dropped to less than 10 at the end of last year.

The office was responsible for a nine-state region spanning Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Utah.

Slam-dunk Hall of Famer

PASSIONATE BASKETBALL INNOVATOR HENRY PORTER IS ONE OF THE SPORT'S LITTLE-KNOWN GIANTS **BY REID CREAGER**

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT to the late Henry V.A. Porter, the undisputed originator of the term "March Madness," one can argue it's not a great slogan. The word "madness," synonymous with chaos, is often associated with someone or something insane, untenable or unjust.

Yet the NCAA vigorously enforces trademark rights to its marketing gold mine term and many spin-offs—even if the powerful collegiate governing body may be reaching at times.

September 1 marked the fifth anniversary of Virginia Urology, tongue firmly in cheek, successfully trademarking the term "Vasectomy Mayhem" and causing the NCAA to cry foul. Because the NCAA has trademarked "March Madness" as well as "March Mayhem," the urologists' trademark will "result in confusion, mistake or deception with petitioner and/or the goods and services marketed in connection with the NCAA," attorney Douglas Masters said in an interview on behalf of the NCAA.

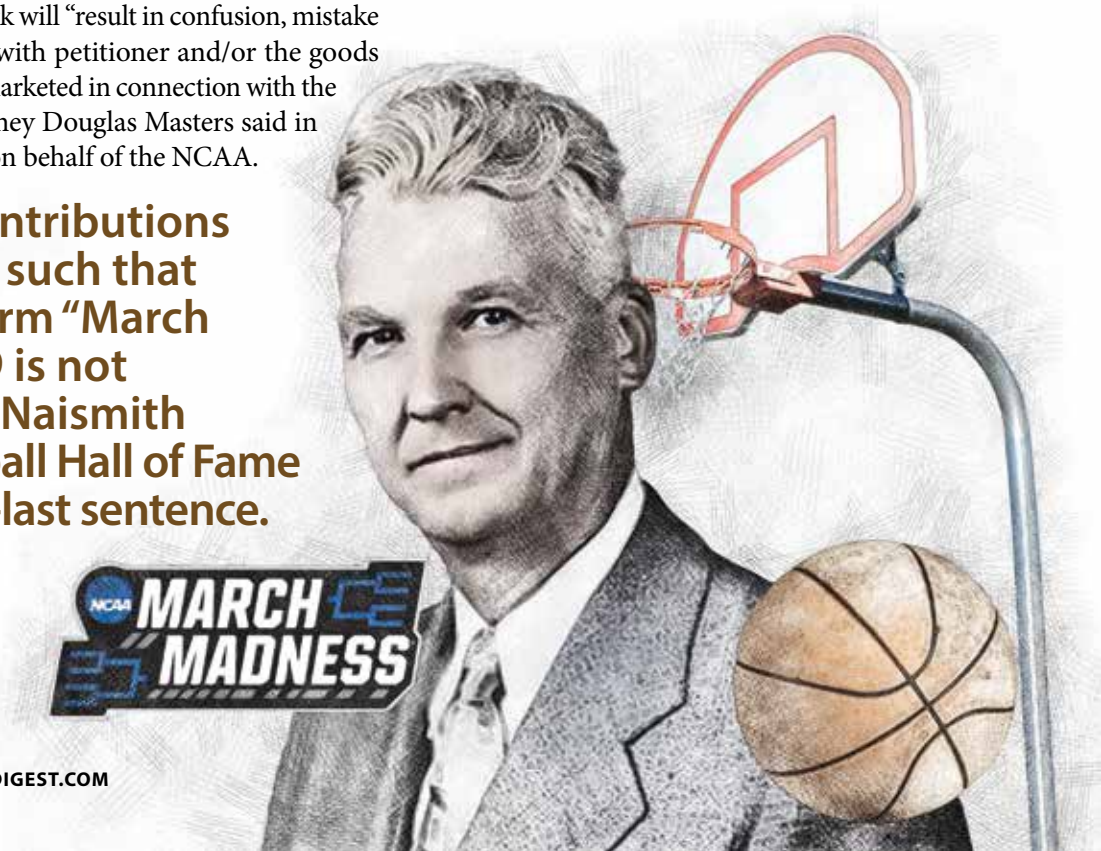
If you think that comment seems more than a wild halfcourt shot, you're in good company with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The trademark stands.

A life meant to be

Porter created the saying long before the NCAA began using "March Madness" to promote its basketball tournaments in the 1980s (trademarking it in 1989). His reference had nothing to do with college sports.

He first used the term in a 1939 essay for *Illinois High School Athlete* magazine—ironically, the year the NCAA held its first men's basketball tournament. Then again, this is not the only coincidence suggesting Porter and basketball were a match made in hoops heaven: His birth in Manito,

Porter's varied contributions to the sport were such that his coining the term "March Madness" in 1939 is not mentioned in his Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame bio until the third-last sentence.



Illinois, in October 1891 came two months before James Naismith invented the game.

Porter was inducted into second class of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1960. It was poetic justice for a man who lived the game with a passion that bordered on romance.

His "March Madness" essay described a mondo enthusiastic basketball fan in a way that may have been autobiographical:

"The thud of the ball on the floor, the slap of the hands on leather, the swish of the net are music to his ears … He is biased, noisy, fidgety, boastful and unreasonable—but we love him for his imperfections."

Even his name says basketball.

His middle initials, V.A., stand for Van Arsdale. All-Star guards Tom and Dick Van Arsdale, from neighboring Indiana, were the first identical twins to play in the National Basketball Association.

Administrator, innovator

Porter's Hall of Fame bio does not mention his pioneering the term "March Madness" until the third sentence from the end. His greatest accomplishments resulted from his obsession with the sport that fueled his desire to improve the game—including how it was played, teaching and inventing equipment.

Naismith famously established the game's first 13 rules when he invented it, but Porter published the first high school rulebook that standardized the game across America. That was three years before his famous essay.

By then, Porter had long been a respected figure in basketball circles. He was a successful coach at Athens High School for many years before being hired in 1927 as assistant manager of the Illinois High School Athletic Association, where he was charged with licensing and training officials in basketball (as well as baseball and football). It was in that job that he was editor of *Illinois High School Athlete* and penned the "March Madness" essay.

Porter joined the National Basketball Committee of the United States and Canada in 1932, where he served for 26 years. He was the main high school negotiator with the NCAA, Amateur Athletic Union and other groups. In 1940, he became the first full-time executive secretary of the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS), a position he held until 1958.

His main accomplishments as an innovator included:

- Experimenting with motion pictures, in the early 1930s, to develop training material for coaches and officials.
- Led the development of the fan-shaped backboard that was instituted at the high school level in 1939, the same year as his historic essay.
- Chosen in 1934 to lead the NFHS effort to develop a molded basketball to replace the sewn leather models so expensive for high school programs. The 32-inch leather ball was replaced with the 29.5-inch molded leather ball in 1938.

"Equipment inventor, rule maker, high school coach and athletic administrator, Henry Porter's innovations were vital to the evolution of basketball," says the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

A loving ode

Early in his tenure at the NFHS, Porter wrote a poem called "Basketball Ides of March" that was soon reprinted by other amateur organizations. The final stanza:

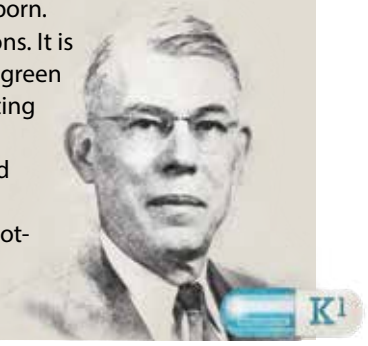
With war nerves tense, the final defense
Is the courage, strength and will
In a million lives where freedom thrives
And liberty lingers still.
Now eagles fly and heroes die
Beneath some foreign arch
Let their sons tread where hate is dead
In a happy Madness of March.

INVENTOR ARCHIVES: NOVEMBER

November 13, 1893: Edward A. Doisy Sr., an American biochemist who invented a way to manufacture Vitamin K1 and won the Nobel Prize in 1943, was born.

K1 is crucial for proper body functions. It is a fat-soluble vitamin, mainly found in green vegetables, that promotes blood clotting and bone health. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts and vegetable oils are all good sources of K1.

Vitamin K2 is also crucial for blood clotting but also calcium metabolism and heart health.



Beta Testers: Your Alpha Strategy

HOW YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS CAN HELP YOU GO FROM PROTOTYPE TO SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT **BY ELIZABETH BREEDLOVE**

ONCE YOU'VE BUILT YOUR PROTOTYPE, how do you know if it's really ready? Will people like it? Will they buy it?

In the past, getting those answers meant hiring expensive focus groups or waiting until after launch to see how the market responds. Today, inventors have something far more powerful and accessible: social media.

Platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok aren't just marketing tools. Used thoughtfully, they can double as real-time product development labs, giving you feedback, ideas and early supporters long before your first official sale.

Instead of waiting until you've spent thousands on manufacturing or packaging, you can collect valuable feedback while changes are still easy to make. The earlier you invite people into your process, the more invested they can become—and the more refined your product gets along the way.

Instead of waiting until you've spent thousands on manufacturing or packaging, you can collect valuable feedback while changes are still easy to make.

Listening before selling

Imagine: You post a short video of your prototype in action. It's still rough around the edges, but you want to see what people think.

Within a few hours, your comment section is full of questions, opinions and suggestions.

Some viewers love it exactly as is. Others ask if it comes in a different size or color. Every comment, positive or negative, is feedback you can use to make your product better.

The beauty of social media is that people are naturally inclined to share their opinions. They'll tell you what they like, what they would change, and what would make them hit "buy now." All you have to do is ask and listen.

Polls can shape details

Polls are one of the simplest ways to gather feedback without overwhelming your audience. Most social platforms make it easy to ask quick, low-pressure questions.

Even a handful of responses can help confirm your instincts or challenge your assumptions. You might find the feature you thought was essential doesn't matter much to buyers, while something small you hadn't considered turns out to be the deciding factor for whether they purchase or not.

Let's say you're designing a new kind of travel mug. You're torn between two lid styles, or maybe you're debating whether to make it stainless steel or BPA-free plastic. You could spend weeks agonizing over the decision, or you could post a poll and ask your followers directly.

When you frame these polls as part of your invention journey—"Help me choose the final

design for my new mug!"—people feel invited into the creative process. They love being asked for their input, especially when they know their feedback will shape the final product.

Polls also have a bonus effect: engagement. Every time someone votes, comments or shares your post, the platform's algorithm takes notice and shows it to more people.

In other words: By asking for feedback, you're also building your visibility.

Creating private groups

As your following grows, you may start to notice a smaller group of people who keep showing up in the comments. They ask good questions, cheer you on, and seem genuinely interested in what you're building. These early fans are the perfect people to invite into a private group.

A Facebook or LinkedIn group can be a safe, focused space where you share updates, prototypes and behind-the-scenes content with the people who care most about your work. Instead of trying to get thoughtful feedback from a general audience, you'll have a smaller circle of trusted testers who understand your goals.

The key is to treat your group members as collaborators rather than customers. Let them feel they're part of something special. Give them early access, thank them publicly and take their input seriously.

TikTok and real-time reactions

Although Facebook and LinkedIn are great for longer conversations, TikTok offers something completely different: instant, unfiltered reactions.

The short, fast-paced nature of TikTok makes it ideal for testing ideas quickly. You can post a simple clip of your invention in action and see what kind of comments roll in.

If people think it's brilliant, you'll know right away. If something looks confusing or impractical, they'll tell you that, too.

TikTok's algorithm also works in your favor. Even if you don't have many followers, a well-made video that sparks curiosity can reach thousands of viewers in hours. You can use that attention to test different angles, literally and figuratively.

Try filming your prototype from different perspectives: showing before-and-after results, or demonstrating how it solves a problem.

Turning feedback into action

Once you start getting input from followers, you'll likely begin to see patterns on which you can act.

As you make adjustments, share your progress publicly. Post updates like, "You all suggested a lighter version, so here's what we're testing now!"

This kind of transparency builds trust. It shows that you listen and care about creating something people actually want.

However, don't feel pressured to act on everything that anyone suggests. Your goal is to balance your vision with your audience's practical needs.

If a comment comes up repeatedly, it's worth taking seriously. If it's a one-off suggestion that doesn't align with your goals, you can thank the person for their feedback and move on.

Follower to fan to customer

Every great product starts as an idea, but the journey from idea to successful launch depends on connection. By turning your followers into beta testers, you can bridge the gap between what you create and what people actually need.

Through polls, comments, private groups and even viral TikTok videos, you can build not just a product but trust.

You'll know that your invention is clever and useful, and your followers will know their opinions matter—which makes them far more likely to support you in return.

So, the next time you share a prototype online, don't think of it as marketing but as a conversation. Ask questions; invite feedback; listen carefully. The people who comment might be the same ones who purchase your product as soon as you launch.

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.

Sorting the Sordid Mess

WOMAN'S COLOR-CODED TAG SYSTEM TAKES THE TIME-CONSUMING GUESSWORK OUT OF SORTING LAUNDRY

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

ACCORDING TO inventor Tammie Lore of Jenks, Oklahoma: "Working full time, running kids to games and practices, assisting in caring for my aging parents, attending high school events, cooking meals and all the things that go along with running a household" often require short-cut solutions to, like, everything!

Whew!

In addition to these, there's sorting laundry, which can be a huge pain for those with limited free time. So, Lore "set out to find a better solution. After much research and refining, TAGit was born.

"TAGit products offer a color-coded, easy-to-apply identifier for clothing, creating a simple system for getting your home (and the people living in it) organized."

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did your background help lead to your invention?

Tammie Lore (TL): I grew up on a small farm in rural Oklahoma, where resourcefulness and creativity were part of everyday life. After earning a degree in special education from Oklahoma State University, I became a high school special education teacher and later earned my master's degree while teaching full time. I'm also a licensed single-engine pilot—a pursuit that taught me precision and patience.

Years later, while juggling full-time work and raising two teenage boys, I kept running into the same daily frustration: sorting laundry. With similar sizes and colors between my husband's and sons' undergarments, everything looked the same.

Permanent markers faded. Sewing colored thread into garments helped, but it was tedious and not scalable. That's when the idea hit me: What if there were an easier, reusable way to color-code clothing?

That moment of need became the spark behind my invention, TAGit. I continue to develop systems that help others bring order to their chaos.

EGT: What is a TAGit?

TL: TAGit is a color-coded tag that differentiates clothing in homes with multiple same-size children, shared laundry situations, or caregiving environments. You assign a different color to each person, so towels, socks, undergarments—anything that looks similar—can be sorted and returned in seconds. No more guessing or mixing up laundry.

EGT: How does it work?

TL: TAGit is a small resin, two-piece tag that consists of a front and back that securely snap together through fabric, creating a permanent color marker without damaging clothing or fading.

TAGit users assign a different color to each person, so towels, socks, undergarments—anything that looks similar—can be sorted and returned in seconds.

"Permanent markers faded. Sewing colored thread into garments helped, but it was tedious and not scalable. That's when the idea hit me: What if there were an easier, reusable way to color-code clothing?" —TAMMIE LORE

TAGit is reusable by simply pulling apart the two pieces and re-applying it to another garment. Think of it like a simple color-coded button that makes laundry instantly logical.

EGT: What are the many household (and other) items on which TAGit can be used?
TL: My son uses them because his and his wife's socks look so similar in size. I use them on my husband's shirts to differentiate his "office" shirts from his worn-out shirts.

Also: Shorts. Undergarments—think of four boys, similar in size, and all compression garments. Jackets, hats, gloves, leggings—think of three girls, similar in size and all "Lulu Lemon."

Bath towels. Bed sheets—to distinguish sizes or top and bottom sets. School uniforms, camp and day care gear, team sports uniforms, military-issued gear—needing to keep track of issued gear but unable to use markers.

Nursing home clothing, Pilates or hospital grip socks—Pilates socks have no "L" or "R" marked on them; you have to open each one to figure out which foot. Have a marker, and done! And a child asked one day if it was a prayer button.

EGT: Had you invented anything before TAGit?
TL: I've had ideas in the past, but TAGit is the first invention I brought from concept to market. It took frustration, perseverance, and a bit of necessity to push me past the idea stage.

EGT: Where are TAGits manufactured? Have you had any logistics issues?
TL: TAGit is proudly manufactured in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. From the beginning, I was committed to keeping production in the United States to ensure quality, support local businesses and maintain hands-on oversight. I also wanted to know the people involved in bringing my product to life.

Fulfillment is handled by Bridges South, a nonprofit organization in Jenks, Oklahoma, that provides meaningful work opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities. Many of these individuals were students I worked with during my teaching career, so seeing them succeed in the workforce brings the mission full circle and makes me so happy!

Like many inventors, I've faced manufacturing challenges—particularly in creating a mold that reliably released the part without sacrificing strength or size.

One turning point came when I found the right plastic shaft inspiration in the most unexpected place: a toy motorcycle from the dollar store. That small find solved a major design hurdle and proved we could make it work.

EGT: Where are you selling your products?
TL: Website: https://tagitstore.com/products/ and at Walmart.

EGT: What is TAGit's pricing?
TL: The suggested retail price is $13.99 for a 12-piece set, designed to offer families an affordable, reusable solution for everyday organization.

EGT: Tell us about your free e-book, and "functional organizing" mentioned on your website.
TL: The free e-book, "5 Organizational Mistakes You May Be Making," addresses common roadblocks people encounter when trying to get organized, especially when they feel overwhelmed. It offers simple shifts to create smoother routines and a more efficient home.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAGIT

My "Functional Organization" course goes deeper. It's based on systems I developed while moving 19 times with my family, managing a teaching career and navigating health setbacks. It focuses on building sustainable routines, using time wisely and developing purpose-driven systems—not just where to store things, but how to think through what actually works in your space.

This course is grounded in the instructional methods and cognitive strategies I studied while earning my degree in special education, particularly the use of metacognition ("thinking about thinking"), helping individuals build awareness and take purposeful action.

TAGit is a small resin, two-piece tag that consists of a front and back that securely snaptogether through fabric, creating a permanent color marker without damaging clothing or fading.

EGT: Have you had any obstacles in patenting TAGit?

TL: Quite a few. One of the biggest frustrations was the timeline. It took nearly three years and several rounds of back-and-forth with the U.S. patent office to get my patent through.

I understand they have a process and volume to manage, but as a first-time inventor, the waiting and lack of communication felt discouraging at times. You pour so much into developing something useful, and then you sit in limbo, hoping it will be protected.

There were moments I questioned if it was even worth it. But I kept pushing forward, and that persistence paid off.

Adding to the technical challenges, I also had issues in the early prototyping phase. One engineer told me not to proceed because we didn't yet have a working prototype. He couldn't grasp the specific structure I was envisioning.

After several failed attempts to explain it, I went to the dollar store and bought that plastic toy motorcycle. The small spokes on the wheels were exactly the shape I was trying to describe. That toy helped bridge the communication gap and gave us the breakthrough we needed to move forward with a mold that actually worked.

Sometimes, real innovation comes from refusing to give up—even if you have to start in the toy aisle!

But the good news is that on July 15, 2025, we were granted U.S. Design Patent: "Lore Patent No. D1083649 (listed under application number 29/845,145)."

EGT: Lessons learned?

TL: One of the most surprising challenges in bringing TAGit to life has been the very thing that makes it unique: There's nothing else quite like it on the market.

You'd think that would be an automatic advantage, but in reality, it presents a different kind of obstacle. Because this solution didn't exist before, most people don't know how to search for it. There's no category for it in their minds.

In a way, I've had to build awareness from the ground up—educating people on a problem they've just been tolerating, not realizing there's now a fix.

At times, it feels like I've created something truly helpful, only to find that the hardest part is not the invention itself but getting people to understand what it is and why it matters. I imagine I'm not the only inventor who's felt this paradox—solving a problem so quietly that people don't yet realize it's been solved.

EGT: What's next for your business?

TL: I'm exploring wholesale, licensing and private-label opportunities to expand TAGit's reach into larger markets. I see potential in schools, care facilities, shared housing, military operations and anywhere laundry overlap is a problem.

I'm also open to selling the patent if the right partner or company comes along—someone who can take this product to scale more quickly than I can alone. Whether it's through licensing, retail partnerships or acquisition, my goal is to get TAGit into the hands of the people who need it most.

Details: tammie@tagitstore.com

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

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Clever Sucker

PR MAVEN AND HIS ALCOHOL-INFUSED LOLLIPOP BRAND CAN BOTH BE CALLED ONE OF A KIND **BY REID CREAGER**

AS EVENTUALITIES GO, this one all but defines the word: Zack Teperman has been building brands for others since starting his public relations agency in 2010 and always wanted to build his own. He's an unapologetically spirited, fun-loving guy who likes his spirits. And he's a sucker for what seems like an impossible challenge.

November's soft launch of Licksy, billed as the world's first-ever alcohol-infused lollipop brand, is the next crazily logical step in a career crammed with caliber, creativity and charisma. You can get a feel for this when the Los Angeles- and Nashville-based Teperman—an essential contact for many *Inventors Digest* inventor cover stories—is asked how his invention came about.

"Picture this: a sunny afternoon, me in the backyard lakeside just outside of Nashville, sipping a seltzer, my daughter beside me happily working her way through a lollipop.

"She's living her best candy life, and I'm over here spilling my drink like a rookie as I chase her around. Then it hit me like a sugar rush: 'Why can't I have what she's having, but with booze, so it won't spill?'

"That evening, once she went to bed, a late-night Google spiral confirmed it ... no real alcohol-infused lollipops existed. Sure, there were 'pina colada-flavored' imposters, but with zero kick. So the next morning, I started calling factories around the world. Most told me it was impossible because the alcohol evaporates during the candy-making process.

"Challenge accepted."

Public relations is not an optimal field for people who aren't aggressive. Teperman embarked on more research and found who he refers to as a "genius" chemist in Kentucky—bourbon country.

"After some mad candy science and very enthusiastic taste-testing, we found a way to lock the booze in, up to 2 percent alcohol by volume. That secret formula and process, you ask? You'll never know!

"Fast-forward through a year of testing flavors, sticks and shapes, plus 'research' parties with friends and family, and boom: Licksy was born."

Protecting the 'chaos'

A native Canadian and former radio host whose celebrity client list has included Robin Leach, Ben Woolf, Taylor Hicks and Mark Cuban, Teperman says his tasty version of "Candy Goes to Hollywood (and Nashville)" has been an unadulterated hit.

"Pure, delightful disbelief. That's the vibe! People can't get over that it's a legit, alcohol-infused lollipop that doesn't taste boozy," he said. "It's been a hit for my friends I've given samples to so far for their bachelorette parties, pool days, tailgates and dance floors—basically, anywhere you'd rather not juggle a drink that could spill."

"After some mad candy science and very enthusiastic taste-testing, we found a way to lock the booze in, up to 2 percent alcohol by volume. That secret formula and process, you ask? You'll never know!"
—ZACK TEPERMAN

Lollipops will be available in three flavors (Watermelon Vodka, Apple Vodka and Lemon Drop) at launch, with a full launch planned for the Christmas holidays.

Teperman says Licksy's process is patent pending and the name is trademarked, with recent full approval from the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Lollipops will be available in three flavors (Watermelon Vodka, Apple Vodka and Lemon Drop) at launch, with a full launch planned for the Christmas holidays.

The ingredients are Food and Drug Administration-approved. The product's manufacturing facilities are FDA registered and operate under strict Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).

"So yes, everything in Licksyland is 100 percent safe, properly labeled and made in facilities sweeter than Wonka's factory—with better hygiene, obviously," Teperman said.

His "lovechild of creativity, curiosity and candy-coated chaos" are vegan, zero fat, gluten-free, with no artificial dyes or colors. The lollipops are made using a proprietary formula ensuring the alcohol remains safely and stably infused within the candy.

The infusion process is a trade secret, protected accordingly. The company is also exploring a provisional patent application filing prior to launch "just to keep our magic recipe and process safely under wraps."

Celebrity endorser?

His new product dovetails with a 15-year odyssey of helping to shape the careers of others. Through pleasure and pain, Teperman has experienced what works and what does not; who is trustworthy and who is not; what has legs and what cannot stand.

"I've been able to learn, witness and be a part of careers being built, and campaigns that have taken business owners from very little to hundreds of millions of dollars in sales. So, after years of building brands for others, I thought, why not build one of my own?"

Teperman hints that one of his celebrity contacts may be part of his promotional efforts.

"Let's just say my inbox has been popping. I've had some pretty exciting celebrity interest from people who love a good innovation and a good party. But until the ink is dry on any agreements and the NDAs are signed, my lips and lollipops are sealed.

"Stay tuned, though!"

Details: enjoylicksy.com

Mission: Unstoppable

VENTUREWELL CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF SUPPORTING AND ACCELERATING THE IDEAS OF INNOVATORS

BY PHIL WEILERSTEIN

OVER THREE DECADES AGO, prolific American inventor Jerry Lemelson imagined a different path for inventors.

He believed that if students had the opportunity to engage directly in the invention and innovation process right in their engineering, science, or business classes, the results could ripple far beyond the classroom. It could lead to scientific breakthroughs, venture creation, and indeed, solutions to society's most pressing problems.

Hampshire College's early invention and creativity program reflected Lemelson's deep belief in the power of young inventors. With The Lemelson Foundation's investment and the vision to create something transformative rather than just another campus program, the initiative was launched as a pilot that aimed to change the field itself.

I was inspired by Jerry's vision and eager for my next adventure beyond traditional startups.

In 1995, I stepped forward to lead the effort of bringing this vision to life, aiming to build something that would empower others to dream, create and lead. My goal was to establish an organization that would connect colleges, universities and research institutions to a practical, hands-on approach to invention, creating a space where aspiring scientists and engineers could not only strive to create innovative solutions but also have the tools, mentorship and networks to make their visions a reality.

Building the network

Our mission was not just to produce ideas but translate those ideas into tangible impact—whether through new technologies, startups or solutions that serve communities.

It was an ambitious undertaking, one that required building a network of educators, mentors and partners who shared the belief that invention could—and should—be accessible to all.

I approached this work as an entrepreneur, shaped by my own journey founding a science-based company and experiencing firsthand the challenges inventors face when trying to bring ideas to market.

Time and again, I had seen promising scientific discoveries stall—not because they lacked merit, but because the people behind them lacked the training and funding necessary to navigate the complex path from concept to impact. Many talented innovators were left

VentureWell supports invention across the globe through training programs, grant funding, and network-building activities; convening innovators and entrepreneurs through programs like FLIPspace (top left), the Ecosystem Futures Fellowship (top right, bottom right), and a number of workshops and conferences to cross-pollinate ideas and advance innovation and entrepreneurship for the good of all. Rob Lemelson, center, awards the 2024 Sustainable Practice Impact Award at VentureWell's annual conference.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF VENTUREWELL

30 VENTUREWELL®
idea to impact

behind simply because they didn't know how to take the next step, didn't have access to guidance on intellectual property, or lacked a supportive community to affirm their potential.

I understood that the traditional academic and research environment often rewarded discovery without teaching the practical skills needed to translate that discovery into a real-world solution.

VentureWell's mission required building a network of educators, mentors and partners who shared the belief that invention could—and should—be accessible to all.

That gap motivated us to build a structure that could guide inventors through the process, helping them validate their ideas, identify critical steps and gain the confidence to pursue them. The goal was never to shortcut hard work; it was to make the path clearer and more inclusive.

Early on, we faced skepticism. Some questioned whether students could meaningfully engage in entrepreneurship or whether academic institutions were prepared to support such programs.

Yet, for every doubter, there were students and faculty whose excitement and curiosity validated the effort. Their engagement demonstrated that hands-on learning, when paired with mentorship and real-world application, was not just possible—it could unlock human potential.

The E-Team Program

A cornerstone of our approach has been the E-Team Program, an idea rooted in Jerry Lemelson's vision.

Each E-Team, short for "entrepreneurial team," brings together emerging inventors, faculty advisers and mentors to develop ideas collaboratively. When we first meet these inventors, their ideas are often just beginning to take shape whether it's a sketch in a notebook, an idea evolving through hands-on experimentation, or an early prototype in the lab.

That's the ideal moment for us to engage: to provide the tailored support that helps them push their ideas further. The E-Team model teaches that invention is rarely a solitary act; it thrives in a collaborative environment full of diverse perspectives and access to the right support at the right time, all of which are essential to moving discoveries into the marketplace.

E-Team participants begin by identifying a problem that they feel passionately about—often one they have experienced firsthand. Then, with guidance from mentors and faculty, they iterate,

prototype and test potential solutions. They learn to validate demand through customer discovery, refine their designs, and when appropriate, pursue intellectual property protection.

Crucially, the E-Team approach emphasizes execution—the translation of ideas into inventions that can drive change.

We offer early, often first-in-the-door, nondilutive funding and practical guidance that helps them ask and answer the right questions: Who needs this? What problem does it solve? How could it scale responsibly and sustainably?

The program is not about teaching them how to pitch; it's about helping them think differently about what they've created and what it could become.

Stunning success stories

That's how we began working with the founders of materials science startup AeroShield, who were then Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate students developing a transparent aerogel material that could make windows dramatically more energy efficient.

Through their participation in our programming, they learned how to test their assumptions, engage with potential users and plan their path by identifying their target market and developing a business plan. AeroShield was selected in 2020 for the Forbes 30 Under 30 list in energy, received funding from the National Science Foundation, was named grand-prize winner of the American Made Solar Prize, and was selected for a $14.5 million ARPA-E SCALEUP award to manufacture its aerogel material.

Six years after their first engagement with us, AeroShield has raised over $10 million in equity funding and has opened a manufacturing facility outside of Boston, working with industry partners to bring its technology to market. This is proof of what can happen when innovators

VentureWell's E-Team Program, which stands for entrepreneurial team, is an idea rooted in Jerry Lemelson's vision that brings together emerging inventors, faculty advisors and mentors to develop ideas collaboratively from concept to tangible impact. Thousands of E-Team members over the years have benefited from VentureWell's tailored support that helps innovators push their ideas further.

have the support they need to take those first entrepreneurial steps.

The founders of Kinnos, a Brooklyn-based medtech startup, participated in the E-Team Program at the earliest stages of their development as undergraduates at Columbia University. As they started their entrepreneurial journey, they were in the process of developing a material that adds a blue color to disinfectant, providing instant visible confirmation of coverage. The color fades to clear automatically with effective wiping technique to confirm sufficient time has passed for disinfection.

Kinnos had to overcome many challenges in order for its product, Highlight®, to see real-life application—especially the major hurdle of breaking into the health care industry. Add to that the rigorous testing and complex validation process needed to prove Highlight was safe and effective, and it is enough to make any new venture balk.

Kinnos persevered. Today, Highlight—a patented, breakthrough technology—is sold directly to hospitals, making it easier to ensure compliance to health standards in the United States and Canada. Kinnos has raised total funding of over $32 million—while disrupting its corner of the health care landscape in the process.

Lasting community impacts

These experiences illustrate the transformative power of the model: Students move beyond theoretical exercises to hands-on invention, learning how to create as well as how to navigate the challenges of scaling an idea.

The E-Team methodology is not just about building products. It's about cultivating inventors who understand the link between their ideas and their positive potential impact in the world.

Our partnership with The Lemelson Foundation enabled us to provide grants to these emerging inventors and extend funding to universities to develop new courses and programs. We worked closely with faculty and administrators to align institutional resources with the needs of students eager to invent.

When we examined the long-term impact of our funding on over 50 past grantees, we discovered that our programming had a large impact

Programs initially focused on students have expanded to include faculty innovators, researchers and interdisciplinary teams tackling pressing societal challenges.

VentureWell President and CEO Phil Weilerstein sees VentureWell as a convener in the space—true to the crucial recognition that invention and entrepreneurship are social activities.

on about 70 percent of the faculty. The vast majority of respondents—80 percent—indicated that their grant-funded courses or programs continued to be sustained past the duration of their grant. In particular, the majority of faculty were able to improve their innovation and entrepreneurship programs and expand students' experiential learning opportunities, a testament to the grant's lasting value and relevance.

Equally important has been the community we've built.

From our first national convening to ongoing workshops and conferences, we've connected people in the field with the purpose of sharing strategies, tradecraft and best practices. This exchange has accelerated adoption, creating a network effect where innovations in teaching and program design spread rapidly across institutions.

As our reach grew, so did the scale of impact. Programs initially focused on students have expanded to include faculty innovators, researchers and interdisciplinary teams tackling pressing societal challenges. Across hundreds of institutions, these initiatives have created a national infrastructure to support invention, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The social difference

The goal has been consistent: ensure that ideas don't stall due to lack of training and needed resources like funding and networks, and that every emerging inventor has a clear path to drive positive change.

Central to our work is the recognition that, at their core, invention and entrepreneurship are social activities. It's rare for these disciplines to succeed in isolation, and the networks an innovator can access often make the difference between a promising idea and an idea that reaches the world.

Beyond the technical skills and knowledge, we emphasize building social capital—connections with mentors, advisors, peers and potential investors. These relationships provide guidance and open doors, creating a pathway to success that is accessible regardless of background or prior experience.

Inclusion is not a side benefit. It is fundamental to our mission. By fostering environments where all participants feel welcomed, valued and empowered, we expand the pool of potential innovators and increase the likelihood that impactful solutions will emerge.

The results are transformative. Inventors gain needed confidence and learn to navigate challenges collaboratively.

Even for those who do not go on to launch companies, the experience is life changing and instills entrepreneurial thinking. It has the potential to shape their careers. Through these efforts, we aim not only to cultivate inventors but to shift the culture of innovation

VENTUREWELL

By the Numbers

20,000+
individuals trained

$30.7M+
in grants awarded

6,100+
ventures supported

1,300+
institutions engaged

$7.8B+
in follow-on funding raised by early-stage ventures we supported

$21M
in funding awarded through our higher ed initiatives

$800,000+
awarded annually via E-Team Program grants

148
active member institutions serving over 3.1 million students

50+
countries with participating program attendees

itself—making it more inclusive, collaborative and oriented toward meaningful outcomes.

That understanding shaped the structured framework we developed to guide venture teams. The Venture Development Framework helps entrepreneurship support organizations, program partners, and entrepreneurs understand the steps required for early-stage science- and technology-based ventures to move toward commercialization.

Expanding beyond students

Over the past three decades, I've witnessed firsthand the growth and scale of our work. What began as a student-focused initiative has expanded to a nationwide ecosystem supporting innovators at every stage of their journey. We have partnered with hundreds of colleges, universities and research institutions, alongside philanthropic and government partners, to create an infrastructure that enables emerging inventors to transform ideas into tangible innovations.

The numbers are compelling. We've supported over 20,000 individual innovators, resulting in the launch of over 6,000 startups, and contributed to the commercialization of numerous licensed products.

Across these efforts, the capital raised by the ventures we support has exceeded $7 billion, driving economic growth and social impact. Equally important are the innovations that may never appear in financial reports but have dramatically improved lives, from new medical devices and digital health solutions to sustainable technologies addressing environmental challenges.

Consider a student team that developed a portable solar water purification system for

VentureWell's ongoing workshops and conferences connect people with the purpose of sharing strategies, tradecraft and best practices. This exchange ripples into a network effect where innovations in teaching and program design spread rapidly across institutions.

communities without reliable access to clean water. With guidance from faculty and mentors, they refined their design, secured a patent and partnered with a nonprofit to scale distribution in developing regions.

Or a research team that created a behavioral health intervention now being adopted across multiple clinics to improve patient outcomes. These are the stories that illustrate our model in action—taking a seed of an idea and developing it into an invention that improves the lives of people and the health of the planet.

Tech-expanding horizons

The scale and diversity of our outcomes reflect the core philosophy of VentureWell: support innovators as they move from discovery to invention to execution, providing the resources needed to succeed.

It is not simply about producing products. It is about producing inventors who are empowered to change the world.

And perhaps most enduring of all is the transformation within those who innovate. Once they see the possibilities of what they can create, they are forever changed, carrying forward the power to turn ideas into action and action into meaningful change.

Looking ahead, our mission remains as clear and vital as it was three decades ago: to expand access to invention pathways so that anyone with an idea and the drive to solve problems can make a positive difference through invention.

Today, innovation is no longer confined to research-intensive universities or major tech hubs. Inventors can emerge from anywhere. Our goal is to make sure they have the critical early support and funding they need to realize their potential.

At the same time, the landscape of innovation is evolving rapidly. Emerging technologies ranging from AI and digital platforms to advanced materials are reshaping what is possible, and new approaches in entrepreneurship education give learners unprecedented opportunities to accelerate the development of and scale solutions quickly.

We've helped launch thousands of startups and contributed to the commercialization of numerous licensed products.

As we enter the next chapter, I am energized by the possibilities. Countless ideas are waiting to be discovered and brought to life.

Our vision is bold, but the framework, partnerships and experience we've built over the past 30 years give us confidence that we can support inventors everywhere, enabling them to turn ideas into innovations that have lasting social and economic impact.

The next 30 years will be defined by broader access and the relentless pursuit of turning promising ideas into real-world solutions. We're just getting started.

See more at venturewell.org.

Building On Jerry Lemelson's Quest

"The Lemelson Foundation's commitment to VentureWell is rooted in the deep, shared conviction—first articulated by our founder, Jerry Lemelson—that invention must be accessible to all," said Rob Schneider, executive director of The Lemelson Foundation.

"Over three decades, they've masterfully grown his vision by building an unparalleled network that now serves innovators from students to faculty and researchers. The scale of their achievement is clear: supporting the launch of thousands of ventures and businesses and driving significant commercialization.

"Jerry would be immensely proud to see how this enduring partnership has fundamentally strengthened the national innovation ecosystem."

BRIGHT IDEAS

Agari

SMART OVEN

agarikitchen.com

Agari combines AI, 3D scanning and breakthrough pressure technology to quickly deliver juicy, seared food with what it calls world-class chef quality.

AI scans and recognizes your food, then automatically calculates and executes the best cook executed with a pressure steam system. Agari's makers say that cooking with pressure reduces cook time by more than three times compared to a conventional steam oven and helps retain natural juices better than any other cooking method.

Agari's double-wall technology transitions from precise, low-temperature cooking to intense searing in less than 1 minute. The oven will retail for $1,099, with delivery to crowdfunding backers set for April.

Frank the Dogtopus

TREAT TOY, BRAIN-BOOSTING PUZLE

dogtopus.store

This eight-tentacled toy can provide dogs with up to 35 minutes of untying knots, sniffing out hidden treats and getting a rewarding workout for mind and body.

The Dogtopus has 24 treat pockets. Each one is a mini adventure with barriers, spikes, rubbery bumps and twisty little traps that exercise a dog's natural foraging instincts. And with a body made from natural rubber and tentacles reinforced with recycled cotton fire hoses, the toy is tough enough for power chewers but gentle on teeth and gums.

Tie the tentacles loose for beginners, tighten them for experts, or braid them together for the ultimate puzzle challenge.

With a future retail price of $89, Dogtopus is to be shipped to crowdfunding backers in December.

xplate

MODULAR, FREE-WEIGHT SYSTEM

xplate.fit

Xplate combines kettlebells, plates, curl bars and more into one design while fitting into a wheeled protective case that stores every component. Built from solid metal, it delivers many workout possibilities while saving money and the clutter of traditional gear.

With the ability to focus on specific muscle groups, xplate can enhance workout efficiency. The xplate app provides instant access to 150-plus guided exercises. Model L and Model M let you choose the setup that fits your training level.

Equipment features include quick-release handles, swivel joints and quick-release weights. Retail prices will range from $499 to $959, depending on quantity of accessories. A Kickstarter launch is planned.

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." — MAYA ANGELOU

DiskPro

ACTIVE COOLING, PORTABLE SOLID-STATE DRIVE WITH MULTI-PORT HUB

sharge.com

DiskPro is a credit card-sized hub with a built-in memory chip and cooler. It can store up to 4TB of files and deliver high-read/write speeds of 10GB per second.

File transfer, 4K 144Hz/8K 30Hz video output, 100W input/80W output, 4 ports, built-in cable and Magnetic Attachment Design allow you to handle data and video stream demands on different devices.

A self-adhesive magnetic ring allows the drive to be mounted on the back of a gaming handheld or the display lid of a laptop for convenient storage expansion on the go.

Depending on capacity, retail prices will run from $239 (1TB) to $559 (4TB). Shipping to crowdfunding backers is set for December.

My Journey of Self-Publishing

GOING SOLO IN CONCEIVING, MARKETING AND SELLING A GAME INVOLVES MANY CONSIDERATIONS **BY APRIL MITCHELL**

A FEW MONTHS BACK, I started my journey with self-publishing my first game ("Are You Game to Self-Publish?", January 2025 and "Start at the Finish" in March 2025's article). I have licensed several games to various publishers and continue to do so, and at the same time am embarking on my first self-publishing journey.

I enjoy learning new things and challenging myself. I wanted to test the waters and take one game through the whole process of getting it to market.

I had things narrowed down to my top two games, so I thought, but I ended up going with a whole different game altogether! Here's why that changed.

I knew I wanted the game to be just cards—regular, poker-size cards and not a special size of cards or clear cards, which would add cost.

Keeping costs down

I knew I wanted the game to be just cards—regular, poker-size cards and not a special size of cards or clear cards, which would add cost. One of the games that was in my top two would have needed to be made with clear cards for a better experience when played.

I wanted the cards to fit into a tuck box that also had a hangtag just in case it makes it to physical retail spaces—not just sold online. This box is the packaging you see for most playing cards.

Using this size box would also cost a lot less to ship. If I am filling orders myself—yet to be determined—it would be much more manageable and cost effective.

Keeping costs down on my game will allow it to be affordable, without parents thinking twice about the purchase. I am aiming for $12.99 retail cost but won't know exactly until later.

Maxing online searches

I wanted the game to compete with other specific games on the market that are popular right now. My goal was to put out a game in the fast-paced family card games category and have a theme that would compete with other big hits.

My hope is that when people search for other popular games in the category and with a similar theme, mine will also pop up. Of course, that depends on having all the right key words set up on the online listing, but if done correctly that would be ideal.

I went with a game that has a super fun name, with engaging artwork, that would jump out if someone is scrolling online for a game or walking by the game aisle. The goal is to invite a closer look at the game, turning over the box to see more details.

Will it be memorable?

I had the theme down and the basics of gameplay, but it needed testing and feedback—which I received from family, friends and game test groups.

The gameplay I landed on creates a fun and memorable experience that ties in the game mechanics to the theme very well. I want people to enjoy playing so much that they want to play another quick game, as well as share it with their friends.

Next steps

I continue to playtest over and over again with different groups. I have a table reserved in the UnPub section of an upcoming game event called PAX Unplugged in Philadelphia, where the public and game publishers can come and play my game to get a sneak peek and give feedback. That's exciting, also a little scary!

My goal is to self-publish my game in the United States and find a publisher that will help get my game into other countries. Whether that means license it or distribute it, I am open to both.

I am gearing up for a spring launch, so stay tuned as I share the original game and how it evolved.

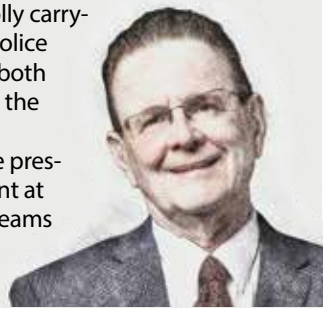
April Mitchell of 4A's Creations, LLC is an inventor in the toys, games, party and housewares industries. She is a two-time patented inventor, product licensing expert and coach who in 2024 won the TAGIE Award for Game Inventor of the Year.

FOND FAREWELLS

David Monroe, widely known as the inventor of the cellphone camera who was the founding chair and CEO of SAMSAT (the San Antonio Museum of Science and Technology), died October 3 when a jet engine fell on him at Port San Antonio. He was 72.

Monroe, who had more than 50 patents, contributed to the evolution of the personal computer and microprocessor technology. He pioneered desktop video teleconferencing, image sensors, government tactical imaging systems and communications and cellphone image transmission.

He was transporting a jet engine with a coworker in a loading dock when the accident occurred, a police sergeant at the scene told KSAT-TV. Monroe went to reach for something when the dolly carrying the jet engine began to roll, police said. The engine hit him, causing both to fall off the 4-foot-tall dock, and the engine fell on him.



At age 27, Monroe became vice president of research and development at Datapoint Corp. He led research teams that contributed to Fortune 500-level innovations.

5 Minutes. 7 Seconds.

EXPLAIN YOUR MARKETING PLAN WITHIN THOSE PARAMETERS, AND YOU SHOULD HAVE THE CLARITY TO SUCCEED

BY WILLIAM SEIDEL

Editor's note: The author delivered these remarks at the USPTO's "Successful Inventing" series on September 13, 2025.

MAKING IT SIMPLE is very hard. Making something as complex as marketing with many moving parts and unknown customer response is nearly impossible.

The marketing plan is the backbone of the business plan. It's the how, what, when, where, who and why—and most important for investors, "how much" for your success. But it can be simple because it is all about the customer, the message and the media you use to reach the customer with the right message.

The LeTourneau model

In 1932, the company founder stood before a group of investors and said, "Gentlemen, we propose to enter the construction equipment industry. Our competition is General Motors, Ford Motors, Chrysler Motors, International Harvester, Allis Chalmers, J.I. Case and approximately 20 other lesser-sized companies.

"Because of the quality of the competition, it will take us 18 months to lead the industry in sales and another five years to sell more than all of our competitors combined."

This well-published story is one of the greatest pitches I ever heard, though it's not completely true.

R. G. LeTourneau was a successful contracting company, incorporated in 1929. It soon changed to earthmoving equipment manufacturing, partnered with the Caterpillar Tractor Co. and moved to Peoria, Illinois. The partnership was able to leverage the best of both to become the leader in heavy construction equipment and take a commanding position in the industry, exactly as the story promised.

If you can explain your marketing plan in 5 minutes with seven sentences, you will be convincing. And it is best written by those who will implement it. Unfortunately.

You must answer the big questions first. Why would you want to do this? How will it be achieved? What is the value?

You may need hundreds of pages of backup, but if you communicate these seven basic points about your product, you will be off to a great start.

The seven sentences

The first sentence explains the purpose of the marketing. This gives focus for all other planning.

What physical action do you want your prospect to take? Pick up your product and put it in his or her cart? Go to the website? Call a phone number?

The tactics detail the actions to implement the strategy. The strategies are how the objectives will be accomplished. The objectives are the milestones to be achieved.

And all support the corporate mission, which is purpose and why the organization exists.

The second sentence states your competitive advantage. You have benefits that only you offer. That is your competitive advantage, setting you apart from the competition.

It may be product benefits such as high quality, long lasting or guaranteed. Or it may be marketing benefits such as a better package, a snappy name or a lower price. Your message will persuade your prospect to take the action you plan.

The third sentence defines your target audience. Is it the locals dining in town, or is it the buyers of the 20 largest retailers? The more specific you are and the more you narrow the audience, the more accurate your marketing's aim will be.

Defining your target determines your message and the media to reach that audience. When you

You must answer the big questions first. Why would you want to do this? How will it be achieved? What is the value?

know what your target reads, watches and buys, you tailor your message to fit.

The fourth sentence lists the marketing methods you will use. How do you reach your target audience?

The strategies for distribution, sales and advertising should explain the way you will reach your customers. These media methods are the tactics of trade ads, Google ad words and shelf talkers, to name a few.

A media budget is needed, which most companies avoid. So the package becomes the only customer communication. It is often an afterthought.

The fifth sentence explains your niche in the marketplace. What's the first thing that enters the customer's mind? Is it price, quality, speed or your ads?

That's your niche, also referred to as positioning. It's what you stand for in the minds of your prospects. When you are clear about your niche, let it come shining through in all that you do.

The sixth sentence defines your identity in the marketplace. Are you the premium brand of granola or the low-priced, imported tools in the "dump-bin" at ACE Hardware?

It's not your image or logo. Your identity is what you, your company and your product stands for.

Everything points to your identity and what you stand for: "The Ultimate Driving Machine." "The Happiest Place On Earth." "Just Do It!"

The seventh sentence is quick financials and your marketing budget. You must allocate an amount of money, usually as a percentage of the projected gross sales, to reach the consumer and promote your product.

The hard part is justifying where to spend the money. To determine the marketing budget, you need to know your potential customer, the best message to influence the purchase decision and the cost of the media to reach that customer.

This is basically how it works as a business—not how it works as a product. This is a summary of how it makes money and how you use the money to generate more money.

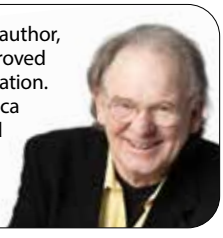
Planning the right way

Most people write a plan to raise money. But very few write it for planning the business.

Seventy-eight percent of small businesses fail because they lack a plan. Lack of a marketing plan is a predictor of failure. By writing a plan, you have an 85 percent chance of acting on it.

It's simply a smart thing to do.

William Seidel is an entrepreneur, author, educator, innovator and court-approved expert witness on marketing innovation. In his career and as owner of America Invents, he has developed, licensed and marketed billions of dollars of products. Contact: (707) 827-3580, Info@AmericaInvents.com.



PART 2

Your Drilling Drill

MAKING HOLES IN SMALL PLASTIC PARTS CAN BE CHALLENGING—AS I LEARNED THE HARD WAY **BY JACK LANDER**

AS I MENTIONED last month in my general primer on drilling holes for prototyping, it is the simplest machining process. But smaller-size holes become more challenging.

A No. 60 drill bit cuts a hole 40/100ths inch in diameter, or 4/10ths. That's typically the smallest drill bit in a regular set of metal-cutting drills. With patience, we can install a No. 60 drill in most drill chucks, but not smaller sizes.

For a 1/32-inch drill bit, we not only need a chuck made for the smaller bits but will discover that a smaller drill press saves drill bits from breaking, due to better sensitivity when applying cutting pressure.

Slow drill speed crucial

With 3D printing on the rise, we are able to create very small parts, even in metal as well as plastics. However, the prototype I was making was small, though not miniature. And in my haste to use my new drill press, I neglected to read the instruction booklet.

Use solid carbide drill bits, if possible, to avoid breaking. Avoid deep holes, if possible. Drill in steps.

The first few holes I drilled in acrylic (plastic) were a disaster. The drill bit was.062 in diameter, and I hadn't expected it to generate much heat. Wrong!

My drill bit did not extract easily from my workpiece due to a coating of melted acrylic tenaciously crowning the tip. And it did not yield to my X-ACTO knife or my side cutters.

Luckily, I had a couple spare .062 drill bits. So, I reduced the speed of the motor to its slowest position, but I could tell by the whine of the motor that it was still too fast.

Hmmm. Did the drill press have pullies and belts? The exploded diagram in the instruction book showed clearly that it did. It also told how to remove the cover in order to change the pulley ratio to slow speed.

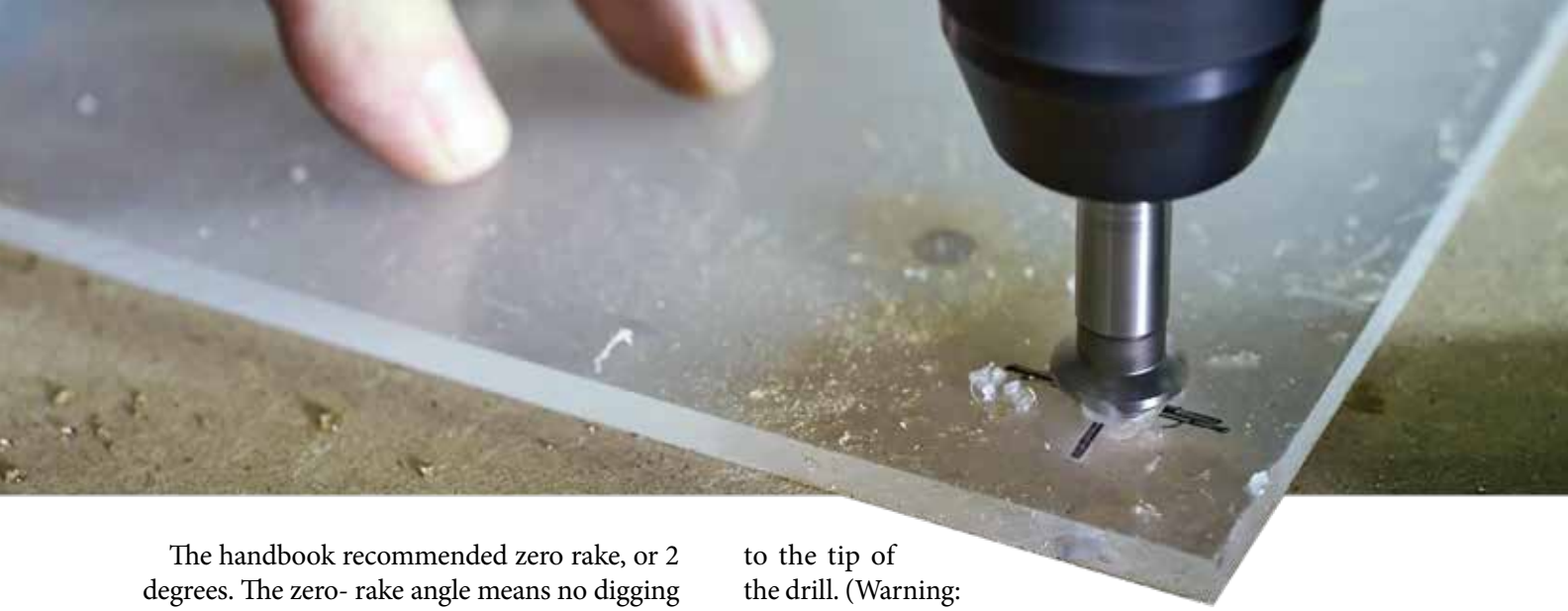
The large diameter pulley was driving the smaller one, of course, and I merely reversed them to achieve the slowest possible speed.

However, friction, which creates the heat that melts the plastic, doesn't disappear at slower speeds. It is reduced because larger "bites" of the plastic are being taken with each rotation of the drill bit. Thus, fewer rotations are needed.

If your arrangement still produces too much heat, try cutting in two or three steps, extracting the drill bit for several seconds to allow the heat to be better absorbed by the body of the drill bit. In the most frustrating of circumstances, use two drill bits alternately, in steps, keeping one bit in ice water while drilling with the other.

Delicate details

Before I solved my problem, I checked my machinist's handbook for the correct rake angle on the drill bit. Rake is the "digging in" angle for drilling acrylic.



The handbook recommended zero rake, or 2 degrees. The zero- rake angle means no digging in—that is, essentially scraping off plastic to create the hole.

Although scraping is legitimate for plastics, it requires more pressure on the workpiece. This can bend a small drill, causing it to break. Pressure can only be controlled by hand, and the hand must learn by trial and error.

The smallest-diameter drill bit in the micro-collection I found as stock was .1 millimeter. A millimeter is .040 inches in round numbers, which means the smallest practical drill is .004 inches in diameter, or about .001 (one thousandth) larger than a large human hair.

I have never tried to drill a hole smaller than .032 inch in diameter, and I found that quite a challenge.

Three key points in drilling small holes:

- Use solid carbide drill bits, if possible, to avoid breaking.
- Avoid deep holes, if possible. Ejecting the chips during drilling is more troublesome in deep holes.
- Drill in steps to avoid heating the drill and causing melted plastic to adhere tenaciously to the tip of the drill. (Warning: Step drilling is hazardous to small drill bits.)

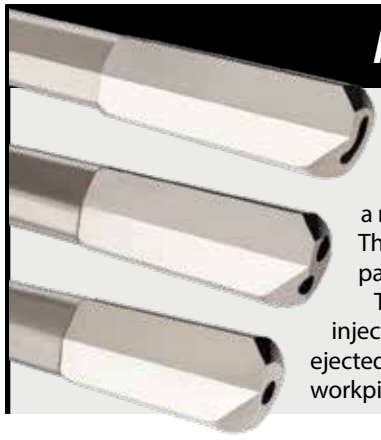
Holding your small pieces

Several miniature drill press vices, ranging in price from $9 to $29, are available for holding small parts securely. Even the less expensive of the various types offer protection for gripping delicate jewelry. (See Amazon.com for a display of small vice options.)

One point that is not obvious from the displays of the drill press vices is how to secure the vice on the drill press platform. I have used two methods: double-stick tape, or temporarily gluing with my favorite, E6000 contact adhesive. Caution: Use only a drop or two of E6000, and be sure you will have a way to pry the vice off or you may be "stuck" with a permanent setup.

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

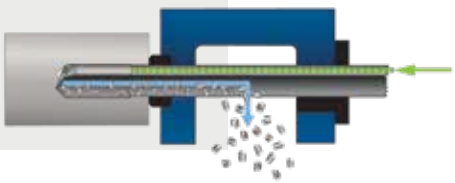
A BIT OF DRILL BIT TRIVIA



Now, for the sake of expert knowledge, allow me to close with this bit of arcane information.

A gun drill, as the name implies, is designed to drill the barrel of a rifle in one pass by continually removing the chip in a novel way. The drill bit is hollow and has straight flutes (as against the spiral pattern of a typical drill bit).

The hollow feature permits the pressurized injection of oil, which forces the swarf (chips) to be ejected as the drilling proceeds. The oil also keeps the workpiece and the drill bit from overheating.



Describing Your Invention

THINK OUT OF THE BOX WHEN APPROPRIATE, UNDERSTAND PATENT LAW REQUIREMENTS—AND MAX OUT ON DRAWINGS

BY GENE QUINN

ONE OF the biggest problems inventors face when setting out to define their invention is with describing what patent law refers to as "alternative embodiments of the invention."

Most inventors are quite good at describing exactly what they have invented. The invention is your work and you know it best, so it is not surprising that most inventors can (with enough effort) explain the preferred version of the invention. This is what the law refers to as the "preferred embodiment." Nevertheless, it is essential to think outside the box when describing your invention in any patent application.

Think about different ways your invention can be made or used, even if you deem them inferior. Failure to disclose alternatives will almost certainly foreclose your ability to say those alternatives are covered by your disclosure, which will prevent any issued patent from covering those undefined variations.

Think about different ways your invention can be made or used, even if you deem them inferior.

This may not seem like a big deal, but history has shown it is critical. If you are lucky enough to have invented something of great importance, many individuals and companies will try to capitalize on the opportunity you have created. If you dismiss variations or entirely different and unique embodiments, you are leaving those to the individuals and/or companies that would seek to capitalize on a product or process that is similar to your own but not specifically covered by your patent claims.

So, what can you do?

Don't mess with defined terms

The following should happen before you finalize your provisional patent application, or if you are working with a patent attorney or patent agent.

Before finalizing what information you provide to someone else, go back through what you have written and ask yourself whether you are using any terms that may have a particular meaning. With each term, ask yourself whether it has a commonly understood meaning by those who are skilled in this field.

If the term does have a commonly understood meaning in the industry, it is essential that you use it to mean what others in the industry think it means. Do not get creative.

Although patent laws say that a patentee can be his or her own lexicographer, it is important not to make too much of this latitude. If those in the industry understand a term to carry a certain meaning that is the meaning the courts will use when interpreting the scope of the patent disclosure, why take a chance?

When in doubt, it is always best to explain through illustration and description rather than to simply rely on a meaning that may or may not be understood in the industry. The specification you create and ultimately file is the glossary for the invention, intended to describe what you have in its full glory, and to define any terms or concepts so everyone understands.

Understanding enablement

It is also essential that you look over what you have written to ensure the description is complete. For any patent application to be complete, the invention must be enabled. This requirement, aptly named the enablement requirement, is geared toward ensuring that every disclosure places

the subject matter of the invention into the possession of the public.

This is what is commonly referred to as the quid pro quo of patent law. The government will grant a patent, together with exclusive rights for a limited time—provided the inventor explains in specific detail how to make and use the invention covered by the patent. The purpose of the requirement is such that when the patent expires, the public has enough information to make and use the invention without having to go back to get more information from the inventor.

To satisfy this requirement, you need to specifically and objectively define and describe how to make and use your invention. The enablement requires that every embodiment needs to be described so that it can and will work.

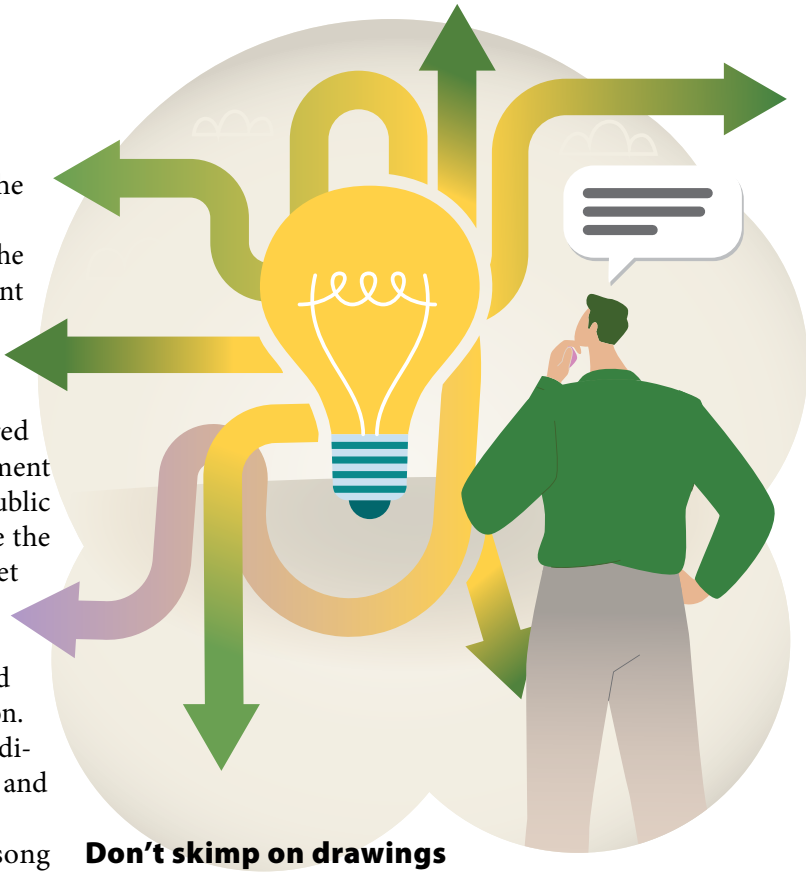
For example, the popular children's song "Skeleton Bones" explains how all the bones in the body are connected. The leg bone is connected to the knee bone, which is connected to the thigh bone, which is in turn connected to the back bone, and so on.

Note that this is a very general overview of how the bones in the body are connected. This is a good first step.

The backbone, however, is made up of many smaller bones. There are seven cervical vertebrae in the necks of all mammals, and these bones together make up a portion of the back bone.

Therefore, a more complete description of the back bone would point out that the neck is a part of the back bone. An even more complete description might include saying cervical vertebrae 1 (i.e., C1, which is a part of the neck) is connected to cervical vertebrae 2 (i.e., C2), and so on.

The point is that the more description you provide, the better—but you must have at least the big-picture overview of how everything fits together and how to make and use the invention. Therefore, be sure that you have disclosed with as much detail as possible how all the pieces of your invention connect, work together, function and interrelate.



Don't skimp on drawings

An excellent way to ensure you are including an appropriately detailed description that treats a variety of variations and alternative embodiments is to have many professional patent drawings.

I am a big fan of including more rather than less. This is because whatever is shown in the drawings will be considered disclosed, and drawings are really worth a thousand words to tell a story.

Patent laws require the applicant to furnish at least one drawing of the invention whenever the nature of the case requires a drawing to understand the invention—which, in my experience, is almost always. The only real exception is when claiming a chemical compound.

Drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. To capture the full benefit of a filing date, a patent application needs to completely cover the invention and all permutations at the time the application is filed, and drawings can and will provide a safety net if you have enough and they are detailed.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has frequently consulted drawings to determine what one of skill in the art would have considered disclosed at the time the application was filed. If you accidentally leave something out of the written disclosure,

The more description you provide, the better—but you must have at least the big-picture overview of how everything fits together and how to make and use the invention.

the drawings you submit may save you in the long run—provided they are detailed enough to convey nuanced information about your invention. Hence the preference for high-quality professional illustrations.

In many cases, the United States Patent and Trademark Office will accept amateur sketches. But given the relatively low price of getting professional drawings and given the far greater detail in a professional illustration, you are doing yourself a disservice if you do not have professional illustrations at the time of filing.

So, why do drawings help so much with the disclosure? In addition to the truth that a picture (or drawing) is worth a thousand words, in a patent application you are supposed to go through and explain in writing what each of the drawings shows. So if you have more drawings, that is naturally going to lead to more textual description.

If you go through the drawings one by one and explain what they show, you will invariably find yourself thinking of things that could be discussed but aren't actually shown well in the drawing—perhaps because of the angle, or perhaps because you want to talk about the materials that could be used for the pieces and parts. That is fine; just write it into the description.

The drawings are there to facilitate understanding. If, as you describe something in the drawing, you think of other things, just describe them in the text.

For example, the drawing might show a do-hickey. Instead of a do-hickey, it could be a widget. So you just explain: "Do-hickey 15, which could be made out of A, B or C, connects to whatchamacallit 10, which likewise can be made out of A, B or C. Although not pictured, the do-hickey 15 could instead be a widget."

I know this is a little skimpy, but it is intended to just be low-level illustrative of the fact that you use the drawings and the associated reference numerals to direct the reader to the pieces and parts you are discussing.

Try the blind test

At the end of the day, you are trying to describe something that at least in part has heretofore never existed—which is what is required to have an invention. So you need to describe not only the specific invention you have but all the possible variations and options. If you don't describe those, they are not a part of your invention and you are just inviting competitors to copy you without infringing your patent.

One convention that might assist you as you set out to describe your invention is to think about how you would describe your invention to someone who is blind. This is a tough task, but the goal of the written disclosure is to provide verbal description that is much like a step-by-step how-to manual.

If you are trying to describe your invention to someone who cannot see, you will invariably find creative and enlightening ways to verbally get your message across. This is the type of detail that should be in an application. When combined with good, quality drawings, you really have something worthwhile.

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

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Sizzling Start

SQUIRES' FIRST MOVES AS USPTO DIRECTOR SUPPORT EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND PROTECT ISSUED PATENTS

BY LOUIS CARBONNEAU

JOHN SQUIRES was confirmed as the 60th director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office on September 17, 2025 (Senate vote: 51-47) and officially began his tenure six days later. His first week sent a clear dual message: embrace emerging technologies while maintaining rigorous Patent Trial and Appeal Board gatekeeping.

On his first full day, Squires issued two strategically chosen patents: U.S. Patent No. 12,419,201 (cryptocurrency/distributed ledger) and U.S. Patent No. 12,419,202 (medical diagnostics). Both fields have faced severe eligibility challenges under precedents from landmark rulings *Alice Corp. v. CLT Bank International* (2014) and *Mayo Collaborative Services v. Prometheus Laboratoires* (2012).

During the signing ceremony, he displayed Samuel Morse's historic telegraph patent and declared: "From crypto and AI, to quantum computing and diagnostics ... these are applied and patent-eligible technologies driving the frontiers of knowledge." The message was unmistakable: The USPTO will take an expansive view of patent eligibility for emerging technologies.

Two days after taking office, Squires delegated his discretionary authority over *inter partes* review institution decisions to Deputy Director Coke Morgan Stewart. (*Editor's note:* IPR allows third parties to challenge the validity of one or more claims of an issued patent.) As acting USPTO director from January through September, she implemented an aggressive discretionary denial framework that dropped IPR institution rates from approximately 68 percent to 43 percent. For patent owners, this was Christmas in September!

Patent owners can expect continued protection from repetitive *inter partes* review challenges, while petitioners face higher bars for institution.

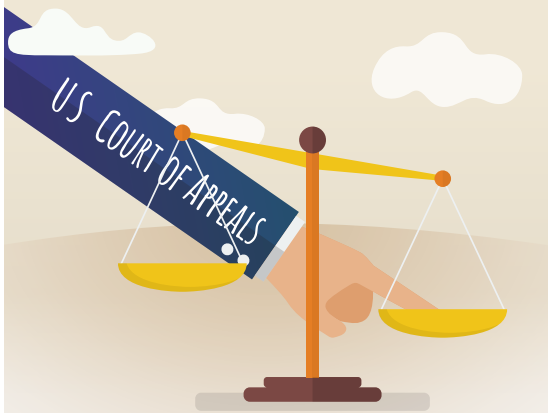
Stewart exercised the authority immediately. On September 26, she denied institution in 15 IPR petitions. In *L'Oréal USA v. Brightex Bio-Photonics*, she denied institution even though the parallel district court case had been stayed—marking a significant expansion of discretionary denial grounds.

Squires' opening moves reveal a coherent strategy: issue stronger patents in emerging technologies and protect them through rigorous PTAB gatekeeping. By publicly praising Stewart's "remarkable stewardship" and immediately delegating PTAB authority to her, he signaled policy continuity. Patent owners can expect continued protection from repetitive IPR challenges, while petitioners face higher bars for institution.

Combined with his expansive approach to patent eligibility, Squires is creating what he calls "Born Strong" patents—high-quality grants in innovative fields, defended against weak challenges through aggressive PTAB review.

Let's see if the courts will align with his vision.

ANOTHER FLIP-FLOP VERDICT



I've mentioned recently that when it comes to patent awards, the motto should be "Beware What You Wish For"—because the larger the jury verdict, the likelier it will be reduced or even overturned. Recently, the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit vacated a $166 million Texas jury verdict against AT&T, finding insufficient evidence that AT&T's 4G/5G networks infringed two Finesse Wireless patents.

The verdict had been based on testimony from the plaintiff's infringement expert that the court found to be "contradictory," "confusing" and "unclear"—legal speak for "we have no idea what this expert was talking about, and apparently neither did the jury."

This decision (with Nokia intervening) serves as another reminder that what a Texas jury gives, the federal circuit can swiftly take away.

A TALE OF 2 VENUES

People in our little world often joke (or lament) that you can have the exact same patent, and whether the inventor asserts in Texas or in California, you'll have vastly different results—even if the facts are identical. This is mostly anecdotal, as we never had a case that actually proved the axiom ... until now.

In September 2023, Anonymous Media Research Holdings, LLC (AMRH) filed two parallel patent suits in Texas federal district courts: one against Samsung (in the Eastern District of Texas) and one against Roku (initially in the Western District of Texas). Same plaintiff, same patents (or closely related family members), filed within weeks of each other. What could go wrong?

In the Samsung case, the Eastern District judge refused to stay the action pending *inter partes* review proceedings (i.e., the defendant's attempt to challenge patent validity via the patent office). The court issued a claim construction order, disposed of invalidity on summary judgment, and the case proceeded to a jury trial. The jury ultimately awarded AMRH $78.5 million in damages.

But in the other case—the one against Roku—the procedural posture took a completely different turn.

That case was transferred (for convenience, naturally) from the Western District of Texas to the Northern District of California. Once in California, the court stayed the litigation because of ongoing IPR proceedings. Then, only 11 days after the summary judgment ruling in the Samsung case (which had upheld validity), the California judge invalidated the same AMRH patents.

In short: In the Samsung case, the Texas court plows ahead despite IPRs, finds no invalidity, and awards tens of millions. In the Roku case, the California court pauses everything for the IPRs, then strikes down the very same patents.

Two courts, same asserted patents (or patent families), radically divergent outcomes. Just an $80 million difference in the result, give or take.

Try explaining the U.S. justice system to your kids ... or your clients. This is forum shopping on vivid display—and a stark reminder that in patent litigation, geography isn't just destiny; it's often the entire ballgame.

THE WORLD IS NOT WAITING

While the United States is trying to find its footing on protecting IP rights, the rest of the world is not standing still:

Across Europe, courts issued several key rulings. In the UK, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that patents must name a natural person as inventor—again rejecting any claim that an AI system ("DABUS") can be listed on a patent.

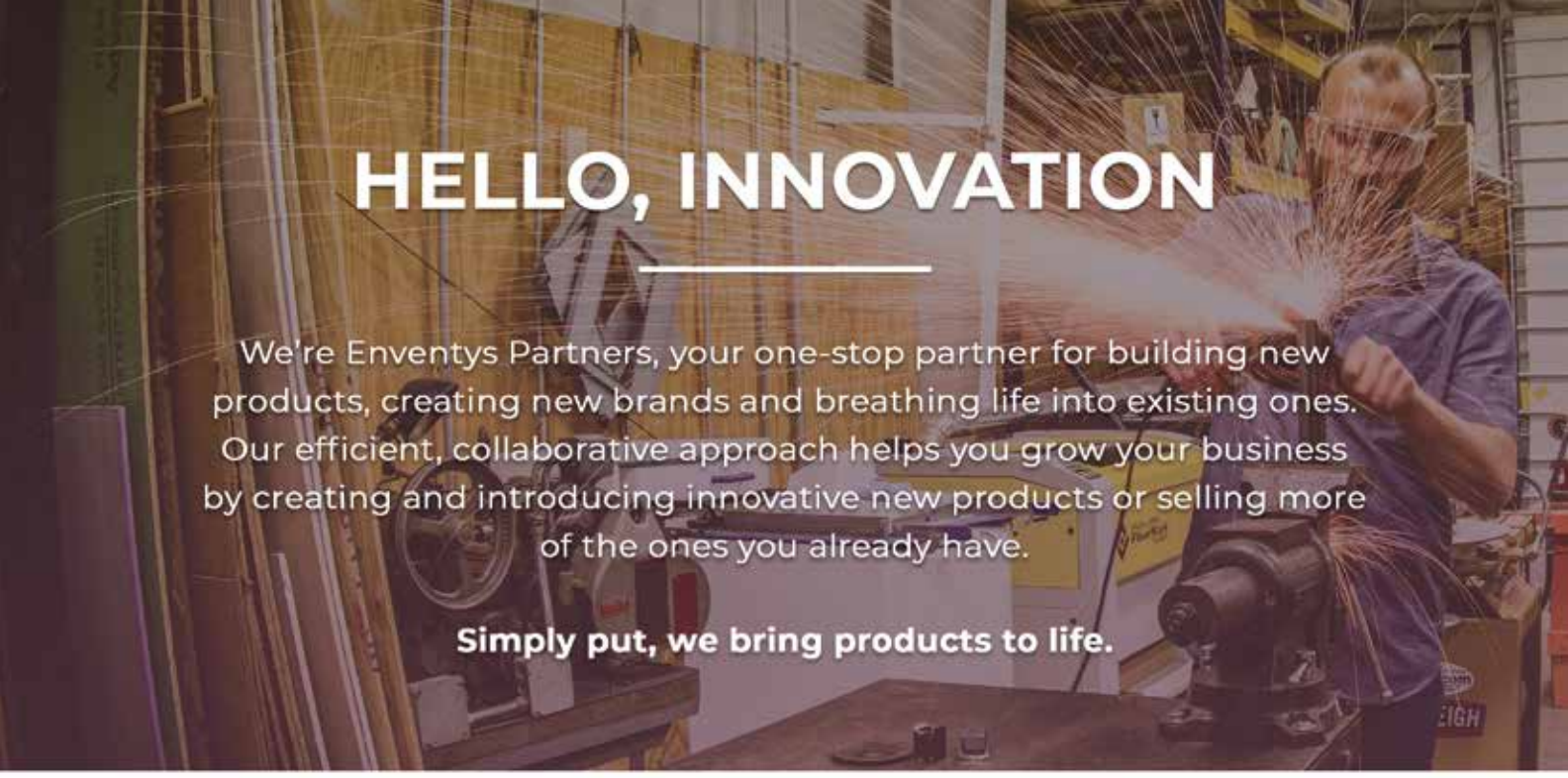
The Court of Appeal clarified when generic drug preparations justify injunctions: In *Boehringer v. Zentiva*, it found that a premature reimbursement application can amount to "imminent infringement," overturning a denial of relief.

In Hamburg, Dyson won a preliminary injunction against Dreame for a hair-curler patent—notably extending its effect to sales in Spain (a non-Unified Patent Court country) via the defendants' European Union representative. Separately, Ireland is discussing a referendum on joining the UPC, which would further expand the court's reach.

In Asia, governments advanced patent policy initiatives. On September 19, Japan and Bahrain signed a memorandum of cooperation to launch a bilateral Patent Prosecution Highway effective January 1, 2026—allowing examiners to fast-track patents approved in the partner office.

India's Patent Office issued new "AYUSH" examination guidelines on September 23 for traditional-medicine inventions (Ayurveda, Yoga, etc.), emphasizing strict novelty checks against published knowledge and mandatory disclosure of biological origin. China likewise touted stronger enforcement of its patent laws at a high-level forum, though no new Chinese patent statutes were actually enacted.

Louis Carbonneau is the founder and CEO of Tangible IP, a leading patent brokerage and strategic intellectual property firm. He has brokered the sale or license of 4,500-plus patents since 2011. He is also an attorney and adjunct professor who has been voted one of the world's leading IP strategists.



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USPTO Launches AI Pilot

PROGRAM WILL TEST IMPACT OF SHARING AUTOMATED SEARCH RESULTS BEFORE A PATENT APPLICATION IS EXAMINED

BY EILEEN MCDERMOTT

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

THE U.S. PATENT and Trademark Office is launching an AI search pilot program for utility patent applications.

The USPTO began accepting petitions to participate in the program on October 20. Petitions will be accepted through April 20, 2026, or the date that each tech center has docketed at least 200 applications accepted, whichever comes first.

The "Automated Search Pilot Program" is meant to "evaluate the impact of sharing the results of an automated search prior to examination of an application." If a petition is granted, the office will use an AI tool that "uses the classification of the application under the Cooperative Patent Classification system, as well as the specification, including the claims and abstract, of the application as contextual information."

Using that information, the tool will then find similar information in public databases including U.S. patents, U.S. pre-grant publications and foreign image and text, which "includes publications from a number of foreign patent authorities," according to a Federal Register Notice.

Those results will be ranked from most to least relevant. The USPTO will then send an Automated Search Results Notice to the applicant identifying potential prior art issues with the application (up to 10 documents identified by the tool), which the applicant will not be required to respond to and which is not considered a notification under patent law.

However, "the results of the automated search may inform a decision on how to proceed with the application"—including a decision by the applicant to file a preliminary amendment, to defer examination, or to file a petition for express abandonment.

Continuing applications are not eligible. The application must be filed electronically using the USPTO's Patent Center. Applicants must also be enrolled in the Patent Center Electronic Office (e-Office).

The program will accept up to 1,600 applications distributed across all tech centers that examine utility applications. However, if any one tech center significantly exceeds 200 applications, it may influence a decision to terminate the pilot early.

According to the Federal Register Notice, the pilot "is designed to evaluate the impact of sharing the results of an automated search prior to examination of a patent application" and will be an opportunity for the office to assess the effectiveness of Automated Search Results Notices in making decisions on patentability in the early stages of examination. The office will also provide an opportunity for feedback during or after the pilot period.

Recently confirmed USPTO Director John Squires has made the use of AI in creating efficiencies for the office a top priority.

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

Major Honor for Renée Quinn

IPWATCHDOG COO RECOGNIZED BY ESTEEMED MARQUIS WHO'S WHO

IPWATCHDOG Chief Operating Officer Renée Quinn has been included in Marquis Who's Who, a more than century-old publication that features and profiles the most prominent individuals in their fields.

The release said:

"Mrs. Quinn has built a reputation as a leading figure in business strategy, internet marketing and e-commerce, with a career characterized by innovation, dedication and a focus on community building. Since April 2006, she has been a pivotal asset to IPWatchdog Inc. As an instrumental member of the executive leadership team, she oversees all operational, financial, procedural and administrative functions, as well as serves as the primary point of contact, managing program sales and sponsorships. She manages the execution of the company's flagship events, such as the IPWatchdog Masters™ series, the annual IPWatchdog LIVE conference and the IPWatchdog Institute educational programs."

Renée and husband Gene Quinn, the founder and chief executive officer of IPWatchdog, "have collaborated effectively to expand the company's visibility and influence. Over the past 19 years, their efforts have helped grow IPWatchdog.com into a respected voice in the intellectual property industry.

"Mrs. Quinn has also been recognized as a public speaker and corporate educator, focusing on social media strategy, brand development and marketing. ... Mrs. Quinn's work has been published on IPWatchdog.com and in *Inventors Digest*, and she has spoken at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's Women's Symposium and the annual meeting of the Association of Intellectual Property Firms.

"Notably, Mrs. Quinn and her husband were featured as the cover story of the November 2024 issue of *Inventors Digest* in celebration of IPWatchdog's 25th anniversary, where they were referred to as IP's First Couple." —*Gene Quinn*

IoT Corner

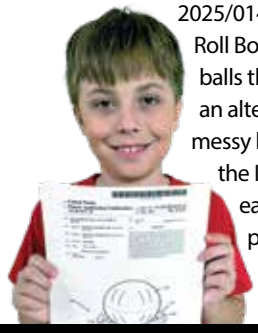
Walmart recently struck a deal with San Diego-based Wiliot to deploy its smart sensors in the megastore's massive supply chain—purported to be the largest such deployment of ambient IoT in the retail sector.

With millions of battery-free IoT sensors, Walmart will be able to retrieve real-time location of merchandise in its 4,600 stores by the end of 2026. The sensors will be able to track an estimated 90 million pallets of inventory.

Wiliot's ambient IoT is powered by harvesting ambient energy from radio waves, light, motion, heat, or other viable energy sources.

Wunderkinds

Fourth-grader and Ohio Invention League student **Richard Crabtree** was awarded U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2025/0143264-A1 for his invention, the All-Rodent Roll Bowl. His creation is an accessory for hamster balls that allows stationary use in any location, an alternative to squeaky hamster wheels and messy hamster balls. He entered his invention at the Invention Convention U.S. Nationals in 2023, earning its Patent Application Award. A PAP patent but a public snapshot of the work before a patent is granted.



What IS That?

The Screaming Goat is exactly as advertised—a 3-inch-tall figurine said to deliver "an incredibly lifelike goat scream" with a gentle press. You also get a miniature illustrated pocket guide of fun facts and trivia about goats. The novelty is billed as "a good stress reliever." Your mileage may vary. Considerably.

Get Busy!

Team registration closes on November 15 for the United States Patent and Trademark Office's **2026 National Patent Application Drafting Competition**, which introduces law students (including undergraduate students in pre-law IP programs) to issues arising in U.S. patent law and develops their patent application drafting skills. *Details: www.uspto.gov/about-us/events/2026-national-patent-application-drafting-competition*

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

1 **Which very optional Thanksgiving invention was patented first—pumpkin powder, or the turkey de-boner?**

2 **The fastest known U.S. patent approval in modern history ("Stretching Device," No. 9,724,551, in 2017) was:**

A) 24 hours after filing **B)** 9 days
C) 3 weeks **D)** 29 days

3 **True or false: Unlike patents and copyrights, which have fixed durations and must be renewed, a trademark can potentially last forever.**

4 **True or false: The late musician, scientist and satirist Tom Lehrer claimed to have invented the Jell-O shot as a way to sneak alcohol into a Christmas party on a military base.**

5 **Per an August 2025 report by UpCounsel, which company has the most active, granted patents worldwide?**

A) IBM **B)** Google
C) Sony **D)** Samsung Electronics

ANSWERS: 1. Pumpkin powder, 1897; turkey de-boner, 1958. 2. B. 3. True. But if you fail to enforce it, it may become generic (i.e. aspirin, yo-yo, escalator). 4. True. 5. D.

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