



ACE HARDWARE TEAMS UP WITH PRODUCT LAUNCH PLATFORM THE GROMMET TO MAKE 'ACE THE PLACE' FOR INNOVATION

Two companies embrace the collaborative power of the Main Street small business and the inventiveness of the local Maker

OAK BROOK, ILL. and SOMERVILLE, MASS. (November 29, 2016) – Ace Hardware Corporation and The Grommet are pleased to announce a joint collaboration to bring the innovations of local Makers into Ace Hardware retail stores.

Ace will debut its collaboration with The Grommet, the leading product launch platform for innovative consumer products, in select Ace stores this holiday season and extending through 2017. The new relationship will leverage the strength and passion of locally-owned Ace stores with the ingenuity of undiscovered inventors, known as “Makers.”

For the launch, 20 unique products from The Grommet, sourced from 15 local Makers, will debut in over 160 Ace stores; assortments will be updated each season. Products are unexpected, newly discovered and fit within at least one of 10 core values that are central to The Grommet’s discovery process, including: Made in the USA; Sustainable Living; Made for a Lifetime; Tech & Innovation; Handcrafted; Independent Maker; Social Enterprises; Philanthropy; Underrepresented Entrepreneurs; and Crowd-funded.

Examples of these uniquely helpful products that will be featured in the launch include:

- A digital tape measure made by eTape16;
- A keyring USB and mobile phone charger made by Nomad;
- A collapsible water bottle made by Hydaway;
- A bracelet that discreetly and fashionably hides a hair tie, made by bittersweet;
- An eyeglass cleaner that uses NASA technology called Peeps. This product is the first Grommet to have channel exclusivity at Ace for six months, meaning big box retail stores won’t have access to sell this item.*

"Since 2008, our mission at The Grommet has been to launch innovative consumer products and help the small businesses behind them to succeed," said Jules Pieri, Co-founder & CEO of The Grommet. "Given Ace Hardware's dedication to local and small businesses—and that they are independent store owners themselves—we are very excited to partner with them to help make Ace Hardware's stores a 'destination for innovation.' By bringing dozens of Grommets to stores across the country, we are helping these entrepreneurs to reach a massive new audience."

"For 92 years, Ace has stood for local small business; for the underdog who dukes it out against the Goliaths of corporate America," said John Venhuizen, President and CEO, Ace Hardware Corporation. "So the partnership with The Grommet not only aligns with the passions of our local

owners, but fuels our desire to further Ace as the place for the dreamers, inventors, innovators and Makers. We are proud to stand with The Grommet and their platform for local makers."

The Grommet has discovered and brought to market dozens of now household brand names, including FitBit, Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day and SodaStream. To date, they have launched more than 2,200 innovative consumer products and amassed a community of nearly three million early adopters and supporters. Followers eagerly await product launches that happen each weekday on The Grommet's e-commerce site. For the collaboration, Ace will tap into The Grommet's wholesale operation, housing more than 10,000 unique finds from independent Makers.

In addition to delighting customers with unique products from The Grommet, Ace wants Makers to know that it could serve as a vehicle to bring their product concepts to retail shelves. "We want the Makers of the world – the dreamers, inventors and entrepreneurs – to know that Ace is your place, too," said Venhuizen. "As the world's largest retailer-owned hardware cooperative, we have the supply chain infrastructure and the buying power to bring the right products to life across nearly 5,000 stores. Send information about your most innovative products to us at Ace, and we'll be ready to review your creations to see if we can champion your product to bring to consumers through Ace stores."

Makers can submit information on their products to Ace Hardware by sending an email to: innovation@acehardware.com** Makers can submit products to The Grommet at <https://www.thegrommet.com/about-us/become-grommet>.

For a complete list of Ace stores that will feature an in-store display featuring products from The Grommet, visit <http://thegrommet.com/ace-hardware-locations>.

**Exclusive to Walmart, Target, Home Depot and Lowe's.*

***By emailing Ace Hardware Corporation ("Ace") with your proposed product or concept, you acknowledge and agree that: (1) your submission is not confidential and Ace has no duty to you to keep the information you provide confidential; (2) Ace may develop or may have already developed a product or concept that may be the same or similar to the proposed product or content provided by you, and Ace may continue to develop its own ideas independent of your submission without acknowledgment, payment or notice to you; (3) any submission you provide to Ace is owned by you, or you have all rights from any third parties to provide your submission to Ace; (4) your submission does not infringe upon the intellectual property rights or other legal rights of any person or entity; (5) your submission does not conflict with or violate any other agreements, restrictions or commitments you have; (6) you are solely responsible for your submission; (7) you will hold Ace harmless and release Ace from any liability that may result from your submission; (8) Ace may reject your submission for any reason or no reason; (9) Ace has no obligation to you whatsoever as a result of your submission; and (10) Ace will not return your submission to you.*

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About Ace Hardware

For more than 90 years, Ace Hardware has been known as the place with the helpful hardware folks in thousands of neighborhoods across America, providing customers with a more personal kind of helpful. In 2016, Ace ranked "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Home Improvement Retail Stores, Ten Years in a Row," according to J.D. Power. With more than 4,900 hardware stores locally owned and operated across the globe, Ace is the largest retailer-owned hardware cooperative in the world. Headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., Ace and its subsidiaries currently operate 17 distribution centers in the U.S. and also have distribution capabilities in Ningbo, China; Colon, Panama; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Its retailers' stores are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and approximately 60 countries. For more information on Ace, visit www.acehardware.com.

About The Grommet

The most innovative, intriguing products deserve a voice. That's where The Grommet comes in. Since 2008, The Grommet has worked with more than 2,200 Makers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and small businesses to launch innovative consumer products. The Grommet discovers, evaluates and selects products (or "Grommets") across 16 categories and amplifies them to its community of 3 million people by telling the stories behind each product. Only 3% of all products considered are launched on the site. The Grommet Wholesale works with more than 10,000 retailers across the U.S. and won Gifts & Decorative Accessories magazine's Retailer Excellence Awards for "Rising Star" in 2015. To learn more, visit www.thegrommet.com.

Media Contacts

Ace Hardware

Kate Kirkpatrick
630-990-1478
kkirk@acehardware.com

The Grommet

Charles McEnerney
617-440-7235
charlie@thegrommet.com