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FabJob Guide to
**Become an
Inventor**



JAMES ROBERT DANIELS

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Importance of Inventing

“If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, though he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

1.1.1 What Inventing Is

I’m told this quote is attributed to author Dave Barry: “Without question, the greatest invention in the history of mankind is beer. Oh, I grant you that the wheel was also a fine invention, but the wheel does not go nearly as well with pizza.” I suspect that the credit is correct; the thought is insightful and full-bodied.

The point is that these two things are inventions, and are significant to human life and history. That is, the first wheel and the first crock of beer were inventions. An invention is the **conception of an idea and the means** or apparatus by which the result is obtained. The wheel is an invention, and so is the process of making a wheel. How a so-called “stone age” person did that is a speculation that I won’t get into.



Inventing is a process that includes **conceiving** of original ideas and developing devices, apparatus, processes or methods that **implement** those ideas. **Inventing is creating the means to produce the desired results.**

Inventing is goal oriented. There is a desirable result, or a goal to be obtained. The purpose may be to create something that goes better than anything else with pizza. Or the goal may be a means of moving things or transporting people without dragging them across the ground, causing damage and pain. The invention or innovation this

produces may simply be an improvement, for example to make the wheel last longer while performing its function.

Putting a new part, say an iron band, around a wagon wheel is an example of an innovation. It's something new or different that's introduced to change or improve on the wheel. The pneumatic tire added a rubber tube full of air, but the result is something more than a wheel. It's a wheel plus a tire, as any mechanic would agree. So there's an invention. Either the wheel or the tire would be considered an invention, because each of them is a novel concept, expressed by the development of the means to make it work.

If you invented a rubber tire, you didn't have to re-invent the wheel first. Hopefully you realized that before you spent twenty years on that step. So, if you want to protect your right to that idea and that invention, you can apply for a patent on your tire, but not on the idea of a wheel. If you found that none of the carriage wheels around in your day would work with a tire, you could also invent a new type of wheel that would. It might be an innovation made by taking, say, a Studebaker buckboard wagon wheel and carving a groove in it. But if that's your prototype (a working model of the invention) to make a new kind of wheel, you can probably patent it, as well as your rubber tire invention. Or, you could simply patent the whole apparatus, consisting of the new concept: a rubber tire, mounted on an innovative wheel, either constructed new or made by carving a groove in a wooden Studebaker wagon wheel.

What matters is what you do with it. And that depends upon what you invent. If you want to obtain a **patent** (to be explained in the next chapter), your invention has to be **novel**, **useful**, and **not obvious**. It doesn't have to be a totally new idea. It may be a significant improvement on an item or on current practice. It doesn't have to be a product at all. In the most common classification of the Utility Patent, it may be a process, an apparatus, or a machine. You might also get a Design Patent for applying your artwork as a decoration or a functional part of something else, like lawn furniture or designer clothing styles.

But the goal of your invention is not "a patent." The goal in your work as an inventor is to create the means to produce the desired results. This is what matters. You're creating something that solves a problem or fills a need. When you do something with it, you will have fulfilled the purpose of inventing. When you continue to invent and make it your life's work, you are a career inventor.

Just as there are an infinite number of things to be invented, there are many ways to invent. Inventing is creative, and may be the design and construction of a new product. But inventing can also be done by mixing chemicals. Inventions such as radar and the nuclear bomb were built on mathematical equations. This is why, as you'll see, there are many routes to becoming an inventor. You can invent by cooking, sewing,

drawing, calculating or building. We're going to find out what you like to do, and find ways to do that creatively. You'll learn how that leads to inventions and how to make inventing your career.

People invent things every day. It is likely that you have ideas for inventing something. Many people are, or aspire to be, "inventors" beyond this, by producing a physical example of their invention and "selling" it. That's what invention is, including all of the above: the wheel, beer, pizza, the custom car you've built or the slip cover you designed and sewed for your custom-built furniture; the hobbyist's gadget and the patented product alike. This book is about more than all of that. This book is about beginning a successful **career** as an inventor. In most cases, this involves inventing again, many times over, as one invention is unlikely to sustain you either financially or in terms of personal and professional satisfaction for the rest of your life.

1.1.2 Why Inventing Matters

"Invention, or technology, is what drives the economy of every country in the world."

— Stephen Paul Gnass, founder of the National Congress of Inventor Organizations

As any successful business person will tell you, a business has to grow in order to survive. Likewise, an economy needs new money coming in to survive, and something has to be produced to make money. Without new ideas, we would have nothing new to produce. The world depends upon progress. Progress depends on inventors.

Progress is about more than making money. We could get along fine without money. Many people and entire cultures have, after all, for thousands of years. (Believe it or don't.) Seriously, we could have a communal or socialistic society, and simply share everything we produce, whether crops, house-building skills or child care. But our society and culture would neither progress nor grow as ours has and continues to do at an increasing rate.

Of the millions of inventions in the world, not all have made money for the inventors, or even for others at times. Yet they do matter. Does our health and wellness matter? Of course, we are all, or certainly should be, immensely grateful for the cures, the vaccines, treatments for the ill and aids for the disabled that have been invented. We're aware of our own longevity by comparison to the life expectancy of our forebears. Have you visited a ship or a home that was built at the time of the American Revolution? You may have had to duck under the doorway or ceiling, as even that short a time ago, people didn't grow as tall as we do now. This may not be the direct result of inventions in medicine, but it is related.

Inventions in communications have transformed us personally through social innovations and brought us closer to everyone else in the entire world community. I can answer a letter from China with an instant communication right now, just as easily as my mother could have called me in for lunch when I was a kid. In the day-to-day quality of life, this may be as important as the ability of the world's Ambassadors to understand each other through the communications system in the United Nations Assembly.

Our technology has been important in its notoriety at times, bringing us more efficient ways to kill one another and threatening the very ecosystem that sustains us. But hopefully as important or even more important is the consciousness of the world that this has brought about, and the innovations for environmental protection that have resulted. Appropriate technology and applications of renewable resources in future inventions can actually improve our environment for humans and for the rest of the world's population.

Comfort and leisure are important, too! We need to play, because we are stressed, and because play is exactly how we learn. If children never played, they would never learn how to operate their bodies or their minds. And if adults have no comfort or leisure to enjoy, what is the point? It's very important that we keep inventing the means for all people to play throughout their lives.

Educational tools and aids are important to us all, and they belong not only in the classroom, but everywhere. The invention of new communications tools, of playthings that teach, of better ways to produce educational books and television shows and new media all benefit society as a whole.

If you care about your family and your community and, yes, society, **inventing is important to you.**

“The Web is more a social creation than a technical one. I designed it for a social effect—to help people work together—and not as a technical toy. The ultimate goal of the Web is to support and improve our weblike existence in the world.”

— Tim Berners-Lee, *Weaving the Web*

All the problems in the world need to be solved. They will be solved by inventors. You can help. And **the world will be a better place** for it.

1.2 About the Career

1.2.1 Lessons of History

Walaika Haskins reported in *PC Magazine* in April 2001 on the winners of the Lemelson Foundation and Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2001 Lemelson-MIT Awards Program. Dr. Raymond Kurzweil was the \$500,000 prize recipient, and Dr. Raymond Damadian was honored for Lifetime Achievement.

Dr. Kurzweil changed the world for the vision impaired with a scanner and speech synthesizer to scan text and read it aloud, and he revolutionized music with the first music synthesizer that could realistically reproduce the sound of any musical instrument. The first owner of a “Kurzweil Reading Machine” was musician Stevie Wonder. Kurzweil said, “I’ve always regarded failure as success deferred, because when it comes to innovation you’ve got to be willing to fail.”

Speaking of the part his parents, teachers and peers played in his successful inventing career, he told a *PRNewswire* reporter, “Encouragement is necessary for young inventors to succeed. It is important for kids to realize that they have the authority to explore their own ideas and that it is okay to fail.”

He believes, “We’re doubling the rate of progress every ten years now, so we’ll see 20,000 years of progress this century, not a hundred.”

Scanning the human body is now possible, thanks to Raymond Damadian’s MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) technology. Many people are alive today because of it. “Innovation is the thrill of discovery. Ideas come from this thrill,” says Dr. Damadian.



Lester Thurow (Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Professor of Management and Economics at MIT) adds, “Invention and innovation are what got us out of the cave. We

learned to write, which is an invention, learned to farm. What separates us from animals is our ability to invent.”

Many inventions are innovations or successive generations of innovations, taking many years and many inventors to develop to maturity. Many ideas take a team to make them into something that works. Pierre Curie discovered piezoelectricity in 1880. He and his brother, Jacques, found that when electricity is applied to a crystal, it vibrates. This was an early start on the possibility of a quartz timepiece. Swiss inventors made the first prototype of a quartz watch; Japanese inventors first brought the quartz watch to the consumer market; and American inventors developed a digital quartz watch.

John Bergey led a team to build the digital quartz watch. He and Dick Walton had gone from military products into research and development at the Hamilton Watch Company, to transfer their work experience on an electronic fuse timer to a watch. They joined forces with George Thiess and Willy Crabtree at Electro-Data, Inc. and built prototypes by 1970, then brought the Pulsar digital watch out in 1972. John Bergey became President of Time Computer, Inc. and holds 26 patents on the watch, including those with co-inventors.

Melanie Loomos invents products to reduce risk factors that lead to musculoskeletal disorders and hemorrhoidal problems. She assembled a team of experts to help her with the Buttpillow™ line of products. Her team includes a neurologist, a gastroenterologist, and an ergonomist. Along with her own research, she credits her manufacturing expert on plastics for contributing greatly to the products. At last report, she was also hiring a marketing expert. Her warehouse is also an office for ten doctors in seven specialties, who help her to continue her research. These “guest doctors” are Melanie’s consultants and contributing writers for the company website. She has a manufacturer, and a group of fashion design sewers to do the stitching on the Buttpillow cushion.

Melanie’s attorney is also an investor and silent partner. He’s assisted financially throughout the research and development (R&D) phase. He’s also contributed as a photographer for the Buttpillow™ website.

Another team member who has a central role in research and development is Darren Salinger, M.D. OB/GYN, a general practitioner as well as an obstetrician/gynecologist. He also writes for the company website.

Melanie realized that you can’t take just one expert’s opinion in R&D, because their opinions differ. So the information that the team presents includes all the opinions they can find in the peer-reviewed, published medical literature on a given topic.

The team of Robert Maurer, Donald Keck and Peter Schultz, in research at Corning Glass, designed and made the first optical fiber practical for carrying information. This was made possible by their discovery of a way to restrict the amount of light lost in transmission through a fiber. This was considered the breakthrough that had evaded scientists for years. Over 90 percent of our long-distance telephone calls are carried by optical fiber now, and new telecommunications technologies depend upon it.

The inventor of the computer floppy disk comments that there are lots of inventions, but not many discoveries. Inventions generally are new combinations of things, things put together in new ways, and new ways of doing things. A discovery, on the other hand, is something entirely new or unique in some way; a breakthrough, and likely to be discovered rather than sought after as the answer to a problem or need.

Thomas Alva Edison was home schooled, read a lot, and experimented with chemistry and mechanics as a boy. He became a telegraph operator and learned about electromagnetism and how the telegraph worked, and this led him to inventing. Edison had tenacity and perseverance going for him. However, he could sometimes hold onto an idea too long. His first patent was granted in 1868, for an electrical vote recorder that the Massachusetts State Legislature didn't buy. The valuable lesson he learned was never to invent something that people don't want.

Stephanie Kwolek has a BS in chemistry. Lacking the means to go to medical school, she took a job at E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. She found out that the work was very interesting to her, and she became a pioneer in new polymers such as Nomex. She experimented, trying to make stronger, stiffer fibers, until she made a discovery that produced Kevlar. Five times stronger pound per pound than steel, it's a dramatic improvement in "bullet-proof" vests, body armor and many other products.

Amanda Theodosia Jones had no aspirations to be an inventor, and she had never canned food in her life. It started with a vision, she said, sent by her late brother. She started experimenting, and discovered a unique way of canning food. She and her cousin, Leroy C. Cooley, were granted seven patents in 1873.

Another vision led Amanda to the oil fields in the 1880's to invent some way to safely burn the crude oil. Of course, she had no training in mechanical things in her limited schooling as a girl in the 1800s, but the solution seemed obvious to her. She put in a safety valve to control the amount of oil released. It worked fine.

All these people have made history because they've chosen to become inventors. They have learned important lessons along the way: Don't spend your time inventing anything that nobody wants. Do devote yourself to solving problems and providing solutions. Know that it takes time and it takes a team. Trust in your vision. Innovation,

inventions and discoveries come with being willing to fail until you succeed. Each and every one of these persons has **changed the world**.

1.2.2 Demands and Trends

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) patent applications worldwide reached 1.76 million in 2006. This is a 4.9% increase from 2005. The WIPO report also states a worldwide increase of 18% in the number of patents that were granted: 727,000 patents in 2006.

Do these inventions sell? It makes sense that a large percentage of those filing for national, regional (for example, Europe) and international patents expect to make more than the cost of filing an application. And the numbers bear this out. Although there has been an increase in the number of patent applications from China and South Korea, the majority of applicants in 2006 were from Japan, followed closely by the United States.

The USA leads the world in patents granted:

- In 2007 alone, this number was 157,283.
- In 2005, it had been 143,806 in this country.
- USPTO patent application filings increased 9.3% between 2005-2007.

While 21% of the year 2003 US applications were in the field of electricity, physics accounted for 29%; and human necessities, only 17% of the filings. Although the personal computer and other gadgets of our time may well seem like the biggest opportunities for new developments, the share of applications in the USA in the electricity field actually fell by 1% from 2002 to 2003, while the physics field increased by 2 percentage points.

The Trilateral offices (USA, Japan and Europe) consider the following fields as “high technology”:

- computer and automated business equipment
- micro-organism and genetic engineering
- aviation
- communications technology
- semi-conductors
- lasers

The proportion of patent applications in these high technology areas in Japan rose from 20.7% in 2002 to 28.4% in 2003. But in Europe, the percentage of high-tech applications went down from 23.6 to 23.2, while in the USA, it went up from 31.4% to 33.3%.

The number of patents granted by the Trilateral offices increased by 3.7% in 2002 and by 5% in 2003.

While electrical, and especially electronic technology and product applications are huge industries and will continue to grow, there are many other fields that present great challenges and opportunities. Space is becoming the final frontier not only for governments, but for many private companies and entrepreneurs. Global warming and the increasingly critical need for alternative fuels and energy sources are driving research, development and production in such areas as solar, wind and fuel cell applications. Appropriate technology can improve our lives and our planet by wasting less and producing more without harming the earth, sea, sky and living creatures. There is much to be done in any field that interests you.

1.2.3 Your Interest In a Career as an Inventor

Doing what you enjoy and making a career of it is the difference between creative people who can't wait to get to work, and people who hate their jobs. Bill Gates's interest in software goes way back to long before we had our own personal computers. Leonardo da Vinci had many interests—science, theology, art, writing... and a passion for all of them. Both decided to pursue their interests and their dreams as their life work.



This is what inventing is about. It's about being inventive in any field of endeavor that's ever been or will be. It's about inventing whole new jobs, careers, industries, and fields. We're on our way to the moon, Mars and beyond, and you know that when pioneers go anywhere, exploiters are close behind (if not in the lead). When the moon is mined, a whole new kind of work will be invented. Many inventions will be needed to survive, work and play in that new environment. Inventors are needed right now to get us there:

rocket scientists, space plane developers, the inventors of the technology to make a “space elevator” a reality.

But you don’t have to wait for all that. You don’t even need to care about space travel or mining the moon. All you have to do is follow your own interests in anything, anywhere. Apply some creativity. And follow through to establish a career. This is the beginning point: your interest.

You may have to do some exploration to find out what your interests are. Start with what you know. What did you like to do when you were a child? Inventors from Thomas Edison to today’s “Curious George” Margolin have counseled inventors to never grow up. Inventing is a creative art and science, and this advice applies to you as much as to a writer, visual artist, or actor. Cowboy movie star of the early 1900’s Tom Mix asked, “Why grow up when you can make movies?” Maybe you can’t get paid for playing cowboy, or for your sandcastle craftsmanship. On the other hand, did you like to build things? Or was the design of your sandcastle the real accomplishment for you? Would you like to be the one to invent the medium that will replace the motion picture?

“There aren’t too many things that have not attracted my attention. In raising four children alone, without child support, one has to adapt and try to make life easier in all ways. And sometimes they’ve come up with ideas for new products.”

— Nicole Chantee, Senior Designer,
Creative Design Association, Inc.

While the memories of what you’ve enjoyed doing in the past may indicate your true interest, an important point of what these people tell us is that **children are inherently creative**. That is what you need most to retain, if you want to succeed in the field of inventing. An open mind is necessary.

Many of us don’t know by the time we grow up what we want to be when we grow up. Some of us don’t find out until late in life, but that’s okay. As Lynn Pardey, world explorer and author along with husband Larry, once told me, “I think life is long enough for everybody to have five careers.” That’s what experience is about. At last count, Barbie Doll™ has had more than 70 careers! Try something new. Go to college; study math, art, cooking, rowing, or whatever. Everything in our lives can be made better by something that will be invented by a person with a passionate interest in that thing.

How many times have you heard somebody say, “I wish I had thought of that?” Or have you ever heard someone say, “I had that idea first?” Ever had somebody you know tell you they **invented** something? If I was a betting man (I’m not), I would surely bet that you have heard all of the above.

Maybe you've invented something. Again, I am sure you have! But you're not reading to hear about "could have," "should have," "would have" or even "did one time." This is about **inventing** something, **doing** something with it and **much more**: making a **career** of **inventing**.

My father invented lots of things, but he didn't choose inventing as a career. He followed through on one invention to the point of applying for a patent. His application was rejected because days earlier, someone else had applied for a patent on the Wankel Rotary Engine (the motor that made Mazda cars a success). His engine was an entirely different concept (and superior to the rotary), but development stopped there. Why? Well, you'll learn in later sections of this book what it takes to overcome such mistakes in the Patent Office, including the dollar costs. But there's another reason, more important to you. He was not committed to the perseverance it takes to establish a career as an inventor. Inventing was his hobby.

Our next-door neighbor was also an inventor. Personally, I happen to dislike some of his inventions and regret daily their existence. One of them, he called the "Automated Disk Jockey." You've probably been subjected to it many times in the last several decades if you've ever listened to the radio. Rock and Roll fans across the country have heard Casey Casem spinning records (CDs now, I assume) on the radio at all hours. He's "automated."

Another of this neighbor's bright ideas was what he called "Canned Laughs." Today, this is generally known as a "laugh track" in television, mainly used on sitcoms (situation comedies). I hate that. Even an episode of "Friends" is ruined for me by this insipid intrusion on the suspension of disbelief, trying to tell me, "this the funny stuff. Laugh!"

My personal reaction aside, our neighbor took his **ideas** and **built** something. He took those **inventions** and **sold** somebody on the idea of using them. He sold his inventions, continued in a **career**, and retired. Last time I saw him, he was enjoying a quiet life with the family on an isolated but comfortable island, and of course building new inventions when he felt like it.

He did something with his ideas. Then he did something with his inventions. Then he worked on the next ideas. He committed to creativity + imagination + education + perseverance + business. He was a **career inventor**.

1.3 Inside This Guide

Committing yourself to creating original works is risky business, but in risk there is opportunity beyond any that you can hope for with the mundane jobs in which most people find themselves.

Whether you are young enough to devote yourself to trying something for a while, old enough to have set aside something to live on while you experiment, or simply ready to begin your next career because you want to, I hope to be of some help along the way.

The inventors and other people who have contributed their knowledge, experience, and advice in this book want to help, too. You will find that they are generous and open in sharing information with each other, and there will be other inventors there for you when you wonder some day, “What do I do next?” They’ve all been there.

We’re going to look at inventing as a career. That means that you are going to earn your living by inventing. If you want to know how to invent; how to progress from all the ideas in your head to producing something that will show up in every household in America, I will get you started in the right direction.

In the next chapter, you’ll learn more about what an inventor really does. We’ll go through the process of inventing, step by step, in Chapter 2. You’ll learn how to come up with ideas and how to develop your invention. You’ll get information to help you decide whether to license your invention, sell it outright, or manufacture it yourself. And you’ll learn about patents and other forms of protection for your inventions.

In Chapter 3, we’ll look at starting your own business as an inventor. The rewards are greatest if you do it yourself. The business of inventing is unique, but running any business yourself takes good business sense. You’ll learn about business planning, start-up costs (and where to get invention development funding), plus how to market and sell your inventions directly to consumers. This chapter also covers conferences, contests, and exhibits for inventors, and exposes the difference between invention management companies that can help you, and how to avoid scams.

Chapter 4 shares the secrets of success that career inventors have learned, many in the School of Hard Knocks. One thing you will soon learn is that inventors, whatever you may have believed in the past, are open to sharing information for the good of all. (After all, if we didn’t care about others, why would we choose to invent a better mousetrap? To catch one mouse in our own house?)

Chapter 5 gives you resources to get you started, keep you going and help you through the process of each of your future inventions. These are references that you will turn to for help throughout your career.

TIP: It is recommended that you read chapters 2-5 in their entirety because a number of important topics (such as patents and selling your inventions) are covered in more than one section.

As a bonus, two special reports are included at the end of the guide:

Special Report # 1 – “How to Develop Your Creativity and Skills as an Inventor” describes the traits of successful inventors, including creativity, imagination, and “The Edison Effect.” It then explains how you can develop your invention skills and recommends specific educational and training programs for everyone from children to college students to lifelong learners.

If you thought there was no such thing as a paying job for an inventor, you’re in for a treat with **Special Report # 2** – “Jobs for Inventors.” There are jobs everywhere for your creative talent. Just don’t look under “inventor” for openings. In fact, like many a FabJob, your dream gig may not even be advertised. But it does exist. From nonprofit organizations to the U.S. Army, there may be opportunities for you as a farmer, biologist, scientist, technician, project director or mechanic—actually, as an inventor.

I wish you success and happiness in doing what you really want to do for a living!