

Inventors:

I have spent over 25 years reviewing products, first as a buyer for retail stores including Target Stores, then as the President/product development person for our own entrepreneurial wholesale distribution business whose customers included [most of](#) the major retailers in the US. At major industry trade shows my role was to talk with any inventor who wanted us to consider [manufacturing and](#) marketing their product. I also reviewed all the invention [promotion firms'](#) mailings. (The companies who promise that they will connect you with people who are just dying to see your new product.)

My opinion on these 'invention promotion firms (IPF's) is they are useless. We would receive a mailing several times [per](#) month from one or more of them. (I still receive some today, 11 years after we sold the company and I am no longer in [that](#) business.) The IPF's didn't understand OUR business so many of the fliers they sent had no connection to us. [We instantly recycled the paper for 99% of them. The 1% generated a creative thought in our heads of a feature or product that, once modified, might have some potential.](#)

1) Any product with the word 'golf' in the title ended up in our mailbox whether it fit our product line or not. Some weren't even golf related.

2) Often the flier claimed the product was patented or held some other Intellectual Property rights. Since the IPF didn't know our business, often there was 'prior art' that would void any such claim. (Even patent attorneys miss finding non-patented prior art.)

3) The IPF said the product could be marketed 'as is'. Seldom was that true. Often the products did not fit the needs of the market and even more often, what was drawn was not able to be manufactured, packaged and sold in the form they were showing it. For example, the package size (in all 3 dimensions) is critical to get retail space. They never appeared to take these parameters into account.

If you really want perspective on your product, find the buyers who know the industry inside and out. Have your attorney draw up a solid non-disclosure agreement but not so restrictive that the buyer can't sign it. Connect with buyers who add innovative products to their assortment. In retail, general retailers often have very limited space for each category but the specialty stores / mail order retailers thrive on finding new, innovative items. Do this early enough in the process that you can get their guidance. We often met people who had spent 10's of thousands of dollars on products that would never make it in the market in the form or packaging or patent design that they had spent money on.

I framed this from a retail product perspective. Each industry has its own set of innovators - people who are more likely to accept new products / techniques / processes, etc who are more likely to integrate them into their operations. Each industry also has the 'connectors' - people who know their way around the business. It might be a sales person for a supplier who gets into all the manufacturers, or an industry consultant, or anyone who specializes in servicing the industry you want to approach. They have a perspective on WHO to talk with and they can make the introduction for you. Find them and use them to set up meetings with people who can use your invention.

[Spend your time and money on making connections to people who have the real connections to help you.](#)

[Ron Eckstam - President 1983 - 2000](#)

[Green Eagle, Inc](#)
[Eden Prairie, MN](#)