

Clean Comes Through in the Clutch

SNOOFYBEE HELPS KEEP BABIES' HANDS OUT OF DIAPERS **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMY AND MIKE PERRY

Ever see an invention and wish it was around when you were raising your kids? Amy and Mike Perry are co-inventors of SnoofyBee™—Clean Hands Changing Pad, for parents of curious babies. As the Perrys' website says, "We believe that cute little hands don't belong in dirty diapers!"

Edith G. Tolchin: What is a SnoofyBee, and how is it better than an old-fashioned diaper changing pad?

Amy Perry: The SnoofyBee is a portable diaper changing clutch that holds diaper supplies, folds out to be a changing pad, and has sides that turn up and connect to form a barrier you can hang toys from to keep your child happy and keep his or her hands out of the mess. There are many diaper clutches on the market that fold out into changing pads, but the barrier feature is something that hasn't ever been done in a portable way like this.

The SnoofyBee came about after Amy and Mike Perry noticed their newborn was curious with his hands during diaper changes.

EGT: How did the name come about?

AP: We came up with the idea for the product a few years before our daughter, Sophie, was born. But we didn't have any experience starting a company or bringing a product to market, so we didn't do anything with it. After Sophie was born, we saw how interested she was in the world around her, and how determined she was to always try new things. So we finally decided to go ahead and make the product a reality, no matter what it would take. SnoofyBee is Sophie's nickname.

EGT: What led to this invention?

AP: My husband has worked in shipping for the past nine years, and I have been a full-time mom. We have four kids and

another on the way. Our first daughter was easy with diapers because she naturally liked staying clean. But when our first son was born, after the age of about 6 months he always wanted to feel and see what we were doing during diaper changes. We searched for a product that could help make things a little easier for us and more pleasant for him but never found anything that worked well for a family constantly on the go. The idea for our product came from there.

EGT: Tell me about creating your first prototype.

AP: My husband sketched a few ideas of how the product might work and then bought fabric. He asked his mom for help with sewing. The first version didn't work well. So he sketched some other versions and kept trying them with the help of friends who could sew, until he found something that functioned the way we wanted. He then recruited me to step in to make the product look nice and design it to be comfortable and user-friendly. We made dozens of prototypes before we had something we were happy with. We then brought it to a manufacturer, where we made more improvements and changes in order to get it to work well for mass production.

"We made dozens of prototypes before we had something we were happy with. We then brought it to a manufacturer, where we made more improvements and changes."

—AMY PERRY

EGT: What happened with the patent process?

AP: For the patents, we started out by searching in Google Patents for anything similar, then familiarized ourselves with some of the prior art that might have some similarities. We then contacted a number of patent lawyers to get quotes and see what free information they could give us about the process. We also read as much as we could online about patents. There is a book by Stephen Key called "One Simple Idea" that really helped us understand the process of provisional patents. With a good



A portable diaper changing clutch that holds diaper supplies, the SnoofyBee folds out to be a changing pad.

fundamental understanding of patents, we eventually found a lawyer with whom we worked closely to write the first provisional patent. Our lawyer was then able to later file a utility patent application for us. We continue to find variations and new versions of the product to protect and now have multiple patents pending.

EGT: Have you done any crowdfunding?

AP: We launched the product on Kickstarter, knowing that we loved the product ourselves. But we didn't know how many other people were struggling with the same problem we had. We were very excited to see the reaction. The campaign ended up raising \$120,000 in pre-orders.

EGT: How did you create your packaging?

AP: We looked at how other popular products in the same category did their packaging. We mimicked them for a general outline, and then we hired an expert in packaging to take our idea and turn it into something that looked great.

EGT: Did you do any market research? How about PR?

AP: Before launching on Kickstarter, we made a very small production run and teamed with another baby product company. We gave them product to sell on their website to see what reaction we would get. We also launched a video on Facebook showing the features of the changing pad and saw that there was a lot of interest. Kickstarter, however, was the big market test



Mike and Amy Perry's experiences with their children as babies led to the SnoofyBee.

for us. Also, leading up to the Kickstarter campaign and afterwards, we actively sought bloggers who were willing to review the product in exchange for free changing pads.

EGT: How has the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act affected the way your product is being manufactured?

AP: As a new manufacturer and as parents ourselves, safety has been on our mind constantly. We are grateful for all of the guidelines and help that the CPSC provides for companies making baby products. It was overwhelming at first to try to understand all of the requirements, but we found a helpful and knowledgeable employee at the CPSC who was able to answer our questions quickly and in great detail. Because of this help and the help of the third-party testing facility we chose, we were able to make a product in which we are confident. It wasn't cheap to do all of the testing necessary, but we are glad that the guidelines are there.

EGT: Are you manufacturing in the USA, or overseas?

AP: We manufactured our first 100 units in the U.S. and were hoping to continue production in the U.S. However, our manufacturer wasn't able to produce the product at a price that would sell so we found multiple manufacturers overseas and eventually narrowed it down to one manufacturer.

EGT: How has product development gone?

AP: When we were first launching the Kickstarter campaign, we partnered with a friend who had been involved in bringing a number of products to market. Our plan was to have the product available to ship in October. He advised we add at least a month to the timeline. We worried that adding a month would make people less likely to support it but felt it was good advice nonetheless. We kept our own internal goal of October as the ship date but told our

backers it would be November. It turned out there were issues in production that did delay things a month.

Because we planned ahead, we were able to ship in November without any of our backers feeling any delay at all. In short, things will always take longer than you think they will, especially in the beginning.

EGT: When did you realize you had a success?

AP: We felt pretty good about it halfway through the Kickstarter campaign. But we didn't feel certain about it until after our backers had the product for a few weeks and were able to let us know how much they loved the product. Once we began seeing repeat orders and excellent reviews, that was when we really knew we were on to something.

EGT: By which means are you selling the SnoofyBee?

AP: We are selling from our website and from Amazon. The next phase will be selling in boutiques first, and then we will branch out to larger chains as we build up the capital to fulfill larger orders.

EGT: What is your vision for the company?

AP: We envision our clean hands barrier to be a fairly standard feature on changing pads within the next couple of years. We are currently developing multiple iterations of the product and have multiple patents pending on the technology and on similar technologies. We are also exploring other applications for the concept.

EGT: Have you thought about licensing?

AP: Originally, that is what we intended to do. We contacted over 60 companies about licensing the product. They all turned us down, so we teamed with a partner who has experience in product development. We launched it on Kickstarter a few months later.

EGT: Do you have any advice for novice inventors?

AP: First, don't worry too much about people stealing your idea. Look into provisional patents and learn how to protect your idea without spending a lot of money up front; but after that, get comfortable with sharing your idea. That is the only way you will find out if it is something that is marketable. Second, partner with people who know what they are doing. There is a lot to launching a new product, and there are plenty of people who have experience and are able to bring a lot of value to the table if they like the idea. There is no need to do it all alone. ☺

More information: info@snoofybee.com

Edie Tolchin has contributed to *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is the author of *Secrets of Successful Inventing* and owner of EGT Global Trading, which for more than 25 years has helped inventors with product safety issues, sourcing and China manufacturing. Contact Edie at egt@egtglobaltrading.com.





Contents

September 2016 Volume 32 Issue 9

24



16



8



ON THE COVER

Jose Torres
of Refix Labs;
photograph by
Victor Jones



6

Features

20 Double Exposure

Tech Entrepreneur-Artist's
Sketches Trace Wearables' History

24 A Lifestyle That's Wearing Well

Wearable Tech:
Back to School, Back to Cool

American Inventors

16 Clean Comes Through In the Clutch

SnoofyBee Helps Keep Babies'
Hands Out of Diapers

Departments

6 Bright Ideas

Spotlight on Innovation

8 Time Tested

The Modern Blackboard Hangs On

12 Lander Zone

Inventors, Don't Fear the 'E' Word

14 Marketing Tips

Cherry-Pick Trade Shows

32 Prototyping

Down and Dirty, and Loving It

34 Inventing 101

Draw That Great Idea With PowerPoint

35 Eye On Washington

Second Pair of Eyes is Back;
5 Things to Know About Patents

46 Inventiveness

Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

Inventors

SEPTEMBER 2016 Volume 32 Issue 9

DIGEST



Drawn To Wearable Tech

TECH ENTREPRENEUR-ARTIST SKETCHED A VISION

KNOW YOUR PATENT LAW

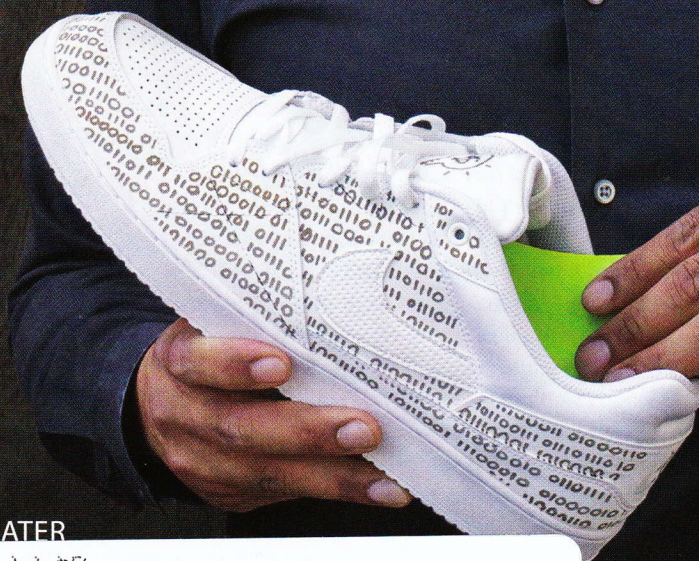
5 IMPERATIVES FOR ALL INVENTORS

BEYOND INVENTING

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR

CLASS INVENTION

THE BLACKBOARD, 200 YEARS LATER



84 P1

\$3.95

PERMIT 38
US POSTAGE PAID
FIRST CLASS