

So why are inventors so cuckoo for Quirky?

One of the newest, and youngest inventor-friendly businesses (founder Ben Kaufman was born in 1986,) Quirky was created with the goal of helping inventors fulfill their dreams. Our contributing editor, Edie G. Tolchin, interviewed a busy Ben Kaufman, by way of his kind assistant Tiffany Markofsky, with the goal of demystifying this unique, new, and quirky Quirky!

Edie G. Tolchin (EGT): Tell us about your background, education and your childhood – where are you from?

Ben Kaufman (BK): I grew up in Long Island, New York. I always had an entrepreneurial spirit but was a very bad student. Before Quirky, I had mophie, which I started in high school in the back of math class. I had a product idea and forced my parents to remortgage their house to allow me to try to execute that idea. I realized how hard it was to build consumer products. I was successful getting that out and launching the company mophie, but through the process realized how difficult it was and that most inventions are left up to luck and circumstance. Inventing is the most important thing in the world and for it to be left up to luck just didn't feel right. I wanted to create a platform where ideas were pushed out into the world because they were great, not because they came from someone who was lucky.

EGT: Do you have any inventions? Do you hold any patents?

BK: When I was in high school, I designed my first product called Song Sling. I was trying to listen to my iPod Shuffle in math class without my teacher noticing. I went home after class one day and crafted this prototype out of ribbon and lanyard. This was the beginning of mophie. From there, I created an entire line of iPod cases under the mophie brand.

EGT: Where did the idea for Quirky come from? Do you have any partners?

BK: I was on the subway one day and saw a woman wearing Song Sling – the product I designed – and had this sort of epiphany. I made that! It was the best feeling in the world. I knew in that moment that I wasn't unique in having the idea – everyone has ideas – but I was unique in the circumstances that came about to allow me to take that product from concept to reality. I wanted to make the invention process accessible so other people could experience that feeling. I created Quirky to help inventors see their products come to life.

EGT: When did you open up Quirky?

BK: We launched Quirky in 2009.

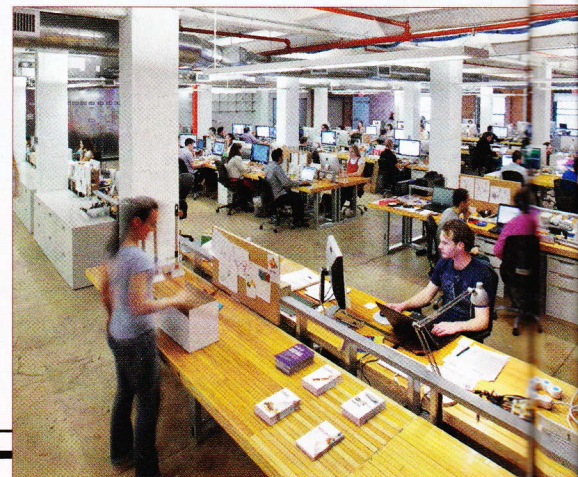
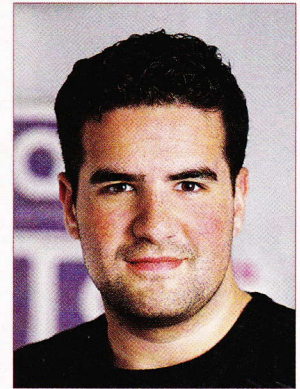
EGT: What does Quirky do? Do you have a mission statement?

BK: We make inventions accessible. To take ideas from pipe dream to consumer product, our in-house team of designers and engineers collaborate with our online community on nearly every aspect of development. Anyone can make his or her mark by submitting a problem-solving idea or weighing in on others. And when a product is sold, we share the revenue with every community member that had an impact.

EGT: Has funding for Quirky ever been an issue? Have you ever used crowdfunding?

BK: We've had several funding rounds and have raised about \$175M in total.

EGT: How can readers of Inventors Digest work with, or join Quirky? What



is the process? What are the fees involved?

BK: Anyone can join-- you just have to go to quirky.com to sign up and start inventing. There's no fee, and your idea can be simply that – an idea. If you have a prototype, great, but we don't require anything more than a written description of the problem you're trying to solve and how you intend to solve it.

EGT: Did you face any challenges along your journey? Any obstacles?

BK: I face challenges every day. Bringing one single product to market is not easy. That's why we exist. We bring new products to market each week. I think that generally people underestimate the entire process: everything from design, getting a patent, manufacturing, retail sales, distribution, to marketing, among many other things. Inventing is hard. We are here to make it easy for you

EGT: Have you learned any lessons from these challenges?

BK: Don't be afraid to fail. Just keep doing it.

EGT: Since most of our readers are novice inventors, can you share any words of wisdom with them?

BK: The best ideas in the world are sitting inside people's heads. Get yours out there and do something with them!

About Ben Kaufman:

Ben Kaufman—Breaker, Maker, Founder and CEO of Quirky—makes invention accessible. At 18, he founded his first company, mophie, and learned just how difficult it is to bring one single product to market. In 2009, Ben launched Quirky to break down the barriers to invention and allow creative people all over the world to invent together. He's helped hundreds of everyday inventors bring their product ideas to life and forged partnerships with the world's largest retailers to sell those products. Today, Ben and Quirky continue to redefine the way the world thinks about product development and invention.

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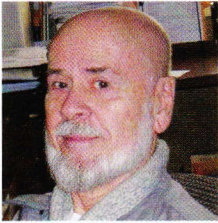


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JACK LANDER, our regular columnist on all things prototyping, licensing and inventing, explores the gap between inventor and entrepreneur. Jack, a near-legend in the inventing community, is no stranger to the written word. His latest book is *Marketing Your Invention – A Complete Guide to Licensing, Producing and Selling Your Invention*. You can reach him at Jack@Inventor-mentor.com



DHANA COHEN Co-founder of The Women Inventorz Network and the newly created Inventorz(VIRTUAL)Network. Dhana knows a thing or two about great innovation, as an inventor herself she struggled with who to contact, and who truly had her best interest in mind. Luckily she stopped inventing after several products and took her background in marketing and partnered with Melinda Knight, together they have developed the right connections, education and marketing for the inventor community. The new (VIRTUAL) InventorzNetwork.com is the only platform out there in the inventor industry, think Match.com meets Angie's List for the inventor industry.



EDIE TOLCHIN, known as "The Sourcing Lady" (SM), "invented" EGT Global Trading in 1997, with a goal to link U.S. inventors with Asian manufacturers, to provide an exclusive import service for sourcing, quality control, production testing and safety issues, manufacturing, international financing, air/ocean shipping, customs clearance arrangements, and dock-to-door delivery. Website: www.egtglobaltrading.com



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