

That's One **Smart Cat**

RUSSIAN IMMIGRANT'S LINE OF INTERACTIVE PUZZLE FEEDERS BEGAN WITH HIS PET'S PERSISTENCE **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

Cat Amazing SLIDERS is an interactive puzzle feeder that brings the thrill of the hunt to indoor cats. The ever-changing treat maze has inner boxes that shift and slide on each level – changing the maze and moving the treats.

'M A BONAFIDE kitty lover. So, when I learned about Cat Amazing, I knew I had to interview its inventor, Andrey Grigoryev.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Tell us about yourself and your background. Is this a team effort?

Andrey Grigoryev (AG): I was born in Russia and immigrated to the United States with my family when I was 8.

I went to a technical high school, with a concentration on visual arts. I graduated college

with a history degree, followed by a meandering career in the world of technology and marketing.

However, I've always been a tinkerer and wanted to build something of my own. So, when I came up with the idea for the Cat Amazing, I channeled that entrepreneurial inclination into making a business.

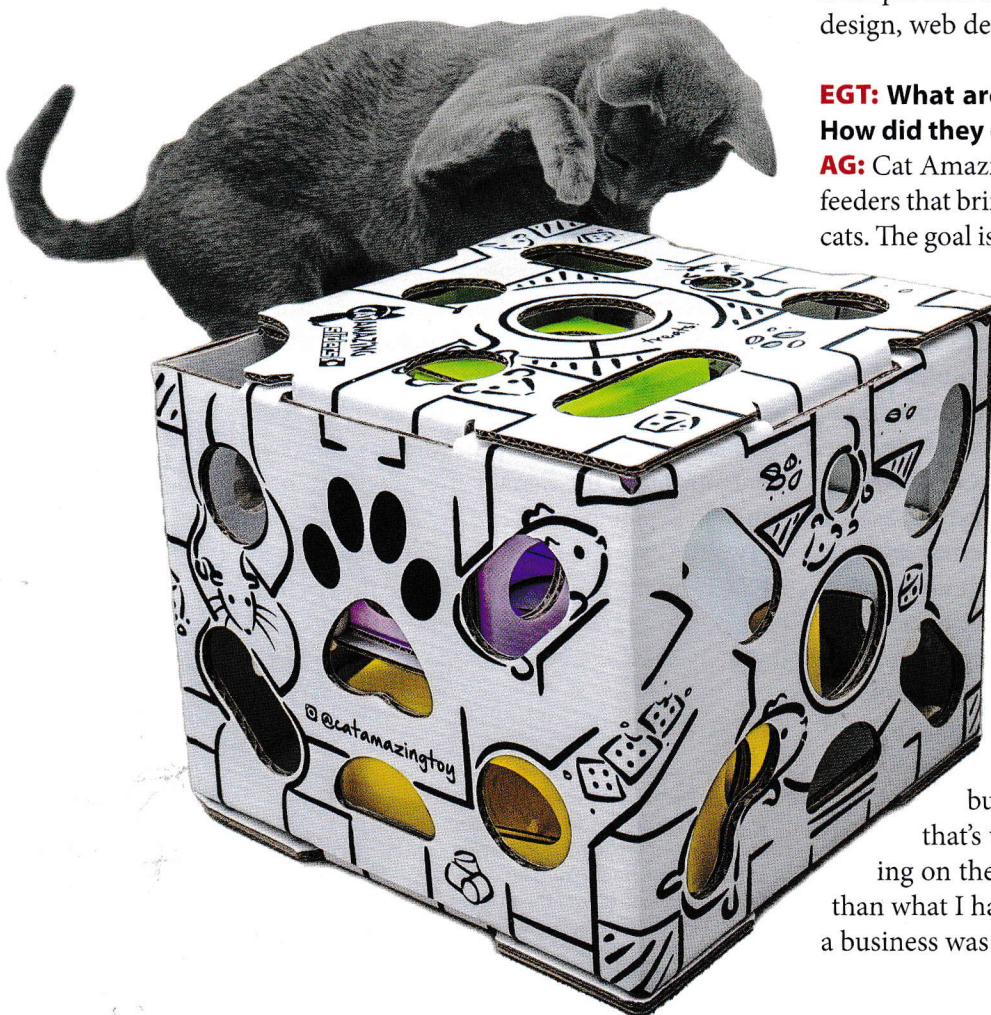
My wife was involved in the beginning, mostly with the ideation and patent processes. I'm still the only full-time employee, but I rely on a team of freelancers and contractors for everything from product development and CAD to graphic design, web development and marketing.

EGT: What are the Cat Amazing products? How did they come about?

AG: Cat Amazing is a line of interactive puzzle feeders that bring the thrill of the hunt to indoor cats. The goal is to provide enrichment—mental and physical—to indoor cats, while reducing the rate of eating for weight management and digestive health.

The original puzzle was actually invented by my first cat ... when he dropped a little red ball into a folding bookstand on the floor and worked to get it out.

I took an empty shipping box and a boxcutter and started making more elaborate mazes for him. He kept solving them, so I decided to just buy him something awesome—and that's when I realized there was nothing on the market that was more complex than what I had already made. So, the idea for a business was born!



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAT AMAZING

“The original puzzle was actually invented by my first cat ... when he dropped a little red ball into a folding bookstand on the floor and worked to get it out.” —ANDREY GRIGORYEV



EGT: Of which materials are the products made? Where are you selling?

AG: The puzzles are made entirely of cardboard. They are sold primarily online (Amazon, our website, Chewy) and in some retail stores.

EGT: What is the retail pricing for the various items?

AG: The CLASSIC retails for \$16.95, the SLIDERS for \$28.95, and MEGA for \$36.95.

EGT: What was your experience with the patent process?

AG: My initial plan was to patent the game mechanics of the toy: adjustable difficulty based on certain parameters. I filed a provisional patent application and started the process of converting it to a utility patent.

I had done a light patent search prior, but it turned out that a similar game mechanic was already patented in another category. I considered adjusting the process but instead decided to abandon it because it was too time consuming. I decided to just focus on building a strong brand and loyal customer base and protect the product that way.

EGT: Have you had any problems or obstacles during product development?

AG: One of the key challenges in product development is making the product as small as possible, and fitting into certain form factors to reduce shipping costs—both ocean and domestic. Most shipping companies have categories for products based on dimensions, so fitting within smaller dimensions can put your products in a lower-cost category. And, of course, the smaller the product, the more you can fit into a container when shipping overseas.

These concerns were really emphasized by COVID, which presented a number of challenges—primarily in the form of increased shipping expense and delays. For example, the launch of the MEGA had to be delayed by nearly six months, first because of production delays and then because the shipping costs had grown astronomically. So, inventory sat for several months before shipping costs dropped into the profitable range.

EGT: Where are you manufacturing? If overseas, please share that experience.

AG: Currently, the products are manufactured in China. It was a challenge to find a manufacturer initially, and I had to go through several samples with a number of candidates before selecting the right one. This is a tedious process but very important.

In the end I found the right one, and I have been with that manufacturer for over 10 years. It is very important to find a manufacturer that is communicative and willing to collaborate on product development and manufacturing adjustment, and can help optimize the product for manufacture. They should be very proactive in offering advice and working toward solutions, not just taking what you show them and rushing to quote and move into production.

EGT: Any logo or trademark issues?

AG: The only issue I had with trademarking was that I initially got my logo and tag line trademarked together, so it was my logo with the words “Best Cat Toy—Ever!” written underneath.

This presented a problem when setting up my brand on Amazon. They required that

Andrey Grigoryev, shown with his current cat, Eli, says: “It is very important to find a manufacturer that is communicative and willing to collaborate on product development and manufacturing adjustment, and can help optimize the product for manufacture.”



the brand name be exactly what's on the trademark. So, for several months until I received a separate trademark for the logo, my brand name on Amazon was "Cat Amazing Best Cat Toy—Ever!" A bit of a mouthful and an eyesore!

EGT: I understand you were on "Shark Tank." Tell us about it.

AG: Being invited on "Shark Tank" was both exhilarating and stressful. There was a great deal of preparation and all the nerves you can imagine during the event.

I received several offers from many of the "Sharks," which was very validating. Afterwards there was a lot of operational work to ensure the website was ready and there would be enough inventory to meet demand. There wasn't!

The Cat Amazing CLASSIC has multiple difficulties so your kitty can learn and increase his and her hunting skills.

EGT: Did you get a deal?

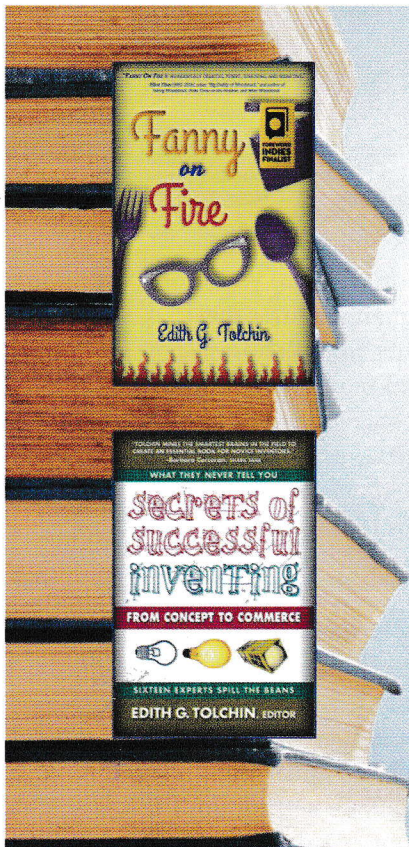
AG: An agreement was made on-air with Lori Grenier for 22 percent for \$200,000—with the stipulation that 5 of those percent would go toward helping shelter cats, and I would match with 5 percent from my share. Subsequently, following due diligence review and negotiations, no formal deal was reached.

EGT: What advice do you have for inventors interested in developing a pet product?

AG: Do lots of testing. Create several prototypes and give them to pet owners to take for a spin. Initial reviews for any product launch are critically important, so be sure to address any issues before releasing the product for sale to customers. ☘

Details: catamazing.com

Edith G Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor (opinionatededitor.com/testimonials), writer (edietolchin.com), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 (egtglobaltrading.com).



The Opinionated Editor

Edith G. Tolchin

Editor ♦ Copywriter ♦ Journalist ♦ Author

Helping you to say it **WRITE!**

www.opinionatededitor.com
editor@opinionatededitor.com

@QueenWrites
 845-321-2362

Contents

November 2022 Volume 38 Issue 11



Features

- 28 Of One Mind, One of a Kind**
Dr. Gary Michelson's Persistence
- 30 Holiday Gift Guide**
Inventors Supporting Inventors
- 36 USA James Dyson Award**
Repositionable Scoliosis Brace
- 38 Collegiate Inventors Winners**
Inventors Hall of Fame Awards

Inventor Spotlight

- 22 Easy on the Eyes**
Duo's Thermal Meditation Device
- 24 That's One Smart Cat**
The Thrill of the Hunt, at Home



42



Departments

- 6 Your USPTO**
News, Upcoming Events
- 10 Editor's Note**
'Earth to Alien ...'
- 11 Everybody's Talking**
Conversation Pieces
- 12 Bright Ideas**
Innovation That Shines
- 14 Time Tested**
The Electric Flat Iron
- 16 Lander Zone**
When Your Patent is Rejected
- 18 Social Hour**
Is Your Plan Working?
- 40 Prototyping**
Innovative Italy
- 42 IP Market**
Sniffing Out the Musk Machismo
- 44 Eye on Washington**
Tough Questions in Prince Case
- 46 Inventiveness**
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

IN COOPERATION WITH



UNITED STATES
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

NOVEMBER 2022 Volume 38 Issue 11

Inventors

DIGEST

Gift Guide

HOLIDAY INSPIRATION FROM
INDEPENDENT INVENTORS

Smells Like Musk
REACTION TO HIS
ANTI-PATENT TIRADE

\$5.95

PSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MARCELINE MO
PERMIT #13