

Trout Fitness/SledHammer – ATAC Assistance Helps Start-Up Firm Launch New Brand, New Product

Industry

[423910](#) Sports equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers

[811490](#) Sporting equipment repair and maintenance without retailing new **sports equipment**

Company City

Auburn

Company State

Alabama

Company Name

Trout Fitness

Company Profile:

Trout Fitness, located in Auburn, Ala., is a start-up company that began operations through the Auburn University technology transfer program in 2012. The company is based on a new sports product design idea from Vaughan Macenia, a strength coach and teacher. Macenia and his partner, attorney Sesie Bonsi, worked with Auburn University mechanical engineering students under the direction of Professor David Dyer, to design and develop the new product for commercial production and marketing through AU's Office of Technology Transfer. The Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC), and outreach unit of the Raymond J. Harbert College of Business, was enlisted to help the new company build and launch its new brand, along with the new product.

Situation:

Named "*SledHammer*," the new product is an athletic strength-building tool. The idea came when Macenia, was helping a neighbor clean up fallen trees following the great tornado outbreak in 2011 that inflicted millions of dollars in damage across the State of Alabama and other parts of the United States. "I was helping cut fallen trees and then rolling the logs out of the way, when I realized this rolling motion was excellent for building strength in the arms and legs, really the whole body," Macenia said. "Later, I thought about collecting some logs to try out the method, but that didn't work because logs were not round enough. They were uneven and had knots and cut branches, so you couldn't get a smooth motion." Macenia and Bonsi, decided to call Professor Dyer to see if he and his students could take the idea and turn it into a training device that could be used by football players and other athletes.

Assistance:

ATAC – through its work with companies in the area of business growth – was enlisted to help Trout Fitness design and launch a new web site, promote and market its new brand, and the new *SledHammer* product. This was achieved under ATAC's status as an Economic Development Administration University Center. The *SledHammer* consists of either an 18- or 24-inch-diameter PVC cylinder attached by chains to two metal bases with free weights on top. The unique design allows the *SledHammer* to reverse directions simply by pushing it the other way as the core rolls through the sleds and goes the other direction. Macenia and Bonsi worked with Auburn's Office of Technology Transfer to obtain patent protection and have started a company, TROUT Fitness, featuring the *SledHammer*. TROUT is an acronym for toughness, resistance, originality, utility and technology—and it is Macenia's middle name. The company has a licensing agreement with the university and has the rights to the co-owned invention. Macenia and Bonsi also worked with Auburn's Department of Industrial and Graphic Design on brand identity, paint schemes and company logos.

Results:

"The assistance provided by ATAC and Industrial Design was crucial in helping us develop a brand identity and Internet presence to begin a plan for selling on a larger scale," Maceina said. Those marketing and graphic design aspects were made possible by funding from ATAC's Economic Development Administration grant. "Helping existing and start-up businesses like TROUT Fitness commercialize an innovation is one of our primary roles as an Outreach and EDA University Center," said ATAC's David Mixson, who manages ATAC's role as an EDA University Center.

Contacts: David Mixson, 334.844.3887, mixsoad@auburn.edu