

Inventors Society of South Florida

Inventare Maximus

October 2003

Inventors Society of South Florida, PO Box 244306, Boynton Beach, FL 33424-4306

In Memory of ISSF Member Dr. Jay Morton

Abby Waters, President ISSF, abbysideas@aol.com

What can I say of this beautiful man? A lot more than he invented the pop top can. His contributions were many. He was rewarded with a mil, a % of a penny. He wrote and sculpted and so much more. He showed us what imagination is for. He loved Diane and she in return, a priceless love that no invention can earn. Dr. Morton was an inventor's inventor, who continued to the end, making dreams reality. He showed us strength and persistence and, at times an iron will, that death cannot bring to end, for passion cannot still.

The meeting room won't be the same, and this I am sure: Bob White, Dr. Abramson and now Dr. Morton, please no more. So, heaven now has three of the best we had, and although they will be missed, I'm glad for the time we had. In loving memory of Dan, Bob and Jay, ideas have three new sets of wings. Keep inventing, angels. With love and loss, I am truly honored to have known you.

Jay Morton... Superman Writer, Publisher, Banker...

Mrs. Diane Morton

"It is with a saddened heart that I write this message to you. Upon returning from our Virginia summer home, Jay was taken suddenly ill and rushed to the hospital in Pineville, NC. He was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm. Surgery was performed Friday, September 5th, but sadly, Jay passed peacefully on September 6th at a Charlotte, NC hospital."

Dr. Jay Morton, Superman writer, publisher, banker, artist and inventor of the "pop top" aluminum can, died Saturday, September 6th at a hospital in Charlotte, NC. He was 92 years old. Born June 27, 1911, Dr. Jay Morton moved to Florida in 1937 to work for Fleischer Studios in Miami. Fleischer Studios was the animation film company in competition with Disney and the producer of Betty Boop, Popeye the Sailor, Felix the Cat, Gulliver's Travels and Superman, plus other animated features.

Jay was an artist and writer working at Fleischer Studios when they acquired the rights to Superman from Dell Comics in 1938. Knowing they were getting the contract, Dr. Morton has already written five scripts with the first being "Faster than a Roaring Hurricane, More Powerful than a Pounding Surf and Able to Leap as Tall as a Plane." By the third animated cartoon, Dr. Morton had written the famous words we all know today: "Faster than a Speeding Bullet, More Powerful than a Locomotive, Able to leap over Tall Buildings with a Single Bound, the Man of Steel, Superman Defending Truth, Justice and the American Way, It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman" and other lines of Superman.

When Paramount Pictures bought Fleischer Studios in 1941, Jay decided to stay in Florida and started the Home News in Hialeah and Miami Springs with his then wife, Mrs. Blanch Morton, who passed away in 1980. The local newspapers including others were sold in 1972. Dr. Morton started sculpting as a child. He has sculptures throughout the world, including a sculpture of Admiral Richard E. Byrd, the Navy explorer of the South Pole, whom Dr. Morton met in 1925. Admiral Byrd was the individual who gave Dr. Morton his Eagle Scout Award. The statue now sits in front of the Joint Judicial Center in Winchester, VA. The county, city and Department of the Navy dedicated it in 1998. Winchester, VA was Dr.



Special Interest Articles:

- Advantages of Owning a Patent
- Wholesale Pricing for Commercial Viability
- Assessing the Value of Your Idea

Individual Highlights:

Owning a Patent	2
Prez Corner	4
Wholesale Pricing	4
News from ID	5
Search an Invention	6
Skill Hunt Winners	7
Infringement Award	7
Assessing Value	8

Mission Statement

To provide a forum that fosters creativity, freethinking and education that will help further our members' innovations.



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Morton's adopted home every summer for over a quarter of a century.

Dr. Morton's many accomplishments are too numerous to mention. Dr. Jay Morton is survived by his wife, Mrs. Diane Morton of Boca Raton, FL and many beloved family and friends. As was his wish, his family is arranging a private memorial service to be held at Unity of Delray Beach at 2pm on September 20th. In lieu of flowers, donations should be made to WPBT (Public Television) at the Dr. Jay Morton Foundation, WPBT, 14901 NE 20th Avenue, Miami, FL 33181 or the Dr. Jay Morton Scholarship Fund for Young Inventors, Inventors Society of South Florida, PO Box 244306, Boynton Beach, FL 33424-4306.

Directions to Unity of Delray Beach: From I-95, take Atlantic Avenue east to Swinton Avenue and turn left (north). The church is 22 blocks north on the left or west side of the street (approximately 2 miles). The address is 101 NW 22nd St, Delray Beach. Unity of Delray Beach telephone is (561) 276-5796.

The Advantages of Owning a Patent

Howard Silken silkhandp@aol.com

Let's face it! All of us invent, primarily, to make money on our invention. Aside from that, there is of course a lot of prestige in just owning a US Patent. You can and should be very proud in knowing you have achieved something with your invention that no one has ever thought of before. For those of you who received a patent, I'm sure that shortly there after your patent was granted, you received a beautiful brochure offering you (at a price) an engraved, in brass, copper or even silver, replica of your patent mounted on a (beautiful, finished, walnut) plaque. I never ordered one but if any one of my inventions makes me \$1,000,000, rest assured I will have one made in sterling silver to hang on the wall.

Aside from the pride and prestigious respect you now have, that piece of paper may be worth more than you think, even if your invention never returns a cent. I claim this because owning a patent was a tremendous help in developing my career in a strange turn of events relating to my job selling power tools and teaching classes on the Radial arm saw.

It started when I was asked to be a witness, by *Black & Decker*, to testify on a court case relating to an accident on a Radial Arm saw *Black & Decker* chose me because they had just bought the *DeWalt* saw from *AMF* and had not hired anyone from *AMF* who knew about radial saws. *Black & Decker* did not have one employee who was knowledgeable enough to be of help. Besides that, in house experts are considered biased by a jury. (I have since found out getting to be an expert witness is not as difficult as it seems. You do not have to wait to be asked to be a witness, if you don't mind pushing yourself a little).

At any trial, an expert cannot testify unless the judge considers the witness to truly be an expert. It works this way. I sit on the stand and my attorney asks me questions about my knowledge and experiences that would qualify me as an expert. This only takes about 10 minutes. When my attorney is through, the opposing attorney has an opportunity to discredit or impeach me by challenging anything he does not like about me or what I said. (I was not warned about this in advance.) His first statement to the judge was, I challenge Mr. Silken as an expert because he is not lettered. (That means I do not have a degree in anything).

The judge asked me, from the bench, Mr. Silken are you associated with any organization pertaining to your field of work. Or do you have any written evidence to present that you are qualified to be an expert? It took me a few seconds to wrack my brains and I said, I own a US Patent on a tool and I am a member of the *Inventors Society of South Florida*. With that, the Judge stood up, banged his gavel

on the bench and said, "You have a United States Patent and are involved with promoting independent inventors! I declare you an expert." We won the case.

Once you have been granted a patent, that fact automatically becomes part of your resume. (CV in legal terms) It is a wonderful bragging agent. To sell anything you first have to sell yourself. What better way is there to let the world know how smart and inventive you are. Don't think it is not nice to brag about yourself a little. If you feel that way, don't bother to apply for a patent. The most important words in your patent application are the ones that tell how smart you are because your invention is better than anything ever done before. (Read Dave Pressman's book *Patent It Yourself*.) I learned this bragging lesson when I decided to write a book on the radial saw for my students. I could not get a single publisher to take it on until I saw an ad stating this publisher would publish any book submitted. I paid them a visit and spoke to the publisher. He said, "Yes, we will publish and print your book and the cost will be determined by the number of copies you order." This was a company that printed vanity books. Having a book printed with your name on it, as the author, can be a great asset even if you only print a few. It's something like getting a patent from the government. The owner of the company showed me a copy of a book where someone ordered only one copy. The author was in the advertising business and knew there was a job opening that was paying \$5,000,00 more than he making. He cut a deal that the author's name, on the book, would be the publisher of the print shop. The book was the amazing story about the real author's successes in the advertising industry. When he applied for the job, the book was included with his resume. He got the job. The lesson learned was 'nothing moves unless it's pushed' and that includes you and me.

Soon after the court case, I had an opportunity to cash in on a patent that I just couldn't sell or license. Its problem was, as with most inventions, it had to be demonstrated in order to sell it. It was and still is a simple tool that cuts holes in wood, metal or plastic using any portable drill and does so in just one revolution. I was making them in my basement shop and sold them to my students.

I used my hole cutter to construct a plywood adjustable tilt table for a drill press. It worked so well I took pictures of it and sent the jig and the pictures to *Popular Science*. They printed an article about it and at the end of the article they listed my name as author. They also printed my address and how much the tool cost. I was overwhelmed with orders and checks came from around the world.

Owning a patent, you can't sell or license, does not mean you can't make money on your invention if you can make the invention yourself. The lesson is: If you can't sell the patent or license it, it will be up to you to sell it yourself.

I have patents of tool accessories I just could not sell. I asked *Popular Science* if they purchased articles from freelance authors like myself and was surprised to learn they preferred to use freelance writers rather than in-house personnel, especially if the writer holds several patents in his field. (They don't know most of mine are duds nor do they care.) Just owning the patents has paid off over and over again. The next article for *Popular Science*, of course, included the use for a new invention. I kept that up for 25 years and wrote articles for all the do-it-yourself publications. You can do the same for they are always looking for new and innovative ideas. Give it a try and be sure to let them know you are an inventor and hold a patent. (You can find a list of publications in the reference department of any good public library. You will find publications on thousands of subjects from airlines to zebras. No matter what your invention is, some publication will be interested in it.)

My resume now includes, in addition to my work experience, Patent holder, Expert Witness, Author, Lecturer and Consultant, and Member of the *Inventors Society of South Florida*. ❖

Membership

The Inventors Society of South Florida membership application form is available online at <http://www.inventorssociety.net/appform.pdf>.

Members are entitled to all that is offered by the ISSF: events, meetings, contests, prizes, awards, nominations, and networking. Members also benefit from a monthly newsletter, full of important information, tips, publications, internet sites and outside expositions.

Membership is the primary source of funds to the ISSF, without which, it is difficult if not impossible to hold meetings, send newsletters, hold special events, and maintain an Internet presence.

During each General Meeting in Deerfield Beach, time permitting, a panel of experts will address questions pertaining to patenting, prototyping, and commercializing. This panel was formed to assist members in taking it to the next step in the inventing process. The panel may include:

Alvin Blum, Registered Patent Agent
John Fulton, Patent Attorney
Freddy Lee, Prototyping Expert
Bob Levy, Product Designer
Howard and Paula Silken, Commercialization Experts ❖



Newsletter Submissions

If you have something you'd like to see in the newsletter, please discuss with or send it to Abby Waters. If it is something that has to be copied, please send the original or a high quality copy. If you need the original document returned, please note this in the submission package.

Please remember that the newsletter is black print only. Submissions that have color (especially over text, i.e. words in a colored box) may not be usable. Try to keep submissions simple and basic. ❖

ISSF Member Meetings

The General Meeting of the ISSF is at 1:30 pm on the **first** Saturday of each month at:

Ligi Tool & Engineering, Inc.
3220 SW 15th St
Deerfield Beach, FL 33442
877-523-6693
www.ligitool.com/contact.htm

From the Florida Turnpike Exit at Sample Rd, Exit 69; turn right on Sample Rd (East); left on Powerline Rd; and right on SW 15th St (pass the first stoplight on Powerline Rd, look for two cement towers and the **Enterprise Center** sign).

From I-95 Southbound Exit at SW 10th St, Exit 40; turn right on SW 10th St (West); left on SW 30th Ave; right on SW 15th St (look for the **Enterprise Center** sign).

From I-95 Northbound: Exit at Sample Rd; turn left on Sample Rd (West); right on Powerline Rd; and right on SW 15th St (pass the first stoplight on Powerline Rd, look for two cement towers and the **Enterprise Center** sign).

Contact
Abby Waters 561-241-7373
abbysideas@aol.com



The General Meeting is located at
Ligi Tool

President's Corner



WHAT ENERGY!!!!!! As inventors we are always looking for answers and solutions. Sometimes the answers come to us in strange ways, and their messenger in strange forms. **Cindy Zatzman** was an unusual messenger in the form of an attorney with enough passion and energy to compete with a roomful of inventors.

We were all moved and surprised. She made us do what we love.....THINK! We get so caught up in the beginning and end that we cease enjoying the process, being scared by the silence and at times ignoring our hearts. We are a rare bunch of individuals making a difference, changing the world, and following our dreams and goals.

I write this to all of my inventors. First and foremost, we create. Then, we take a step and incubate. We seem to wait for the solution we're unable to generate. We take another step and incubate. The answer will come, whether luck or fate. Look at the answers and incubate. Then, move forward and still create with a moment more to incubate. And then, you will be a great creator and your invention will rise from the incubator. Move slowly toward your goal. Don't lose faith. Believe in your ideas and you will arrive, knowing you have created a dream and a life worth living. Thank you, **Cindy Zatzman** for inspiring our creativity and **Cathy VerSchneider** for seeing the membership's need for this motivation.

Congratulations to **Freddy Lee** for being selected by Skil Tools for his drill accessory invention that was selected over 400 inventions offered in the Skil Tool Hunt. Also, congratulations for being selected as a future judge for the Big Idea Group. The more recognition each member receives, the more all members benefit from the exposure. Thanks to **Lydia Woods** (inventor of Tarp Klips) and **Karl Smith** (inventor of Flood Plug) for sharing their invention stories with the group. We hope they will contribute their stories to the membership through the newsletter, and that other members will do likewise for the benefit of all.

Chris Fraser, a young inventor with a pill bottle idea, was saved \$8000 which he almost gave for invention submission. I directed him to the patent depository where he discovered for nothing more than his time, that his idea has been patented. I also also shared with him some ways I thought he could improve his invention to make it patentable. He carries the Silken's book, upon which **Howard Silken** beamed with excitement, "the book looks all battered and the inventor must really be using it."

Keep in mind what Henry Ford said: "Before anything else, getting ready is the secret of success."

Abby

Wholesale Pricing for Commercial Viability

Wholesale price = materials cost + manufacturing costs (tooling, machinery, skill level of operators and cycle times for direct labor per widget) + packaging costs + shipping costs + overhead (cost of rent, utilities, office supplies, support staff, etc) + licensing fee or royalty + 30% profit margin. The store retailing the product will mark up the item 50% to 100%. Will the end consumer pay the retail price for your widget? If they won't pay it, you must cut costs by re-evaluating all the factors in line with the consumer's value estimate. The burden is on the inventor to show the licensor that the product will work for everyone – the consumer, the retailer, the manufacturer, the licensor and the inventor! ❖

News from Inventors Digest

First, I would like to invite you to take a look at our new website, www.inventorsdigest.com. It's been months in the making, and just went live this week. There are lots of great features (check out the calendar and click on a darkened number), and we'll be able to update news and other information more quickly. When you get discouraged, read our TIP OF THE DAY for your daily dose of invention inspiration! Also, we can conduct surveys so watch for more information on that and other new features. Now the news ...

One of the issues before Congress is H.R. 1561. You can read this bill by going to <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and typing in H.R. 1561. I reported on this bill back in February, and it's gaining steam right now. If passed, one way this bill would affect inventors is to change the current filing fee from \$375 to \$750.

Obviously, your patent fees will double. But for corporations and other large entities, their fees will be increased just 33% (from \$750 to \$1,000). This legislation includes a new fee structure, which will include a \$500 search fee. Sources tell me that in five years that fee will be increased to \$800. And the search will not necessarily be done by Patent Office examiners; H.R. 1561 allows for patent searches to be done by outside organizations.

Since 1990, Congress has taken more than half a billion dollars in patent fees and spent them on other areas. Now H.R. 1561 would double inventors' patent filing fees. What can you do about this? One member of the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), wants to know what inventors think about this legislation. If you think it's unfair to double your patent fees, let him know. Rep. Frank Wolf, 241 Cannon House Office Building, 1st St. and Independence Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20515. Telephone: 202-225-5136. FAX: 202-225-0437. Email: can only be accessed from Rep. Wolf's website www.house.gov/wolf

Also, send a copy of your letter to your representative. You can get his or her mailing/fax information at www.house.gov

On the positive side of inventing news, there are some great workshops and tradeshow coming up! (Get all the details on our calendar at www.inventorsdigest.com)

- Sept. 20. The Society of Mississippi Inventors is holding a conference - www.msinventors.org
- Sept. 20. Invention University is conducting a day-long workshop in Endicott, N.Y. www.inventionuniversity.com
- Oct. 3. Conference at the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater
- Oct. 18. Yankee Invention Expo in Waterbury, Conn. Read our cover story for the Sept/Oct issue and learn how exhibiting at Yankee helped one inventor get this product on the market!

The Department of Energy's Inventions and Innovations Program is working on a commercialization support web site that should be useful to all inventors, not just those with energy-related inventions.

The National New Product Hunt, cosponsored by the United Inventors Association and Procter & Gamble, concluded at midnight August 31. Hundreds of submissions were received, and the judges are diligently reviewing them. ❖

*We should be taught not to wait for inspiration to start a thing.
Action always generates inspiration. Inspiration seldom generates action.*

--- Frank Tibolt

ISSF Speakers in Miami

When the ISSF offers a second speaker, it is at 1:00 pm on the **third** Saturday of each month at:

N. Miami Beach Public Library
1601 NE 164th St
North Miami Beach, FL

From I-95 Northbound: Exit at NW 167th St, Exit 17, turn right on NW 167th St (East); Pass 163rd Street Mall and turn left on NE 16th Ave one block to NE 164th St. The library is straight ahead through the stoplight.

From I-95 Southbound: Exit at Miami Gardens Dr (N.E. 183rd St); Straight through stoplight onto NE 6th Ave; left on NE 167th St (East); Pass 163rd Street Mall and turn left on NE 16 Ave one block to NE 164th St. The library is straight ahead through stoplight.

Contact: Bob Levy at 305-893-5989 or 305-205-2884 cell or email boblevy@bellsouth.net ❖



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Books for Inventors

<http://booksforinventors.com/AlanTrippMillions.htm> ❖

Patent Translations

<http://www.patenttranslation.at> ❖

Yankee Expo

The 9th Annual Yankee Invention Expo will be held Saturday and Sunday October 18-19, 2003.

Expo officials are asking for a count of the number of brochures each organization needs for members, colleagues & friends.

Read more about the Yankee Expo and reserve your booth at <http://yankeeinventionexpo.org/>

Inventor Helps Inventors

Jim Riordanco has been inventing for a living and helping inventors take products to market for over 25 years and is NOT one of the hated scam artists. In fact, Jim worked with Norm Parrish, past president of the National Congress of Inventor Organizations and California's Attorney General's office to develop the language in the disclosures that the scammers must now use in their contracts. Riordanco's site, www.riordanco.com, is full of interesting products, projects and testimonials from inventors he has helped.

Corporate Creations

Corporate Creations specializes in the preparation and filing of basic corporate and trademark documents with government agencies, corporate kits, document retrieval services, and the provision of registered offices nationwide and offshore. That means Corporate Creations does not compete against its legal professional clients. Thousands of law firm attorneys, paralegals, accountants, corporate counsel and their business clients worldwide rely on the services of Corporate Creations. Visit online at www.CorporateCreations.com.

Inventor Book Signing

Papyri Books in North Adams, MA hosted **Howard and Paula Silken** for an afternoon discussion and book signing at 2pm on Saturday, August 23rd.

At the end of the lecture and demonstration at Papyri Books, the Silkens gave all who attended a free "Perfect Bookmark".

Searching a New Invention

When you visit a Patent and Trademark Depository Library, such as the Broward County Main Library in Fort Lauderdale, you will learn about the seven step strategy:

1. Index to US Patent Classification (paper, Cassis or USPTO Web)
2. Manual of Classification (paper, Cassis or USPTO Web)
3. Classification Definitions (microfiche, Cassis or USPTO Web)
4. Bibliographic listings for issued patents and published applications (Cassis or USPTO Web)
5. Subclass Listing (Cassis or USPTO Web)
6. Official Gazette – Patent Section (paper or microfilm)
7. Complete Patent Document (microfilm cartridge, Cassis USPat/USAAp, or USPTO Web)

The seven-step strategy is found at <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/ptdl/step7.htm>.



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<p>SEE WINNERS AT www.patentcolorado.com</p>

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Winners of the Skil Idea Hunt

Thanks to everyone for participating in the Skil Idea Hunt. The Big Idea Group received nearly 400 ideas from over 60 inventors. We're pleased to announce the winners of the Hunt. The following people or companies will be awarded drills from Skil:

Harry Billado	Freddy Lee
Olin Brown & Steven Daniels	Edwin Lo
Richard Chysna	Gordon MacLeod
Michael Cucurullo	Jill Krider O'Banyel
Tony Deblauwe & Stefan Kassovic	Rich Pignata
Design Innovations	Joe Shumaker
Brent Farley	Val and Kristin Valgardson
Duane Fay	John and Paige Vinson
Allan Goldscher	Peter Wachtel
Grand Idea Studio	Fred Wiley
George Gut	Bonnie Zacherle
Helix Design	

Please note that we can't publicly reveal any details about the winning ideas, even the categories. Skil wants to preserve their competitive advantage by keeping information about products confidential until items hit the shelves.

The Big Idea Group apologizes to everyone for the delay in making this announcement. (Skil moved headquarters recently, which somewhat held up the process.) Skil is now reviewing the winning inventions to determine which it might wish to license. The Big Idea Group will advise inventors if Skil decides to pursue an idea. ❖

Patent Infringement Award

A federal judge recently ordered a \$29M award paid to Virginia inventor, Thomas G. Woolston and his Great Falls, Va., company, MercExchange. In May, a federal jury in Norfolk found that eBay willfully infringed on Woolston's patents with features like eBay's "Buy It Now" option, which offers a way for people to buy auction items at a fixed price.

In his ruling, U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Friedman said he would not require the Internet giant to abandon the disputed technology, saying lawyers for Woolston failed to show that he would suffer irreparable harm if the court did not issue an injunction.

Because the jury found that the violation was willful, the judge could have tripled the jury's award. In Wednesday's ruling, Friedman wrote that he rejected the option because there was an "insufficient basis" for doing it, in part because the outcome of the case was close. Friedman also refused to order an injunction, saying MercExchange had never asked for a preliminary injunction.

"Substantial evidence was added at trial showing that the plaintiff does not practice its inventions and exists merely to license its patented technology to others. Indeed, the plaintiff has made numerous comments to the media before, during, and after this trial indicating that it did not seek to enjoin eBay but rather sought appropriate damages for the infringement," Friedman wrote.

The jury award does not affect eBay's primary auction bidding system. In his original suit, Woolston claimed that the entire auction house infringed on his patents, but Friedman threw out those claims. The case hinged on how eBay sells fixed-price merchandise. ❖

Emerging Tech Showcase

On Thursday, November 20, 2003 Enterprise Development Corporation (EDC), in conjunction with Champion-Level Sponsor Office Depot, will host the **Sixth Annual Emerging Technology Business Showcase (ETBS)** at the Westin Cypress Creek, Ft. Lauderdale.

ETBS will feature exhibitor presentations in conjunction with sponsor seminars for Florida science and technology-based businesses seeking strategic alliances, funding and other networking opportunities. Presenting companies represent some of the most promising new technologies in the region and are new to the investment community.

Benefits of participation come in the form of new customers, clients, strategic alliances and investment opportunities.

For more information and to register visit www.edc-tech.org or contact Chris Kennelly, Director of Programs at ckennelly@edc-tech.org ❖

Staples Idea Hunt

From the pool of best ideas, Staples has decided to move to the next stage of development with four inventors/inventor teams:

- Judy Close and Liz Knight
- Mike Cucurullo
- Tony Deblauwe and Stefan Kassovic
- Ann Sullivan

Inventors will be prototyping ideas and personally presenting them to Staples executives in early September, allowing Staples to review in greater depth the licensing potential of each invention. If you have questions, please email InfoBig@BigIdeaGroup.net. ❖

Inventors Flowchart

Find an inventors flowchart from concept to production here: <http://techweb.ceat.okstate.edu/ias/> ❖

How the Smart Inventor Does It

Find out how the smart inventor does it and use his checklist at <http://www.inventorhelp.com/Primer/Primer.htm> ❖

*Obstacles are
those frightful
things you see
when you take
your eyes off
the goal.*

---Hanna More

LIGI Tool

on

October 4th

speaker

Robert Downey

discussing

Claims Writing

We're on the Web!

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InventorsSociety.net

For any comments about the
content of this newsletter
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Assessing the Value of Your Idea

There is valuable, yet relatively inexpensive, information you can gather without disclosing proprietary information about your product. When you start making contacts, you are beginning to build a network. Keep good records of who you spoke to, when, where and what was said. You may want to talk to that contact later for another reason. You may make technical contacts now for an overall early feasibility assessment, but they may be able to assist you later in prototype development. You might be calling manufacturer representatives now to get information on competitors, but you might call them later because you need a representative for distribution. You might call competitors directly for information on their marketing mixes, but they might be a future licensee.

When you make a telephone call, be prepared with a brief script. Ask if the contacts have time to talk. Communicate that you have respect for their opinions. Be polished. Be professional. Use basic telephone etiquette. If you are not comfortable making calls like this, get someone else to do it, but remember, first hand information is best.

Start your contact and information network by covering four major areas:

1. Technical feasibility
2. Degree of competition
3. Estimate of need
4. Relevant trends

Some of these will be more relevant for your idea than others, and some of the information sources will be more relevant for you than for others. Pick and choose the ones most appropriate for your project.

Many experts are listed in directories and databases, some of which offer free access via the Internet. Find experts by doing a general search for information on the topic. Read articles and contact the authors. Technical people are not necessarily knowledgeable about marketability, so it is valuable to get different perspectives. Check out trade shows, informational networking, customers of competitive products and distributors. Think about targeting your market and identifying the most likely prospects. Relevant trends affecting demand for your product might be industrial, demographic or societal. Most information on industry and demographic trends is readily available from trade associations and in trade and business periodicals. ❖

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