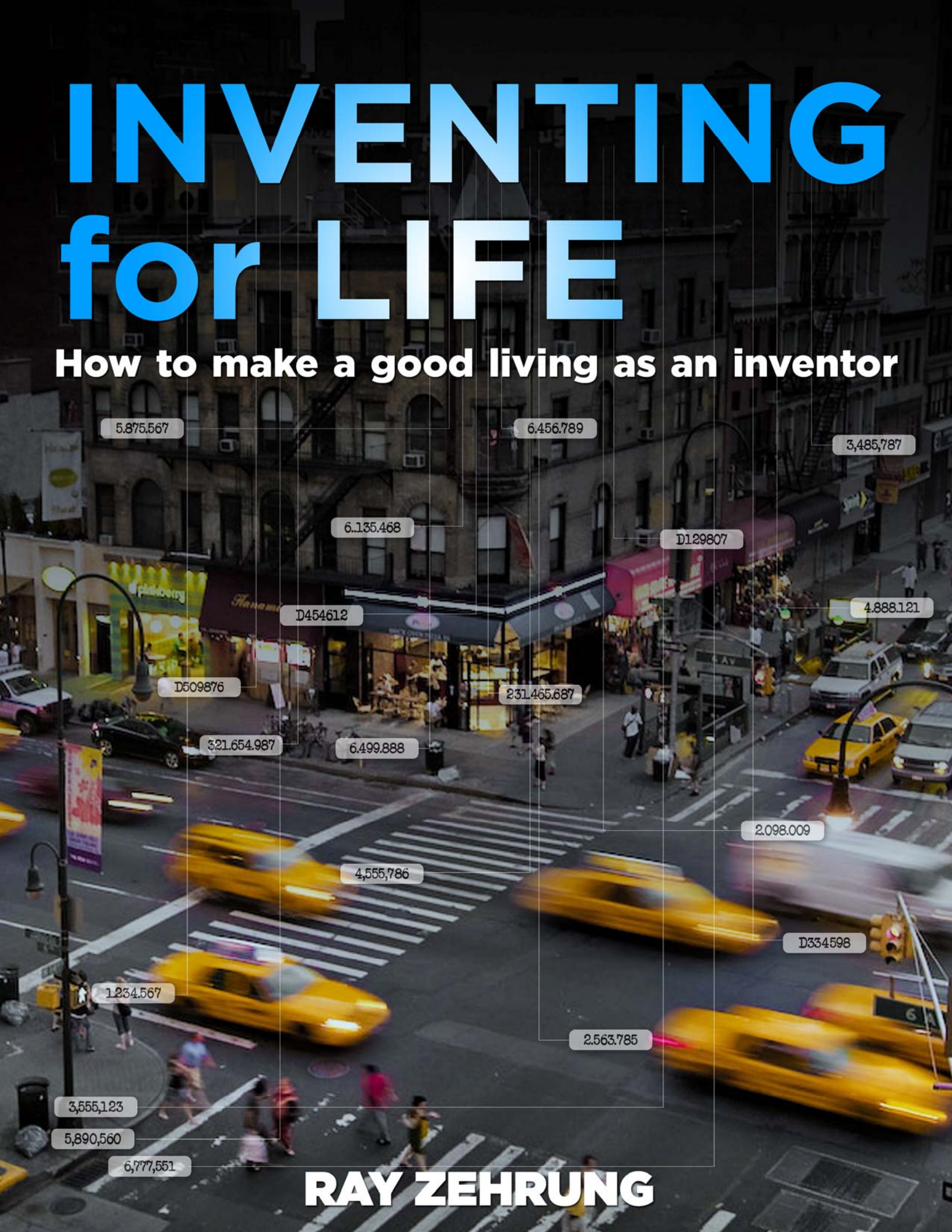
How to make a good living as an inventor.

Inventing for Life, how to make a good living as an inventor

INVENTING for LIFE

How to make a good living as an inventor



RAY ZEHRUNG

Note:

The author takes full responsibility for any and all discrepancies in regards to spelling, grammar, run-on sentences, etc., etc., etc.

The author has never claimed to be a good writer, just a great inventor. Please write the author if you find something so stomach-turning that it simply ***must*** be fixed.

The patent numbers on the cover of this book are for illustration purposes only. Everyday, we are surrounded by the patented products of inventors who are much like you.

With my Greatest Thanks,

Ray Zehrung

Ever say to yourself "someone should make something that does…", or find yourself dreaming of an absolutely outstanding idea that you know is better than anything else on the market, or something that is not even on the market?

With my 15 years of successful inventing and almost twenty years in an actual successful small business, I can give you the real skinny on how to get started.

Obviously, by reading my book title, you can ascertain that I am not going to show you how to "Get Rich" or "Make Millions". I am not saying you can't, since I have made millions at what I do. Instead, I am going to show you the actual steps needed to take your potential money making idea from a dream, to a (hopefully) successful business. I say "hopefully" since you will have to work hard, study hard and understand that inventing is a business. Not a dream or a "wish" but a real business. Like all businesses, there are certain rules, behaviors, ethics and other parameters that must be met to be successful. We all have great ideas, but if you are serious about making money from your ideas, you will have to work at it. Plain and simple.

This book not only covers how to actually have your product made, but how to market it, how to price it, how to determine the need for it and basically…how to make the business of inventing a business you can start, run and prosper at. You won't find this type of information in most of the books currently available where the authors write about patents or ideas. This is a ***Supercharged, Start to Finish Guide on Inventing for Life.***

Regardless of what you may have heard, very few companies will license your idea from you or pay you huge sums of money for the pleasure of you sharing your great ideas with them. Most companies are so gun shy of litigation that they will not even look at your idea, talk about your idea or read about your idea. Once you are successful as an inventor though, companies will seek you out and offer to pay you for any new inventions, but this comes with time, effort and a good reputation.

Don't get me wrong, ideas do get licensed every day and we will cover the issue of licensing later on in this book. But for now, let's just assume you are going to actually start a business based upon your ideas, always keeping in mind that licensing of your patent, or an outright purchase of your company may come about later. You might have a patentable idea that can be immediately licensed, if so, this book will provide you with links and resources you can explore.

I decided to write this book and share my experiences with people for a couple of simple reasons. Whenever I meet someone in my travels (I travel a lot) and the discussion turns to what we each do for a living, I invariably say "I am an independent inventor". As soon as those words leave my lips, the other person's eyes light up and they are instantly curious and want to know not only about what I have patented, but also how I make money at my profession.

Since there is absolutely no way I can divulge everything a person needs to know about inventing in a casual conversation, I decided that I should write this book. From now on,

I can simply say "go to this website and purchase my book, where you will find everything you need to know". So, not only will I be helping people become successful, but I will also save myself many long hours of repeating the same thing over and over and over…(not to be repetitious).

Another reason I have written this book is to make money. Yes, I know, this might seem a rather blatant admission, but my time and experience has come at a great cost and if you were to pay an Invention Consultant for this information, your out of pocket expenses could be very high. You can find plenty of "Consultants" who would be very happy to separate you from your hard earned cash. Truth to be told, you don't need a consultant to get started. What you do need is accurate information, resources to explore and a book like this one from someone who has "been there".

I myself have, for the past few years, worked as a consultant for people who have simply heard about me from people they know. Some have been successful at inventing and some have not been very successful. I rarely charged for this help, since I believe we all have something to share. When I do charge (translated into someone I do not know well), for my time, my fee usually runs about $250.00 per hour. Now you understand how valuable this book is.

Alright, you are probably asking yourself how I got into inventing. Almost twenty years ago, in 1991, I founded my first successful business in the Silicon Valley of California. My business wasn't one of those pie-in-the-sky Internet companies that rose to great heights, only to crash and burn when the Dot Com bubble burst. I actually founded a fairly staid, useful and time tested service business. I started a locksmith business (wait for it….you might be wondering what this has to do with inventing) and became fairly successful.

By 1996, my company had four full time employees, not counting myself, and our revenues were just about one million dollars annually.

While my goal had always been to maximize my business profits, I sometimes found this task difficult to accomplish due to one overriding factor: some of the products I used on a daily basis and installed for my customers were simply not built very well.

I remember one particular product that drove me crazy. There was only one company in the USA that made this product and their quality control was less than optimal. I actually purchased 8 units of this product for a job and found that all eight of them were bad, straight out of the box. When I called the distributor, I was told that I must "have done something to them, since they worked when they were shipped". When I expressed my unhappiness with this answer and asked what I should do with these defective products, I was asked in a very smarmy voice "Do you fish?" implying that I should use these $110.00 (each) products as fishing weights. The distributor and the manufacturer would not make good on their defective product (really, they were bad right out of the box) and I ended up eating not only any potential profit from that job, but lost money too.

I determined (here's the answer to my request above to wait) that I could build a better product than what was available in the market. I had just had that "Eureka" moment we all have when we come up with a great idea.

The only problem was that I had never applied for a patent, never done any marketing of a product, except ones that were tied into my service business and had never, ever, dealt with all of the different vendors needed to actually prototype, engineer, make, sell, distribute and promote a completely new product.

I can tell you, the learning curve was extraordinary. I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into when I started.

Sure, I had picked up a couple of books on how to patent my idea, how to license my ideas, how to make MILLIONS (screamed the book titles) on my ideas and all sorts of other books, pamphlets, and software. Unfortunately, way back in 1995 when I had my Eureka moment, the Internet was not what it is today. Netscape had just released the first web browser (Navigator 1.0), HTML was only a year old and if you wanted information in the pre-Internet days, you went to the library for research and shopped book or computer stores for software and information.

Wow…I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, even with all of my research. I made many mistakes, lost some really hard earned money, hired people I did not need, paid consultants who had to be laughing behind my back as they deposited my checks, and essentially took a crash course at Hard Knock U. However, even with all of the mistakes made, I seemed to flourish, my inventions worked and I began to make money. Within a few short years, my new company (where I sold my patented products from) was grossing in the millions of dollars annually.

This book is a fairly comprehensive snap shot of my life as an inventor and the processes I have put together for success. I have not worked for anyone else, any other company, or any other business for 20 years. I have not been fired or laid off for a long, long time, since I have controlled my own destiny and earning power. I have more than a dozen successful patents. Some of the patents I hold are to protect my own manufactured goods for the life of the patent (more on this later) and some of them have been licensed to fairly large multi-national corporations where I either received a one time royalty payment, or continue to receive royalties.

Again, I am not implying that you are going to get rich quick. I am not implying that your idea will actually make you one single cent. What I am sharing with you is how I have made, and continue to make a successful living by inventing, prototyping, marketing, selling and patenting my own ideas.

The reason this book is primarily sold as an eBook is fairly simple. I have included a great many links to vendors, prototype shops, inventing blogs (including mine, where I will answer any questions I am able), articles, resources, contract manufacturers, customs brokerage houses, distributors, marketing channels and other such related websites.

I have found that whenever I purchase a live book (made of paper) and there are web sites included in the pages, I become extremely frustrated when typing in super long, complex web addresses. Actually drives me crazy. With my eBook, you click on the link and go immediately to the sites I have referenced. Again, this is a ***super charged book on the business of inventing***, with immediate gratification regarding applicably referenced material. Thank goodness for the Internet. You will not have to enroll in Hard Knock U or search dusty shelves and multiple stores for what you need either.

Note:
You might want to bookmark all of the links I have in this book. I also suggest you bookmark any links you come across that are beneficial. You can categorize them into different folders. I use a main folder in my browser bookmarks folder called "Ideas" and for each idea, I have a sub-folder with a name. Under each sub-folder, I have sub-sub-folders that drill down to the specific reason for each group of links.

Try it like this in your browser bookmark folder:

Ideas
- **Patents**
  - **Attorneys**
  - **Agents**
  - **Artists**
- **Engineers**
  - **Electrical**
  - **Mechanical**

You might find that you want to have reference links for each project. Such as My Bookmarks/Ideas/Sun Umbrella/Manufacturers/USA etc. You can also place any drawings, quotes, specifications etc., in your Documents folders using the same hierarchy.

I hope you enjoy this book and profit from it. I hope you are successful and make a decent living and perhaps make MILLIONS in the process. I hope you work hard, study hard, dream big and watch your dreams become a reality. Welcome to the world of Inventing For Life.

Let's get started…

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CHAPTER 1

Where Great Ideas Come From

We have all had what we think are great ideas. We mull them over, think about them, dream about them, make little notes on cocktail napkins, talk to our friends and family (and sometimes complete strangers) and generally toss around what we think is a great idea until one of the following happens.

We stop talking about our idea and move on with life's daily grind but never forget our idea.

We stop talking about our idea, stop thinking about our idea and completely forget our idea.

We find that someone has beat us to the punch and move on to another idea.

Occasionally, some of us go further. We actually act on our ideas. Now, not every idea is a great idea, or even a particularly good idea. Some ideas are pie-in-the-sky, some ideas are simply way ahead of their time (the technology is not developed enough for viability) and some ideas are way behind the times. Some of the things we think are new have already been invented (which you will find with a patent, web and periodical search) and for whatever reason, are not made or sold any longer.

The problem with coming up with a really excellent idea is this:

Most of us dream up products, or ideas about products we have never seriously had any experience with.

Here's a secret. The best ideas are ones that come from your own work experience or your own personal experience with a particular situation. What I mean by this is that if you have absolutely zero experience in molecular biology, your new idea for gene sequencing may not be viable.

Here's an example of what I mean by things you have experience with. It is not necessarily related to your work, or education. Let's look at an example.

Many years ago, I had my first of three daughters. Being the responsible man I am, I decided that I was just as able to change wet diapers (I preferred the wet ones only) as my wife. We used disposable diapers and typically went through enough diapers in a month to seriously affect the stock price of the diaper manufacturers. The way I would check to see if my daughter had a wet diaper was to put my hand on the front of her diaper and feel if it was warm. But…I could not always tell if she was wet with this method, so, I would end up placing my fingers down the front of her diaper to see if it was moist.

After a few hundred of these wet diaper investigations, I decided there had to be a better way (and this "has to be a better way" process is a key concept of inventing). I came up with an idea to place non-toxic water soluble ink on the inside of the plastic shell that would run when wet and (the image would

become messy, in other words) and thereby be able to tell from a quick glance if my daughter had wet her diaper. Now, before the patent holder for this particular process decides to sue me for claiming this is my patented product, I will clarify.

At the time, I had already applied for one patent in door hardware products. My patent agent was very fun to work with, and since he was more experienced and had many years of helping people write and obtain patents (for a quite substantial fee, I might add), I went to him and told him of my idea. His advice to me was to "stick to what you know". At the time, I figured he knew what he was talking about. He wasn't trying to actually lose me money on an excellent invention. He was trying to protect my assets by not having me run off on some wild goose chase, trying to patent and develop a product in an area where I had absolutely no experience.

Had I only known then, what I know now. I dropped my pursuit of what I thought a particularly excellent idea and indeed continued to develop products in "what I knew". Three years later, in time for my second daughter, lo and behold, new diapers were being promoted and sold that had the exact idea I had formulated for ink that ran when the diaper was wet. Billions of diapers are sold yearly and use this patented process, and if you have children, or watch television, I am sure you have seen them advertised.

If you are reading this book, it means you have had some great ideas and not acted on them. You let your excellent idea fade away, forgotten, until one day…viola you see the exact thing you wanted to patent and sell, being sold by someone else. Perhaps even years later.

The point of this somewhat long-winded story is that if you stick to what you know, such as your baby's wet bottom, and you look for ways to improve something in your life, or the lives of others, you will most likely have a patentable idea, assuming it is not behind (no pun intended) or ahead of its time.

You see…I did know diapers. I had changed so many I could do it blindfolded. I could do it with one hand tied behind my back. I could do it in the car while drinking coffee and talking on a cell phone. I could change them in my sleep. Well…you get the idea. I knew diapers. At the time, I did not think I knew diapers, since I had been told that I did not know diapers or the market. This idea would have been an excellent one to patent or offer to license to that large company.

Here's another point I want to make with this true life story. If you have conviction, if you have passion and if you have a belief in yourself and your ideas, follow your heart. Don't let someone dissuade you. Don't let someone tell you to "stick to what you know" don't let someone convince you that you don't know beans from diapers.

Since I did not work much on the diaper idea, did not have a notebook with this idea in it and did not follow the needed procedures for product-in-development (we'll cover what this means later), I basically lost out on this one. My goal here is to help you make sure you never have regrets about "the one that got away".

So, if you come up with an idea, even if it is completely out of your line of work, but you have experience using a particular product, or engaging in a certain activity, don't be discouraged that you don't know anything about the particular market for such an idea. Make it work.

Here's a simple example:

> *You might ride the subway each day to work. You might see something that just doesn't "feel right" or "look right". You might stare at this particular object every day and have a sense that something is just not right about what you are seeing. Your mind begins to work on the problem of this thing that sticks in your craw. You begin to imagine a better way to have this process, product or device work better.*
>
> *Finally, one day, you say your own heartfelt "Eureka" and that is how you come up with some of your ideas. You are an experienced subway rider. You have ridden so many subways, for so many days and so many years, you might believe you own the subway. In essence, you* ***are*** *"sticking to what you know".*

Every day, you work with products, you use products, you see products, you handle things that other people dreamt about and brought forth from their imagination into the real world. Every day you are exposed to thousands of people's dreams. Thousands of ideas made real. Every day you use things, discard things and see things in your daily life.

A couple of years ago, my oldest daughter's class had a career day where parents were invited in to talk to the children about what their parents did for a living. There were lots of accountants, doctors, musicians, management consultants and any number of careers represented by the parents. I was the only inventor. I had to sit down and try to decide how best to reach the children and give them some way to understand what drove me to invent.

After a lot of mulling things over, writing down ideas and crumpling up sheets of paper and starting over, I finally narrowed the formulae for my inventing down to three basic concepts.

1. Inventors are basically lazy people
2. Inventors are easily frustrated
3. Inventors are easier to anger than average people.

Whoa…did I just shock you? You are probably thinking that this all sounds very negative. That is what my daughter's teacher thought too. Once I got into my spiel, I could see her lift up from her chair with a look of horror on her face. Was I actually going to tell her students (and my own daughter) that successful inventors were lazy, frustrated, angry misfits? That they did not have to study, learn, work hard and excel? Nope. I gave her a "be patient" look and proceeded to explain my opening statement to the children, just as I am going to explain my meaning to you now.

HOW DO THESE THREE BASIC PRECEPTS DRIVE NEW PRODUCTS AND INVENTIONS?

Let's start with why I say inventors are lazy people.

We don't like using more effort than we think is necessary to accomplish a task we believe should be simple. Just like that. We don't like "make work". We like for our time to be well spent, well used and not wasted. Whenever you find yourself doing something by rote, doing something tedious, something that takes the brain of a gnat, think to yourself "I am way too lazy to do this all day, the same way, every day until I collapse" and you have the makings of a motivational beginning. Being lazy translates into increased productivity.

We want to do more, be happier while doing whatever it is we are doing, have more leisure time as a result of our time savings and basically use our brains for something we enjoy. A good inventor is therefore a lazy person who wants to get a task done as quickly, efficiently and expeditiously as possible. Try to decide how to cut your time (or someone else's time) doing mundane tasks. You will find yourself coming up with all sorts of ideas in how to be lazy and invent something better.

Why do I say inventors are easily frustrated?

Imagine this. You are trying to open a jar. That jar lid must be welded on, you think to yourself. That jar lid was put on with a machine that has no concept of your weak hands, your frail bones or your lack of upper body strength. That jar is your nemesis. But every time you open a new jar of pickles, or relish, or peaches, you go through the same process. Struggle, fight, twist, turn, gyrate, scream (and curse the machine) and wonder to yourself if you are going to starve before you get that &$##@ jar open. You, my reader, are frustrated.

You have just been presented, and most likely been presented many times, with an opportunity for a great idea. Now, don't run out and make some tool that helps people open jars, as there are quite a few on the market. I am using this as an example. You will come across situations each and every day where you become frustrated because something is just "messed up" as some of my ex-military buddies were fond of saying.

By the way, if you really do come up with an excellent idea for opening jars that is far superior to what is available, I am not here to dissuade you from moving forward. Think about something that frustrates you. What opportunities do you see? What can you do to stop from being overly frustrated? You now have the basis for an idea.

What do I mean by inventors are easy to anger?

Hah…how many times have you cut yourself on a poorly designed product? How many times have you barked your knuckles on a bolt because your wrench slipped while working on a car? How many times have you burned yourself and gasped because of the pain? How many times have you tripped, cut yourself, bumped yourself, slipped on something, twisted something, and just basically hurt yourself on something? If you are honest, you have experienced situations like this before and most likely, (I know you don't want to think about this) you will again.

Such situations are great learning experiences. Take a look at why you got hurt. Why you had to hold in your desire to swear in front of your children. Try to take the situation apart in your mind and investigate what happened. Try to come to a solution that keeps you from getting hurt again. Trust me, if you were injured in a particular situation, there are many other people who have been hurt too. Now, you have the basis for an idea.

The secret to coming up with great ideas.

Lazy, Frustrated, Angry.

Of course, some people will argue with my premise for how ideas are generated, but really, even if you turn it all around and say you want to make people happy, there has to be a reason they are unhappy. What's that? Oh, so they are bored with a process, (feeling lazy) frustrated, (stop swearing sweetheart) or angry (you are so hard to be around when you scream, honey) and you just want them to be happier. See?

Great ideas do not only come from the types of situations I have described above. I have found myself just slipping into a waking la-la land while my mind wanders. Not because something necessarily bothered me, but simply because I zone out at times and dream of things that I would like to see brought into the real world. We all get those daydream moments and such dreaming is also a great way to have the unique "Eureka" experience.

I will share one more true life story with you. I saved it for the end of this chapter, since it applies to several of the concepts I have written about above.

> *One day, I was in the swimming pool with my girls. I was standing in the shallow end and was splashing water around and found my gaze drawn to my*

submerged hands. I was captivated (like a Blue Jay and shiny objects) by the way my thumbs made crevices in the water and how a large trailing bubble followed my thumbs. I stood there and ran my hands back and forth about a hundred times. My wife looked at me after a while and, I swear, she was wondering if I had finally snapped and needed medication. She called out to me, but when I am in "the zone", I am very hard to reach. After a few minutes, she finally got my attention sufficiently removed from watching my thumbs and asked me if I was OK. I explained to her that the bubbles following my thumbs had given me an idea for underwater vehicles.

She just smiled and shook her head and called me crazy (her standard response to my zoning out times) and asked what I meant.

"Well" I said to her, "when my thumb pushes through the water, there is a big air bubble behind it. Since air is much less dense than water (a volume of air at sea level has 0.1275% of the density of the same volume of water), it makes sense that the friction of an object traveling through water surrounded by a bubble of air would be less."

My wife's cousin is a very smart cookie. He has a PhD in physics from UC Berkeley and even taught there for a few years. I decided to bounce my findings off of him and discuss how vehicles (subs etc.) could travel faster under water with this idea I had. After listening to my idea, he basically overwhelmed me with technical terms for fluid dynamics, bubble tension theorems and started to write a whole bunch of mumble jumbo on a white board. Basically, he told me I was just dreaming the impossible.

Five years later, I was reading a scientific magazine and came across an article on super cavitation for underwater torpedoes. A Middle Eastern country that is in the news a lot had developed a new torpedo based on an old Russian design that was able to obtain speeds in excess of 300 knots. For you non-nautical types, that is well over 300 mph and over 500 kilometers per hour.

Here is a nice link that explains the concept, if you are so inclined.

http://www.answers.com/topic/supercavitation

Of course, I was not thinking of torpedoes, but rather underwater craft, having been raised on Dick Tracy and a deep love of science fiction novels.

The point of this last story, at the end of this chapter is twofold:

Once again, I had been dissuaded from pursuing a field of endeavor, an invention of perhaps some really cool underwater vehicle design, by being told that I did not know what I was talking about. Since both of my "stick to what you know" experiences were

fairly close together, it took me awhile to realize that I had to listen to myself on some issues and when I sought advice, learn to take it for what is was, and not gospel.

Secondly, I had discovered a great idea by doing something I "did know" which was swimming, enjoying a beautiful day and having fun with my girls.

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