

My Everyday Edisons JOURNEY

By Eric Huber

As an avid viewer of the Emmy Award-winning public television show, *Everyday Edisons*, I had watched the successes of the show's winners, met the personalities behind the products, and always wondered in the back of my mind if someday it could be me and one of my inventions in the *Everyday Edisons* spotlight.

But after suffering through countless “Cattle Calls” back in the 80's, during my acting and modeling days, I vowed that I would never wait in a long line again — unless it was at the DMV or Disneyland. So when it was announced that Season 4 of *Everyday Edisons* was going to be held online, I was relieved. I could participate in that kind of audition! The only problem was, I have a lot of ideas, so my next thought was, “If I audition in the traditional way, what idea or two will I present?”

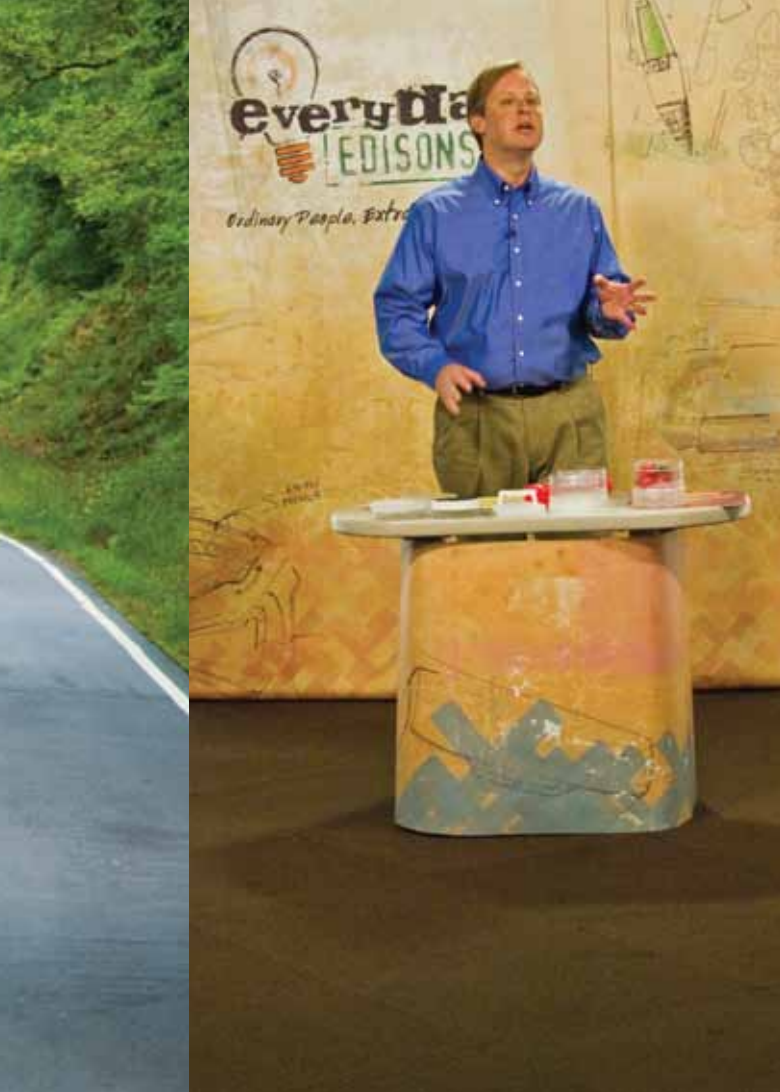
Luckily, this proved not to be a problem at all. The broad nature of the casting call requirements gave me a great opportunity to submit ideas that did not fall into categories of previous Edison Nation Live Product Searches (LPS). I really didn't know what they wanted, so I thought “what the heck” and submitted about 50 ideas to the casting call, then crossed my fingers. Since I can't determine what a good idea is and what's a loser, I knew Edison Nation could decide if any of my ideas were worthy.

Next came the all too familiar process of watching the Edi-

son Nation member dashboard for the progress of my submissions. All of them went from stage one to three fairly quickly. The casting call deadline was fast approaching, and I expected that would be when the dashboards would really begin moving — and that was exactly what happened. Thirty-eight went out at the most ruthless of the stages, stage 4. The good news was that 12 still remained. Over the next week or so, two-thirds of those 12 went out at the next stage, but five were still climbing and had made it to G6. Now the stress began. What would happen with these last five? Ninety percent of my submissions were out of the running, but a G7 would mean an all-expense-paid trip to Charlotte, a chance to pitch my product in person, and an opportunity to meet all the behind-the-scene people that make things happen.

On February 2, I received the phone call we all wait for — the caller ID with a 704 area code. I was nervously anxious to speak to the person on the other end. Was this going to be a congratulatory call, or were they coming up with something new and making personal phone calls to say, “I'm sorry, but you get big, fat Red X's.” Well, Mary Dickson introduced herself, and asked if I could bring four of my remaining products to the *Everyday Edisons* judges. “Sure,” I said, still trying to keep my excitement in check, knowing that I was still a far cry away from being named an “*Everyday Edison*.”

A few days later, the presentation tips and guidelines were



received, giving me about two weeks to prepare for the face-to-face audition. I had ten minutes for each of my products, five minutes for set-up, and five minutes for the actual presentation. The tips seemed straight forward: (1) State the name of your invention; (2) Give a brief description of it; (3) Discuss what problem it solves or the opportunity it addresses; (4) Identify the target market; (5) Define the size of the target market; (6) Demonstrate how your invention works; (7) Answer the judges' questions to the best of your ability.

I made an outline for each presentation, wrote a script and prepared my prototypes. Like presentations I'd done in the past, I knew that preparation was key. I found that writing out a complete script, including descriptions of product demonstration, works best for me. I did this for each of the four products. After practicing and reviewing each a few times on video, I was ready. Just like a test or an interview, the better prepared I am, the more relaxed and confident I feel when it's time for the actual presentation.

My products were going to travel cross-country to Edison Nation before me via UPS, so I packed everything needed for the presentations, plus tools and supplies in case of an emergency. Duct tape, dental floss, bubble gum... you know, the typical MacGyver (Oops! UPS broke it) Preparedness Kit.

Upon arriving at Edison Nation, the auditioning guests were welcomed at a dinner reception, with nearly 100 in attendance.

I've never felt comfortable "working the room" or making small talk with strangers, but as soon as I walked in I felt like I was amongst friends. I found myself engaged in lively conversations with people whose interests shared the common thread of innovation and discovery. It all seemed like a world away from my tinkering in the garage in solitude. I was reluctant to leave the fun and excitement of the evening, but I knew I had a big morning ahead. So I retired to my hotel room to relax with some light, albeit repetitive reading — my scripts for the next day's audition.

The Edison Nation/Everyday Edisons offices make their home in an amazing, converted, old brick grist mill. The auditioning facilities were set-up inside, complete with a "Green Room" located just outside of Anna and Daniel's offices, the nerve center for all the ASOTV successes. My boxes had been delivered to the Green Room with their contents unscathed, so it was time for hair and make-up. No joke, my wife had packed me my own make-up in my MacGyver Kit!

I took a moment to review the schedule and noticed that I was one of the first to present, and that I'd been given an hour between each of my four presentations. What a relief! I didn't want a "back-to-back-to-back-to-back" presentation. I didn't want the judges to get bored of me. Michael Cable, the host of Everyday Edisons, came in to give me a few tips and words of encouragement... then, I was called... it was my turn to audition... it was show time!

Upon entering the set, I was fitted with a wireless mic, spent a few minutes setting up my presentation, and then enthusiastically introduced myself. Over the years, my experience has taught me to leave my notes behind, and to pay attention to my audience.

In this case, the judges were: Louis Foreman (CEO of Edison Nation and Creator of Everyday Edisons), Jon Dudas (the former director of the U.S. Patent Office), Christine Aguilera (CEO of Sky Mall) and many others from Edison Nation and Everyday Edisons. I covered my points, looked for a reaction from my audience, and most of all, I was myself and just had fun.

After the audition, we took tours of Edison Nation. Amazing! I could go on and on about this place, but let me just give you a visual — Edison Nation is like Disneyland for inventors. The audition day ended with a bite to eat and a great opportunity to hang out with the Everyday Edisons staff; some notable inventors, including the 'Mister Steamy' guys, Michael Diep of 'Emery Cat' fame, and the Shepards who invented the 'Gyro Bowl.'

The next morning it was time to go home. Replaying the events of the weekend in my mind made the 6-hour flight home go quickly, but it was just the beginning of what seemed like an eternity of anticipation, waiting and wondering which

15 products would be chosen as finalists out of the 50 that were presented.

A month later I got a call from (my now favorite) 704 area code. One of my ideas was selected for the final 15. While this was exciting news and I was thrilled to hear it, I didn't want to get my hopes up too high. I knew that I'd have to wait awhile for the "final 10 countdown" to begin. That would be the exciting part of the rollercoaster ride.

A few months later, the first inventor was selected... then the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th ...the 8th... then I started doing the math, figuring my probability of being chosen, and began to worry. Eventually, I got a call from the 704 area code. But it wasn't a "Congratulations, you made it" call, rather it was a caller saying, "I have no idea if you made it. I'm just calling to schedule a Skype call for you with Mr. Foreman." Ugh! Pins & needles, pins and needles... what was he going to say?

Well, I was completely thrilled and thoroughly relieved when Mr. Foreman said that I had been chosen as inventor #9 for Everyday Edisons Season 4.

My wife and I were 'happy-dancing' for days. Then as soon as Edison Nation made the announcement on the blog, we immediately shared the exciting news with our friends and family on Facebook. This news was too big to have to wait for our annual Christmas newsletter.

A video of our Skype conversation was uploaded to YouTube, and my wife linked it to her Facebook posts. Hmm... while the content of our conversation was terrific, how I appeared in the Skype video was not so good. I looked Ug-ly! My face appeared distorted and a ghostly green. But it was my own fault. {Note to self: #1- Choose better lighting conditions, avoid having total darkness behind you as it accentuates the glare from the computer screen; #2-Position camera so that it is eyelevel or tilted slightly downward. Make sure it's not pointing up my nose; #3- Ditch the eyeglasses; and finally #4- Don't let wife do my make-up.}

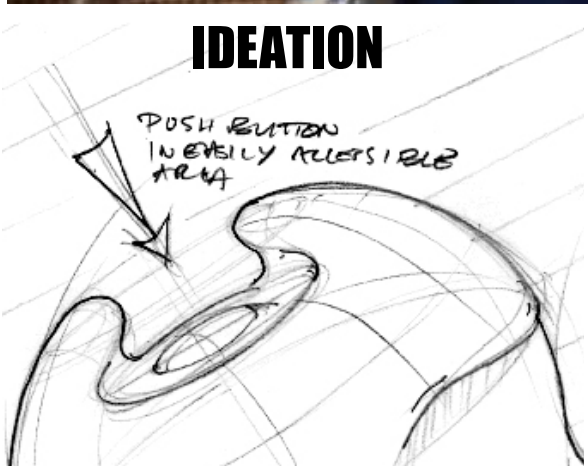
It's a big deal to be named an 'Everyday Edison.' For me, it's a personal affirmation.

The title comes with perks, 50,000 Insider Points, and the coveted 'Everyday Edison' banner on my EN avatar. My wife has her Miss Oregon-World sash, and a collection of blue ribbons from the county fair, but now I have a banner of my own, albeit virtual. And quite frankly, the prestige associated with being an 'Everyday Edison' is credible and of significant measure. I like it!

The following week Edison Nation sent a video camera for us to record 'a day in the life of Eric Huber.' So often we go through our lives on auto-pilot, so I really had to give it some thought. Finally, my wife and I decided on topics, times, and locations. Then I 'hired' my son to shoot the footage. It was fun! We began in the Man Cave, went to the beach, retail stores, and Disneyland. A couple of days later the video camera was on its way back to the Everyday Edisons staff. I have no idea how they are going to use it. I'm curious to find out what will end up on the cutting room floor.



PROTOTYPE



IDEATION



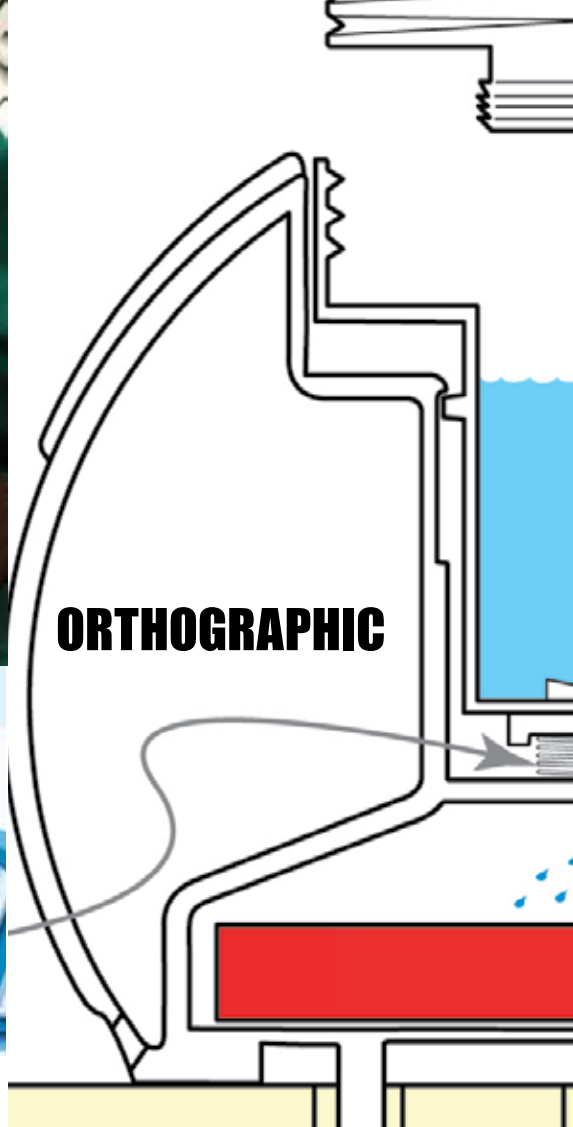
LOGO

Once that camera was out of my hands, it was time to wait again... patiently. Everyone kept asking me, "Well, have you heard anything yet?" I finally started saying, "No, stop asking."

Over the next few months I would hear little rumors like, "There's good progress," or "They're working really hard." While these vague comments were meant to be assuring, I knew that there were some major engineering challenges involved in creating my product. But from watching the previous seasons of 'Everyday Edisons,' I was confident that the technical expertise of the behind-the-scenes engineers at Eventys/Edison Nation would make it happen, if it was at all possible.

Once significant progress was made, secrets were revealed to me. I was only allowed to share the exciting news with my immediate family, and they were sworn to secrecy... especially no status updates on Facebook. I was pretty excited, so keeping these secrets was a challenge, but, I couldn't tell anyone else until the first episode was released to public television stations.

On April 6, 2012, the first episode introduced my product as, "The Microwavable Steam Sponge," its temporary name. The real name and face of my product would remain a mystery for a little while longer.



On April 19th, I flew to Charlotte for more taping of the show. Again, I was kept completely in the dark about the days planned events. It actually made me feel uneasy, and I had an 8-hour plane ride to whip it up into a full-blown case of the nerves. Unlike the auditions, the extent of my preparation for this important day was limited my wardrobe choices, and what would look best on TV. Just in case, I brought several shirt choices, and as for my pants, I had a choice of khaki, khaki, or khaki. If it was going to be a 'big reveal' of my finished product, complete with a logo, and commercialization plan, should I wear the purple shirt or the green shirt? Not knowing what events to expect made it feel like a surprise party, and I've never been one to like surprises. But I have a new outlook now, and I've concluded that I really like this kind of surprise party.

About the taping of the show: it was fun and exciting to be around the Everyday Edisons crew and the professionals that make things happen at the Edison Nation facility. That's about all that I'm allowed to tell you – except that I did decide to go with the green shirt and khaki pants!

To find out the rest, tune in to Everyday Edisons Season 4, Episode 11: "Hot and Steamy."

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