



## Wendy H. Steele, Tape Wrangler

### The Story:

There seems to be two kinds of people in the world: people who tend to look at a situation and take it for what it is. And people who seem to look at something and see what it could be...what it is NOT...or how to make it better. I fall into the latter category. So does my husband, Rick.

Back in early 2006, Rick and I were working on a project together. An invention, actually, designed for the building industry (we are both licensed builders). We were working with duct tape and were having difficulty peeling it off the roll and tearing it – repeatedly – for this project. We commented to each other that we needed to pick up a duct tape dispenser, noting that working with it by hand was tedious and frustrating. After searching all of the likely places, we realized that no such dispenser existed and then started thinking about how a “good” duct tape dispenser would function. The result was our Tape Wrangler 700 Heavy Duty Tape Dispenser.

This product was very well received in the market. The Tape Wrangler 700 was the start of a family of tape dispensers under the Tape Wrangler brand. Soon, the second generation duct tape dispenser, known as the Tape Wrangler 700S (“S” for “safety”) made it to market. By late 2007, the Tape Wrangler ProSeal 200D, a new approach to shipping tape dispensers, was in prototype. By the end of 2008, we have all three of these dispensers in production and final, working prototypes for a half a dozen more products in the Tape Wrangler name ready for production.

**Why did you become a business owner and what significant factors led you?**

I became a business owner when the “Big Idea” seemed to really solve a problem and fill a niche in the marketplace.

**What prepared you (or didn't!) for business ownership?**

Prior to becoming a full time entrepreneur, I had a wonderful career in the banking business culminating with my role as Senior Vice President and Regional Manager of a regional bank's Private Financial Group. My background in banking was a wonderful education for entrepreneurship. Additionally, back in 2001, I took an idea I had about philanthropy and built a non-profit from zero to over \$7 million in grants nationwide by 2008 – and it's still growing!

Rick also has vital experience starting and running a business. He's been a serial-entrepreneur since 1991 – Starting, growing and then selling a number of businesses along the way.

**What or who inspired you?**

I am lucky to have many wonderful role models in my life. My dad has been my biggest mentor. My Grandparents definitely taught me about business ownership and responsibility.

**What do you enjoy most about business ownership?**

I enjoy working with Rick every day! We like that we are controlling our own destiny and not at the mercy of a large corporation and decisions made elsewhere. We love that we are building a legacy and teaching our children the many aspects of product development and business ownership.

The networking with other business owners/inventors has been fabulous! We have met so many entrepreneurs who have guided us and brainstormed along the way. Those connections are so beneficial and fun!

**Who or what keeps you motivated?**

I love what I do! I am motivated to succeed. I enjoy the high energy and pace of working.

**What advice do you have for women considering or in the beginning stages of ownership?**

Expect everything to take longer and cost more than you plan.

Don't skimp when it comes to legal & accounting advice.

Talk to a good banker and set the right structure in place from the beginning.

Enjoy every minute!!