

THE WINE AND CHEER CART: The Next Great Retail Invention?

BY TEDDY DURGIN



What's been the most important invention in grocery retail over the decades? The cash register? Sure. And it's been updated frequently over the years with the latest computer and barcode technology. Security cameras? Certainly, such tech has significantly cut down on shoplifting. But many believe a more basic invention is what built grocery and packaged-goods retail into what it is today. The shopping cart!

The shopping cart was invented in 1937 by Sylvan Goldman, owner of the Humpty Dumpty grocery chain. He realized that once people's hands were full, they left his stores. So, he invented the shopping cart, which ultimately compelled people to stay in stores longer and buy more goods.

Today, all sorts of innovations are impacting retail, from self checkouts to digital coupons. But Tom and Charlotte Santolli believe the shopping cart will once again trump them all. Together, this husband-and-wife duo out of New Jersey have invented and patented The Wine & Cheer Cart specifically for beer, wine, and liquor stores.

The cart is designed to hold bottles of varying sizes upright while shopping. The secret is the Santollis' patented mesh of "safety rings" built into each cart.

The cart is designed to hold bottles of varying sizes upright while shopping. The secret is the Santollis' patented mesh of "safety rings" built into each cart. Preventing breakage and near-constant bottle clanking is the most obvious benefit. But that's just one of the cart's pluses. Based on multiple principles of human behavioral science, the Santollis believe customers will naturally feel compelled to fill more rings than leave unfilled -- i.e., more sales for the retailer!

Tom Santolli, an insurance broker for over three decades, said, "There was a study done in the early 19th century by a psychiatrist, and it had to do with a person's desire to complete a project. When you see those holes, people are going to want to fill them simply because they're there. We knew we couldn't have 50 rings because that would kill the effect. This one has 16, and we might have one that has eight or 12 for smaller, liquor





stores."

Charlotte came up with the basic idea. A stay-at-home mom who raised their two daughters, she was shopping at a liquor store one day. When she got home with her purchases, she expressed how annoying it was that every time she shopped in that store, she had to do so with "this big, stupid cart. No matter how I would position the bottles, they'd always roll around!"

She continued, "What I said next was, 'I have an idea! Those cup holders they use in carts so you can go around the store with a cup of coffee or drink, that's just one holder. They should do a grid of them. Then, you could put the bottles in and they'd all be secure.' And Tom immediately jumped up and was like, 'That's a great idea! We have to run with this!'

Tom recalled "I went upstairs, got on the computer, and Googled every shopping cart manufacturer in the world. You could see all of their product lines, all their accessories. I looked everywhere. I couldn't find it, and I just knew it didn't

exist." They contacted a lawyer, started an official search, realized nothing like what the cart they were looking to invent existed, and went from there.

Both agreed that securing a patent has been the toughest part of making The Wine & Cheer Cart a reality. Charlotte said, "Everything we'd heard was, 'Strap in for the long run! It's going to take a dozen years!' Well, we got it in three and a half."

Tom chimed in, "We had a couple of challenges in the back-and-forths with the patent examiner in Washington. But not nearly as many as most people. He even conceded when I was on my conference call with him and my attorney, he said, 'Two things. First of all, the simplest inventions are always the best. And second, I've never seen anything like this!' So, I knew we had a good shot."

Now, the Santollis believe they have a good shot at making their cart a major success with retailers. A physical challenge was to get it to "nest," the industry term for stacking. One cart has to push in to another when storing them. They overcame that with simple engineering. The fun since has been showing the carts to prospective clients.

Tom remarked, "I've taken it to a lot of liquor stores. I love getting the automatic, 'Aha!' I don't even have to explain the benefits. They're pretty obvious when you see it."

Charlotte concluded, "We take the cart to liquor stores and put it with the other carts. And customers of every age love it, especially older people and people with bad backs. Because with the grid, you don't have to bend down into the cart and lift things out for the cashier. And just being able to operate and navigate the cart and not hear the clinking of bottles? 'Aha!' indeed!"

For more information, contact CFS Inventions, LLC at 201-264-1223. ■



WE SELL BUSINESSES!

DISCOVER ATKINS BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Recognized Industry Expert



**Steve Atkins, Principal Broker
Certified Business Intermediary
www.atkinsrealtygroup.com
Email: atkins.steve@comcast.net**



*Dual Hwy Liquors-Steve made a difficult and stressful situation seem like a walk on the beach. He always kept me well informed, and I couldn't be happier with the results. Thanks again!
..... Kami M., Seller*

*IM Wine-Although we had been told by others that it would be very difficult to sell our business, Steve was able to find the right buyer and a path to settlement that satisfied everyone.
..... Ellen M., Seller*

Call today: 410-757-4965