

THE DAILY TIMES

Dream halted on road to mass production

By Brice Stump • November 15, 2009

So, you have a great idea on a device that makes life easier or better. You develop a working convincing prototype and believe the next step to entrepreneurial success is production. And there a dream can end, stalled on the yellow brick road to mass production and marketing success.

That is where inventor Drew Phillips and businessman Phil Adkins now find themselves.



They have worked together on the development of their "Biketoo" invention, a bicycle that can become a motorized vehicle at the push of a button. For Phillips, the Biketoo embodies years of his life. Sure enough, they seemed to have created the modern version of the perfect mousetrap. Or, in their case, the perfect motorized bike.

So many frustrating years of work with government agencies and bureaucracies, of technical challenges and obstacles, to conquer them all but to be stopped in their tracks by the lack of a manufacturer.

When I look back at some of the dumb and worthless "inventions" promoted on infomercials like one gizmo, a black slab that claimed to be able to defrost frozen steak perfectly in minutes, or the countless ridiculous exercise machines that promised spot weight reduction with no effort or the diet pills that melted pounds away while you slept, I am at a loss to understand where the real leaders of business are when the Biketoo is a real deal, ready to go, a potential money maker that sits in a garage undiscovered.

Talking to the two, I was impressed by the huge amount of time invested in the project and the sheer work they have done to get where they are. What if this thing never flies?

Phillips told me the Biketoo isn't the most important element of his life, but one has to wonder about the moment when you have to face reality and know your coveted idea, your labor of love for more than a decade, well, won't fly. Not because it isn't a great idea, but that the last important element of making mass production a reality, just never happened.

I don't know diddly about marketing, development and the intricacies of business plans, but from what I saw, Phillips and Adkins have done everything right to bring a working prototype with the marketing material to someone's attention. From their clever Biketoo watch in a metal suitcase marketing tool, to on the street survey tests, and a polished brochure with loads of technical information, the whole ball of wax is signed, sealed and delivered in one neat package.

Do you wonder sometimes about being at the right place at the right time? I often wonder if Thomas Edison would have been another Bill Gates today if, only if, Edison was "in our time," or would he have been just another computer geek who worked in Gates' shadow?

Are Phillips and Adkins fortunate enough to be at the right time and right place -- now? If they are lucky, perhaps they will find a business partner or manufacturer capable of putting the Biketoo in production. If not, they will never recoup the \$200,000 or so in time and components and out-of-pocket expenses to create the Biketoo.

During my interview with the two, I never felt like the whole project was about money. Realistically, they now hope to have their project become a commercial success, but, as they say, getting there is most of the fun. Fun is fine, but mass production is its own reward as well, validating the worth and value of what they thought and believe is a great idea.

I do not know where this story will end for them. They have built what appears to be a novel and creative motorized bicycle. For two local guys, I hope they are rewarded for their dedication to small business ingenuity and perseverance.

So far, they have "done good."

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