

Practical Pouch for Purse Packing

WOMAN'S INVENTION PREVENTS HAIRBRUSH MESSSES,
HELPS WITH ORGANIZATION **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

TYPICALLY like to feature products by women inventors because they are innate problem solvers and frequently underrepresented in this industry. Here is a business owned by Athalia Monae of Chicago, whose simple new product solved the problem of packing a hairbrush for travel.

Perhaps you're in a hurry and have some hair gel left on your brush but have no time to thoroughly clean it before packing it. Pouches by ALAHTA offers a solution.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did Pouches by ALAHTA products come about?

Athalia Monae (AM): Several years ago, I was searching for a pouch of some sort to store my hairbrush or comb. At the time, I was wrapping my comb or hairbrush in a paper towel to prevent stray hairs and hair product from transferring from the hairbrush onto the contents of my purse.

I searched several community stores, retailers and even online for a hairbrush pouch where I could store either one of my hairbrushes or combs, but none of them had what I was looking for. So, one day I was sitting at my kitchen table trying to figure out if there was any stone left unturned when I came up with the idea to create my own.

Before finally deciding on doing it, I continued researching thoroughly for hairbrush pouches similar to the one I envisioned. But after several days of fruitless research, I sketched what I wanted my product to look like, had my first prototype made, and contacted a patent attorney to find out if I could patent my design. When he told me we could try, I started my journey.

EGT: What problem does the hairbrush pouch solve? How is it different from similar pouches?

AM: Not only does the ALAHTA pouch solve the problem of stray hairs transferring from hairbrushes or combs onto the contents of purses, travel luggage, or gym bags, it also helps keep things organized.

Most of the time I carry a mid- to large-sized purse, and things are constantly getting lost in there. With our pouch, my hairbrush or comb is one less thing to worry about losing.

I own a Denman brush, a round brush, a rake tail comb, a paddle brush, a rat tail comb, and a wide-tooth comb. I would like to be able to store either one of those in my pouch.

The thing that makes our pouch stand out from other similar products is its unique design. Although it comes in one shape and size, our pouch can accommodate hairbrushes and combs of different shapes and sizes, providing the customer with better value for their money.

Moreover, the material used to make the product makes it easy to clean with a damp, soapy cloth or in the washing machine on gentle cycle. Another added benefit is the selection of different colors and prints we offer.

EGT: Did it take several prototypes for you to get to production quality?

AM: Oh, yes! I had a total of nine prototypes made by four different manufacturers before I was satisfied. A beautiful thing that came out of that experience was that I learned a lot from the people I was working with, while also building positive connections.

“Our idea with our hairbrush pouch was to design a product for traveling needs that’s not only practical, but trendy and stylish as well.” —ATHALIA MONAE

EGT: Are any of your products patented? (Especially the hairbrush pouch?) If so, please let us know if the process was difficult. If not, what distinguishes your products from other similar pouches?

AM: Yes, the ALAHTA pouch is patented. The process was not actually difficult.

First, I carried out a thorough research myself to make sure my idea didn’t already exist. Then, when I hired a patent attorney, he explained that they do their own research on behalf of their clients prior to filing the patent application, which pleased me because I was afraid I might have missed something during my research. Fortunately, I didn’t.

EGT: How many products are you featuring? What is the retail pricing? Colors and sizes? Different fabrics?

AM: We’re currently featuring the ALAHTA pouch, which is made of polyurethane and knit material and is available in black with a red accent color (houndstooth print), grey with a yellow accent color (houndstooth print), and solid black with a white accent color.

The pouch dimensions are 11-by-4.5-by-2 cm, and the retail price is \$24.99. We’re also featuring a black polyurethane leather jewelry pouch which retails at \$10.99, and two suede jewelry pouches in tan and pink at \$7.99 each.

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

AM: Originally, our plan was to manufacture in the U.S.A., but the manufacturers I worked with weren’t able to make the product to my satisfaction, so we decided to produce overseas.



The manufacturer who produced our product was very kind and professional. They stuck to the schedule and made sure we were satisfied throughout the process.

The one thing that disappointed me, however, was that some product was missing. After discussing the matter with the agent, we came to the conclusion that it must have been lost during shipping.

EGT: Have you ever considered applying for “Shark Tank” or done any crowdfunding?

AM: I’ve never done any crowdfunding, but maybe I will consider applying for “Shark Tank” one day. I’ve had several people ask me that, but at this time, I don’t believe I would be a good candidate for the show because I don’t have the numbers, as far as sales go.

Pouches by ALAHTA can accommodate hairbrushes and combs of different shapes and sizes.

EGT: Who manages your PR?

AM: I manage my own PR. Besides being a business attorney, I've always represented myself.

EGT: What has been your biggest obstacle in product development?

AM: I've had several challenges on this journey which I'm grateful for because out of those challenges, I've met some great people. Also, it has helped with my personal growth. However, I would have to say that commercialization has been my biggest obstacle in product development.

EGT: Do you have any guidance for new entrepreneurs?

AM: I would say that entrepreneurship is not for the faint of heart. It's a lot of work, research, commitment, diligence and sacrifice.

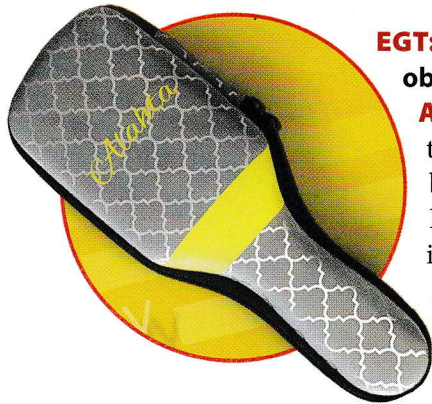
But if this is something you feel passionate about doing, stick with it; don't give up. If you need to walk away from that project for a second to regroup, allow yourself to do that.

Don't see situations that didn't work out as failures. Use them as motivation to do better. Most important: Stay focused.

EGT: Where do you see Pouches by ALAHTA in the next five years?

AM: I will be adding more prints, colors and new products in the near future. I see Pouches by ALAHTA in multiple retailers, locally and internationally, and with several new products. ☺

Details: amonae@pouchesbyalahta.com



More prints, colors and new products are planned.

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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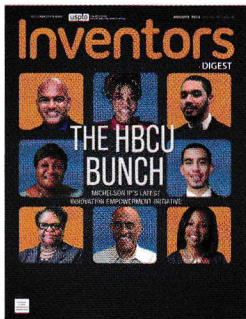
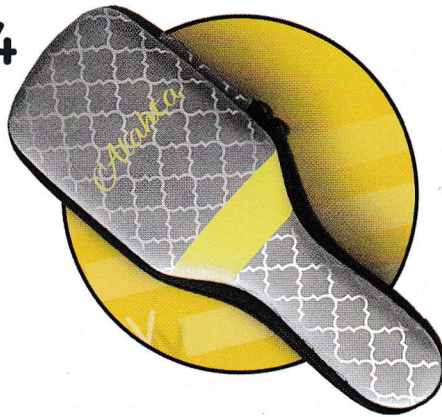
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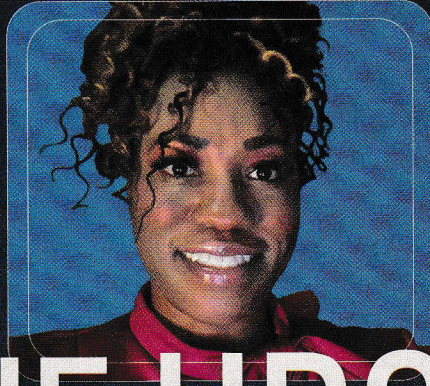
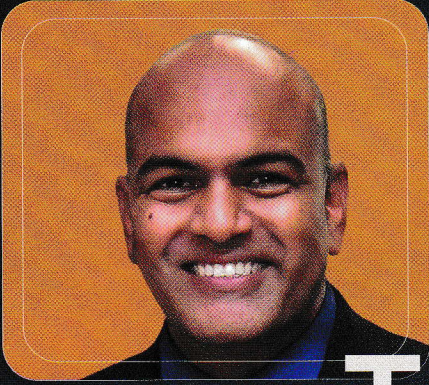
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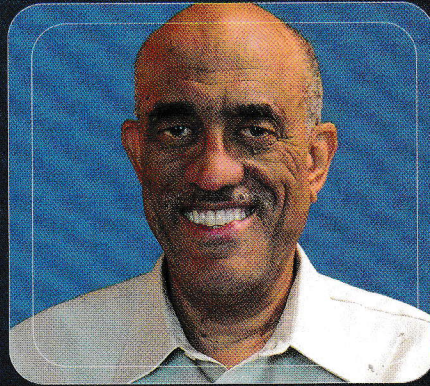
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