

# INVENTORS

THE MAGAZINE FOR IDEAS PEOPLE >

DIGEST

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## Edie Tolchin. *She's baaack.* The



**author** and **sourcing expert** returns this issue to take us inside the beast that is the CPSIA, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act – a piece of 2008

legislation enacted after tainted Chinese imports hit these shores. No one wants lead paint in children's toys. Yet the CPSIA is a minefield – a false step can be hazardous. Tolchin helps us navigate this important, complex area.

Visit [egtglobaltrading.com](http://egtglobaltrading.com), [onestopinventionshop.net](http://onestopinventionshop.net) or contact her at [EGT@warwick.net](mailto:EGT@warwick.net)

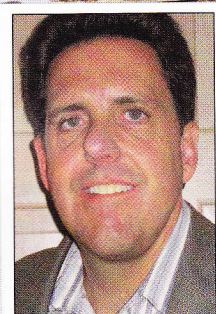
## William Mistler is a



**mechanical engineer** and **inventor** with a **variety of academic degrees** and, as it turns out, a new breed of condom. His story, recounted in our *First Person*

section, illustrates how almost every product offers an avenue for innovation. And you don't have to be Dr. Drew, Ruth or Phil to figure out a better way to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Mistler holds masters degrees in mechanical engineering, manufacturing engineering, business and education. He's currently studying for his masters in innovation and entrepreneurship at the University of Oslo. Contact [wmistler@mac.com](mailto:wmistler@mac.com).

## Bill McHenry is **president** and

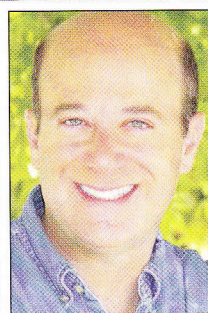


**CEO** of Widgeteer Inc. We love the name of his company, and we love his sage advice on best ways to close a sales call, which he offers in this month's issue. He was in our

offices not too long ago. It was a surprise visit – at least I wasn't expecting him. But we shared some barbecue, business philosophies and hit it off. His company develops consumer products and we'll vouch that he's one of the "good guys."

Visit [entrepreneursales.com](http://entrepreneursales.com), [vac-it.com](http://vac-it.com) and [icecubecatcher.com](http://icecubecatcher.com)

## Steve Greenberg.



Who doesn't like this guy? He's a force of nature, a brilliant television presence and **author** of *Gadget Nation*. He's also on the **executive board** of the United

Inventors Association. So why hasn't he written for us before now? We remedy that this month. He offers real-world advice on how best to get your product showcased on TV.

Visit [gadgetnation.net](http://gadgetnation.net)



# HALT! WHO GOES THERE!?

## Breaking through Import Barriers

By Edie Tolchin

If you have been considering sourcing and manufacturing your new invention on your own, you may have heard about the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act.

Enacted in November 2008 by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, CPSIA was a response to crises with toxic and unsafe products made in recent years, especially those imported from China.

Product recalls for problems such as tainted baby formula, phthalates in baby bottles, dangerous lead levels in children's jewelry and games – among many others – prompted the U.S. government to create a lengthy, ever-evolving and extremely complicated set of regulations you need to know.

Last year, in this magazine, I gave an introduction to the CPSIA (*Better Safe Than Sorry* – February 2009). This report is a brief reality show-type overview of CPSIA protocol done right.

### Background

Enter Rose Marie Iskowitz, owner of RMI Enterprises, LLC who lives in Branchburg, N.J. with her husband Lee and two small children, Alex and Ana. She has a degree in

n' Go evolved from the need for cleanliness and organization. With two children, schlepping the older one to soccer games and play dates, the little one always needed a clean place for diaper changes – and a public restroom just didn't cut it.

"I was much more comfortable changing my baby in the back hatch of my SUV. After all, I knew what 'dirt' was there and it was my 'dirt.'" Toting changing supplies in a bag in the back of her car was a start, but they would inevitably roll around or spill out and she still needed to dig through the bag with a squirmy baby and an older one to keep her eyes on.

Iskowitz went to a fabric store, and with the help of a family friend and seamstress, together they concocted the very first Dipe n' Go prototype – a changing pad, developed for the car, made from easy-to-clean polyester. It attaches easily to the hatch with a hook and loop strip, stores supplies such as diapers and wipes, and can open and close easily with just one hand – so you can safely hold onto that squirmy baby or toddler with the other.

From there, she researched patents and found out about the PPA - provisional patent application. It was inexpensive compared to

A Product Design Evaluation (DE) with a CPSC-accredited lab is ALWAYS step one. We prepared a parcel containing the prototype, along with packaging mock-up, and sales sheet (or you can use a brochure if available). We completed the lab's application form requesting the DE, and spelled out our specific requests to include CPSIA evaluation, age-grading (to determine proper age-labeling for children's products), and a request for quotation for these services prior to commencing the procedure. Typical costs for DEs can range between \$1,000 - \$1,500. Unless the lab is particularly pressed, the DE can take between two to three weeks.

While the DE was conducted, I instructed Iskowitz to contact the "Law Label" people (ever pick up a pillow at Walmart and see those intimidating tags that say "Under Penalty of Law, Do Not Remove...")? to begin preparation for the text and state registrations of the required law label for this category of product (cushions, pillows, etc.) Many people did not know that the Law Label was required even for a changing pad.

We registered with the Law Label Web site and they in turn filed all state requirements. Some states require factory (China or other) registrations. The company then ensures that all of your state registrations are maintained and kept up to date, provided you pay, and stay current with all fees.

Once the 23-page DE report was presented, I prepared an interpretation of it for Iskowitz, and made sure all CPSIA regulations were outlined, thorough labeling instructions included (such as product care/fabric content/country of origin/logo labels, Tracking Labels and Law Labels) and any product construction issues were addressed – such as the use of the term "hook and loop" on packaging instead of Velcro - unless the factory is specifically using the name brand of Velcro. We were provided with a very thorough list of both mandatory and optional production tests, and we then determined *which* tests would be done during production, once the factory

**S**ourcing and manufacturing a baby product has always been challenging.

communications from the College of New Jersey and a background in the financial services industry.

Iskowitz contacted me in June 2009 for sourcing advice on her Dipe n' Go invention. She had previously worked with a sourcing agent, which did not work out. Iskowitz explains there were serious communication issues, along with a lack of knowledge of CPSIA and children's product safety issues.

### What is Dipe n' Go?

A very simple, yet novel idea, the Dipe

a full patent and would protect her invention while she developed it and began to market the idea.

### DE and CPSIA, Oh My!

Sourcing and manufacturing a baby product has always been challenging, though especially in recent times, due to the watchdogs at the Consumer Product Safety Commission. It can make or break your venture in more ways than one. Penalties for non-compliance with the CPSIA can run in the thousands of dollars. So, how did we begin the process?



**Rose Marie Iskowitz found that her baby was the mother of invention and the inspiration for her Dipe n' Go mobile changing station.**

*Photo courtesy of Edie Tolchin*



was selected. I then had the list of CPSIA regulations and selected production tests translated into Chinese (I use a professor of Chinese at a local university, as I have found this to be the most economical method for translation).

I then took several identical prototypes with packaging mock-ups, printed instructional product inserts and most importantly the Chinese translation of critical excerpts of the DE report, and submitted them to various prospective Chinese baby product manufacturers. After numerous back-and-forths via e-mail, FedEx parcels with samples, price quotes and shrewd selection, we decided on a factory that provided us with the best communication, pricing, quality, promptness and an eagerness to please. We prepared a very detailed purchase order, which included all CPSIA testing, labeling (including CP-SIA Tracking Labels) and documentation requirements.

As I have frequently found, the Chinese translation of key safety issues does the trick in helping to select the appropriate factory to close the deal.

Iskowitz worked with Jay Johnson from Five Minute Productions to create her Web

site, [www.dipe-n-go.com](http://www.dipe-n-go.com).

While pre-production began, I presented a prototype to (U.S.) Customs and Border Protection for a Binding Ruling request, to determine in advance the product classification for import duties (*On the Waterfront* – July 2008). This is critical. Anyone can consult the Harmonized Tariff System for existing products. But if yours is a new invention, a Binding Ruling is in all likelihood necessary. You don't want any surprises regarding how much money to set aside in import duties.

Iskowitz continued to work on finalizing packaging issues, and when the pre-production samples were done, they were sent to the China affiliate of the CPSC-accredited safety lab – the same lab that did the preliminary DE, for CPSIA-production testing. Jupiter aligned with Mars, and all tests passed.

The factory was given the green light to proceed with production, all I's dotted and T's crossed, and within a very short time, we were presented with mass-production samples to check for quality and consistency. We then began arrangements for shipment, including checking export carton markings via photos

sent from the factory and shipping documentation then began working with the customs broker at the USA port into which the shipment would arrive, to prepare them for import.

We generated the General Conformity Certificate, a copy of which was presented to the customs broker, to have ready in case Customs requested it. Customs and Border Protection has indicated they may at some point begin to review General Conformity Certificates, though at press time it is made available for retail and distribution channels, for children's products, regulated products and other products deemed appropriate by the CPSC.

Shipment arrived at the U.S. port, cleared Customs without a hitch, and Iskowitz had her first order of 100% CPSIA-compliant Dipe n' Go product available for sale.

#### **Timeline and Triumphs:**

- Having an exec from Babies "R" Us see Dipe n' Go™ at a trade show and agree to sell it online.
- The first purchase order from a national retailer, Babies "R" Us.
- Great feedback and interest from several retailers and many requests for samples.
- Winning two industry awards including "Mom's Best" and "Parent Tested Parent Approved Media."

Iskowitz says she has been working on Dipe n' Go for about three years, from initial idea to production, to purchase order from a national retailer. This timeline is about average for most inventors.

#### **On the Horizon**

Iskowitz plans to take Dipe n' Go to the limit. "The marketing, public relations, social networking and sales avenues are endless. My goal is to take Dipe n' Go as far as it will go. That is, have it in every retail establishment, Web site, catalog and boutique that will have us." Adds husband, Lee, "most people would give up, but she investigates every detail and doesn't let problems stop her from meeting her goal." He's also hoping for an early retirement. ■

Visit [www.dipe-n-go.com](http://www.dipe-n-go.com)