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Inventors Meet to Compare Notes. Just Don't Ask to Glimpse Them.



Orly Ramirez shows his invention, the Brooklyn Bicycle Brake Light, during a meeting with other inventors and entrepreneurs in Mineola, N.Y.

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The conference room was filled with like-minded souls, possessors of brilliant ideas designed to set the world on fire — or at least to make some money.

A fitness trainer told fellow audience members he had ideas for improving transportation, but said he “obviously” could not reveal them, citing patent and copyright reasons. A man in his 60s

said he had a “bunch of ideas related to electrical fires.” A woman with a high-pitched voice simply said she wanted to get a “utility patent.”

Some seemed to wince under smiles when one man announced he had had luck with his creations on Amazon, or when a woman boasted of having entrepreneurship “opportunities” on the horizon. One young attendee wanted to create software for compiling e-books.

“I hope to make a million dollars,” he said, perhaps in jest, and the room erupted in laughter.

The gathering in Mineola, N.Y., on Monday night brought together members of the [Nassau County Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club](#), and the guest speaker, Sue Purvis, the innovation and outreach coordinator for the Greater New York Region of the [United States Patent and Trademark Office](#).

The club’s president, Brian Fried, 39, warned audience members at the start, “If you have an unprotected idea, you reveal it here at your own risk.”

Mr. Fried, whose business card shows him pulling the cord to an inspiration light bulb, suggested people remain general about their ideas. If it involved the kitchen he recommended perhaps just saying “kitchen utensil.” At one point, he displayed one of his own inventions: a collapsible egg tray called “Eggstra Space.”

Ms. Purvis told the audience of about 100 that it was very rare to “actually meet inventors,” noting that “usually they have lawyers.”

She recounted how one man personally showed up with a carpet-seaming device and demonstrated it to her. “I thought it was so helpful,” she said. People scribbled notes intently.

At another point, Ms. Purvis, perhaps wary of a post-meeting mob scene, said, “Just to make it clear. I do not look at patents.”

During a question-and-answer period, several topics arose repeatedly: protecting intellectual property in China and other countries, nondisclosure agreements, the [America Invents Act](#) (which Ms. Purvis said is the “biggest patent reform ever”), and multiple variations on how ideas can get stolen and what precautions inventors can take.

At one point Mr. Fried told the crowd that privacy among inventors was understandable but he cautioned “you’re not going to get anywhere if you don’t tell anyone about it.”

Toward the end audience members got up to network and mingle. The room became abuzz with ideas, or with vague references to them, at least.

Orly Ramirez, 50, displayed his invention, the Brooklyn Bicycle Brake Light, a set of bike brake lights that operate via brake sensitivity, like a car. Mr. Ramirez was one of the few that showed his invention to the crowd earlier (he said he holds a provisional patent for it).

“I was driving home in the dark and a cyclist crossed right in front of me,” he said, “So I said, ‘Why doesn’t this guy have a light?’ ” He added, “I don’t like to be called an inventor. I like ‘transformer.’ ” The true innovators, he said, were the cavemen.

By meeting’s end, Ms. Purvis had managed to avoid an overwhelming scrum. She remarked on the culture of privacy among inventors. “It’s common among independent inventors,” she said. “It’s good to be protective.” Idea theft occurs, she said. “It’s the first inventor to file.”

The fitness trainer who had earlier declined to talk about his ideas for transportation, expanded on them slightly now. “I feel I have some profound ideas,” said Brian Kleiman, 43, of East Meadow. He offered that his ideas involved subways, taxis, and aviation, but he revealed little else.

He admitted that he had held on to some of his ideas for up to 10 years, and that he has yet to explicitly tell anyone what they are. When asked if there was anyone he might share his ideas with, he thought carefully.

“Bloomberg,” he finally said, referring to the billionaire mayor of New York. “I think he’s somebody I could trust it with.”