

Toileting Breakthrough is a Relief

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

SQUATTY POTTY MADE ALMOST \$30 MILLION IN 2016



The past few years in particular have yielded an abundance of personal care inventions, three of which I have recently covered (“Take a Stand,” January 2016; “The Restroom Kit,” October 2016; “Epic Wipes,” November 2016).

A few months ago, Stephen Key, invention licensing guru and author of “One Simple Idea,” made an introduction when I mentioned to him that I was working on a book about female inventors. I discovered another personal hygiene product with a catchy name that speaks for itself: Squatty Potty—a stepstool-like device that, according to the website, puts you in a better squatting position to provide “the new healthy way of eliminating.”

I sat down (forgive the pun) with Judy Edwards, who invented the product with the help of her husband, Bill, and son Bobby.

Edith G. Tolchin: Did you, Judy, create the prototype, or did you and your family work on it together?

Judy Edwards: Squatty Potty, like most new inventions, was discovered out of need. After hearing about the squatting concept and knowing that Squatty Potty was literally a product for everyone, we knew that we needed to bring it to market even if it was a product that no one really wanted to talk about.

I had been using a regular stool that I had around the house and hated it in my bathroom. It was not the right size or height, and it was always in the way. So one day while talking about it at the kitchen table with my husband, Bill, and son Bobby, we decided to make a stool that would be designed for the task. Together we drew out some drawings that we thought would work. Then we went to a neighbor and asked him to make a

prototype out of wood. We had several made before we came up with the perfect design that we thought would work. And of course we had to come up with a name, get some design patents and trademarks. It was a lot of work at the beginning. We had never marketed a product before so were unsure how to go about it.

EGT: What was the product timeline?

JE: Squatty Potty was started at the end of 2010, when we sent prototypes to family and friends for Christmas. We didn’t formally start the business until 2011, when our first website was created. Because Squatty Potty really works for so many people, right from the beginning we started getting more orders from the gifts that were given out that first Christmas. Then from there we started sending free stools to health bloggers for review. With rave reviews, the orders started coming in.

EGT: Did you have any problems with your first prototypes?

JE: Yes, we changed the design several times before we came up with a stool that we felt would work well for most people. Then we found out really quickly that regular painted wood would not be the best product for a bathroom stool. That’s when we decided to find an injection mold company that could build a stool close to the wood model. This cut our customer cost to less than half that of the wood model, and it also gave us bigger margins for retail sales in the future. In order for any product to make it in retail, it needs to be around 4-5 times the cost of manufacturing.

EGT: Are you manufacturing in the United States, or overseas?

The Squatty Potty Ecco Toilet Stool is highly effective in aligning the colon for effortless elimination.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SQUATTY POTTY

JE: We started by having them built in China but soon found out that would not work for us. We wanted to have more control and be able to store inventory, so we decided to have the molds shipped to the United States to a factory close to our office in Utah. After shipping the molds it was actually cheaper for us to have them produced here. We are happy that it was probably one of the better decisions we made along the way. We do, however, realize that sometimes it is not always the best—as with our bamboo stool. We still have it made in China, where bamboo is harvested.

EGT: Please share your “Shark Tank” experience with us.

JE: “Shark Tank”—Season 6, which aired in November 2014—was one of the scariest things I have ever done. Going in the tank knowing how they can slaughter people was so intimidating. I was not sure if they would think we even had a real product and would believe us.

They do not know ahead who is walking into the tank, so the surprise for both is very real. Even though it was very difficult for me, it was probably one of the most important business decisions we have made. Twenty-five million instant audience viewers is literally

worth several million dollars of advertisement for a company like ours that has a product that needs education for the consumer. It was such a great break for us.

EGT: What other products are you offering at your website? What are your means of selling?

JE: We realized that building a brand is very important in a business. So part of that is branching out into products that complement your anchor product. We currently offer several models of Squatty Potty along with a toilet spray called “Unicorn Gold,” a takeoff of our popular unicorn video for Squatty Potty. We offer a bidet that fits to your existing toilet. We also offer a product called “Good Move,” which is a natural laxative for occasional constipation, and are hoping to come out this next year with a complete pharmacy line for better gut health.

We are introducing a new product called Squatty-pottymus. It is a complete potty training kit with seat, literature and stool for children learning to potty train. It helps teach parents the importance of proper toilet posture from the beginning.

We are currently selling products to many retail stores—some of which are Bed Bath & Beyond, Target,

“Knowing that Squatty Potty was literally a product for everyone, we knew that we needed to bring it to market even if it was a product that no one really wanted to talk about.” —JUDY EDWARDS



Judy Edwards (second from left) and Bobby Edwards are flanked by Lori Greiner of “Shark Tank” and Dr. Mehmet Oz during their appearance on the “Dr. Oz Show.” Greiner talked to Dr. Oz about the invention after seeing it on her show.

AMERICAN INVENTORS



Squatty Potty says its new Slim Teak design "speaks to your urban sensibilities."

and Costco—and are hoping to get into many pharmacies next year. However, our biggest retailer is Amazon.

Our total sales reached close to \$30 million in 2016.

EGT: How many models of Squatty Potty are there?

JE: We currently have around seven or eight models.

EGT: Did you make any attempts at crowdfunding?

JE: In the very beginning we tried crowdfunding, but it didn't prove successful for us. Basically, we had to discover a way to help people talk about this (often controversial) subject. With our video that has had over 130 million views, I think now that this subject of pooping isn't as difficult to talk about. We tried to make it a more approachable subject.

EGT: How is your product packaged? Did you work with a graphic designer?

JE: At first we just did all design work in house. It has been probably one of the hardest obstacles to hurdle over and continues to be a challenge, but as the company has grown and our budget is bigger we have reached out to a professional company that is currently changing our branding and making everything more uniform.

EGT: Which obstacles have you encountered?

JE: Oh, my; there have been too many obstacles to mention. But one thing you have to remember is to try to educate yourself as much as possible and don't be afraid to admit that you don't know it all. Always be open to suggestions from others that have been through (the process) before. Stay focused, and know that many discouraging days are ahead. But the rewards will come with hard work and effort.

Don't be afraid of failure. We have had several designs that just didn't work or sell well. Always listen to your customers as they will give you advice on what can be improved. ☺

Details: squattypotty.com



Unicorn Gold, a toilet spray made by the company, is a takeoff on its popular unicorn video.

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.



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Baseball Hall of Famer Johnny Bench; photo courtesy of Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and Museum.



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