

That's Using Your Head

WOMAN'S FASHION STATEMENT COMBINES
HEADBAND WITH READING GLASSES **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

PERSONAL CARE accessories are a huge market. I've recently covered many such products in *Inventors Digest* (Kickstands, April 2019; Makeup Junkie cosmetic bags, July 2019; Bra Bridge, September 2019; Best Pocket Square Holder, November 2019).

Many of us face the predicament of not being able to find one's reading glasses, only to discover they're resting on your head. Here's a smart combo solution of a hair accessory fashion statement and reading glasses, invented by Valerie Carbone of the Orlando, Florida, area.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Please describe Eyebandz® and how this invention came about.

Valerie Carbone (VC): Eyebandz is a headband and reading glasses in one. The lenses are camouflaged within the design of the headband.

After I turned 40, my need for reading glasses increased exponentially. I needed reading glasses to read texts, labels, a menu, and so on.

One day I reached on top of my head for the glasses I now always kept there, and accidentally pulled down a headband I was wearing that day instead. I looked at the headband design and thought, "Wait a minute. This could be and should be both." The idea for Eyebandz was born.

I researched and found there are over 39 million American women over age 40 using reading glasses daily. I knew many of these women were wearing their glasses on their heads just like me. The reason we do this is that even if we have 10 pairs, we can never find them when we need them. By far the biggest problem with needing reading glasses is finding them.

There are many problems with wearing glasses on your head. The main ones are that they fall off as you lean over, they pull your hair when you drop them down, and they can be a bit unsightly. I knew Eyebandz could easily solve all these problems, too.

Since I have my Eyebandz I can read texts, menus and labels quickly. I can run on the treadmill not worrying about my glasses falling off. I can keep better track of my expensive readers. The list is long.

I also looked at products in the reading glass arena, and all were designed to help us keep track of glasses—i.e., pins, chains, wallets with pockets. So, I knew I was on to something.

Since Eyebandz launched, I've had great feedback. However, I often must remind people that Eyebandz isn't meant to replace reading glasses; it's an option for quick reads. If you're reading a book or working on the computer, you should be using your reading glasses.

The largest issue has been people dropping them downward to use them like glasses when they're meant to be dropped to the tip of the nose. I like to say simply, "Stop, drop, and read."

EGT: What is your background?

VC: I have a master's degree in occupational therapy. The word occupational in this vocation refers to the "work of life." We focus on ADLs (activities of daily living), tasks such as dressing, eating and bathing.

As occupational therapists, we strive to educate our patients with acute or chronic disorders to be as independent and functional as possible. We are also known for our knowledge of AE & AD (adaptive equipment and assistive devices)—items such as transfer boards, walkers, adaptive utensils, etc.

In short, we are problem solvers. So inventing is often a skill most OTs possess.

EGT: Have you invented anything before?

VC: No, although I have had and continue to have many ideas for new or improved products.

My most notable idea was the rolling backpack. I watched my children and all the other children struggling to carry their heavy backpacks. Knowing the considerable harm it could be causing to their muscular and spinal systems, I thought there has to be a better way.

I made prototypes in my garage that worked quite well, and I went to the library to patent search for the idea. I shared the idea with my family and close friends. There were so many naysayers, saying things



“Since I have my Eyebandz I can read texts, menus and labels quickly. I can run on the treadmill not worrying about my glasses falling off. I can keep better track of my expensive readers.” —VALERIE CARBONE

like “Kids won’t wheel that to school” and such, so I finally just let it go. Lo and behold, five years later they were everywhere.

So, when I had the idea for Eyebandz I decided to see it through this time.

EGT: How many prototypes did it take before you were satisfied?

VC: First, let me say I’d love to see how most inventors answered this (laughing). It’s my experience that it can be quite challenging to be satisfied—not because we’re necessarily that persnickety, but because it can be difficult to get the product to match the image we have in our minds, and especially for small inventors like myself who have a limited budget. But if I had to guess, I’d say I have made a couple dozen iterations.

Although I’m quite happy with the current model I have, it’s my search for what Eyebandz can be that now has me on the path of licensing. I see in my mind the legs this product can have.

The women who embrace Eyebandz will want choices, high-end metals, woods, and so on. I see endless styles, colors, price/quality points. Perhaps in several sizes—i.e., small, medium, large. I see them so clearly in my mind, displayed at Macy’s, hanging

on endcaps at Target, CVS and Walgreens, and being demonstrated on QVC and HSN.

I’m confident a large company with vision can make them all they should be, and that is what I am focused on today. I’m looking for a relationship with a company that sees the inherent potential of Eyebandz and is willing to make it the best it can be.

EGT: Where are you manufacturing? If overseas, can you share any obstacles?

VC: Sometimes you must go overseas. Like many American inventors, I desperately wanted to produce Eyebandz here in the States.

I went to several companies, to no avail. I quickly learned that all headbands are made overseas. Additionally, most eyeglass lenses are also made there, although we do make some domestically. What we mostly make here are medical- and science-grade lenses.

I found a CAD drawer, a molding house and an injection facility and was able to source lenses from California for the first batch of Eyebandz I made here. However, they were quite expensive, and they had difficulty providing the cuts close enough to fit in the molded design properly. So as of today, Eyebandz is manufactured overseas.

EGT: Are there any governmental safety regulations involved in manufacturing this product?

VC: Yes, I learned quickly that I must register with the Food and Drug Administration and pay quite a hefty yearly fee to be an importer of glasses. And equally important, the company you're buying from must also be registered as an exporter with the FDA.

Additionally, the company you're buying from must provide safety testing such as the "Drop Ball Test" to attest to the safety of the lenses.

EGT: Is the product patented?

VC: Yes, Eyebandz has a utility patent, a design patent, and the name is trademarked. I researched and found a great attorney, John Rizvi. He calls himself "The Patent Professor" and also teaches patent law. I brought him my homemade prototypes, and the process went quite smoothly.

EGT: Where are you selling?

VC: Eyebandz is sold on Amazon. I also have a website, but the Buy button brings you to Amazon. As I mentioned earlier, my focus is on licensing Eyebandz to a company that can do it proudly.

EGT: Do you have any advice on any issues relating to the invention process?

VC: Verify there's a market for it. I attended a couple of trade shows where women would jump up and down screaming, "I love it!" and "Why didn't I think of that?"

Also, Eyebandz has been a finalist in several contests. For instance, it won the most popular invention at Maker Faire Orlando in the local invention organization area.

Another tip is if FDA compliance is needed, the FDA site has a way to research manufacturers that have the proper registration. So, go from their list.

Lastly, cherish the support of your family and friends. They can hold us up in times of struggle and doubt. ☺

Details: eyebandz.com

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (fannyonfire.com) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



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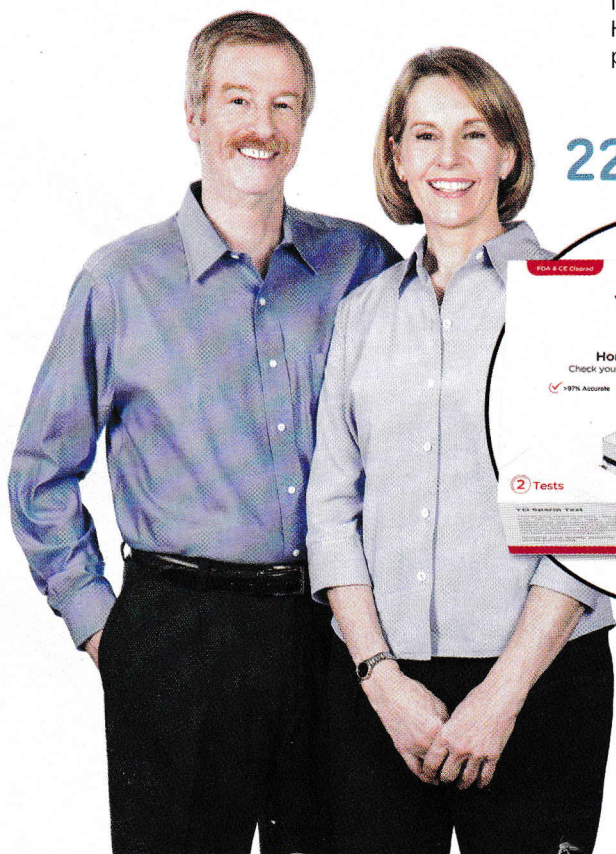
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Ivy Losaw (left) and Harper Losaw;
photo by Jeremy Losaw



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