

Recreational Marine Drive Commercialization Path Chart
for Independent Inventors with Drive Concepts
Somewhat Similar to Outboards & Stern Drives
(NOT for shaft driven surface drives or water jet drives)

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The Boating Industry
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This chart, and the accompanying paper, focus on drive concepts somewhat similar to outboards and stern drives, and especially those targeting the mainstream market between 40 and 300 horsepower.

Many other scenarios are possible for smaller drives and for drives targeting low volume, specific niches.

Individual (Independent Inventor)
Invents Drive Concept

Determine Uniqueness
of the Design

A thorough search of U.S. and international patents, trade literature, historical archives and other sources will typically find over half the new drive concepts proposed have already been proposed by others. Several of the remaining concepts will be found to be so close to drives already proposed by others, they offer little incentive for a manufacturer to license their idea over the existing ones, and little prevents manufacturers from creating their own variant of the concept from ideas already in the literature. The faster you determine the level of uniqueness of your drive, the faster you can confidently advance or eliminate your idea.

Begin to Develop the
Concept

Select Path

Many inventors select one path, try it for a while, then try another, or pursue several at once. The purpose of this chart is to point out there are a limited number of paths and each path has its own difficulties.

Self Fund Design,
Manufacturing and
Marketing

This choice will typically require a minimum investment of several hundred thousand to a few million dollars to establish sales of just a few units, and total devotion of several years of the inventors life.

Finance with
Government Grants

SBIR and STTR and other government grants might be used to develop some technologies in their infancy, but probably not to develop a drive to a licensable state.

Finance with Angel
Investors & Venture
Capitalists

Angel Investors, Venture Capitalists and Venture Capital Funds require strong management teams, want some control, and a solid strategy to large returns on their investment in a hurry - These situations are rarely present in new marine drives inventions.

License the Invention

Inventor must be willing to expend energy and funds (typically over one hundred thousand dollars) to "prove" the invention, secure intellectual property protection and obtain high quality presentation materials. They must also be willing to give up control and accept a REASONABLE royalty.

Joint Venture /
Strategic Partner

Inventor must have a blend of a good design, personal investment in the project, expertise, business sense and expectations worthy to attract a partner and be willing to share decision making and profits with them.

Go Public
Create a Publicly Traded
Company

Some loosely formed groups look for new technologies to acquire and go public, often on the London Alternative Stock Exchange. The Pursuit Drive is an example. Most of their projects involve pretty radical technology leaps.

Give Idea to a Relative
or Friend

You must still be listed as inventor on patents. Your friend or relative may not be successful in commercializing the drive.

You need to make sure you are no longer liable for any debts or injuries associated with the drive.

Give Idea to a Specific
Company

Inventor must be willing to give up the idea for free and it still stands a strong possibility of never being produced. If the drive is not patented, it may be difficult to even get them to look at it.

Give Idea to the World

It still stands a strong possibility of never being produced. You may need to prove it is unique (get a patent) and does not infringe on others. Companies may be reluctant to build something they cannot protect. It may take considerable effort to make the world aware of it.

Drop the Idea, Stop All
Work on the Project

STOP

It is very hard for some people to give up and move on.

This is a very basic chart showing only a few of the thousands of steps involved. Together with its associated paper, Marketing New Marine Drive Concepts Similar to Outboards and Stern Drives: a Difficult Path for Independent Inventors and Small Companies, its purpose is to show the difficulties associated with bringing a new drive to market and especially those associated with trying to license a marine drive. We hope this analysis will cause Independent Inventors to consider the difficulties ahead before investing thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in a project that may have no future.

It is certainly possible to successfully license a marine drive, but among drives similar outboards and stern drives, the only successful license by an Independent Inventor we are aware of is the original stern drive licensed to Volvo back in 1958, and most insiders think that drive was not actually invented by an "independent" inventor. For those wishing to proceed, we (Polson Enterprises) provide a wide range of market, technical, and patent research services to support the development of new marine drives of all types.

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