MASKerAID a Solution to a Modern Day Problem
The Story Behind MASKerAID

I am proud to share the story of a product I developed during the Pandemic. I called it MASKerAID since, like it sounds, it is a helpful aid for people's face masks. The best part is that I wanted to do this as a way of helping people, and have donated 100% of all sales to a local food pantry.

Along the way I learned so much about developing a product, starting a business, and how a single person can make a big difference. I also learned that a great product can be extraordinarily simple as long as it is functional and well designed.
Two Birds With One Stone

During the pandemic there were two problems that were concerning me most.

- Integrating masks into daily life
- The growing issue of food insecurity

I am proud to share how I was able to address both concerns through a creative solution.
Ask

I asked people to describe issues they had relating to handling their face masks?
I learned:

- People have no place to put their masks when they aren’t wearing them
  - For example, they get placed on tables while people are eating
- People leave their masks at home or in their car
- People drop masks, causing them to get dirty and if not picked up, cause an unsanitary litter problem

I knew that MASKerAIDs could solve all three of these problems if I could develop a design that people would find helpful and would make mask wearing more fun and stylish.
Research

In any project or business there is more than meets the eye. Through my research I discovered that Bill Nye said, “I recommend you tie a string—a piece of cord or even a shoelace—to the ear straps of your mask, so that you can let it hang around your neck to carry it and easily put it on when you see someone.”

Before I even launched the project I spent a good amount of time figuring out how to make a product that would solve the challenges I identified. I discovered that there were mask lanyards out there and I thought I could design some with beads that would be fun and functional. Before I began I had a lot to learn. Through online videos, I taught myself how to bead and make necklaces that would be sturdy enough to hold up with frequent use. I also needed to learn how to use special tools for jewelry making.
Imagine

I wanted to develop an exciting product that would grab people’s attention and improve their mask wearing experience. I came up with the name MASKerAID and a logo to make sure that the product would be noticed and remembered.

Some things I had to think about were what styles I could make and what people would be interested to wear. I wanted to design a product that would be unique and useful for daily life. After all, if the product wasn’t regularly used, it would not solve the problems I identified.

It was also at this stage that I got excited about the possibility to raise money for the important cause of food insecurity and established a good goal.
Planning

I spent time looking for the necessary materials I would need to make MASKerAIDs. I found high quality beads, decided which string and wire to use and purchased the necessary tools and equipment to begin the project.

I also determined how long it would take to make the MASKerAIDs, how much they would cost to make and started thinking about how much I would sell them for. This was especially important so that I could set a goal of how much I could raise for the food pantry.
Create and Test

I practiced using the tools and making MASKerAIDs. I tried making them different lengths and weights in order to see what worked the best. I had fun making different designs and coming up with clever names.

I was surprised by how simple it was to learn the new skill of jewelry making and how much I enjoyed it.

I gave them to family and friends to see how they worked and was interested in the feedback I received. Overall, people seemed to feel that the initial prototype was ready for production with only a couple of tweaks that I was able to improve, as detailed in the next slide.
Improve

From the start I received lots of feedback and one of the things I heard was that some masks straps were too wide for the lobster clips that I used. To accommodate wider straps I added two larger lanyard clips to make sure that MASKerAIDs could be used for all masks.

People said that the beads needed to be light enough to not pull their masks and to increase comfort throughout use. Some other requests were for special colors for sports teams and personal tastes.

I also wanted to be sure MASKerAIDs would be functional after the pandemic so I started including rubber pieces that hold your eyeglasses and sunglasses.
A Product Nobody Knew They Needed

"People don't know what they want until you show it to them."
- Steve Jobs

While at Apple, Steve Jobs often talked about how great ideas are ones that people don’t even recognize they need at the time. I found that this was the case with MASKerAIDS. Most people who bought them have shared that they were not actively searching for a mask necklace, but they quickly realized how helpful it can be.
The Effort Paid Off

I am glad I put in the attention to design on the front end. I received such great feedback and people have been really enthusiastic about MASKerAIDs.

One girl who had gotten some of my MASKerAIDs went to a school that issued lanyards to their students and the girl was upset because she preferred her MASKerAID. The students started getting neck irritations from the school-issued lanyards and they stopped using them. The girl’s family shared my project with many other families which resulted in a lot of sales.

Another story is a teacher who teaches with my mom recently sent an email that she had misplaced her MASKerAID for a couple days and felt lost without it. She ordered a bunch more so she would always have one handy.
Like A Rocket, It Took Off!

I had no idea that MASKerAIDs would be so well received and within the first weekend I had met my original goal. From there the story was picked up by the local news and media which drew more attention to my project. This further pushed me to keep going and keep raising my goal. I have currently raised $7,500 and am still going strong with hopes to reach at least $10,000 for the food pantry.
Bibliography

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zIv3CQ9kJ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zIv3CQ9kJ8) Essential Tools for Beading
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLmpKE3GvU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLmpKE3GvU) How to Finish Beaded Necklaces
Thank you for your interest!

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Stay Safe and Healthy!