



THE INVENTORS' NETWORK

THEY CONVENE IN A CASTLE, BUT THEIR METHODS ARE MODERN

Some illustrious and notable innovators have passed through the portals of the **Inventors' Network**, based in Minneapolis. Luminaries include the guy who invented Post-it Notes, a patent illustrator for Fortune 100 companies and a fellow who won the 2004 *Mechanics Illustrated* Editor's Choice Award. Not a bad line-up. But more than anything, the Inventors' Network prides itself on saving members time, money and frustration when it comes to developing or commercializing new products.

Secrets to Success:

We poll members for topics of interest. Then we interview and secure speakers to fill the need. We balance the monthly meetings with a variety of topics throughout the year. We sponsor annual special educational seminars. We sponsor product showcase events, where we invite manufacturers and the public. We sponsor the Young Inventors Fair

featuring about 100 exhibitors each April. We exhibit at trade shows and business events. Each June we exhibit at the Minnesota Inventors Congress in Redwood Falls, Minn. We send qualified speakers to speak at schools, libraries, community groups and businesses. We have our own library where members can check out reference materials monthly. We have developed an invention review workbook to help inventors identify the strengths and weaknesses of their products. Most of our members have one or more inventions under development.

Pearls of Wisdom:

Work together. Listen to one another. Create a safe environment for everyone to participate. Be inclusive and not exclusive. Pay a lot of attention to hospitality and always offer a variety of refreshments for everyone at your meetings. Our meeting location is superb. We are privileged to be able

to meet in a 19th-century castle that has been fully renovated to meet today's standards. Our group is made up of members who are professionals interested in making money off their inventions. The group in the early days was not professionally organized. We now operate according to established bylaws and standard business practices. Our best asset is our business plan. We re-evaluate and adjust our path each year.

Claim to Fame:

Art Fry, inventor of the Post-it Note.

Otto Schmitt, inventor of the Schmitt trigger, which made computing possible. He established the field of biomedical engineering and is known for his contributions to biophysics and the invention of many other electronic devices.

Robert Albertson, the inventor of the 0-degree ratchet wrench, 2004

Mechanics Illustrated Editor's Choice Award. Inventor of the lawn string trimmer, pressure washer, trans-electric drive and more.

Jack Smith, illustrator of thousands of patents for Fortune 100 companies and the independent inventor community. Illustrator of the book *Leonardo's Lost Robots*; winner of the American Publishers Award for best technical publication of 2006.

Abbott Rohn, inventor of the pleated paper automotive air filter.

Ron Johansson, inventor with 28 patents with 3M Co. Ron is author of the *Invention Review Workbook*. ■

Inventors Digest is interested in profiling some of the country's most vibrant inventor organizations. E-mail info@inventorsdigest.com or call 704.369.7312, ext. 3, to be considered.

THE INVENTORS' NETWORK

Founded: Group met casually for about 15 years. In 1995, it officially organized as a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

Web site: www.inventorsnetwork.org

Membership: 159 ... with 400 newsletter subscribers

Annual dues: \$80 annual dues. Meetings are free to members; \$15 meeting charge for visitors. This amount applies toward membership dues if the visitor joins the following month.

Meets: Third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Doors open for registration at 6:30 p.m.

Where: The VanDusen Center, 1900 LaSalle Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55403. Mailing address: P.O. Box 462, Excelsior, MN 55331-0462. Phone 651.602.3175.

Who shows up: 70 percent men; 30 percent women. The female segment is growing at the fastest rate. Occupations include engineers, medical professionals, small-business owners, accountants, trade workers, attorneys, artists, administrators, corporate employees, sales and marketing people and more. Our members and attendees come from many states and Canada.