

What is the future of office design?

# Entrepreneur

Plus

THE 50-YEAR  
STARTUP  
A sustainability  
checklist

MENSWEAR  
WITH A TWIST  
(Hint: It's not just  
for men)

Chris  
Hardwick,  
aka the  
Nerdist

# GO FORTH & CONQUER

Lessons  
in success  
from two nerds  
who tapped key  
influencers and  
reshaped the  
media world

the  
**NERD**  
ISSUE



PROFANITY  
IN THE  
WORKPLACE  
When it's OK—  
and when it's  
not OK

THE BOSSHOLE  
EXPERIMENT  
Our inside look  
at game development

## Tangible goods

How to turn a product idea into a consumer must-have

Jules Pieri started The Grommet, a product-launch platform, after realizing that contemporary entrepreneurs have ready access to manufacturing technology such as 3-D printing but no easy way to get their products into consumers' hands.

Since 2008 The Grommet has brought 1,500 companies and 6,000 products to market through its online store, which produces video reviews and social media campaigns that emphasize the people behind the products. Says Pieri: "Our first cut isn't: *Will this product sell well?* It's: *Do people want to know this story?*"

Pieri, who serves as CEO, walked us through the steps for taking a product from concept to reality. —Christina Le Beau



Reality check:  
The Grommet's  
Jules Pieri.

a product funded, that's a good validator. The main drawback is that campaigns can be unprepared for success—you have to quickly figure out how to deliver everything you promised.

### HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHETHER TO PRODUCE IN-HOUSE OR OUTSOURCE?

There are online inventor communities that are useful for those kinds of questions, but you can also find someone with a product in the same vein—not a competitor, but someone who uses the same kinds of processes. Sometimes people don't feel confident just picking up the phone, but anyone who has cracked this really loves talking about it. It's a real triumph to crack supply chains. When it comes time to price, make

### I HAVE AN IDEA FOR A PRODUCT. NOW WHAT?

Make sure there's a large market opportunity. I see a lot of mompreneurs, for instance, who are solving a very narrow problem that their child will have for only six months. Don't overlisten to your own needs. Do Google searches and see how many people are searching to solve the same problem. Check reviews on Amazon to see whether there are existing products.

### WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO PROTOTYPE?

Start with the elementary toolkit of foam board, cardboard. You can also do 3-D printed prototypes. We had a pitch session at Fenway Park where an 8-year-old came with a 3-D printed prototype.

You can rent those machines for \$15 an hour now, so they're not inaccessible. If you're starting to get the kind of response you'd hoped for, you might need a visual presentation, too. I love when someone reaches out to a designer or engineer to help move to the next level. Or you can join a hacker lab to try out ideas.

### AT WHAT POINT SHOULD INVENTORS CONSIDER CROWDFUNDING?

They should get a rough prototype together first. One insider tip: Make sure you get at least 20 percent of the campaign pre-funded before it goes live; 81 percent of campaigns that have a head start are successful. Crowdfunded campaigns also are a good way to get some market intelligence. If you can get

sure you create a margin structure that later allows for retail partners. Generally you want the manufacturing cost to be one-fifth of the retail price.

### WHAT ARE SOME COMMON ROOKIE MISTAKES?

You'd be surprised by how many people have a wonderful product and get a big order from someone like us, and we get an e-mail saying, "I'll be back in two weeks." They're not taking their own business seriously, and that's the kiss of death. It seems so basic, so obvious to not do that, but we see it often. The way you can get things produced today, you don't necessarily need to have the business skills to complement that, so people aren't always prepared.