

It's All Downhill From Here

POCKET-SIZED TOTE WITH A WHEEL LETS SKIERS ROLL THEIR SKIS INSTEAD OF CARRYING THEM **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

HAVE NEVER attempted skiing or had any inclination to do so. But many years ago I wrote one of my first newspaper columns from high atop Belleayre Mountain in New York state, safely ensconced inside the ski lodge, content with just a laptop and a hot chocolate.

The views were gorgeous, and I never had to worry about falling flat on my bum. And even if I never plan on skiing or snowboarding, I do know good inventions. Here is one that was "bitten" by "Shark Tank" star Barbara Corcoran.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): What is your background, and have you invented anything before this product?

Kyle Allen (KA): I was born and raised in the south. My wife and I currently split our time between our home in Lafayette, Louisiana, and Snowmass, Colorado.

I have been an entrepreneur all my life. I have started and sold several companies, mostly involving the oil and gas industry. Ski-Z® is the first invention I have created for retail.

EGT: What is Ski-Z, and how does it work?

KA: Ski-Z is a pocket-sized ski tote designed with a wheel, so skiers of all ages can easily roll their skis instead of having to carry them. The Ski-Z simply attaches to the front of your skis with a handy Velcro strap. You can push it, pull it and turn it on a dime!

EGT: What is Ski-Z made of?

KA: The Ski-Z is a nylon injection mold that fits on the front of your skis and tightens with a Velcro (hook and loop) strap. The skis are carried by a super high rebound wheel that allows your skis to roll on any surface.

EGT: What are the color choices? How is the product packaged?

KA: Ski-Z comes in four dynamic colors: red, green, gray and pink. The packaging is small and colorful and made with recycled cardboard.

EGT: Tell us about your "Shark Tank" experience.

KA: Last July, my wife Tanya and I were at a restaurant in Denver having dinner. Tanya asked me what project we should focus on next. I told her my dream was to get Ski-Z on "Shark Tank." It had been on my mind for eight years.

Tanya immediately reached for her phone and looked up "Shark Tank" audition dates and locations. We were shocked to find out that the last auditions for the year were in one week from that day, and they were going to be held right there in Denver! We quickly called our friend and business partner Nick Palermo. He was onboard to be on the show, and the next five months were crazy.

The live filming of the show was at Sony Studios in Culver City, California. The filming was very intense. It was like being in combat! They filmed us live and uninterrupted for 45 minutes. The editing team cut it down to 10 minutes for the airing of the show. It was an amazing experience. We ended up making a deal with Barbara Corcoran for \$50,000 and 15 percent of our company.

EGT: Your website says that Ski-Z is made in the USA. How were you able to keep costs down low enough to keep from manufacturing overseas?

KA: Our labor force in the United States is far more superior when it comes to quality than in many other countries. Understanding manufacturing and how to utilize the labor force in the United States is the cornerstone to Ski-Z's success.

EGT: What is the retail price? Where are you selling?

KA: The original cost is \$24.95. However, it has sold for as low \$18.95 during specific sale promotions. It



“Once you have a thought, take that idea and reverse engineer it. Set goals based on what outcome you would like to obtain.” —KYLE ALLEN



is currently sold on our website SkiJunk.com and also on Amazon. It will be sold through local retailers in the near future.

EGT: Please tell us about your patent experience.

KA: It was a difficult and timely process. During that time, there were several companies in the United States and overseas that were attempting to infringe on our product. Our utility patent took two years to process and was finalized in 2013. The name Ski-Z is trademarked.

EGT: Who handles your PR?

KA: Our PR is handled in-house.

EGT: Any plans to add items to your product line?

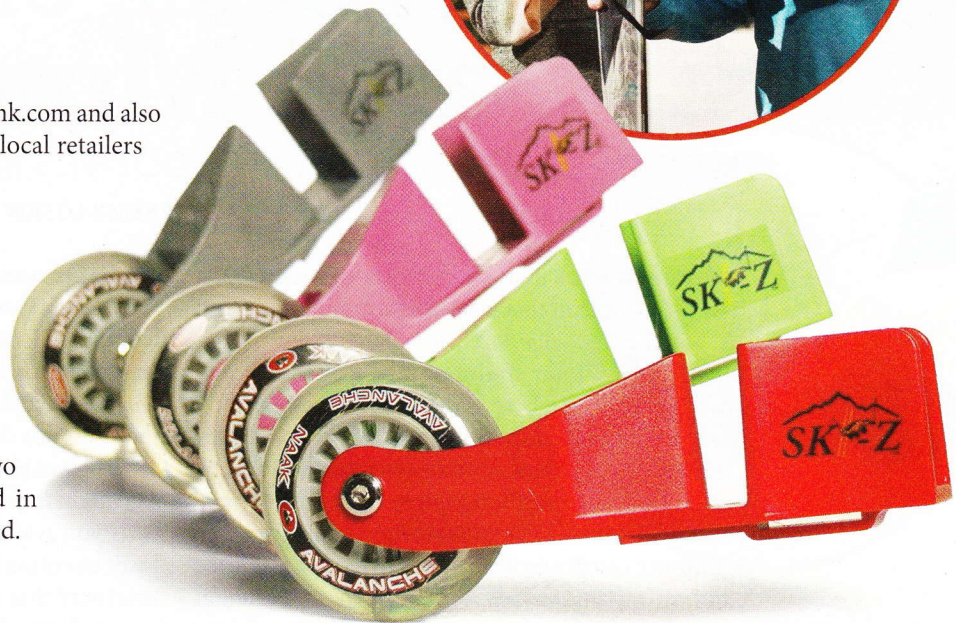
KA: Other products are being discussed, but our main focus right now is Ski-Z.

EGT: Can you share any advice for novice inventors?

KA: Never let an invention be a dream ... make it reality! There will be many setbacks, but I believe that setbacks are made to be set-ups. Don't let the valleys discourage you. With risk comes reward!

There is always so much excitement on the front end of an invention, and sometimes you lose sight of the result. My advice is once you have a thought, take that idea and reverse engineer it. Set goals based on what outcome you would like to obtain. Evaluate your idea and transform it into a business plan. Ask yourself the important questions, not the imaginary ones. In the early stages, it's easy to make poor decisions based on emotion—such as: taking on partnerships, inviting in friends or family, giving away too much equity, or mortgaging something that is already paid off.

An invention is a long-term goal. It can take years for it to transpire. You have to have good planning and patience.



Think of your invention as a seed. You have to nurture it before it reaches its full potential. During the period of incubation, it would be wise to study the risk, market size and associated cost in marketing.

At this point, a comprehensive study by a third party could be very valuable in your business plan. These types of companies can offer you analytics that can assist you in setting realistic goals and expectations.

In everyday life, traffic signals we're accustomed to are in the order of green, yellow and red. To an inventor, or in a successful business, it should be the opposite. You should reverse the color order to: red (stop and evaluate), yellow (caution and research), and then green (proceed). 🚦

Details: info@skijunk.com

Above: “Shark Tank” star Barbara Corcoran was so impressed with Kyle Allen’s Ski-Z that she made a deal with his company for \$50,000 and 15 percent of the company.

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.

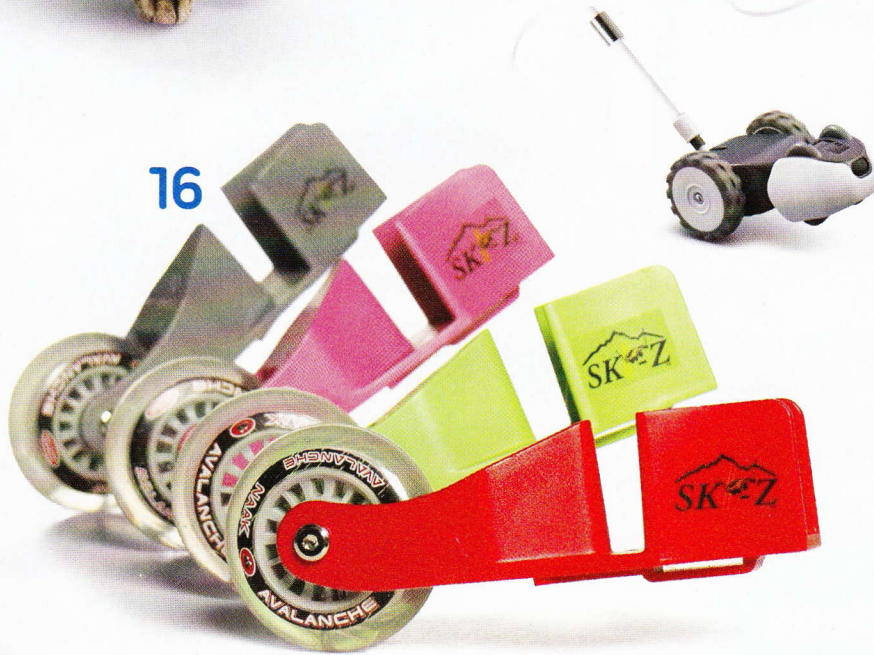


Contents

May 2019 Volume 35 Issue 5



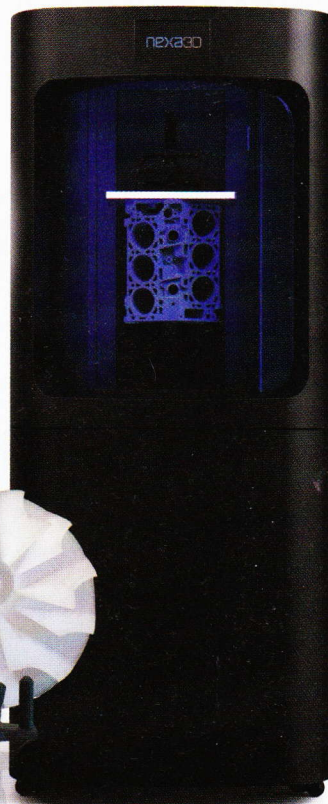
18



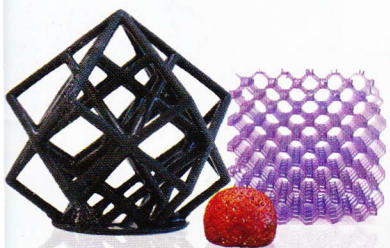
16



10



32



Feature

- 20 Auto Innovation**
Top 10 for 2019, All Time; Raht Racer; Driverless Cars; Curmudgeon vs. Millennial

Inventor Spotlight

- 16 All Downhill From Here**
Ski Tote With a Wheel
- 18 Novel Cat-Mouse Game**
3 Develop Robotic Toy

Departments

- 7 Everybody's Talking**
Conversation Pieces
- 8 Bright Ideas**
Innovation That Shines
- 10 Time Tested**
A Last Will for Peace
- 12 Social Hour**
7-Step Social Media Plan
- 14 To Market**
A Sell Sheet Primer
- 32 Prototyping**
Hottest 3D Trends
- 35 Inventing 101**
3D Printing at the Library
- 36 IP Market**
Back to Square One?
- 40 Eye on Washington**
Serial Attacks on Patent Portfolios; Seeking More Inventorship for Women
- 46 Inventiveness**
Focus on the Fun and Fascinating

Inventors

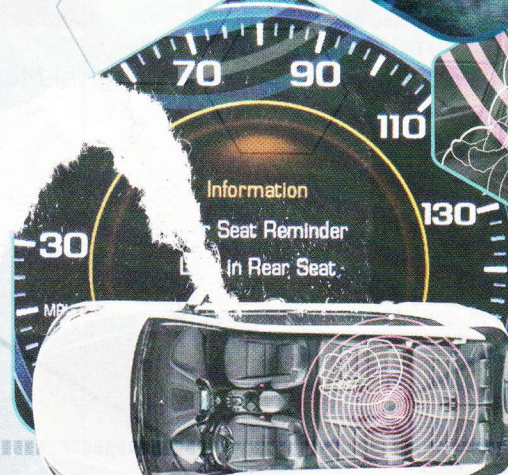
MAY 2019 Volume 35 Issue 05

DIGEST

Auto Innovation

CURRENT BEST TECHNOLOGY
ALL-TIME TOP 10 INVENTIONS
PEDAL-POWERED RAHT RACER

**NATIONAL
INVENTORS
MONTH**



\$5.95

PRST STANDARD
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 38
FULTON, MO

PRND2