

Get Comfortable.....Here is the story of how it all happened...

The concept for iRun International was started three years ago when I was training for the Honolulu Marathon in support of Team in Training for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Hawaii. During the months-long training, I used an iPod Shuffle to help take my mind off of the endless miles that comprise marathon training. However, during the innumerable hours on the road, I found that the earphones (ear buds) that come with the iPod, as well as the all of the aftermarket products available had one flaw....they were all too long. The industry standard length for a set of earphones is 40 inches (100 centimeters) and that posed a problem for me and many of the runners that I trained with. From the constant tangling of the wires to the earphones being pulled out of my ear because of the tangling and weight of the wires being pulled down with each of the more than 1000 steps per mile, I was spending more time fumbling with wires than concentrating on running. And it wasn't just me. Everyone was having the same problems as I was, and we were all trading "secrets" of how to solve these problems. Everything from using paperclips to clamps, I tried everything to keep the wires from pulling and tangling, with nothing but temporary solutions.

That was until I began training for triathlons, and then it came to me. By this time, I had found a semi-permanent solution which was simply clipping my iPod Shuffle to the strap of my hat and wrapping the excessive wires around the strap to bring it to a manageable length. That was when the epiphany came; Why wrap the wires to shorten them rather than shortening them permanently? So that is what I did. Just as the creators of Nike did so many years ago, I set out to find the solution to my problem. So I bought a pair of cheap earphones, measured the distance from the back of my head and t-shirt to my ears, cut the wires and took the earphones apart. After some head scratching and soldering, I had it! My first prototype of what would become the iRun Performance Earphones. Finally here was a solution that worked and was permanent. It was a clean and simple design that actually would allow me to focus my attention on running and not my earphones. Reducing the length of the wires to 28cm (11 inches) and eliminate the problem of tangling and twisting as well as reducing the added mass of the wires which pulls the earphones out of your ears. I trained for triathlons and Ironman races using my prototype and it worked flawlessly. So I started the long process of research and development. I had NO IDEA how long and difficult it was!

The journey of iRun has truly been a one-man show (with lots of help from my wife). Creating, designing and finalizing the earphones were the easy part. From there, I had to figure out how to patent them, do trademarks, and manufacture the products and so many other things that I didn't even know about. So with an idea and working prototype in hand, I began looking for someone to make them. Negotiating with manufacturers in China is not as easy as you might think, especially for someone that doesn't speak Chinese. But that's exactly what I did....they asked me about MOQs, TTs and PIs and I had no idea what they were talking about....so I lost a lot of sleep and did a lot of research and successfully negotiated the samples, production and reduced MOQs for initial orders.

Then came the really hard part....attorneys! I called some patent attorneys and they quoted me about \$10,000 per patent from beginning to end. Seriously?!?!?! I had three designs and didn't have \$30,000....so what did I do next? Yep, I lost more sleep and did a LOT more research on

the USPTO website. I downloaded and printed off the instructions for filing Provisional Patents to “hold my place in line” so to speak. Researched Trademarks at the same time..and before you know it, iRun had three Provisional Patents and three Trademarks pending. All of this for under \$1000! What a deal! After my extensive and exhaustive reading, re-reading and falling asleep while reading the USPTO, I decided that I needed to submit the Design Patents. With words of encouragement from my wife in the form of “Well, you have always had more sense than money”, I set out to create and submit three complete Design Patents. Do you have any idea how much time it takes to put one of those together, not to mention THREE at the same time? Yep, it took a day.

(This is where I should mention my obsessive-compulsive tendency to become single minded in purpose until I finish something. I won’t sleep, eat or anything until I have completed whatever is on my mind....a gift, from my mother who wakes up at 2am to vacuum the house)

So what would have cost me \$30,000 in attorney fees, ended up costing me \$1,284 for everything...tax, tag, title and insurance. Not a bad deal.

Now we had manufacturing ability, legal protection, negotiated contracts and a means of shipping them here (did I forget to mention that I had to create an Importing Company and hire a Customs Broker??? That’s another story for another day.) but after talking with the manufacturers more, I didn’t have any packaging. So once again, it was time to become sleep deprived and do more research. Coming up with the design for the earphones was easy...it only took a day. Coming up with packaging....now that was completely different! It took me more than a month to create the packaging for the entire line of products. Not having ANY background in graphic design of ANY sort, I turned to my trusted Microsoft Paint program. And if you are educated in the ways of graphic design, you know that this is NOT a preferred program of choice. So after exhausting work, I had it....the packaging for the products. When I sent the designs to the manufacturers, they informed me that they needed to be in .AI format...What is .AI format????? Hmmmm....more research and less sleep again. Google showed me that .AI stands for Adobe Illustrator, so I downloaded the trial version and attempted, unsuccessfully, to learn Adobe Illustrator. So I relented, for the first time during this entire process....and had to ask for help. So a friend gave me a name of a graphic artist they knew and after emailing her the files, within 3 days she had completed what had taken me more than a month to do. A valuable lesson to remember.

So now with manufacturing locked on, shipping covered, importing handled, packaging finalized, patents-pending, trademarks pending and everything covered...how to market the product? Have you ever seen one of those people that can spin 10 plates on 10 sticks simultaneously? Well, that is exactly what it has been like during this entire process. And how long has this process taken, you might wonder? Remember the aforementioned OCD tendencies that I inherited? Well, from conceptualization to pre-production samples in hand to selling products to retailers has taken 6 months. That’s right.....6 months. Now I have been told that this is an unheard of amount of time, but since I have nothing to compare it to, I can only assume that this has taken exactly as long as it was meant to take....and it is still evolving. So there it is...the story behind the Birth of a Brand....iRun High Performance Earphones.