

## Wet Blankets Through History

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To help develop an open-minded and defiant attitude to others' rejection of your ideas, remember that many creative contributions are initially met with skepticism, if not outright hostility. Keep this list of creative contributions that we now know to be significant but that were once thought to be crazy, stupid, useless, offensive and doomed to failure. The next time you or someone you know has a new idea, creation or innovation, remember this list. Remind yourself that it is far better to give an idea a chance - or at least to not immediately shoot it down - than to be one of those who always say "Won't work" or "Bad idea" or "Too risky" and, hence, never do anything great. Here are some examples:

This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." *Western Union internal memo, 1876.*

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?" *David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.*

"The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a "C," the idea must be feasible." A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" *H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927.*

"I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper." *Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in "Gone With The Wind."*

"A cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, the market research reports say America likes crispy cookies, not soft and chewy cookies like you make." *Response to Debbi Fields' idea of starting Mrs. Fields' Cookies.*

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out." *Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.*

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." *Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895.*

"If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this." *Spencer Silver on the work that led to the unique adhesives for 3-M "Post-It" Notepads.*

"So we went to Atari and said, 'Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you.' And they said, 'No.' So then we went to Hewlett-Packard,

and they said, 'Hey, we don't need you. You haven't got through college yet.'" *Apple Computer Inc. founder Steve Jobs on attempts to get Atari and H-P interested in his and Steve Wozniak's personal computer.*

"Professor Goddard does not know the relation between action and reaction and the need to have something better than a vacuum against which to react. He seems to lack the basic knowledge ladled out daily in high schools." *1921 New York Times editorial about Robert Goddard's revolutionary rocket work.*

"You want to have consistent and uniform muscle development across all of your muscles? It can't be done. It's just a fact of life. You just have to accept inconsistent muscle development as an unalterable condition of weight training." *Response to Arthur Jones, who solved the "unsolvable" problem by inventing Nautilus.*

"Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy." *Drillers who Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859.*

"I think there's a world market for about five computers." *Thomas J Watson, Chairman of the Board, IBM.*

"The bomb will never go off. I speak as an expert in explosives." *Admiral William Leahy, US Atomic Bomb Project.*

"This fellow Charles Lindbergh will never make it. He's doomed." *Harry Guggenheim, millionaire aviation enthusiast.*

"Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau." *Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.*

"Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value." *Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.*

"Man will never reach the moon regardless of all future scientific advances." *Dr. Lee De Forest, inventor of the vacuum tube and father of television.*

"Everything that can be invented has been invented." *Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899.*