

Inventors Council

OF MID-MICHIGAN

PO Box 232, Lennon Michigan 48449

Web Site: INVENTORSCOUNCIL.ORG

The Inventors Council is an independent, non-profit 501 C-3 corporation formed to help inventors pursue their dreams of bringing new and innovative products to market. Our goal is to help fellow inventors succeed in the most efficient and least costly manner possible by providing education and business networking.

Founded by Robert (Bob) Ross in 1995

We meet monthly at Walli's Restaurant, 1341 South Center Road Burton, Michigan. Just Two blocks south of I-69, Exit 139

VOLUME SIXTEEN

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, May 10, 2012, 7:00PM

NUMBER FIVE

April 12 Meeting

We had Matt Hahn and Eldon Preston from the Thumb-Works in attendance. They shared how the Thumb-Works serves the entrepreneurs and businesses in the Thumb Area. Some students from Mott College were in attendance.

Our speaker was Daniel Davis co-inventor of Ican-stand, a new device for wheel chair users. He was featured on ABC Channel twelve. Two prototypes are built and expect to go to market in about 18 months. Dan brought a prototype to the meeting. Dan did a great presentation..

All ICMC meetings begin at 7:00pm in the upper level of Walli's Restaurant on Center Road in Burton.

May 10, 2012 Meeting

We do not have a speaker in May. What we really need to work on is the Cubicle Cop.

We have three teams formed to lead the design, engineering, packaging and signage, marketing and sales. Teams leaders are as follows:

Housing Team: Mike R, Andy, McKinley

Sign Team: Mike W., Kerry, Gene

Marketing Team: Joy, Carole, Susan

We have some decisions to make at the May 10 meeting. Come and help us. Be part of the inventing process. See you all on Thursday at 7:00 pm at Wali's.

"Believe You Can or Believe You Can't and You'll Be Right"

These words were spoken by Henry Ford. Words to live and invent by in your own life.

We never tell you inventing is easy, but it is doable. Many in our own inventors club have proven it by creating products and selling them. A few have licensed the product to a manufacturer that sells for them. We know it is easy to get discouraged and impatient when your idea is not moving along as fast as you want.

The founder of the Inventors Council of Mid-Michigan, Bob Ross always said to work at least five minutes on your idea or invention every day. That will keep you thinking about your idea a little every day. Work could include web searches, a sketch, checking stores and looking at similar products, etc. At least do five minutes each day and you will move along steady.

Refine your ideas and always reexamine your own design and plans. It will not take much money to make a Mock-up and use it to work out your issues or challenges. You can refine it as you go. Don't worry about failing some times, but learn from your mistakes or lack of knowledge and improve every time you work on it. **The most important thing is to have fun being an inventor.**

Years ago a reporter asked Thomas Edison why he failed on his first 2000 designs of the light bulb? Edison told him he did not fail 2000 times, but instead discovered 2000 ways it couldn't work. He eliminated all those possibilities so he could discover a design that finally functioned correctly. The light bulb was a gift to the world that Edison had failed at so many times, but his dedication finally won out and he changed the world for the better.



MARKETING

Hints from the Fog
by Mike Ball, President



The buyer doesn't really hate you

I had a nice chat last evening with my good friend Karen Waksman. As some of you may know Karen does a segment on this blog called “Just Ask Karen”

We talked about several things, but one was a new program she is developing to help inventors approach retail buyers. As a professional product rep Karen knows more than just a little bit about what a buyer wants and how to position a product so it fits cleanly into those needs. You see, most inventors have never contacted a buyer, and the prevailing attitude is that buyers hate inventors. I can tell you this is nowhere near the truth. The disconnect comes when the inventor doesn't understand the world the buyer lives in – and the buyer simply does not have the time to educate every inventor who calls. The buyer has several things going on all at the same time and if an inventor knows what those things are, and respects them, the process will be better for everyone. So let's take a look at a few things that an inventor should know a buyer deals with...so you can factor them into your presentation.

It's YOUR baby, Not mine - Some of my closest friends are retail buyers, most are very kind people who are very good at their jobs. To get good at their jobs they had to learn to divorce themselves from the emotion of the product. It's just another widget to them, so don't be offended if they aren't as excited as you about your “baby”

But the Fact is – Just the facts, those are what the buyer needs to do their jobs. You may come packing tons of opinions about how many millions of people want your product, or how many units you think their store can sell, but the buyer does not care. What they do care about are questions like - how many units have been sold, where they were sold, how much they were sold for, how large is the packaging, how many come in a sub pack, how many sub packs in a master, and what's the lead-time - to name a few

Oh, my phone is ringing...again – Yep, you call them and call them and maybe at some point they even call you back. But what you may not stop to ponder is that you were one of hundreds of “vendors” calling them that day, and everyone wants the same thing – a sale. They are not mean, they are just busy.

At the end of the day, if you really want to get a buyer's attention – it's easy - develop a great product, find the answers they will need to do their job, and act professional. If you get really good at developing products you won't have to call them – They'll call you.

In the meantime, ask Karen about selling into retail chains – she's really good at it. <http://productforprofit.com/>

Reprint from a Mark Reyland article

Inventors Clubs are a great way to network with other creative people who are interested in creating products that solve a real problem that people need.

**We are Inventors Helping Inventors
Using the Product Development Process**

Invention Review Panel

For objective evaluation and priceless feedback, share your invention ideas with an educated group of inventors, business owners, engineers and authors!

Our Panel will sign a non-disclosure agreement to guarantee your ideas are kept secret while we provide you with the input needed to make decisions, no matter what stage of the invention process you're at!

There's a \$25.00 Donation for a Review. The Panel meets at 6:15pm before each meeting. Call Panel Chairman Rick Mason at 810-659-7935 for an appointment.

Review Panel Members
Rick Mason Marty Sovis
Jim White

Bob Ross 1919 - 2004
Inventors Education Column

Inventors Resources

Michigan Inventors Clubs
Inventors Council of Mid-Michigan
Inventorscouncil.org

Muskegon Inventors Network
Muskegoninventorsnetwork.org

Grand Rapids Inventors Network
GRinventorsnetwork.org

Jackson Inventors Network
Jacksoninventors.org

Mid-Michigan Innovation Center
www.mmic.us

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May Highlight Events

We have one more sector award still open for registration! If you have a food safety or food processing business you'd like to enter into the GLEQ competition, you can still register through www.GLEQ.org. You could be in the running for a \$10,000 prize sponsored by the Global Food Protection Institute that will be awarded at the Entrepreneur Connect (EC), June 12 event. The newest EC sponsor, MSU Federal Credit Union, is stepping up to be part of this exciting event. This year's event includes: Boost Lansing (elevator pitch competition), Consultant's Corridor (for one-on-one advice), great network, and breakout sessions on Crowdfunding, Lean Startup, and more. Find out more about EC and register at www.EntrepreneurConnectMI.org.

May Highlight Events

Michigan Growth Capital Symposium. MGCS, the premier event where financiers meet the 'Best of the Midwest' in new businesses and emerging technologies, is celebrating its 31st year. As one of the longest running programs of its kind, this year's symposium is expected to bring together 400 attendees including investors from across the country, executives of early stage and emerging growth companies, and related stakeholders. GLEQ is sponsoring this year's MGCS.

Tuesday and Wednesday, May 15 10:30 a.m.-7 p.m -16 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Marriott Resort, 1275 S. Huron St., Ypsilanti.

<http://www.michiganqcs.com/>

Michigan Lean Startup Conference. Michigan Lean Startup Conference is back for a second year with another great speaker lineup. Feature presentations by Lean Startup thought leaders Steve Blank, Dan Martell, Ash Maurya, Patrick Vlaskovits, Brant Cooper, and more. You will get practical advice on customer development, customer acquisition, business model generation, marketing, raising capital & more. Plan to stay for the evening reception where you will have the opportunity to grab a bite, have a drink, meet the speakers, and network with the Michigan startup community. GLEQ is sponsoring this event.

Thursday, May 17, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Eberhard Center, Grand Rapids.

<http://leanstartupmi.com>

StartGarden.com launches. The portal for the StartGarden.com funding initiative from Pomegranate Studios and Rick DeVos was opened yesterday, April 26. They will be awarding two \$5,000 awards each week moving forward. One will be chosen by the DeVos Family and the other by the general public each week of the year. It does NOT have to be a Grand Rapids based company and the application process is quite easy. Find out more!

<http://www.startgarden.com>

MobiPrize People's Choice Award. Get your vote in before May 1st and you could make or break your favorite team's chances of a \$5,000k award and a trip to Rio 20 and top notch mentorship! MobiPrize is an award for entrepreneurial ventures in sustainable transportation. Created by the University of Michigan SMART initiative with the generous support of the Rockefeller Foundation, MobiPrize recognizes enterprises that demonstrate innovative and replicable solutions to local and global transportation challenges.

Tuesday, May 1, voting deadline

<http://www.mobiprize.com/>

Heading for the Big Leagues. Heading for the Big Leagues celebrates innovation & entrepreneurship in the mid-Michigan region and gives attendees an opportunity to network and see firsthand some of the innovative products and services being developed here. Special recognition will be given to entrepreneurs and businesses that have cultivated mid-Michigan's entrepreneurial environment, including established and emerging companies that are critical to growing Michigan's economy.

Thursday, May 31, 4-9 p.m.

Dow Diamond, 825 E. Main Street, Midland.

<http://www.mmic.us/component/registrationpro/event/84/Heading-for-the-Big-Leagues-2012.html>

MI-SBTDC Events and Workshops. The Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Centers around the state offer dozens of opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business owners to get training and education. Workshops like: Five Keys to Achieving Fiscal Fitness, Fundamentals of Writing a Business Plan, Starting a Business, FastTrac programs and more.

May 1-31

<http://www.misbtcd.net/events.aspx>

Lean Green Belt Certificate. Participants in the Green Belt Certificate program will gain the ability to tackle targeted concerns within a company's value stream or operations, apply Lean principles to focused areas of the business and recommend ideas for cultural change. This unique program will also leverage an excellent network of assistance from the Macomb-OU INCubator. Find out more about the program and application process.

May 1-June 28, regularly scheduled sessions, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Macomb-OU INCubator at Velocity, 6633 Eighteen Mile Road, Sterling Heights.

http://www.automationalley.com/a2_nws_eventcal?m=5&y=2012

LA2M. LA2M is a lunch group that meets every Wednesday to discuss the latest digital and new marketing trends, strategies and techniques.

May 2: Brad Mann, Director of Xbox LIVE Advertising at microsoft, "The War for the Living Room." **May 9:** David Murray, of Moncur Associates presents "The Unique Value for Social Networks." **May 16:** Beth Tanenhaus Winsten of tinyBIGPICTUREshows presents "From Hollywood to Silicon Valley" and **May 23:** Kentaro roy of Kentaro Web Design SEO presents "Using Web Analytics for Smarter Marketing."

Each Wednesday in May, 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m.

Conor O'Neills, 318 S. Main St., Ann Arbor.

