

Kids' Fun on the Go

COUPLE'S TOILET-TRAINING PRODUCT INSPIRED BY CHALLENGES WITH THEIR FIRST-BORN DAUGHTER **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

FOR THOSE with young children, grandchildren, or even with relatives who are beginning the arduous path toward toilet-training a toddler, inventor Mindy Wright's Potty Time ADVENTures is a unique and colorful option.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): I understand you have an interesting backstory.

Mindy Wright (MW): My husband, Brandon, and I have been sellers on Amazon since 2009. It was the Wild West time of Amazon, when they recently opened the marketplace to products other than books.

We started selling small home and kitchen goods as a side gig in hopes it would become

a full-time job for us. We lived in a tiny, one-bedroom apartment in Green Lake, Washington, about a 10-minute drive from downtown Seattle. We lined our apartment walls with shelving to house our product and used our bedroom as a shipping station. Our bed was in place of the dining table.

In 2011, we quit our other jobs (interior design and pressure washing) and moved to Renton, Washington, and bought our first home—which is where we still live—to do this full time. By 2015, we were doing over \$1 million in sales annually on Amazon. This continued and we thrived until 2018 when Amazon Basics launched, and the market became oversaturated with sellers and duplicate listings.

When this happened, we immediately saw a huge decline in sales. Brandon and I still wanted to sell on Amazon but knew we had to start, create, and manufacture our own proprietary product to set us apart.

Amid all this happening, we were struggling with potty-training our daughter Ruby. One evening, Brandon thought of things he enjoyed as a child, and Advent calendars came to mind.

He said, "Wouldn't it be fun to mash-up an Advent calendar and a potty chart?" My response was, "Brilliant!" That weekend, I created a mockup and tried it with Ruby. Her response was overwhelmingly positive and that weekend, Lil ADVENTS was born.

EGT: How long did it take to potty-train your children using this product?

MW: On average it takes kiddos 60 to 90 successful deposits to become fully potty-trained. When we thought of this product

Potty Time ADVENTures was conceived as a mash-up of an Advent calendar and a potty chart.



“Since this product has not been made before, we needed to clearly think everything through and visualize how our customers would use this from start to finish and get the best bang for their buck.” —MINDY WRIGHT



and tried it out with Ruby, she was around the 60-deposit mark; hence, our frustration and reason for thinking outside the box.

When we started her on our prototype, she was potty-trained in two weeks. Our second child, Daisy, just became potty-trained and it took her about three weeks total.

EGT: How did you create your first prototype? Did you have to make many before you were production-ready?

MW: We created one prototype over a week-end by manipulating a cardboard game box and taped graphics on it. After that, we went to work by learning (Adobe) Illustrator software and creating all our graphics and documents for the manufacturer.

Next, we went through three sample rounds with the manufacturer to get all the kinks worked out before we went into full production. Our first 40-foot container landed on November 18, 2019.

EGT: Have you patented PottyTime ADVENTures—and if so, was it difficult?

MW: We have a patent pending currently. We hired a patent lawyer to do this for us, so it wasn't necessarily difficult, but it is very expensive and is a lengthy process.

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

MW: We have three themes: Farm Animals, Dinosaurs and Busy Vehicles. Our fourth theme should be available soon: Unicorn Friends.

EGT: Where are you selling?

MW: We sell on our website, Amazon.com,

BuyBuyBaby.com, BedBathandBeyond.com, Walmart.com, eBay.com and will have soon launched on Target.com.

We are also in over 40 “Mom and Pop” shops across the United States.

EGT: Because these are products for children, is each production batch CPSIA (Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act) certified?

MW: Yes, 100 percent. The intended age range is considered “for 18 months and older.”

EGT: Tell us about your manufacturing experience.

MW: We manufacture our products in China. Just by our stars aligning at the perfect time, we were able to get in contact with a toy mogul and present him with our idea over a video chat. He loved the idea and just by chance was planning a trip to China three weeks later.

EGT: Have you found any glitches or obstacles while developing the products?

MW: I think the biggest obstacles while developing Potty Time ADVENTures has been creating a new category in the potty-training space and doing it well. Since this product has not been made before, we needed to clearly think everything through and visualize how our customers would use this from start to finish and get the best bang for their buck. It seems simple, but when you start from square one, the possibilities are endless.

The real challenge arose when our first container left China. It was marked for an

Husband-and-wife team Brandon and Mindy Wright saw great progress while testing their invention with their children Daisy (second from left) and Ruby.

intensive exam (by U.S. Customs) when it arrived in the Port of Tacoma, Washington. This is because we are new importers. This extended our delivery date by a few weeks during the worst time possible for sellers and cost us thousands of dollars.

Then when listing our products on Amazon, another seller was fraudulently using our UPC codes, so our listings were not showing up correctly until about February or March of 2020. If you searched our product, a black T-Shirt would pull up, which was very frustrating!

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

MW: We launched on Amazon in late November 2019 but didn't have everything worked out until about February or March 2020 due to the whole

UPC fiasco. Our sales really started at that time. For 2020 we hit about \$200,000 in revenue, with roughly 8,000 units sold.

EGT: Any advice for inventors looking to develop a new children's product?

MW: Put yourself in your customer's shoes. I know this answer is extremely played out, but that's because it's true. Think about who your customer is so you can really target your market. If your product doesn't appeal to your market, it won't sell. 🐼

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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.



2 Critical Steps to getting your NEW PRODUCT "out there"

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2 GET A WEBSITE!

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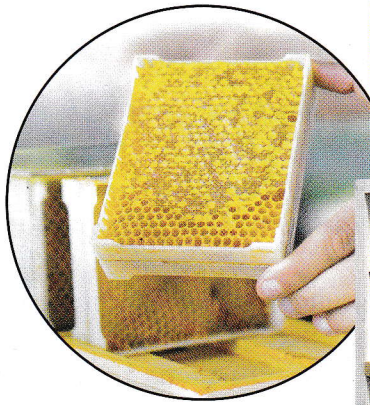
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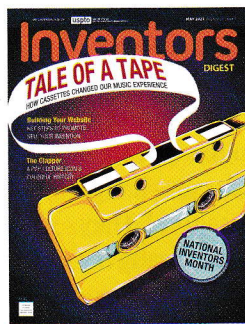
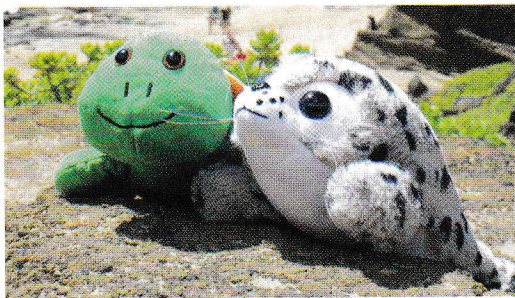
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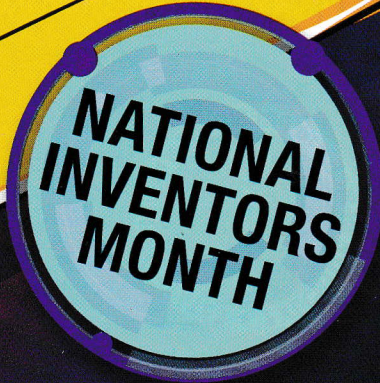
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