

Limelight America

by Michael Drew Shaw

Many great ideas were born in Ohio.

First gas station: Columbus 1912. First disposable diaper: Cincinnati 1962. First radio station: Toledo 1907. The beer can: Newark 1937. The cash register: Dayton 1879. Play-Doh: Cincinnati 1952. Pop-Top-Can: Dayton 1965. Stepladder: Dayton 1870. Vacuum cleaner: Canton 1907. The hamburger: Canton 1891. The Hot Dog: Niles 1900. Chewing gum: Mount Vernon 1869. Life Savers: Cleveland 1912. Rippled potato chips: Bowling Green 1930. Girl Scout Cookies: Akron 1931. Rubber hose: Akron 1874. The grocery bag: Fremont 1883. Book matches: Barberton 1911. Formica: Cincinnati 1913. First electric traffic signal: Cleveland 1914. And (this one didn't get very far) the motorized spaghetti fork: Canton 1969.

The visionaries who came up with these things all faced many challenges along the way to success. I have a file drawer stuffed with what I thought at the time were great ideas. Okay, put me in the motorized spaghetti fork category. But hey, do you know how much money the Hula hoop and the pet rock made? I rest my case.

While visiting with a well-known entrepreneur our discussion was about the difficulty of coming up with something new and making it a success. As we talked the word "hurdle" came up several times, so on the flight back home I "invented" a board game for entrepreneurs called just that. **Hurdles**. Here's how it's played.

The Pieces: A deck of cards with six color categories. PURPLE *The Bank*, YELLOW *The Experts*, GREEN *The Government*, ORANGE *The Lawyers*, BLUE *The Customers*; RED *The Competition*. Plus one dice with six colored sides and play money. Last player with any cash left wins.

Each player starts with \$25,000. Play goes clockwise, first player to roll GREEN starts. Dice color determines category. Cards are drawn and read out loud with everyone following the instructions. "*The government is broke and needs some more of your money. Everybody put a thousand dollars in the pot.*"

Some more examples: PURPLE: *The bank approved your business loan. Collect \$500 from each player.* YELLOW: *Your research is insufficient. Pay the expert on your right \$2,000 to finish the job.* GREEN: *The IRS has disallowed your deduction for Excedrin. Put \$350 in the pot.* ORANGE: *Your lawyer has left the country. Pay each player \$800 to help find him.* BLUE: *A customer knocked over the Cheese Whiz display. Put \$50 in the pot for cleanup in isle five.* RED: *The*

competition ran out of whoopee cushions. You have a few left and everybody at this table wants one. Collect \$200 from each player.

I actually got as far as having my game reviewed by “an expert” who basically told me it wouldn’t fly. I figured he’d just chosen to steal my idea and sell it to Parker Brothers.

So far **Hurdles** hasn’t shown up on any store shelves that I know of. I wouldn’t want to end up like the guy who invented the intermittent windshield wiper only to have it stolen. Not plagiarized, *blatantly ripped off*. In the end he won his lawsuit against Detroit automakers and got a lot of money. But believe me, that is one of the hardest and *saddest* ways to get rich.

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