

# Inventors COUNCIL

OF MID-MICHIGAN

PO Box 232, Lennon Michigan 48449

Web Site: [INVENTORSCOUNCIL.ORG](http://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 THIRTEEN

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2009, 7:00PM

NUMBER NINE

## Photo Night at the Club

We will be taking photos of club members this meeting to be put on our web site. We would like all members to have their photos taken so we can keep our networking growing.

The subject of the meeting will be "Opinions, who should you trust when receiving advice about your invention." It should be a lively night with our inventors. See you all there.

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

## September Meeting Recap

The Eden Company, makers of the Bogden Box gave us a great presentation. We learned how they made a product out of scraps and now sell it in 36 countries.

Some points Dave Eden gave were: be less concerned with a patent and more concerned with making a product and selling it. Don't mortgage your house for protection. If someone gets a patent on your product, they can't stop you from selling it.

Bogden Box rules of marketing.

- A. The first rule is break all rules.
- B. Believe in your product.
- C. Do whatever is necessary within the law.
- D. Just build it and get it out there, you can continue to make changes through the years.
- E. Let the customer decide: if it sells, it stays, if it doesn't, it goes.
- F. Consider selling on e-bay; people have money in their pockets and want to buy.

## Someday is Not a Day of the Week Reprinted from September 21,2009 IdeaBuyer Newsletter-

In inventing, few ideas are more comforting – and more dangerous – than "someday." To the inventor with a product in mind, the concept of "someday" becomes a security blanket, allowing him to endlessly theorize about his idea and safeguarding him from responsibility for bringing it to market. After all, if you start now - the reasoning goes - any number of things could go wrong...and then your product might fail. Or perhaps friends and relatives denounce inventing as a frivolous hobby. So instead, the wait for "someday" continues, and the project is postponed until the inventor finally musters up the courage to see his product as a defensible goal worthy of serious pursuit. But for some inventors (perhaps many), "someday" never comes. So what happens to them? This is a question worth exploring.

Well, for one thing, they don't become failures. In this narrow sense, their decision to indefinitely wait has succeeded in making it absolutely impossible to fail. But is this really something to be proud of? Only by Homer Simpson's cynical "I find that trying is the first step toward failure" logic can this be considered a success. The truth is that most inventors who don't try **are not happy** with their decision. Some try to forget about it by consciously avoiding thoughts of the dream they did not pursue. Others experience regret more intensely, living each day with the deep awareness that they gave up on themselves. It's not a fun feeling, and for some it never fully disappears.

But enough psychologizing. I think we can safely assume that **you** don't want any of that. You would rather know that despite all risk, uncertainty or criticism, you gave **your** invention an honest-to-God chance. Perhaps it isn't fear holding you back, but simple confusion about where to start. After all, conceiving of an entirely new product, developing said product and bringing it to market is hardly a routine matter. It is very tempting to look at such a lofty goal and conclude "little old me could never do all of that." However, this is exactly the type of fearful thinking that "someday" feeds off of. If you are going to make a serious go of this, you need to replace that thinking with bold practicality. Instead of succumbing to complexity, determine specifically what a given thing actually requires you to do. This nearly always involves breaking down huge goals like "develop my product" into smaller steps that do not boggle the mind.

With this in mind, IdeaBuyer would like to offer the new or timid inventor a "roadmap" that will make the huge goal of new product development less intimidating. Think of these steps as stages that any successful inventor passes through. As you read them, ask which stage you are currently in what it would take to keep going.

### Step 1) Define your product

Step 1 is where inventors consumed by the "someday" bug never depart from – defining your idea. Nevertheless, it is the critically important step that forms the foundation of everything else. If your product exists in your mind as a jumbled mess of "neat ideas" or things that would "be pretty cool", it will be tough for you to focus or advance the idea in any meaningful way. The reason is that our brains rely heavily on **schemas** to motivate us and keep us moving. It has been proven, for example, that students who see college as the centerpiece of a passionately sought-after career of their choosing get better grades than those who simply see college as a vaguely important chore.



## MARKETING

Hints from the Fog

by Mike Ball, President



Someday is Not a Day of the Week by The Idea Buyer Newsletter (cont.)

For the same reason, inventors who begin each day with a crisp, clear vision of what they are trying to create have an inestimable advantage over those less certain. It therefore pays tremendously to define your idea as best you can at this early stage.

### Step 2) Determine demand for your product

This step is somewhat less fun, but just as crucial as the first. You must determine whether there is demand for your product. The reason, simply enough, is that even the best product won't sell if nobody wants to buy it. And few things are worse than pouring months or years into creating something with no demand. Luckily, there is an effective way to reduce this risk - market research. IdeaBuyer has an extensive, free article on that [here](#). Read it and follow its advice.

### Step 3) Patent your product (but not fully)

If your product survives the "market research test" – that is, you can give plausible reasons why people want it and identify who those people are – the next step is filing for patent protection. Be careful however! Many patent lawyers will falsely tell you that you ought to get a full patent (called a utility patent) right away. This is incorrect. Inventors can actually get what is known as a provisional patent (for hundreds of dollars compared to thousands) which gives them patent protection for 12 months. During this time, the inventor can gauge interest in the product and on that basis decide whether to get the utility patent. IdeaBuyer has an extensive, free article on that [here](#). Our sister website, PatentHelpNow.com, also has an eye-opening 3 part series called "[Patent Facts & Fiction](#)" that will answer any lingering questions.

### Step 4) Develop a prototype of your product

The next step following patent protection is to develop a prototype of your product. Understandably, this is something you may or may not be able to do yourself. Not every inventor possesses the skills to literally create what he envisions from physical materials and drawings. Fortunately, this is not necessary. There are firms you can hire to do the bulk of this work for you, under your guidance and according to your specifications. IdeaBuyer works with and recommends Product Development Co and its "[Turning Ideas Into Profits](#)" process. PDC's talented and experienced engineers can draft up industry-standard [technical drawings](#) and develop physical and virtual prototypes based on them. This is when your idea begins to really take shape.

### Step 5) Decide upon a commercialization strategy for your product

When it comes to inventing, there's more than one way to skin the cat. Many inventors wish to carry their product all the way through completion and get it onto store shelves. This is a perfectly good strategy and one you should certainly investigate. Other strategies include licensing your patented product to someone else (say, a manufacturer or retailer) who will do all of that themselves and pay you royalties. Should the latter strategy appeal to you, visit [PatentHelpNow](#) and peruse our library of free articles on everything from valuing your patent for sale to licensing patents to retailers. For all others, continue on to steps 6 and 7.

### Step 6) Find a manufacturer (if your strategy is to sell product in stores)

Finding a manufacturer to mass-produce your invention is no simple task. A new inventor with little or no industry experience may feel overwhelmed by the sheer newness of this goal and lack a firm direction on how to accomplish it. For this key step, we again refer you without hesitation to [Product Development Co](#). The same engineers who can assist with prototype development have valuable, long-standing connections with manufacturers who can produce your invention on a wide scale. If not PDC, there are similar organizations that can assist you with this important step.

### Step 7) Sell the product

Finally, it comes time to sell the product, either online, in stores, or otherwise. This too can seem bewilderingly complicated, but remember to think pragmatically – what does it really involve? IdeaBuyer has a free article called "[Getting Your Invention on Store Shelves Within 30 Days](#)" that begins to answer this question. We recommend everyone check it out before getting started on this step. Of course, IdeaBuyer also works one-on-one with inventors on connecting them with interested retailers and manufacturers. We are happy to talk with anyone who thinks their invention might be ready for prime time.

### Someday is not a day of the week

Above all, remember our earlier discussion about someday – and remember that it is not a day of the week. Those who stake all their hopes and dreams on "someday" typically find that life has passed them by, leaving little more than longing for what might have been. Don't be one of those people! Instead, use this road map as your guide, and remember these timeless words regarding criticism and big dreams.

## 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 no cost for this service. The Panel meets at 6:15pm before each meeting. Call Panel Chairman Mike Wiley at 810-691-4451 for an appointment.

Review Panel Members  
Mike Wiley  
Jim White Mike Ball

**Bob Ross 1919 - 2004**  
*Inventors Education Column*

## Inventors Event Notices

For Entrepreneur news/events go to:  
<http://www.gleg.org/>.

This is the Michigan entrepreneur group based in Ann Arbor

PawsLife is looking for great pet product ideas. Deadline is November 2, 2009. For information see:  
[www.edisonnation.com/pawslife](http://www.edisonnation.com/pawslife)

Central Kentucky's 5th Annual Inventors Council. Downtown Lexington at the Public Library.  
Tuesday, October 13 from 6:00pm to 9:00pm <http://www.ckic.org/news.html>

### Officers And Directors

Mike Ball  
*President*  
810-245-5599  
michaelball@turbousa.com

Bill Thomas  
*Vice-President*  
810-664-1500  
wthomas@gfn.org

Marty Sovis  
*Secretary/Treasurer*  
810-659-6741  
msovis@comcast.net

Mike Wiley  
*Evaluation*  
810-691-4451  
mwiley1111@aol.com

Alex Kiwior  
*Evaluation*  
248-652-3258  
akiwior@flash.net

Ron Kilponen  
*Legal*  
248-344-7132  
kilponen@bignet.net

Fred Elvin  
*Information*  
248-652-6945  
felvin@sbcglobal.net

Don Wildfong  
*Marketing/Historian*  
810-645-0891  
dwildfong@earthlink.net

Jim Harris  
*Membership*  
810-621-3468  
harris03@charter.net

Bill Brabenec  
*At Large*  
810-724-2722  
brab@tir.com

A 501-C-3  
All-Volunteer  
Corporation