



Lipstick, a flash of inspiration and a glue that stands on its head

“Everything that can be invented has been invented,” noted a certain Charles H. Duell in 1899. At the time Duell was head of the US Patent Office – and, thanks to his job, he actually spent a lot of time dealing with inventors and their ideas. However, it is clear that his prognosis was more than a little premature and that he severely misjudged the innovative potential of the human spirit.

Today, patents are registered for approximately 700,000 new inventions each year; around the globe over four million patents are currently in force. And products by innovative companies such as Henkel prove again and again that even everyday little helpers can be further improved. Prime examples are the PowerPritt Multi-Purpose Glue products recently launched by Henkel. These include the first solvent-free multi-purpose glue stick as well as the first multi-purpose gel glue in a handy headstand bottle.

In 1967, Dr. Wolfgang Dierichs was flying high above the clouds. On board an airplane, the Henkel employee let his gaze wander, watching absentmindedly as a young woman put on some make-up. She pulled out a tube of lipstick and applied it to her lips with a practiced hand. And at this moment, a light suddenly went on in Dierichs' head, a sudden burst of inspiration that seemed to come from nowhere: Why, he asked himself, don't we have glue in solid form like a lipstick? Small, handy and always ready to use. Did Dierichs just want to get some rest after his long day? That would be pure speculation – at least the man himself didn't breathe a word to that effect. However, we do know that an ingenious idea was born on that flight.

Working together with Dr. Arpad Muszik, the inventor of the solvent-free adhesive compound, Dierichs turned his inspiration into reality. Two years later, in 1969, the launch of the glue stick created a furor around the world. Today people around the globe purchase approximately 130 million Pritt Sticks each year – making it the world's most popular paper glue.

The legendary Pritt Stick was the inspiration for another innovative product. Just like in 1967, a couple of Henkel employees once again asked themselves a simple question: Why don't we have a solid multi-purpose adhesive in stick form that people can use to glue paper as well as cardboard, felt and leather? And why can't it be solvent-free, not to mention completely odorless? The answer came in 2003, with the PowerPritt Multi-Purpose Glue Stick, which, like its illustrious predecessor, opened up new dimensions – but this time in the multi-purpose adhesive market.

Naturally, no one on the Henkel team wanted to believe that everything had indeed been invented. No matter what Charles H. Duell had said. And the next product of their innovative thinking was not long in coming. Inspired and spurred on by Dierichs' stroke of genius, the developers celebrated another success: a solvent-free multi-purpose glue in gel form and in a headstand bottle, marketed under the name "PowerPritt Multi-Purpose Gel." It can glue a wide variety of materials such as felt, paper, cardboard, leather, styrofoam, wood and many plastics, achieving an extra-strong bond. Thanks to the product's innovative gel consistency and its specially developed bottle, users can glue a variety of objects quickly and cleanly. The PowerPritt Gel applicator can be adjusted with one hand, allowing the user to switch easily between broad and fine application. Especially important, according to Dr. Felix Rustemeyer of the development team, is the fact that "the gel is one hundred percent solvent-free and odorless, making it ideal for children to use."

The new bottle shape means that the glue is always ready to use immediately. A cleverly situated press point allows the user to precisely control application by squeezing lightly – which makes it easy for kids to use. All these ingenious details were tested countless times by special teams. The procedures included five weeks as cargo on the high seas at temperatures of over 50 degrees Celsius as well as a high-altitude test in Mexico City at 2240 meters above sea level.

The PowerPritt innovations have every chance of living up to their famous role model. And today we can look forward to seeing what flashes of inspiration Henkel researchers will impress us with in the future.

Further information: www.prittworld.com