

Joyce Thomas



Joyce Thomas is an innovator and educator with a passion for design. As a professional industrial designer, she has worked across interdisciplinary boundaries and integrated marketing, engineering, and consumer needs into creative products for Electrolux, Euro-Pro, Bosch, Jarden Consumer Solutions, Sunbeam, Crock-Pot, and many others for 30+ years. She has employed the consumer as an active participant in the designing process, utilizing user-centered design, design ethnography, and empathic design research strategies to focus on enhancing quality of life for people through more intuitive and meaningful products.

Joyce discovered ID as a freshman at Rochester Institute of Technology on a career day when a senior waxed poetic about product design. Never actually having considered that people designed things, Joyce discovered what would be her lifelong passion and career. She attributes her success to the great foundation given to her by RIT professors Craig McArt and Toby Thompson. "One short sentence that Toby told my class long ago has had a big influence on my career, the products I have developed, and what I tell my students. 'I try not to know so much about what can be done (or how it can be done) that it stops me from trying to do it in a different way.' It has helped fuel me to move past the 'we already tried that' mentality, and jump out of the easy part of the job (the research) into the hard part—the designing."

Year of Graduation

1975

Current Positions

Visiting Assistant Professor of Industrial Design and Visiting Research Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Director of Faculty and Curriculum, Institute of Arts Entrepreneurship in Chicago

President and Principal, Joyce Thomas Designs

Chief Creative Office, ThomasSchumerGroup

Eureka QuickUp & BrushUp

“With the MiniMite handvac, in 1982 I neatly sidestepped the design and utility patents Black&Decker was protecting on its innovative Dustbuster cordless handvac. A year later I added a handle and a floor nozzle and Eureka scooped the market with the introduction of the very first light weight battery-operated upright cleaner.”



Background

Introduced in 1984, this market became one of the fastest growing segments of the floor care industry. Black&Decker followed suit with their own product, but infringed on the QuickUp's utility patents and ended up paying royalties to Eureka.

In addition to the home/consumer market, the airline and restaurant industries adopted use of this product for its size and convenience. This prompted the need for removable battery packs and the ability to charge multiple battery packs to extend the time usability.

“Appliance Manufacturer” awarded top honors to this product in its first annual Excellence in Design Award in 1987.

To keep pace with production requirements, the original design was updated in 1999.

This product line incorporates both battery-operated models and corded versions. Consideration for insert molding and utilization of existing parts (floor nozzle and stock hand grip) were primary criteria for the redesign. Rather than a simple face-lift of an existing product, new features were incorporated in the redesign both internally and externally to add to the functionality and perceived value of this product.

The QuickUp continues to be produced today.

Year of Release

1984

Awards/Achievements

59 United States and International Patents Awarded

Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2008
Rochester Institute of Technology, 1975

1st Annual Excellence in Design Award, *Appliance Magazine*—Top Honors 1987
Small Appliances Category—Eureka BrushUp.

