INVENTION INSIDER
Stories of Success, Set-backs & Serendipity

JUAN GILBERT, FNAI

An Interview with Juan Gilbert, FNAI

Who inspired you?
This is a difficult question because inspiration for me came from so many different people at different times. For example, my parents inspired me from day one because they told me I could do anything as long as I worked at it. George Washington Carver was another inspiration for me with respect to invention. He was a genius and trailblazer.

What made you decide on your field of study?
In high school, I loved science, specifically chemistry, so I knew I was going to be a scientist because I wanted to solve societal problems and improve peoples' lives. It wasn't until I was in college that I had taken a computer programming course and did very well. I later changed my major to systems analysis, or computer science. I decided on computing because I knew I could earn a living in computer science and I could invent things that would have societal impacts.

What was your eureka moment?
I have had several of these. I will speak to one of the more recent moments. I invented a transparent interactive printing interface for voting. Essentially, it's a transparent voting machine, see http://www.transparentvotingmachine.com/ for a demo. I know have a patent on this technology as well. When I invented this technology, the goal was to provide a user interface that would allow voters to more accurately detect any vote changes on their ballot. I ran a study with this technology in 2021 and I had a significant increase in voter detection of errors. That was a eureka moment in that, the technology was working even better than I intended.

How you recovered from a set-back in your work?
Set-backs are a part of invention. The best way to recover is to keep going. You evaluate what caused the set-back and then formulate a way forward. Set-backs are just points of information that help me improve the invention.

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