

Lightening the Load

ERGONOMIC, STRAPLESS BABY CARRIER
WITH STORAGE CATCHES ON WITH PARENTS

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN



Tammy Rant relaxes with her family (clockwise from left): Norah, Dan, Dylan and Bailey.

I'VE been manufacturing baby products in China for many years. I recently came upon a baby product with a catchy name, TushBaby.

I contacted the inventor, Tammy Rant, who founded California-based TushBaby Inc. She is a busy wife and mom of three little daughters, including a newborn.

The feature that I like best about this product is that it distributes the baby's weight evenly, allowing for comfortable carrying without stressing one's posture. And who doesn't love lots of storage room for baby's and parents' odds and ends?

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How does TushBaby work, and what are the distinct advantages over other carriers and similar products?

Tammy Rant (TR): TushBaby is a unique, strapless baby carrier designed to help caregivers carry their kids comfortably, stash their stuff conveniently, and save their backs. With TushBaby, you can ditch the sacks, packs and annoying strap-ins. This soft, ergonomic baby carrier sits right above your hip. It just takes one safe, sturdy buckle to put it on.

EGT: Please tell us about your background, and what led to this invention.

TR: I've been in software sales for the last 10 years. Five years ago, I had my first child and since then I've had two more.

I was shocked that I couldn't find an easy, comfortable way to carry my kids, and I knew other parents had the same problem. It was a pain in my arms and a strain on my back to shift my kids from hip to hip every five minutes.

Strollers were too bulky. Strap-in carriers were too complicated. And wraps and sacks were too hot and sweaty. So I created my own solution with TushBaby, an ergonomic hip-seat that evenly distributes weight to reduce back, arm, and hip strain, and has built-in storage so parents don't have to lug around three bags. TushBaby was truly born out of pure and simple necessity.

EGT: How did you create your first prototype? How many tweaks did you need?

TR: I asked my sister to draw up the concept I had in my head. And then I sent her renderings to a small manufacturer to create the prototype.

I'll never forget wearing that first model to a local park, where I was practically tackled by 12 mothers and fathers asking where they could buy one. Right then I knew I had a real problem-solving product on my hands, and I began working closely with designers, manufacturers, and pediatricians to create a safe, ergonomic hip-seat carrier for caregivers of any age.

It took 12 iterations until I got it just right—though now, of course, I'm refining the style and adding a few more features.

"I'll never forget wearing that first model to a local park, where I was practically tackled by 12 mothers and fathers asking where they could buy one." —TAMMY RANT

EGT: Please share your patent process.

TR: I've learned much more about patent law than I ever anticipated I would! My sister happens to be an IP attorney with the biggest law firm in the world, so she knew exactly who to refer me to for product patent advice and applications.

I spent a lot of time reviewing the design and utility of my product with my attorney and ended up applying for four patents. We are planning to apply for one more, since we are now testing some new features for a spring release of a new version.

EGT: Have you done any crowdfunding in addition to appearing on "Shark Tank"?

TR: As soon as I was accepted on "Shark Tank," I launched a Kickstarter campaign to gauge customer interest and raise money for manufacturing. Kickstarter BLEW UP—earning \$124,000, which was well above the \$10,000 value that I'd set.

During that month-long campaign, our product was featured on BuzzFeed, Parents, Good Housekeeping and more than 15 major outlets, garnering over 60 million views. We went viral in a matter of weeks!

By the time I got on "Shark Tank," I was feeling pretty good about our business potential. But it was still terrifying getting in front of the sharks without having any sales numbers—not to mention, I was five months pregnant and still suffering from H.G. (which is like morning sickness on steroids).

I only partly remember rattling off my pitch, sending the babies off the stage, and then answering all their questions. All the adrenaline made the experience blur. And even though they grilled me, I was thrilled to get a deal with Lori Greiner—especially after two other sharks had pulled out.

EGT: How many styles, fabrics, sizes and colors have you created?

TR: We launched TushBaby with two colors—black and grey—and one size, along with an extension belt add-on. We're about to launch four colors (black, grey, cheetah and camo) with new zipper and button details. We also now offer two sizes: petite and average, and the extension belt for more room.

EGT: How has the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act affected the way your product is being manufactured? What kind of production testing and certifications are required for TushBaby?

TR: We comply with all the required testing for the Consumer Products Safety Commission and beyond. Since we were already using high-quality materials that passed global standards, no new requirement impacted us other than needing to do additional testing.

It took 12 iterations to get the TushBaby just right.

EGT: Are you manufacturing in the USA, or overseas?

TR: We're manufacturing in China but distributing from five locations in the USA:



Fresno, California; Carlisle, Pennsylvania; Mesquite, Texas; Carol Stream, Illinois; and Columbus, Ohio.

I've gotten used to working late nights or in the middle of the night to be on Skype calls with my manufacturers. Now I have a newborn that's up all night, so lately I don't need to set middle-of-the-night alarms. I've got one on automatic!

My manufacturers are extremely professional and fluent in English, so there's no communication barrier—which is immensely helpful because the level of detail we discuss would be very challenging otherwise.

EGT: Have you encountered any obstacles in product development?

TR: Let me count the ways. I had one manufacturer try to steal my design before producing it. A shipping container with my first order of a thousand TushBabies was delayed by three weeks. Customers were not happy!

And then a bunch of cheap knock-offs came out right after my Kickstarter campaign. The companies didn't just take my idea; they also used my branded copy and photos of my own kid! It's been quite a learning process. And I've learned a lot.

EGT: How are you selling this product, and who handles your PR?

TR: I'm selling this product through Shopify at Tushbaby.com, and on Amazon. My co-founder, Sara Azadi, handles our PR.

EGT: Are you planning on increasing your product line?

TR: You bet! We have quite a few baby products up our sleeves, but I'm not going to give too much away.

EGT: Any advice for novice inventors?

TR: Don't give up. Keep pushing through. Push through the obstacles, the sleepless nights, the self-doubt, the daily struggle, and the haters. No one can bring you down except yourself. ☺

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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"

1 GET IT MADE

Contact Edie Tolchin – "The Sourcing Lady" (SM) for sourcing, China manufacturing, product safety issues, packaging assistance, quality control, production testing, final shipment inspections, freight arrangements, import services and delivery to your door!

www.EGTglobaltrading.com

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P.O. Box 5660 - Hillsborough, NJ 08844

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2 GET A WEBSITE!

Contact Ken Robinson – While your order is being manufactured, you need to start working on your WEB PRESENCE! Get people talking about your product on Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+), get good search engine placement (SEO)!

www.widgetsontheweb.com

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Inventors

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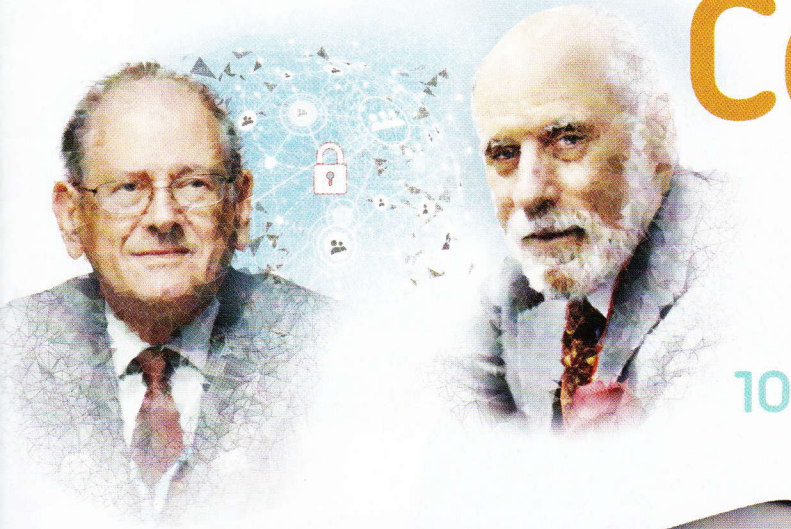


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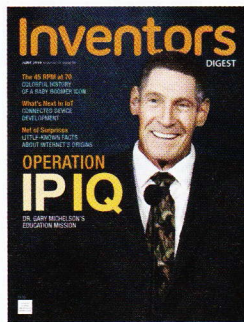
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Dr. Gary Michelson;
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