

Happy to **Make Waves**

MINNEAPOLIS WOMAN TARGETS THINNING HAIR NICHE
WITH VOLUMIZING DIFFUSER HAIRBRUSH **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

HERE'S AN INVENTION to help turn a "bad hair day" into a winning hairstyle. Meet Cherie Monson of Minneapolis, inventor of the CLM Volumizer.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Please tell us about yourself and your background.

Cherie Monson (CM): My late father, who was my inspiration for inventing, was always finding a way to make something he couldn't find or was too expensive to purchase. I graduated with a business degree from the University of Minnesota and spent the next 37 years working in sales and marketing.

Two years after a breast cancer diagnosis in 2020, I decided to retire from my stressful 26-year career as a sales consultant. I wanted to dedicate my time to building my then-two-year-old company selling my patented CLM Volumizer.

EGT: How did the idea come about?

CM: My journey began 15 years ago, when I stopped getting permanent waves to start

coloring my hair. After a few years of trying every hair tool available to re-create my previous wavy hairstyle, I finally discovered a volumizing diffuser hair dryer attachment that could add volume to my thin, straight hair.

I quickly discovered that I could not re-create the look on vacation without bringing my heavy hair dryer and clunky diffuser with me. So, I asked myself, "How can I replicate the results of a diffuser without the hassle?"

After several years of perfecting a travel-friendly volumizing diffuser hairbrush that nobody else invented, I applied for a design patent.

EGT: How many prototypes and test users did it take before you were sure of marketability?

CM: My nephew 3-D-printed my prototypes. It took us about three or four changes to the prototype handle before we found a good option. He printed out 15 for me that I passed out to co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances. I was very happy that several of the testers were excited about my brush and what it could do for them.

EGT: Is the CLM Volumizer patented?

CM: The CLM Volumizer has two design patents: the original patent for my Volumizing and Diffusing Hairbrush, and a continuation to further protect the design of my brush.

My attorney and I discussed both a utility and a design patent but decided we would have a better opportunity of getting the design patent, since there are so many hair tools that claim to be volumizers and diffusers.

EGT: Is the CLM Volumizer made overseas, or in the USA?

CM: I'm very satisfied with my USA sourcing company, EarMark Sourcing. They connected me with the two manufacturers I'm working with in China (custom logo zippered bag) and South Korea (injection molded brush and

"Travel friendly" is a key feature of the product.



“The CLM Volumizer has two design patents: the original patent for my Volumizing and Diffusing Hairbrush, and a continuation to further protect the design of my brush.”

—CHERIE MONSON

casing). I love that EarMark Sourcing handles all the communication with the manufacturers.

I chose to go overseas, where the minimum order quantity and price per piece were substantially less than domestic manufacturing. I hope to move manufacturing to the USA when my sales increase, so I can manage the higher minimum-order quantities.

EGT: Any plans for additional products?

CM: I am considering a smaller brush that is thinner with the same type of plastic “fingers.” I am also looking at creating a fragile/thinning hair packaging bundle with a hair towel, hair mask or serum, and my brush. This is the three-step process I started using after radiation damage to minimize hair loss.

EGT: Which issues have you had?

CM: I have had three major challenges during my entrepreneur journey.

It took me nine months to find a manufacturer. I originally used Protolabs online to help with the injection mold design, but they were unable to manufacture my casing. I then spoke with a local referral from a friend. They ultimately decided they didn’t want to manufacture a consumer product after all (they only do industrial manufacturing).

After receiving very high quotes from other online manufacturers, I finally asked for help from The Women Inventors Club Facebook group. They recommended EarMark Sourcing, which found me my manufacturers.

I originally tried selling my Volumizing Diffuser Hairbrush on Amazon. After several months of low sales, even while using “Pay Per Click” advertising, I realized my ideal customer might be looking at social media to find their hair styling tools, not Amazon.

I knew very little about social media. So, I hired a market research company to completely relaunch

my product, now called the CLM Volumizer.

After another year of continued low sales, I have decided to pivot my marketing to a smaller niche that focuses on women with fragile or thinning hair. This pivot will align with my brand story and the “Clean Beauty & Wellness” movement I’ve chosen to pursue.

EGT: Many women inventors serve as mentors to each other. Have you had any mentors?

CM: Marcy McKenna and The Women Inventors Club Facebook group have been invaluable mentors for me. I also appreciate my membership with the United Inventors Association. Without these networking groups, I might not be speaking with you today.

EGT: What advice would you give to a prospective inventor?

CM: Before spending your money to patent, design or manufacture your invention, I highly recommend:

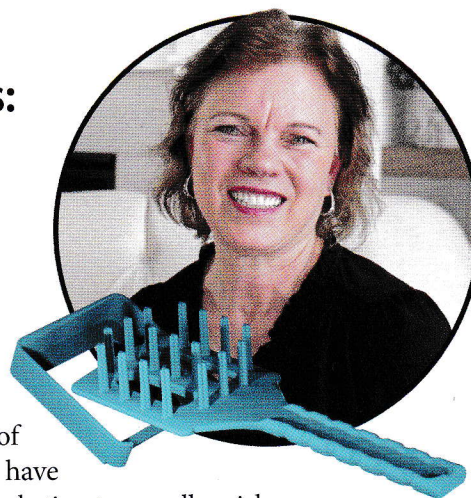
Research your product everywhere (Walmart, Amazon, Alibaba, Google, USPTO, etc.).

Create inexpensive prototypes and have anyone you know in your target market test your prototypes. Use their feedback to help with the final design.

Create a research survey using your digital design and distribute it to your target market/ideal customer to validate your product. 📊

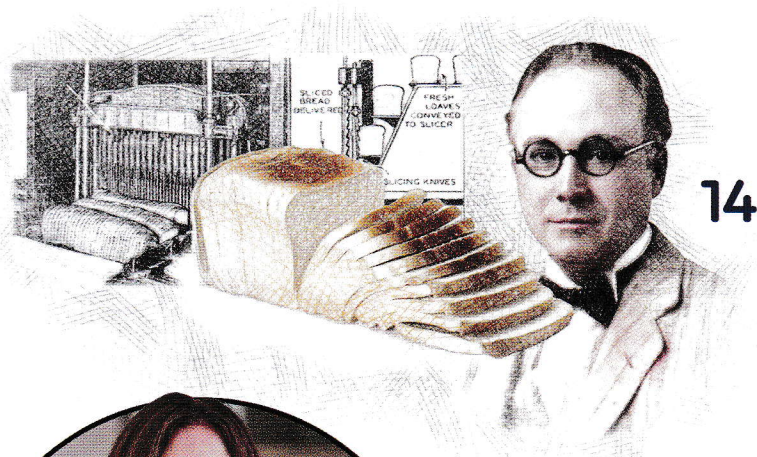
Details: clmcreations.com

Edith G. Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000 (edietolchin.com/portfolio). She is the author of several books, including “Secrets of Successful Women Inventors” (<https://a.co/d/fAGlvZJ>) and “Secrets of Successful Inventing” (<https://a.co/d/8dafJd6>).



Contents

May 2024 Volume 40 Issue 5



Features

- 24 10 Questions With ...**
Patent Attorney Carolyn Favorito
- 28 All Good**
New Brands Consistent With
Niko Moon's Wellness Mission

Inventor Spotlight

- 22 Happy to Make Waves**
Woman's Travel-friendly Volumizer

Departments

- 6 Your USPTO**
News Inventors Can Use
- 10 Editor's Note**
Innovation Celebrations
- 11 Everybody's Talking**
What You're Saying
- 12 Bright Ideas**
Innovation That Shines
- 14 Time Tested**
The Greatest Thing Since ...
- 16 Lander Zone**
Utility Patent Options
- 20 Social Hour**
Using Marketing Automation
- 34 Think Marketing**
Evolutionary Vs. Revolutionary
- 37 Meant to Invent**
Pitching to a New Industry
- 38 Prototyping**
We Have Liftoff!
- 40 IP Market**
Patent Transactions Up, But ...
- 42 Patent Pending**
You Have an Idea. Now What?
- 46 Inventiveness**
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating



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