

root four imagination | maurice tuff

Teen drivers are four to six times more likely to be in a car accident than an experienced driver. When a parent is in the car with them however, their chances of being in a car accident decrease tremendously. Since parents can't be in the car with their new teen driver at all times, how do you make sure they are always driving safely?

Maurice Tuff, owner of Root Four Imagination, has found a solution to this problem. With the help of SafeDriver®, parents can be sure their teens are always driving safe. Each time the car is used by their teen, parents can find out the maximum speed they drove, the distance they traveled, and how many sudden brakes were made.

A sensor is self-installed inside the car, recording the statistics of each drive. Attached to the key chain with the car keys is the key fob, a device that looks similar to an electronic car starter. When a parent gives their teen the car keys they enter a pin into the key fob which resets the previous data. As the teen is driving the car, the data is being recorded and displayed on the key fob. When they return with the keys the parents can immediately see how safely their teen was driving.

SafeDriver® is virtually tamperproof. If the teen tries to remove the sensor or tamper with the key fob, "TAMPER" will appear on the screen. If they guess the secret pin, the key fob shows how many times the pin has been reset. SafeDriver® is designed to help teach new drivers to always drive safely. "The risk management in your brain is not developed until you're 25," explains Maurice, "They don't understand that going 150km an hour is dangerous because they don't think about how it could kill them. They don't have the experience to know what to do if something pops out in front of them." "What a teen does understand is reward and punishment, and if a teen comes home with bad numbers then they won't get the car the next week," says Maurice, "so you can give them time to learn over a period of a year or until they know how to drive properly."

There are two strategies for using SafeDriver®: to let the teens know it is there so they always drive safe, or to not tell them and catch them driving unsafely. Root Four promotes telling your teen it is there. "If you let your teen know it is there, it is preventative," says Maurice. Teens know if they drive recklessly their parents will find out, so they always drive safely." If teens do not know it is there, they may drive recklessly and it would be too late if something were to happen. "Then you get yourself into a punishment situation where you catch them doing excessive speed and you've got a fight on your hands." He says. SafeDriver® is a monitoring system created by Maurice Tuff, but it is not the first monitoring system he created. After graduating from Mobile Central High School and completing an Electrical Engineering Degree at Memorial University, Maurice started working with Nortel, but not for too long.

In 2002 he started Blue Line Innovations. Their device allows real time monitoring of energy use in homes. The Power Cost Monitor is a self-installed wireless energy monitor that shows how much energy is being used in a home and converts it to how much money is being spent from moment to moment and in total. It has been featured on Martha Stewart, FOX News, ABC, CNN online, and many other media outlets. Wanting to do something more than monitoring energy use in the home, Maurice says the next logical option was to move on to vehicles. "I started by trying to find a problem to solve, because you can't just make something if you can't

create a need for it," he says, "When I checked the stats of teen driving and saw the teen fatalities and teen accidents, I said okay let's come up with something to solve that." " - "Once I got the experience with Blue Line to make a product, coming here and making a product for vehicles was a little easier. Experience really helps."

Maurice says. All the design work is done in the province but the products are manufactured in China. Maurice travels to Hong Kong about once every two months to oversee manufacturing and has his product sold around the world. SafeDriver® has been sold in Israel, Great Britain, and United States and even Australia.

"One of the things you want to make sure of is that you are ready," says Maurice, "If something goes wrong with your product then your credibility is gone and you have to recall your products. You have to walk before you run, and make sure you get it perfect first."

One of the biggest challenges facing Root Four is product awareness. "We are making a product that no one has heard of before and there is no category for," says Maurice, "when you come up with a brand new product that doesn't have any direct competitors, you need to work very hard for awareness and to create the drive for the product."

To accomplish this awareness, branding and product names were very important. A series of name changes took place to help achieve this. The company name is Root Four Imagination, the brand is Lemur Vehicle Monitors, and the product name is SafeDriver®. The product name gives an indication of what the product is, and the brand gives the sense that there are more products under that brand.

With this in mind, Maurice has developed more products including the EconoDriver for environmentally conscious people and BlueDriver that uses Bluetooth technology to communicate with smartphones and tablets. The new branding and packaging design was done by a company in Ontario and the logo was done by a local company in the province. "They know things that we don't so it is good to get them involved to set this up properly," says Maurice, "you can make a product but you've got to sell it and the only way to sell it is through good marketing."

When it comes to advice for an upcoming entrepreneur, Maurice says "Don't listen to the naysayers. There are those who will support you and think it's a great idea and there are others that will say that you are crazy. But they are not risk takers, they just don't get it. You also don't need to have your head in the clouds either. You still need to listen to constructive criticism, but you have to avoid the naysayers."

He also says "when you do start your own business it's kind of nice not to know what the challenges are. That way you will actually go out and do it. Otherwise you might get too scared and wonder if you can actually accomplish it. When new entrepreneurs ask me what the challenges are, I say, "I'm not telling you because if I do, you won't do it. You will learn, and you will figure it out."

Growing up, Maurice's father always had different ideas but with six kids in the family he always had to go to work. Listening to his father, Maurice developed entrepreneurial tendencies. "I don't know if I always wanted to own my own business, but I'm fairly independent and I didn't take direction well, even in high school," he says, "but I took my school work very seriously. So this is kind of a perfect fit."