

[First written and distributed in 1993 by Stephen Paul Gnass]

AMERICA'S FUNNIEST INVENTORS?

Questions to Evaluate Television Shows that Feature Inventors and Inventions

Does this show represent the proper image that we want to project as inventors? Is this of benefit to inventors, most of whom have put in years of effort and hard work to develop their inventions?

1. SHOW FORMAT:

- 1.1 Is it strictly entertainment?
- 1.2 Is it light, silly, amusing, corny, rinky dinky?
- 1.3 Does it have merit? If yes, what exactly is this merit?
- 1.4 Is it a format like "America's Funniest Videos" or People, etc.?
- 1.5 Does it trivialize and/or make light of the inventors, the inventions, and/or the reason for inventing it?
- 1.6 Does the show's format really help the image of the inventor, and would the show encourage or discourage others with ideas?
- 1.7 Could the show's stereotype of inventors help or hinder in the negotiation of a deal with a licensee, buyer, etc.?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

2. SHOW STAGE:

- 2.1 What does the intro and background music do for you? How does it make you feel?
- 2.2 What does the background stage and design setting look like? Does it resemble a talk show, game show, entertainment, etc.? Is this setting conducive and beneficial to the inventors image?

2.3 Who is the host? What is he known or famous for? Is the host a comedian? Are his questions developed to make light of the inventor/invention to get the audience to laugh?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

3. SHOW PURPOSE AND/OR MAIN MOTIVE:

3.1 What is the show's sole purpose?

3.2 Has it been developed to get high ratings and viewership so it can earn big profits for its producers, advertisers, etc.?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

4. IDEA PROTECTION:

4.1 How many ideas do they receive?

4.2 How many ideas do you think are sent in and how many are actually aired from these?

4.3 What is happening with all the other ideas they receive that are not being aired?

4.4 Are all the ideas they receive patented or patent pending?

4.5 If not, are the people told to get protection before sending in their ideas?

4.6 Are people told that they could jeopardize their international patent rights if their ideas are submitted without protection?

4.7 At the end of the show when they invite the public to send in their ideas, do they mention the risk involved with submitting unprotected ideas and that they have only one year to get a patent once publicly displayed?

4.8 Are potential participants being informed about the rules, regulations and guidelines

around disclosure and/or the 1-year window, and/or risk involved?

4.9 If so, are they being told before or after the ideas are submitted?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

5.1 What are the prizes and are they adequate?

5.2 Who sponsors the prizes? Are the sponsors getting or seeing any of the ideas submitted?

5.3 Is there a conflict of interest in any of these sponsorships or other working arrangements?

5.4 What about any and all of the staff members who work for the show - are any of these people familiar with intellectual property laws? Could the inventors' ideas be at risk? What is constantly happening in the entertainment/film industry with ideas?

5.5 What could happen to all of these unprotected ideas if the law changes from "First-to-Invent" to "First-to-File" and ideas can only be protected with a patent?

5.6 Just how high is the risk and does it outweigh any benefits that could be derived from participating?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

6. QUESTIONS:

6.1 What organizations across the country are helping them get inventions and/or running ads in their publications?

- 6.2 Has each organization done its due diligence related to these questions about the image and stereotype presentation of the inventor, the risk of unprotected ideas, and possible conflict of interest in arrangements?
- 6.3 What will this do for inventors, the organizations, and for our industry?
- 6.4 Just because the producers are big names, does this mean they care about inventors?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

7. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS:

- 7.1 Is there any concern about inventors?
- 7.2 Is there any benefit to inventors?
- 7.3 Does it damage or help the inventors image?
- 7.4 Will the inventor earn the respect of government, investors and VIPS who watch the show?
- 7.5 Is the show anti-inventor or entrepreneur?
- 7.6 Does it give the proper importance to inventors in society?
- 7.7 Although the TV show producers are not directly taking money from inventors, are they jeopardizing the inventors rights, not only with people associated with TV production, but with millions of viewers?
- 7.8 Are inventors being ridiculed and is there a tone of sarcasm in the way the show presents inventors, or are they presented seriously?
- 7.9 Are inventors and organizations compromising their values because everyone is so wrapped up in the Hollywood glitz and mystique? Has anyone popped the bubble to see what's really going on?
- 7.10 What is the motivation for inventors to be on the show? Is it based on fact, reality and sound advice? Has the inventor given a lot of thought as to why he should or shouldn't participate? Is it for the right reason? Or is the fact that it's free along with the glamour and glitter of being on national TV outweighing all rationalization and analyzation?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

8. SUGGESTIONS:

- 8.1 Wouldn't it be better to be represented by the types of quality shows that position the importance of inventions like PBS *Newton's Apple*, *Beyond Tomorrow*, Discovery Channel's *Invention* and other quality shows that represent the inventor and product in the serious, proper image?
- 8.2 Collectively, we can let them know how we feel by sending a letter to the show's producer, advertisers and the network.
- 8.3 We can send out press releases to local news stations or newspapers expressing how we feel.
- 8.4 If corrections are not made to improve the show's format, then a boycott of the show by inventors and inventor groups may be necessary to keep the Nielson ratings low, which means not watching it ourselves and telling friends and family not to watch it.

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

9. CONCLUSION:

- 9.1 Is this the lottery mentality, where everyone is trying to get on these types of shows because it's free and glamorous?
- 9.2 Yet, how many thousands of applications are being submitted, and how many applicants are getting on these shows?

What are your thoughts: _____

Pros and Cons: _____

For years, inventor groups and key players have been complaining about the negative image of the inventor. Yet, is this the image we want for the invention industry? If we support them, have we sold out? And for what? If we support them, have we done so without looking past the glitz to see the whole picture? Have we done so without seeing a pilot, without analyzation or knowing the implications of whether it's going to damage the inventor and the industry?

Yet, doesn't improper positioning of the inventor hurt the whole industry? If the image of the inventor is important to you, your families, and friends, then it's important to speak up. Do something about it. Take action.

Bottom line, the emphasis of the inventor's importance to society will be based upon how responsibly each person and each inventor organization handles these issues.

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ABOUT STEPHEN GNASS:

Stephen Paul Gnass is founder of www.InventionConvention.com, Executive Director of the National Congress of Inventor Organizations [NCIO] and an inventors advocate. Mr. Gnass speaks on the subject of the "Business of Inventing" [tm] and has had his articles reprinted in various magazines. As Senior Consultant with the Gnass Group, he consults independent inventors and small businesses. He can be emailed at gness@businessofinventing.com or visit www.businessofinventing.com.

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