

Innovation: Enhance takes product ideas to market.



Photo by
Elizabeth Flores,
Star Tribune

Local entrepreneur Trevor Lambert with some of the staff at Enhance Product Development, which walks clients through all the steps of curating an invention idea.

Trevor Lambert thought he was going to become a priest while he was studying at the University of St. Thomas.

He later contemplated a career as a log-home builder in New Zealand after working on a job there that helped him pay his way through college. After changing his mind several times, Lambert decided to use the craftsmanship skills he learned from building log homes to become an inventor.

The Eagan native became increasingly frustrated with companies and licensing agencies that promised to help him turn his invention ideas into reality.

So Lambert changed his career path once again and in 2000 opened Lambert and Lambert with his father.

The licensing agency helps inventors take more developed ideas into the marketplace.

"At that point, I was really bootstrapping it. I literally had my office in my garage," Lambert said. "It was quite the journey for sure. I'm not sure how my clients will feel knowing I'm a philosophy and Catholic studies major who almost went into log building."

Following years of steady growth, and eventually trading his garage for an office in north Minneapolis, Lambert decided he wanted to help inventors in more ways.

His passion was in product development and he wanted to go after inventors with less developed product ideas.

"I really wanted to have an industrial design firm and it didn't make sense to have it in Lambert and Lambert, so that's how Enhance was born," he said.

So Lambert and Lambert stayed put, and in 2010 he started Enhance Product Development, an industrial design firm in Champlin that turns invention ideas into products.

With about 20 employees, Enhance walks clients through all the steps of curating an invention idea, from several rounds of concept sketching, CAD development and photorealistic rendering to logos, graphic design and generating a full presentation for pitching the product.

Enhance Product Development mainly works with start-ups and inventors looking to license their products.

The company also works with brands not large enough to have a design department or enough marketing expertise in-house.

"A lot of times we are working with an inventor who has an idea in his or her head, and we are trying to get it out there," Lambert said. "Your typical CEO or VP of marketing, who makes decisions on these products, [doesn't] always have a lot of imagination, so we want them to see it."

When a potential client comes in the door, the first two things Lambert's company does is ask, "Is there

already a product like this on the market?" and "Do people want to buy this?"

Designers then go through several sessions drawing up mock-ups for the idea. The design for products takes place in what Lambert calls the "invention lab," a large design studio space with sketches, concepts and a 3-D printer.



They then take the client through graphic design, creating a logo and a presentation for how they will pitch this product to stores, investors or As Seen On TV, a generic marketplace for products advertised on television and a popular landing place for clients.

One of the products helped along by his company was **HurriClean toilet cleaner** that Lambert said is popular on As Seen On TV. Others include the **EggZact Boiler**, which holds boiling eggs; **Hover Cover**, a magnetic microwave lid; and **Smart Capo**, an iPhone holder for a guitar.

"There aren't a whole lot of companies who do what we do in Minneapolis," he said. "Our focus is product

design. We see faces light up when they see the product in their head become a reality."

Enhance Product Design has grown to include both international clients and workers, including in China.

Lambert said they have a range of employee backgrounds because of how tricky it can be to find qualified industrial designers.

In the next three years, though, the company hopes to launch its own line of in-house products.

"It really was about 17 years of trial and error to see what works, which is why Enhance Product Design does what it does," he said. "It's so important to have product design and get the inventors from having an idea in their head to where they need to be for licensing."

End of StarTribune Article.

