



Article by Gene Quinn | Published September 9, 2017

Enhance Product Development: Ideation, Design and Licensing for Inventors

With walls covered in brainstorm whiteboards and a 3D printer constantly humming as it churns out parts for the next new prototype, you'll find the "Invention Lab" of Enhance Product Development a flurry of innovative activity.

If you are an invention nerd, a trip to Enhance Product Development is an opportunity to really geek-out.

"The DNA of our company is all about enabling innovation," said Trevor Lambert, founder and CEO of Enhance Product Development, a product design firm that has quietly been churning out many hit products that inventors are sure to recognize. "In collaboration with our clients, we enthusiastically tackle new design challenges with vigorous creativity. Whether it's a startup looking to launch a new product line or an inventor with one invention concept, our mission is to offer smart, impactful solutions to our customers' needs."

For me, the real interesting piece of what Enhance does is their work with concepts. Many times inventors will come to me with more than an idea but less than an invention, which can be a real valley of death for inventors to navigate. So many good ideas get trapped in the uncomfortable space between something more than an idea and something less than a full-blown tangible invention. For those inventors facing that dilemma Enhance Product Development can help, particularly if you are an inventor or entrepreneur looking to license your invention. They have tailored a service aptly named Design for LicensingSM, which is Enhance's service for inventors specifically seeking to earn royalties rather than taking a product to market themselves.

"There's a common misconception that inventors have when they have a great new product idea," cautioned Lambert.

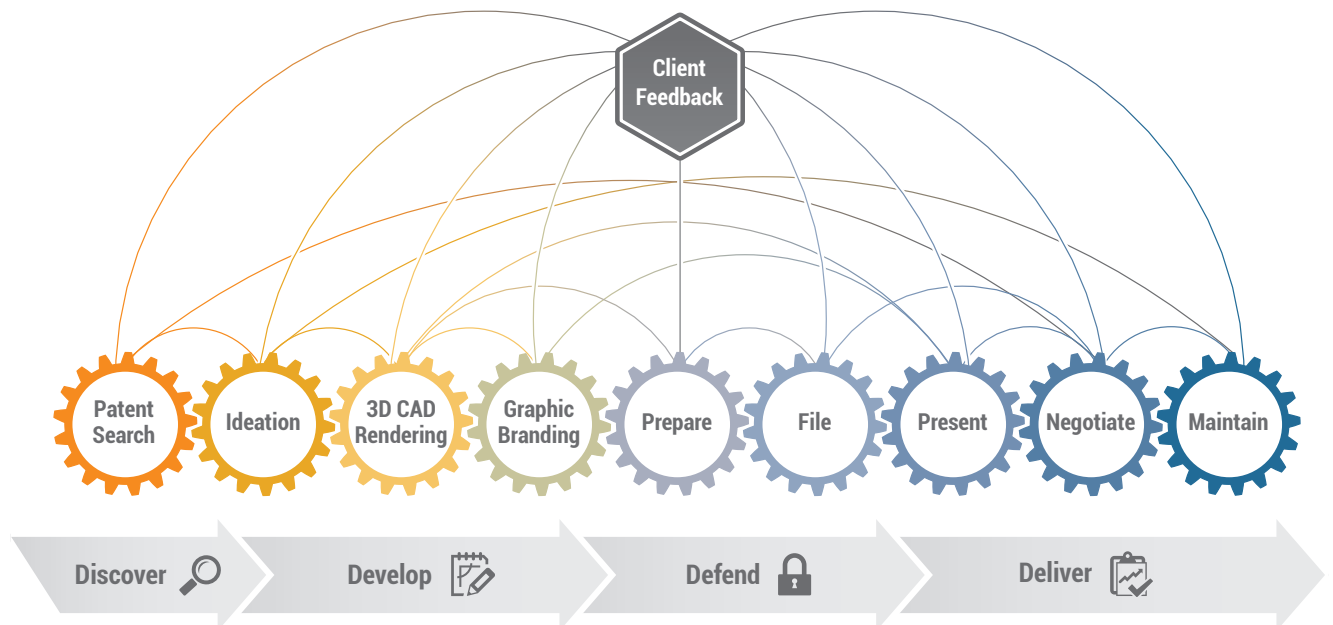
"Many think they can simply march into a company and get paid for their rough concept on a napkin sketch. In reality, that doesn't happen. It needs to be developed before it's given any real consideration... because companies are looking for a product, not a project."

However, transforming that great new invention idea into a presentable product can be a daunting task for most

independent inventors. It draws from a wide variety of skill sets; from design, engineering and manufacturing to the legal aspects of intellectual property protection, marketing and licensing. This is why it is best for inventors to choose a strong team with diversified talents if you plan on bringing your invention to market through licensing.

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To describe their process at Enhance Product Development in detail, Trevor provided the following infographic which highlights the various steps that seeks to bring product solutions downstream to licensing.



One critical component of that team is product design.

"A well-designed product provides inventors with the visuals necessary to tell the story and attract initial interest from a licensee that can then lead to deal-making conversations. Consequently, it's a worthwhile investment that **should not be skipped,**"

said Lambert.

"I've seen mediocre ideas executed well that end up hitting the market, and great ideas executed poorly that are doomed to fail," cautioned Lambert. "That's why Design for LicensingSM employs an iterative process of stages with a constant feedback loop with our client. This way, we can be sure the product we develop meets the needs of the user and embodies the solution our client envisioned. Further, we constructed the steps so that each component benefits and supports later efforts, thus maximizing efficiency and cost-effectiveness."

Lately, Enhance Product Development has been rolling out new products in a number of categories, such as housewares, pet, and as seen on TV. From the True Touch pet deshedding glove to the Hover Cover magnetic microwave splatter guard, or the all new Clever Tong, Enhance's design process is netting some innovative results that are turning into big hits on the market. In an effort to further explain their design process, Trevor has offered us an exclusive look behind the curtain to see how some of these products were developed in each of the stages.

As can be expected though, before the deep dive into the creative components of design, the first step of their process is "Discover." This primarily involves research into existing patents and prior art to determine novelty as well as user feedback to get an early reading on customer demand. "Upon inventing something new, every inventor should ask themselves two important questions," said Lambert. "Is my core invention unique and would customers want to buy it?"

Only if those two answers are 'yes' do I advise an inventor to move on into the next steps of design."

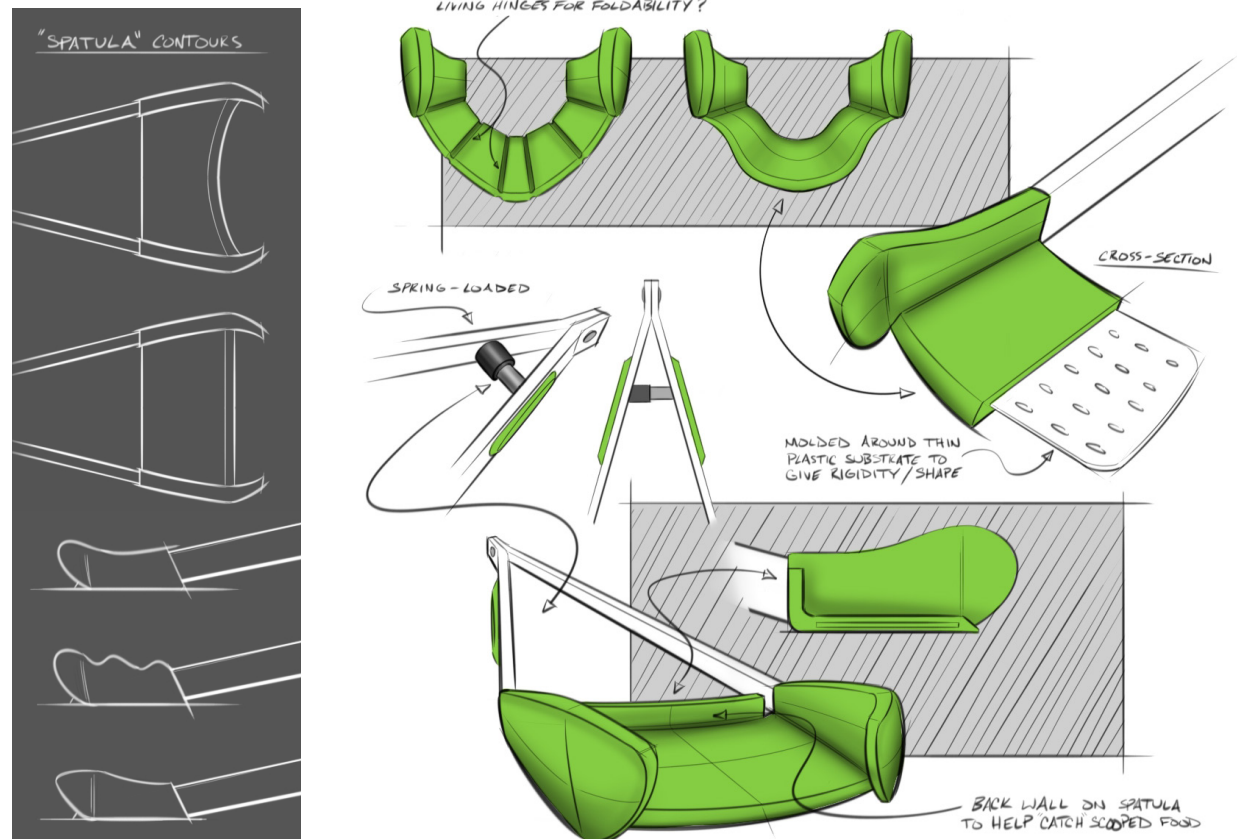
From that point, inventors move into the "Develop" stage which is broken down into several main sub-components. The first is ideation, where the design team takes the client's invention and explores various ways it could be executed through numerous rounds of brainstorming and concept sketching. The goal is to identify the best embodiment when considering various elements that lead to successful products, such as functionality, form, ergonomics and

manufacturing feasibility. Often times this exploration leads to key improvements on the original idea or even whole new inventions that were unforeseen by the client.

"During ideation we seek to give the client three main things: what they want, what they need and something they didn't expect," said Tom Grimm, the lead product designer at Enhance Product Development. Tom has over 30 years of experience in product design including several years as a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

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Below: A typical ideation session with numerous concept sketches exploring an invention that eventually became the Clever Tong.





***“We don’t approach an invention just as it is, but more so what it could be.*”**

Sound design thinking explores the full spectrum of the concept, from mild to wild, and only through that exploration can we unlock its full potential for our clients.”

After ideation, the next step in the “Develop” stage is the creation of 3D CAD and photorealistic renderings to allow visualization of the product for presentations. Additionally, the CAD files can produce as output line drawings for the various patent figures and also establish the basis for manufacturing surfaces. Enhance Product Development utilizes the industry standard software, Solidworks, and makes it a point to provide the native CAD files to their clients upon completion of a project. “Oftentimes, design firms will withhold the CAD files so if there is further work necessary the client has to continue to go back, thus creating more billable hours for the firm. For us, it’s all about offering our clients intrinsic value, and withholding those native files would be contrary to our core philosophy,” expressed Lambert.

Once the product’s visuals are complete, the final portion of the “Develop” stage is graphics and branding. In this component, Enhance Product Development develops the logo and seeks to highlight the features through a multi-slide presentation used to either attract a licensee or secure investors. The presentation typically highlights the unique selling proposition, features and benefits, as well as any other important points that differentiate the product, make it unique or give it a competitive advantage over existing products.

The next stage inventors move into is called “Defend”, which can be done with the inventor’s own patent attorney/agent or one referred to by Enhance Product Development. “In this age of ‘first-inventor-to-file,’ plus with companies understandably not wanting to sign nondisclosure agreements, we won’t represent inventors for licensing unless they at least have a provisional patent application filed,” acknowledged Lambert.

“The provisional is a powerful tool since it allows inventors and entrepreneurs the ability to assess the market and perfect their invention before filing the more expensive utility patent. Plus since it effectively extends patent coverage an extra year, it’s almost always the right strategy for our clients.”



Lastly, Enhance’s Design for LicensingSM process moves into the marketing and business development stage, commonly referred to as “Deliver.” The sole focus of this stage is to connect the client to a company that would manufacture, distribute and sell the product in exchange for royalties for the inventor. This typically involves market research to identify strong potential companies, networking with existing contacts, forging new relationships, and trade show attendance. “What we are looking for are companies with a strong brand and broad distribution, so that they are well-positioned to sell our clients’ products in large volume,” stated Lambert. “Conversely, we are looking for companies wherein our clients’ product is truly complementary to their brand and current assortment. That synergy is what makes for a powerful licensing deal that can be mutually-beneficial for many years.”

Enhance Product Development has been a long-time sponsor of IPWatchdog.com. As a sponsor it might be easy for readers to think I’m obligated to say nice things, but that simply isn’t the case. Many years ago I was frustrated when we attempted to serve Google Ads. Too many sketchy companies without any real track record would appear. I reached out to Trevor Lambert, who I knew through his affiliation with the United Inventors Association and work with independent inventors. It is hard to believe, but that was over 10 years ago. We gained a partner I knew I could refer readers to without reservation, and I’ve been recommending Enhance to readers and clients ever since.

Trevor is one of the good guys. While the decision about who you work with is a personal one, if you have an invention that could use some design assistance consider contacting Enhance Product Development for a 100% Confidential, no obligation consultation.

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