

Market Research

tip of the Month

Jan 2014

by John Rau

Have you ever heard of the “ask other inventors approach” wherein you ask other inventors how they approached the development of their invention idea, were they successful and, if so, what did they do to make it a successful venture?

Inventors talking to other inventors? What a clever idea! I wonder if anyone has ever thought of this?

Separate from e-mails and the cyber world, the primary types of opportunities for inventors to interact face-to-face with other inventors are through various inventor organizations and clubs, attendance at “inventor-oriented” types of expositions and trade shows (such as Invent-Help’s Invention & New Product Exposition (INPEX), the largest invention trade show held each year in June in Pittsburg, and the Minnesota Inventors Congress’ Invention & Idea Show formerly held in Redwood Falls, MN and now scheduled for Minneapolis in May 2014).

Inventor support organizations and invention clubs are local groups where you can find other inventors, professionals associated with the invention field who can provide needed services, education programs and other resources that can help you through the invention development process. In each monthly issue, Inventors Digest magazine publishes a list of the names and contacts of such inventor groups that have been certified by the United Inventors Association (UIA). For example, the October 2013 issue provides 91 listings covering 37 states, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Another good source of such information is “Inventors Eye”, which is the USPTO’s bi-monthly newsletter for the independent inventor community. The December 2013 edition (see www.uspto.gov/inventors/independent/eye/201312) provides 80 listings covering 47 states and the District of Columbia. Comparing both listings, you will find that they are not identical and contain duplicates, but collectively, these two sources can give you enough information in the sense of helping you find an inventor support organization or club near you.

As pointed out by Invention Partner (see www.inventionpartner.com), key advantages in getting involved with an inventors club/organization include:

- Networking with inventors of all skill and accomplishment levels
- Hearing speakers that are successful in their niche of the inventing process
- Finding partners or service providers
- Keeping you motivated to succeed
- Associating with like-minded individuals as not everyone understands what an inventor goes through

The Houston Inventors Association (see www.inventors.org) motto is “Inventors Helping Inventors.” At its meetings, they “provide speakers having

first-hand knowledge of the difficulties in getting from raw idea to marketable products who offer their success stories, and share tips on marketing your invention. The speakers also provide valuable information in technical areas such as: protecting your idea, patent fundamentals, building prototypes, injection molding, manufacturing versus licensing and more.” At their meetings, they “connect inventors having a problem with other members who may be able to help solve it.”

The motto of the Texas Inventors’ Association is “Friends Helping Friends” (see www.txinventors.com). They claim that “Our membership includes people at every stage of the inventive process who are willing to share their knowledge, experience, contacts and encouragement to fellow inventors. Among our membership you will find patent attorneys, patent agents, prototype designers, successful inventors who have licensed their products and successful inventors who have built businesses around their inventions, experts in off-shore manufacturing as well as inventors at every step of the inventive process”.

Referring to www.virginiainventors.org, the mission statement of the Virginia Inventors Forum is to actively assist and educate inventors at both the national and global level by providing inventor/entrepreneur information and support. As stated at their web site, “We help our members move along a well-regarded set of invention development steps to place themselves in a position for commercial success”.

In Southern California, an inventor organization that I can relate to is the 20+ year-old Inventors Forum (www.inventorsforum.org), with approximately 200 members and located in Orange County, CA. This inventor organization holds its twice monthly meetings in conjunction with the Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics at Chapman University in Orange, CA. The first meeting of the month is an open seminar with speakers presenting topics of general interest to the inventor community, and the last meeting of the month is specifically dedicated to “member assistance” in the sense that the doors are closed, non-disclosure agreements are signed, and inventors are asked to present to the group (typically 50-75 people) where they are in the invention process and where they need help. Not only do inventors get feedback, but they get to keep whatever ideas and/or suggestions are made. The audience is similar in composition to that described above by the other associations.

Wow! The above examples are illustrative of the numerous inventor association and club resources that are available across the United States to inventors. We all recognize that the process of inventing, patenting, manufacturing and marketing an invention can be very daunting for the first time inventor. Go find an inventors club in your area and start talking to those that have been through the process.

ultraresch@cs.com | (714) 281-0150