

The Gift of **Grab**

COUPLE'S SIMPLE SHOWER WALL ATTACHMENT COLLECTS CLUMPS OF HAIR **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

HAIR, HAIR, EVERYWHERE! This can be a problem when it clings to your shower or bathtub walls, or clogs drains.

HairyGrabster® is a simple, new “Why didn’t I think of that?” invention to solve this problem. The inventors are Patricia J. Watne and Andrew T. Watne from Orland Park, Illinois.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did you come up with the idea? How does it work?

Patricia J. Watne (PJW): One day Andy came to me, looking very concerned. He was sure our oldest daughter needed to see a doctor. “Look at all the hair she lost in the shower!”

He had no idea people with longer hair lose so much hair in the shower, or that there was no way to manage and contain the shed hair. I explained to him that many people resort to using the shower wall to collect the wet hair from their hands, while others ball it up or just let it go down the drain. As we discussed the issue further, we realized this was a problem we could solve. The seed of HairyGrabster was planted.

To use a HairyGrabster, you attach it to the shower wall with the suction cups on the back. Once you have hair tangled on your hand, you simply swipe both sides of the hand on HairyGrabster. The hair is quickly and easily removed from the hand and held neatly in place.

EGT: Have you ever invented before?

PJW: HairyGrabster is the first product either of us has conceived and brought into production. We’ve had other ideas before but none that we’ve attempted to license or manufacture.

Andy started his career in bond trading at the Chicago Board of Trade before transitioning into IT project management.

I have always worked in sales and design in the floral industry. I am part of the fourth generation of my family’s 100-year-old retail flower business.

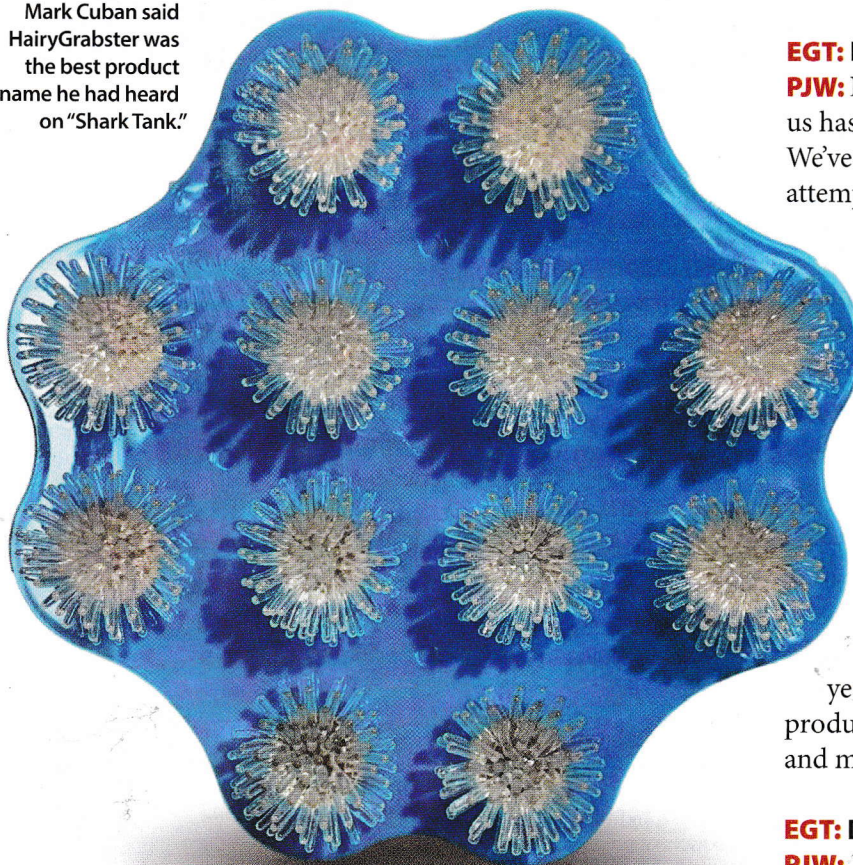
EGT: Had you tried crowdfunding before “Shark Tank”?

PJW: Going into “Shark Tank,” we were completely self-funded. We have bootstrapped the company over the past four years, using our money from our savings for product development, patent, manufacturing and marketing.

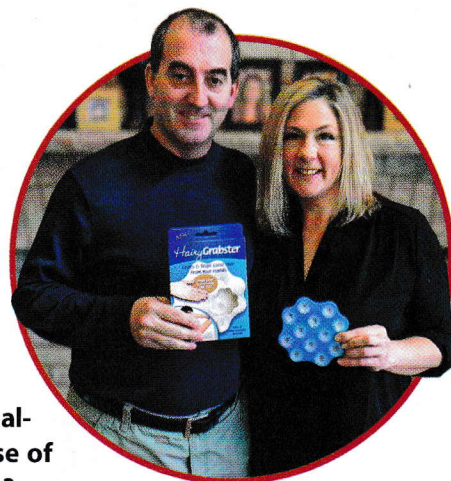
EGT: Did you get a deal on “Shark Tank”?

PJW: In our discussion with the Sharks, they

Mark Cuban said HairyGrabster was the best product name he had heard on “Shark Tank.”



“There are so many amazing inventors willing to share their successes, failures, and lessons learned!” —PATRICIA J. WATNE



felt we were too early and our sales too low for them to get involved.

Daymond John told us he got it and understood that we wouldn't miss the chance to present in the "Tank," but we were too early for him. Mark Cuban said that "HairyGrabster" was the best product name he had heard in the "Tank," and he shared helpful marketing ideas with us. Barbara Corcoran had a lot of questions about our sales. In the end, we did not receive any offers from any Sharks.

EGT: Where are you selling the HairyGrabster?

PJW: We sell HairyGrabster on our website, as well as Amazon and Walmart.com. We have participated in Zulily sale events and have them available in local salons and gift shops.

EGT: How is the HairyGrabster packaged, and who designed it?

PJW: Andy and I went on a lot of "dates" walking aisles at stores to look at packaging. We explored the pros and cons of clamshell packaging and poly bags with cardboard headers before making the decision to use a cardboard box.

Being a new concept, the box provided the most space to illustrate and explain both the problem and our solution. We sought out boxes that told their product's story well for inspiration and worked to emulate the best parts of what we found.

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

PJW: We are manufacturing overseas. Between the difficulty in molding our product and the smaller order quantities we had to start with, we were not able to find a U.S. company to manufacture HairyGrabster. Most were reluctant to even give us a quote. We would love to bring our manufacturing back on shore at some point.

EGT: Have you had challenges with any phase of product development?

PJW: We have faced challenges in every phase of product development!

The first CAD engineer we worked with took one look at our prototype and told us the product could not be manufactured as designed. Taking his advice, we changed our design to be more "injection mold friendly."

When we 3D printed the new design, the product didn't work—at all. We didn't know what to do next.

We were referred to a new CAD engineer who assured us our first design could be manufactured. He quickly created new designs, referred us to a patent attorney, and began sending out for U.S. manufacturing quotes. Every answer we received was "no quote."

We then looked overseas. We found a manufacturer and received a sample. It worked great and we paid for the mold. Soon after, we discovered our project had not been run through the company, and the salesman had taken off with our money.

Time to regroup once again. Eventually, we found an overseas manufacturing partner. Being extra cautious, we didn't send all our drawings at once. We made sure they could produce the difficult portion (the bristles) and after that part was made, we sent the backplate. We had all the parts shipped to us and assembled the first lot ourselves.

Now that we have established a sense of trust, we have them manufacture, assemble and box each piece.

EGT: Who manages your quality control and PR?

PJW: We manage everything in house. Andy handles quality control in the evenings, checking

the suction cups and bristles for any damage or malformation. I oversee our PR, communications, social media, orders, and all other day-to-day operations.

We are currently in the process of contracting with a marketing company to expand our reach and messaging.

EGT: Do you plan on introducing any new items to your product line?

PJW: We will be adding a butterfly-shaped HairyGrabster in the next few months. We are finalizing colors now.

We have several other shapes we would like to eventually add as well. We are also exploring further uses for HairyGrabster.

EGT: What advice do you have for novice inventors on developing a household product?

PJW: First, join inventors groups. Participate in the events, read the newsletters, network with other members. There are so many amazing

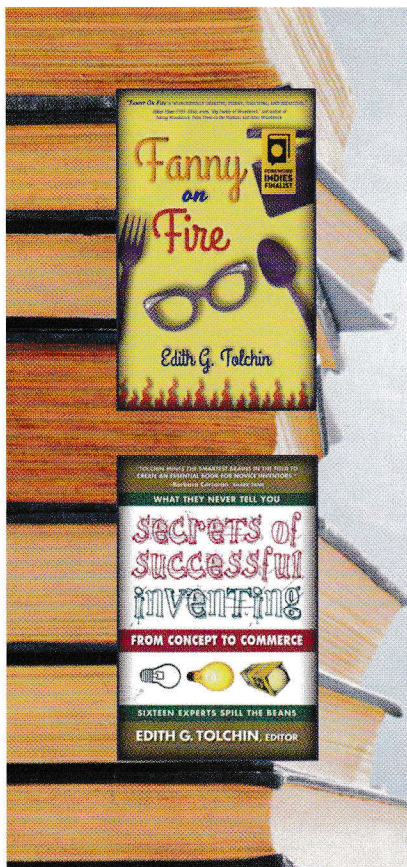
inventors willing to share their successes, failures, and lessons learned!

Second, once you've identified a household problem and developed the solution, research. Research patents for similar products; see if other solutions exist on the market; look at online forums for people complaining about the problem; ballpark your production cost, identify the likely retail price.

As you gauge market size, demand, cost and profit, you're better equipped to decide whether to invest your time, effort and money in product development. You can also weigh bringing the product to market yourself versus licensing. ☺

Details: hairygrabster.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).



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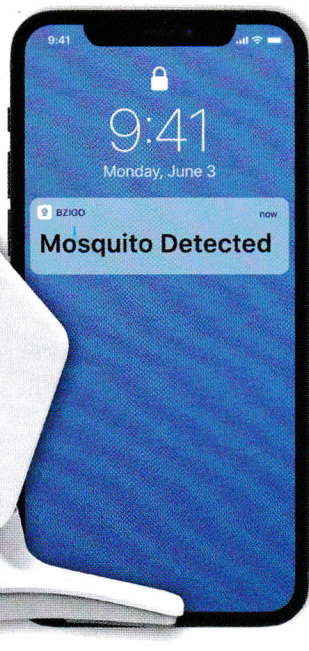
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