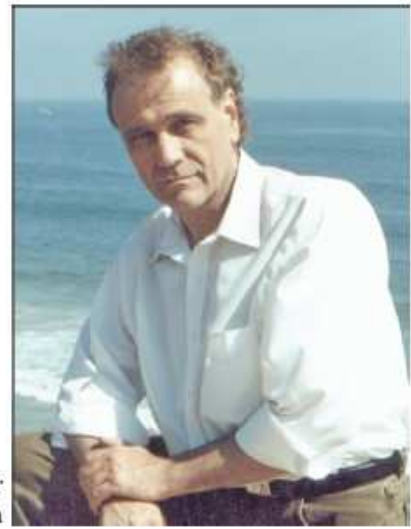


Don't Just Sit There, Invent Something!



By Stephen Paul Gnass, Founder
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BEVERLY HILLS, CA—Talking with Don O. Carlson the other day, we were discussing ideas and he told me the story of a great idea that he gave away. He was at a trade show and stopped by a booth that was displaying chop (miter) saws. He said to the exhibitor, “Why don’t you put on a laser light for the blade so I can see where I’m cutting, and don’t miss the mark?”

The gentleman became quiet and went into deep thought, so Don went on his way. To his surprise, 18 months later, chop saws started to appear on the market with the innovative laser light that Don had recommended.

This reminded me of my own personal story when I awoke one night with what I believed to be a “million dollar idea.” I had a flash of inspiration that a business could be created around a toll-free number. This was when AT&T was still known as Ma Bell in the ’70s. The first thing I did in the morning was to call AT&T and lock in the number. Because I was young, inexperienced and a little insecure I needed to get some feedback from my staff. So I excitedly put together a presentation for them.

I gave them the pitch that, “We don’t even need to know how to make flower arrangements, we can run them through the association. All we need to do is promote the 800 number, “1-800-FLOWERS” and just process the orders.

Well, nobody got excited and my enthusiasm waned and I let the concept go. Approximately eight years later while driving down Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles I stopped at a red light and saw a huge billboard on the right with this bouquet of flowers literally blooming out of the top of the billboard. And on the billboard’s face was “1-800-FLOWERS.”

Like Don, this was my idea, but as the saying goes, ideas are a dime a dozen. People rarely profit from raw ideas alone. Don and I each had a great idea but it’s really the person who takes the action and does what’s necessary doing the research, finding out what needs to be done to protect the idea and follows with the procedures of creating, developing and launching the idea into the marketplace.

I can’t begin to tell you how many people I’ve talked with who’ve had a concept or idea and just want me to tell them who will buy it from them. They’re not willing to do the due diligence necessary and take the action to have the invention come to fruition either through launching the idea into the marketplace as an entrepreneur or licensing the concept and collecting royalties.

That’s why many people who are in the eureka stage really never profit from their idea because they think it’s going to be too hard, too costly and only see the work and expense. But what most people don’t know is that with the U.S. Patent System you often do not need a prototype to get a patent and you don’t need a patent to commercialize or license your invention. You can get to the testing stage often without spending hardly any money for well under \$5,000 (although of course, this depends on the complexity of the technology, invention, or product). If the inventor is willing to roll up his sleeves and put in the time and dedication to achieving success.

I always advise my clients not to prematurely get patents and prototypes especially not in the very early stages because it’s often not necessary. The 200 year old U.S. Patent System is used by most major corporations and has been embraced by the greatest inventors of our time like Thomas Edison and many others. Unlike other patent systems around the world, the U.S. Patent System allows inventors to get immediate protection without rushing to file patents.

There also have been some recent changes in the U.S. Patent System that give inventors a very cost effective way to get a one year patent pending status known as the Provisional Patent Application or PPA.

So the next time you come up with an idea or invention just remember that you can move forward on limited resources without going broke in the process. My creed is that for most ideas, you can usually go through the process in under two years and under \$2,000. This will show you whether you have something that’s a go or no go. So as I say, “Don’t just sit there, invent something. And if you invented something, don’t just sit there.”

Stephen Paul Gnass is Senior Consultant with the Gnass Group and has been assisting inventors for over three decades. He is the founder of InventionConvention.com, and Executive Director of the National Congress of Inventor Organizations [NCIO]. Gnass has written numerous articles on the subject and process of the “Business of Inventing” [tm,] which have appeared in various publications. He offers a Complimentary Brainstorm by phone and can be reached at 800 458-5624 or email gnass@businessofinventing.com or Circle Reader Service No. 146.