

In the Shadow of the Great Pyramid

By Lawrence J. Udell

Egypt has plenty of enthusiastic inventors, but lacks the incentive and resources base, even to minor degree.

I was privileged to represent the United States

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at a conference in Cairo, Egypt, last fall. The Conference was titled "The Effective Use Of Innovations and Inventions and Their Role In Economic Development." It was sponsored by the World Intellectual Property Organization

(WIPO), which is part of the United Nations with 161 Countries as members.

I gave two presentations to an audience consisting of Egyptian inventors, small business owners, government officials and representative from a few other countries. The first was on support services and how critical they are in the United States as a resource to inventors and innovators. The second speech was on the evaluation assessment process-how to go from idea to product to commercialization.

I designed both so as not to give the impression that the American system and resources for inventors are superior. It was not my intention that the listener (through an instant translation system) assume that we were the worlds ultimate home for creative idea people. It was, however extremely difficult for me not to brag about American inventor and our accomplishments.

It was especially interesting to recognize the similarities and the difference between American and Egyptian inventor. During 1996, their patent office received 1200 patent applications; by comparison, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office received over 206,000 applications! Our population is four times that of Egypt's, but the primary differences are the incentives and motivation to invent.

America is a land that first fought for its freedom, then recognized the unlimited opportunities that freedom afforded and started the greatest technological revolution and evolution in the history of the world. We are a nation of both dreamers and doers. We feed upon the creativity of each other and those who come before us. The ability to create and invent has been within each human being since the dawn of civilization and will continue to be for infinity.

What makes one inventor more successful than another is quite simple. You look around and invent either what does not exist that people will want, or improve upon what does exist that will make people want it more. Those who do become successful, surround themselves with experienced and compatible contributors, and never fall in love their "brain-child." Inventors are often described by the media as "paranoid" – and many are- but to lift yourself above this perception, you have to realistically see your creation as a business person and not as the inventor.

Throughout the world it's all the same: recognition by one's peers brings fame and personal fortune, but what is dramatically different in the U.S. is the resource base and

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A BIT OF ADVICE

In reflecting on the advantages America's inventors have, **Larry Udell** offers the following advice.

- Stop spending money to feed your inventor ego. Before you spend on dollar on your idea, use the massive resource data bases that are available to tell you whether your "million-dollar-idea" is worth anything.
- Stop being influenced by invention promotion firms, relative and neighbour and go do your own homework. The U.S. Patent & Trademark Office has Patent Depository Libraries all across the fifty states. Use them to your advantage, and, besides, they're free.
- As difficult as it may be for many of you, reverse roles and be the potential investor not the inventor, would you reach into your pocket, whether it's your money or others, and give it to the inventor who is starry-eyed and convinced his invention will be the greatest and most successful new product of the century. Look at what you are doing as the "coldblooded" business person who is looking at return-on-investment in the shortest period of time.

the size of potential domestic markets. Egypt has the same overly enthusiastic inventor with a new game, device or piece of equipment. They spoke of how I could take their great idea to America, and we would both be rich.

Their perception, in many respects, is accurate. America is the largest buying power in the world, and we don't mind spending money on new products (oftentimes whether the make sense or not). These Egyptian inventors saw me as their path to the wealthy American market. They did not even consider their own country of sixty million people, or Europe or Asia; all they wanted was the good old USA.

I attempted not to discourage, but at the same time did not encourage. The conference took place at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, which is similar to our own National Institute of Standards and

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...THE VALUE OF FREEDOM AND ALL IT BRNGS TO OUR LIVES OPENS TODAY'S DOORS TO TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITES.

Technology and Small Business Administration. The obvious difference was not only pointed out

to me, but was easily recognized: the lack of a resource base, even to a minor degree

We in America, who often complain

about everything, should spend even one day, on our own, in a third world country.

We take so

much for granted that we lose sight of the unlimited opportunities before us. Yet we often wonder how foreigners come to our country and within a few years are not only productive citizens but are major contributors to our economic system and society.

They dreamt about freedoms of America long before they ever arrived, and once here, they turned their dreams into reality.

When our ancestors first came to the shores of the United States, no one was waiting to hand them anything. They struggled to learn the language and new customs, knowing that if they didn't service, there was no one to blame but themselves.

The purpose of this article is not only to express my concern with inventor in other areas of the world, but my personal reflections on those who talk to me daily with their list of success, right at the top of the list

is "Money," which they believe will solve all their problems.

Count your blessing, American inventors, since the value of freedom and all it brings to our lives opens today's doors to tomorrow's opportunities. Recognize that the system you have, while far from perfect, is still the best intellectual property protection system on the planet. At least we have ability to voice our opinions and influence the laws that govern us.

Egypt is a proud nation whose heritage dates back thousands of years. They are not only looking at the future, but making a concerted effort to optimize change to the positive. The greatest potential for economic prosperity for its citizens lies not only in help from other nations, but from within its own creative abilities, assisted by a government that recognizes intellectual wealth.

Not once, even while roaming the back streets of Cairo, was I ever asked for a hand-out. People sold drinks or boxes of tissue for a small amount of money, but I didn't see the "homeless" looking for a hand-out. I found this not only admirable, but it spoke for a nation in need that is willing to do whatever is necessary for its future prosperity.

While in the shadow of the Great Pyramid, my mind raced back to a land that was a mystery from my early childhood. This land is now pulling itself into the dawn of the new century. I was reminded that it was the creative genius of Egyptian inventors who designed and built this incredible monument to the world and its future generations. I was humbled and awed by their past accomplishments and anticipate their future will be as bold and inspiring!

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