

News Coverage

Inventor and Panitch Schwarze Client Lonnie Johnson Featured by USPTO

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Taking a great idea from concept to market can take years of hard work and unwavering persistence, as inventor Lonnie Johnson knows well. Johnson, who is a client of Panitch Schwarze's, recently was featured in Journeys of Innovation, a series by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office that tells the stories of inventors or entrepreneurs whose groundbreaking innovations have made a positive difference in the world.

Originally from Mobile, Alabama, Johnson was a student at a segregated high school when he designed and built his own robot, entered it in a regional science fair, and won first place. Since then, the USPTO notes that he has received more than 100 patents for inventions that include new types of engines, batteries, and spacecraft.

In the interview, Johnson shares the story behind his invention that changed summer for kids all over the world – the Super Soaker®, a line of toy water guns. He accidentally invented the Super Soaker while attempting to build a new water pump when he worked at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Johnson also discusses the vital role that patent protection has played in his success, noting that the original Super Soaker patent gave him the grounds to protect his intellectual property.

"...when the infringers started, we were able to get injunctions put in place based on the patent," Johnson said. "We actually stopped shipments coming into the country at the docks in Los Angeles. And I think when we took the first infringer on, the other companies decided to step back and leave it alone. That allowed us to focus on developing the product and proving it, and it became a major success."

Patents protect the inventor, Johnson said, noting, "...it's extremely important that if you take the risk, do all the development work, and stick your neck out, and prove that something is possible, and then have everybody jump on, pile on and eat the benefits away from you, that is unfair."

Read the full USPTO interview [here](#) and don't miss the [blog post about Johnson](#) by Panitch Schwarze founding partner Ronald L. Panitch.

