

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, June 14, 2012, 7:00PM

NUMBER SEVEN

Creating Prototypes to Market your Invention

July Meeting

Starting at 7:00 pm July 14, 2012

Tonight we will be presenting "Funding your business with cash flow". This is a look at an actual business start up and how an inventor can use this to launch their own invention to the market.

Mike Ball will be doing the presentation and will try to make it interactive and explain all the details for each step.

The meeting will begin at 7:00pm in the upper level of Walli's Resturant on Center Road in Burton.

June 14 Meeting

Our speakers were Jim and Carol Owens the inventors of the Cat Door. They gave us an entertaining look at the design and marketing of their product.

We especially enjoyed the use of the .com sites they were able to use as well as the dedication it takes to market a product.

The design, engineering, and manufacturing challenges were typical of all product cycles as the business grew.

Thanks to Jim and Carol for a great time.

There are several different types of prototypes. A "looks-like" prototype looks like the item but doesn't actually function. A "works-like" prototype does function, and could be a "proof of concept" prototype (proves that the invention does what it is supposed to), but doesn't look completely right. But what you want for hands-on market research, and for impressing potential business partners and licensees, is a "looks-like/works-like" prototype. This one looks and functions like the real thing.

You could spend a lot of money creating a "looks-like/works-like" prototype, but in many situations, you don't have to. For plastic parts, if you can come up with an invention model that has the right surfaces, you can fairly easily turn that into plastic duplicates using silicone molds and urethane castings (see the DVD [How to Make Plastic Prototypes](#)).

How do you create your invention model? If there is something that closely approximates your invention, a few modifications might be all you need. After some sanding and painting, you might have all you need for a model that you can use to make your mold. The other way to go is to have a CAD (Computer Aided Design) model made. The CAD model can be turned directly into a rapid prototype using a 3D printer. Once you have the surfaces of the rapid prototype the way you want, you are ready to make your mold.

An advantage to having the CAD work done is that the files can be used by a mold-maker when you are ready for mass production. Another advantage is that you can use the CAD model to make a virtual prototype. Of course, if you have a good enough prototype, you can shoot a video of your invention being used. In fact, there have been cases where individuals have shot a short TV commercial using a prototype of a product, aired the commercial as a test (without charging any credit cards), and used the results to determine whether or not to jump quickly into production. In addition to all of the practical reasons to create a good prototype, there is also the satisfaction of turning a mental concept into a physical object. I have to say that I got a tremendous amount of satisfaction creating a prototype of one of my inventions that ended up not performing as I had expected. I would have never known if I hadn't created it.

If you need information on prototyping, or any part of the invention process, take a look at the resources [here](#). If you need help with a project, let me know. I'll give you some free consulting, and professional services if you need them. Good luck with your inventing.

Article by Randy Landreneau at rl@completeproductdevelopment.com



MARKETING

Hints from the Fog
by Mike Ball, President



We all love our ideas, we all want to make money, and we're all excited about seeing our products on store shelves. However, the most important things an inventor who works in products can do is understand this simple reality

A Product is Simply a Wrapper for a Function

So what do we mean when we say that? – It's simple - when developing a new product innovation, or testing a new product invention we have to focus on the core effect that product is having on solving the problem for the consumer.

Often I hear from inventors about how there is "nothing else like this on the market" what they are really saying is I don't see my product out there. That may be a true statement, but it doesn't mean they don't see their product "function" out there.

Let us take the case of the shovel – a simple tool used to dig dirt. When challenged to find similar products on the market the inventor normally brings back every shovel they can find. However, if you break down the function of the shovel the field gets much larger. You find Picks, Post Hole Diggers, Garden Tools....and of course shovels.

What makes this an important part of the process is that as part of the purchasing decision consumers use something we call "Workarounds" That is, while they are standing in front of the product in the store, they go through this mental list of products they may already have that can achieve the same function as the shovel they are thinking about purchasing. When they find something on the list, they will often use it to justify not purchasing the product – Your product.

Hmmm....should I buy this \$19.95 shovel? Or can I dig out that rock using the pick I have in the garage? After all, this saves me \$19.95 and I can use that to get that new shirt I've been wanting.

As a product designer and inventor you will never get away from workarounds. In fact, the best you may ever achieve is to design as many of them as you can out of your product. What you can do however is to understand this is about functions not products, while understanding your competition isn't just on the shelf next to you, but in something that consumer may have purchased years ago.

Mark Reyland is a professional inventor and product developer. The information contained in this blog is based on years of taking products to market

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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Inventors Events in July

Prima Civitas Foundation Entrepreneurial Engagement Event Proposals. Through its entrepreneurship initiative Moving Ideas to Market, PCF has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide four stipends of up to \$3,000 each to student-driven groups or community coalitions interested in hosting entrepreneurial engagement events. The goal of the events is to connect Michigan college students with community resources.

Deadline for proposals is **Thursday, August 30.**

<http://www.MovingIdeasToMarket.org>

Entrepreneurs' Round Table. Bring your lunch each month and join members of the Innovation Center & other entrepreneurs for a new topic pertaining to your growing business.

Beverages will be provided

Tuesday, July 10, noon-1 p.m.

2007 Austin Street, Midland

<http://www.mmic.us/events.html>

Ann Arbor OpenCoffee. This is a networking event for entrepreneurs, investors and those who work with innovation businesses, particularly in IT, cleantech and life sciences. So far we've kept the agenda open, allowing those who show up to set it as they wish. It's heavy on networking, full of interesting opinions and stories, and has led to several successful business partnerships and gigs.

Tuesday, July 10, 8-9:30 a.m.

SPARK Central, 330 E. Liberty, Lower Level, Ann Arbor

<http://www.annarborusa.org/events>

The Art of Networking: Online Networking. We all have numerous networking opportunities each week, personally meeting with colleagues, associates and potential clients. But the Internet presents an alternative method of meeting people and offers the means to filter these prospects in ways that are not possible in person. We can virtually "meet" people with similar interests and goals through the Web. Keith Zender, founder of the online social networking platform PeopleMovers, will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of "meeting" in cyberspace.

Tuesday, July 10, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Automation Alley, 2675 Bellingham, Troy

http://www.automationalley.com/a2_nws_eventinfo?id=a08600000Fa2M7AAJ

GRIN Monthly Meeting- Want Money? This Grand Rapids Inventors Network (GRIN) monthly meeting is a great opportunity to meet those with similar concerns around inventing and formulating a business. Six experts say why/how their organizations lends money ... and why they DON'T. Ask what it takes to get funding from them.

Tuesday, July 10, 6-8 p.m.

Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences, GVSU, 301 Michigan Street NE, Room 119, Grand Rapids

<http://www.grinventors.org/schedule.html>

Marketing Roundtable Summer Workshop. If you have ever been to a Marketing Roundtable event – you may have noticed there are a lot of very interesting and knowledgeable people at the event, but getting one-on-one time with people is a lot tougher in a crowd. So we decided to offer several workshops where you can do exactly that – get that personal face time with someone that has expertise in a particular field.

Tuesday, July 10, 5-7 p.m.

SPARK Central, 330 E. Liberty, Lower Level, Ann Arbor

<http://www.annarborusa.org/events>

MCC Live – West Side. Join the business professionals of Motor City Connect for an effective and fun alternative to the traditional networking meeting. This is a chance for everyone to come face-to-face with other MCC members. MCC Live lunches are relaxed, casual and usually good for a few laughs. It's never a something you have to attend, it's an event you want to attend. No sixty second commercials. No ten minute speakers. Just a chance to break bread together, meet new people, seek to understand their needs and connect on a new level.

Tuesday, July 10, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

The Uptown Grill 3100 East Maple Road, Commerce

<http://motorcityconnect.groupsite.com/calendar/event/2012/7/10/38642>

The ABC'S of SBIR/STTR Funding. Join us in person or via webinar for this special session covering SBIR/STTR program basics including: program purpose; eligibility; and sources of funding. It is designed to provide enough information for attendees to determine if they would like to seriously pursue proposal development and tools to help begin the process.

Wednesday, July 11, 10 a.m.-noon.

Webinar or Ann Arbor location TBD

<http://bbctraining71112.eventbrite.com/>

Selling Smart Workshop- Increase Your Pipeline with Networking Finesse. Effective networking will help you to create a sustainable pipeline of new business opportunities and increase your sales and profit performance. This session will share proven tactics, strategies and activities that increase a business' brand presence in their market to establish a continuous stream of new customers and clients, as well as expand relationships with existing clients. The panel will field questions and offer consultation posed by the attendees to help them adapt the concepts to their business and market.

Wednesday, July 11, 9-11 a.m.

SPARK Central, 330 E. Liberty Street, Lower Level, Ann Arbor

<http://www.annarborusa.org/events>

Bulletproof Your Success™ Business Lectures - The Art of Woo, Not War. The Community House (TCH) will continue its successful monthly Bulletproof Your Success Business Lectures, presented by Camille Jayne, President and CEO of TCH. The lectures offer tools and processes that business people can start using immediately to help "bulletproof" their personal business effectiveness.

Wednesday, July 11, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

The Community House, 380 South Bates Street, Birmingham

http://www.automationalley.com/a2_nws_eventinfo?id=a08600000GEGBOAAP

8(a) Certification Orientation. This three hour workshop helps minority small businesses gain a foothold in government contracting. Upon enrollment in this program, firms receive information on finding contracts, proposal preparation, and contract administration.

Wednesday, July 11, 9 a.m.-noon.

TechTown, 440 Burroughs Street, Detroit

<http://www.misbtdc.net/workshop.aspx?ekey=90320022>

TED Talk Thursday. The Second and Fourth Thursdays of the Month are TED Talk Thursdays-Join us for this free networking event from 8:30-10 am. MMIC will provide the TED Talk video, and Grounds for a Better World will provide the coffee and pastries to fuel your brainstorming and idea-sharing.

Thursday, July 12, 8:30-10 a.m.

2007 Austin Street, Midland

<http://www.mmic.us/events.html>

PeerSpectives CEO Roundtable – Lowe Foundation Retreat. Leadership of My Organization will explore the critical elements of culture and the productive impact that systems have on the organization. You will learn how to: Build a culture that empowers employees to give their very best, Diagnose your company's readiness for change, Use practical techniques to design an organizational structure, systems and processes that enhance the work your people do, and Gain insight and tools that encourage your organization to continuously renew itself.

Sunday, July 15, three sessions ending Tuesday, July 17.

Edward Lowe Foundation, 58220 Decatur Road, Cassopolis

<http://www.misbtcd.net/center.aspx?center=39150&subloc=3>

A2 NewTech Meetup. Five presenters this month take the stage for ten minutes each, five minutes to demo and five minutes to answer questions, followed by open announcements and community networking. Entrepreneurs can email organizers at a2newtech.org if you'd like to present!

Tuesday, July 17, 6:30-8 p.m.

Blau Auditorium, UM Ross School of Business, 701 Tappan Street, Ann Arbor

<http://www.a2newtech.org/>

Taxes and Legal (part 1). Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women (GROW) presents a workshop for obtaining specific information on business entities, such as LLC's; S and C Corps. How to calculate profit, expenses, owner draw and tax reporting. Information on state licensing such, as sales tax, registering with the state, etc. Includes question and answer session.

Tuesday, July 17, 6-9 p.m.

GROW, 25 Sheldon Blvd., Suite 210, Grand Rapids

<http://www.GrowBusiness.org>

MCC Live – East Side. Join the business professionals of Motor City Connect for an effective and fun alternative to the traditional networking meeting. This is a chance for everyone to come face-to-face with other MCC members. MCC Live lunches are relaxed, casual and usually good for a few laughs. It's never a something you have to attend, it's an event you want to attend. No sixty second commercials. No ten minute speakers. Just a chance to break bread together, meet new people, seek to understand their needs and connect on a new level.

Tuesday, July 17, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Ray Laethem Motor Village, 18001 Mack Ave., Grosse Pointe

<http://motorcityconnect.groupsite.com/calendar/event/2012/7/17/329977>

Five Keys to Achieving Fiscal Fitness. An advanced financial planning workshop for established businesses designed to help even the non-financial business owner achieve "Fiscal Fitness". This program is designed to help business owners strengthen financial literacy and improve the ability to access capital needed to grow. Who should attend: CEOs of businesses with at least three years of financial history who want to have a better understanding of how financial statements can inform their business decisions.

Wednesday, July 18, 8 a.m.-noon.

Oakland County Business Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford

<http://www.advantageOakland.com/StartABusiness>

Lunch with PUNCH: Referrals, Help me ... Help you. Pure networking where participants have the opportunity to present their business pitch and enjoy fun and interactive networking during the lunch hour.

Wednesday, July 18, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Holiday Inn, 310 Pearl Street NW, Grand Rapids

<http://www.GrowBusiness.org>

Entrepreneur & Innovators Club Meeting. Whether you are just in the dreaming stages of starting a business or if you've been in business for years, we encourage you and welcome you to attend. Each meeting will begin with a guest speaker, then discussion and networking. We will highlight the business resources that are available in our community, navigate the hurdles of getting started and continuing to grow a business, and explore the challenges and rewards of business success and failure. Meets the third Wednesday of every month.

Wednesday, July 18, 6-7:30 p.m.

The Stream, 1 State Road, Newaygo

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

Crafting the Small Business – Session 7: Into the Online Marketplace. Maker Works, presents a weekly series for the small business owner, artisan and crafter. These hands on workshops will help you sort through the menagerie of challenges the marketplace presents. This panel discussion features Southeast Michigan online sellers who have "made it" and are thriving based on the tactics they have used.

Thursday, July 19, 6:30-9 p.m.

3765 Plaza Drive, Ann Arbor

www.maker-works.com/content/event-sessions

Fundamentals of Writing a Business Plan. Designed for individuals who want to increase their chances for successful self-employment, the course covers business planning in detail. Specifics of marketing and finance, legal and regulatory issues, operations, and information based planning and management are key components of the workshop. The first steps for creating a business plan draft will be included along with a demonstration of the MI-SBTDC online business plan tool.

Thursday, July 19, 9 a.m.-noon.

Oakland Country Business Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford

<http://www.advantageOakland.com/StartABusiness>

West Shore Inventor/Entrepreneur Network Monthly Meeting. The West Shore Inventor/Entrepreneur Network (WIN) supports inventors and entrepreneurs in the Lake/Manistee/Mason/Oceana County region. Monthly meetings offer peer support, confidential idea reviews, and advice about the invention, patenting and promotion process. WIN also teams up with local, regional and statewide business development organizations to refer members for help with writing a business plan, marketing research and access to capital.

Monday, July 23, 6-8 p.m.

West Shore Community College, Schoenherr Campus Center, Muskegon

Call 231.843.5903.

MCC Live – Royal Oak. Join the business professionals of Motor City Connect for an effective and fun alternative to the traditional networking meeting. This is a chance for everyone to come face-to-face with other MCC members. MCC Live lunches are relaxed, casual and usually good for a few laughs. It's never a something you have to attend, it's an event you want to attend. No sixty second commercials. No ten minute speakers. Just a chance to break bread together, meet new people, seek to understand their needs and connect on a new level.

Tuesday, July 24, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Basstone, 419 S. Main Street, Royal Oak

<http://motorcityconnect.groupsite.com/calendar/event/2012/7/24/40865>

Legal and Financial Basics for Small Business. "Legal & Financial Basics" provides new and existing Michigan entrepreneurs an understanding of the "key" legal and financial considerations when starting and operating a business in Michigan. The program addresses "how to" select the best legal entity for your business, "how to" protect your business interests when dealing with customers, suppliers or independent contractors and important information and guidelines for establishing short and long term succession plans for your business.

Tuesday, July 31, 9 a.m.-noon.

Oakland Country Business Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, Waterford

<http://www.advantageOakland.com/StartABusiness>