

Holidays **with Pull**

WOMAN'S SLIP-ON GRIPS FOR KITCHEN CABINETS
ADD FESTIVITY WITH CONVENIENCE **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

HERE'S A new product to help glam up those often-boring kitchen cabinet handles. Festive and colorful, the new Knobēz line for various holidays was invented by Morgan Uhl of Tampa.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did your idea come about? When did you invent the line?

Morgan Uhl (MU): I invented Knobēz because I wanted to add clutter-free decorations to my kitchen for the holidays.

While sipping my coffee and enjoying a warm fireplace one day in early November 2021, I had the idea: "What if I could make my cabinet knobs look like Christmas ornaments without having to change my hardware? What if I could just grip over my existing hardware to add a decoration while still being able to use my hardware for function?"

I went to search for such a decoration on multiple search engine platforms and came up empty. The invention of Knobēz started that very day with the pursuit of inventing a clutter-free, decorative cabinet knob cover that was able to grip over a variety of different styles and sizes of knob hardware.

EGT: Did it take long before you created the perfect prototype(s)? How many tries?

MU: I started jotting down ideas for my product on November 7, 2021. I searched for items on Amazon that I could combine to create a prototype.

I spent much of late 2021 and early 2022 working to create a functional prototype so that I could explain my invention and show the application to the plastic mold injector factories for quotes.

I was quite surprised at how many factories I called that were not interested in my idea. I found out very quickly that I needed to make a CAD design for my invention so that I could send a file for the factories to review and quote. I went through about six different designs for my idea before settling on the concept of gluing two objects together: a decorative hard plastic piece, and a stretchy TPE (thermoplastic elastomer) piece so that the two pieces could become one product, Knobēz.

After contacting close to 100 U.S. manufacturers and hearing "no" or receiving ridiculous quotes, I was able to purchase my prototype mold in June 2022 from Bruin Manufacturing in Marshalltown, Iowa, and I had the unfinished product in hand by October of that year. I spent the entire holiday season of 2022 decorating every glitter ornament Knobēz by hand and sealing the glitter as well. I was able to conduct a soft launch to show proof of concept.



"I went to search for such a decoration on multiple search engine platforms and came up empty. The invention of Knobēz started that very day ..."

—MORGAN UHL



EGT: Have you had any manufacturing difficulties?

MU: Unfortunately, there was a miscommunication about the finished product price moving forward in the spring of 2023 and I had to cut ties with Bruin, as the price per piece was not feasible for making a profit.

I was back in the search for a manufacturer for Knobēz, but this time I knew exactly what I was looking for. I came across a conference on LinkedIn called the Inspired Home Show. They shared their schedule for the entire conference and the speakers, along with their titles.

I was able to connect with one of the speakers listed, Carmine Denisco, with the United Inventors Association. Carmine owns EarMark Sourcing and was able to give me the names of three different factories that were more than capable of manufacturing my product. Knobēz are currently manufactured in South Korea.

EGT: What are Knobēz made of?

MU: Knobēz are made entirely of plastic. They consist of a hard plastic decoration with a TPE stretchy gripper underneath. The idea is to stretch the gripper over your entire existing cabinet knob so that the user can either use the Knobēz or the cabinet knob for operational function.

EGT: Because it's a product that might be mistaken for candy by children (i.e., candy canes) are you having them safety tested?

MU: There are currently no safety tests performed on Knobēz or Handlez (another style).

EGT: Have you had any difficulties with logistics?

MU: Logistics is completed through EarMark Sourcing. The only difficulty that I have found is to be estimating the shipping time and customs clearance.

EGT: Have you tried crowdfunding?

MU: I have not tried any crowdfunding for Knobēz. I have been able to finance all my start-up costs with a line of credit from TD Bank, personal funds and preorder sales.

EGT: Are your products patented?

MU: I have a family friend whose expertise is intellectual property and IP litigation. I was able to reach out to him to ask about how to go about protecting my idea.

We performed a patentability search, followed by a provisional utility patent application. I have since filed a final utility patent and filed a provisional design patent application for my new Handlez.

Knobēz knob covers are able to grip over a variety of different styles and sizes of knob hardware.



There are six different Knobēz seasonal/holiday collections.

EGT: How many different types of Knobēz are you manufacturing?

MU: I am currently working on six different Knobēz collections:

Pumpkin Knobēz (consisting of a fall pumpkin and a jack o' lantern pumpkin); Peppermint Knobēz (consisting of red and pink peppermints); Valentine's Knobēz and Peeps Bunny Knobēz; and Star Knobēz for the summer—as well as Peppermint Knobēz XL for larger and square shaped cabinet knobs.

SPECIAL HONOR FOR EDITH G. TOLCHIN

Our longtime *Inventors Digest* writer recently received a Recommended Citation from the Journal of the Patent and Trademark Resource Center Association for her newest book, "Secrets of Successful Women Inventors" (2024, Square One Publishers). This followed a book review by Professor Suzanne Reinman at the Patent and Trademark Resource Center in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

EGT: What, if any, obstacles have you encountered while developing the products?

MU: I encountered issues with the integrity of the gripper when moving from my U.S. manufacturer to my manufacturer in South Korea. I was able to provide excellent customer service and offer replacements to customers. I was also able to communicate the issues with the factory, which now has quality control checklists in place for future collections.

EGT: How have sales been? How long have you been selling?

MU: I was able sell over 11,000 units of Knobēz and Handlez within just six months of fully launching. In the last 14 months, since launching the pre-orders for my signature red peppermint collection, I have been able to sell over 26,000 units of Knobēz and Handlez.

EGT: Can you offer advice for inventors looking to develop a new household product?

MU: My advice is to surround yourself with people who are going to give you their best and want to you succeed.

My CAD designer is quick and super easy to communicate with. My patent attorney, Alex, is always available and while not inexpensive, very good at what he was able to provide. My current business relationship with Carmine Denisco from EarMark Sourcing has proven to be more like a partnership with someone who wants to see me succeed with my products and is encouraging as well as efficient and effective with seeing my factory production through to completion. 🍪

Details: Knobez.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

September 2024 Volume 40 Issue 9

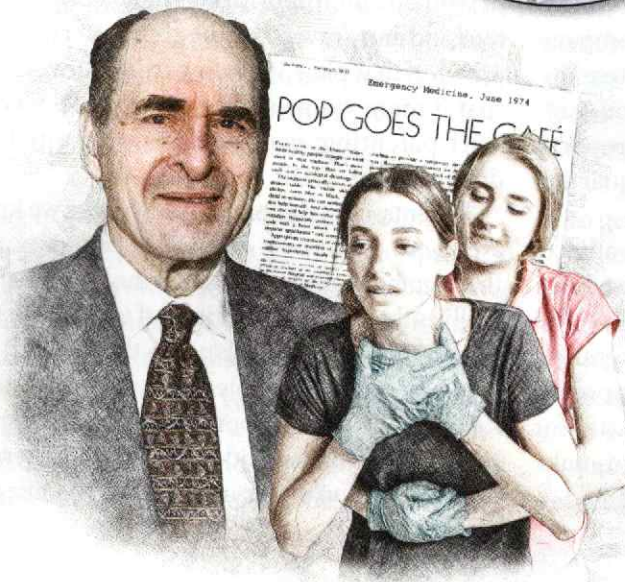
They Said **What?**

- 4** The patent system is a pie that we can grow as big as we want.
- 9** The case brings to light Google's heavy-handed monopolistic practices and how they wield their power to crush potential competition and innovation.
- 13** Today, our nation celebrates National Heimlich Maneuver Day—along with National Nail Polish Day, National Olive Day, and National Say Something Nice Day.

38



24



12

Feature

- 29 The Best-Laid Flight Plans**
2 Different Toy Planes Take On Different Building Problems

Inventor Spotlight

- 22 Can't Slam This Dunk**
Design Manager's Oreo Cookie Dipper
- 24 Holidays With Pull**
Woman's Festive Drawer Pull Covers



Departments

- 6 Your USPTO**
Looking Back at Invention-Con 2024
- 8 Editor's Note**
100 Issues. Let's Do 100 More
- 9 Everybody's Talking**
Google Taken to Task for its Tactics
- 10 Bright Ideas**
Innovation That Shines
- 12 Time Tested**
Heimlich a Mixed Medical Bag
- 16 Lander Zone**
How to Self-Manufacture
- 19 Inventing 101**
Patenting Pet Products
- 20 Social Hour**
The Art of Cross-Promotion
- 27 Inventor Update**
Shawn Moye
- 34 Think Marketing**
Sales is Not Marketing
- 36 Inventing 101**
Your Profit Formula
- 38 Prototyping**
Injection Molding Fixes
- 40 IP Market**
'Shameless' War on ITC
- 42 Eye On Washington**
RESTORE, NOFAKES Introduced
- 46 Inventiveness**
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

Inventors

DIGEST

TOY STORIES

1 PRODUCT CATEGORY,
2 DIFFERENT PATHS

Invention-Con 2024

IP INSIGHT FROM
TRUSTED EXPERTS

Maneuver Man

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153