



An innovative, feminist sex toy just made crowdfunding history



DAME PRODUCTS

Pint-sized pleasure.

FROM OUR SERIES

Ideas

Our home for bold arguments and big thinkers.



By **Vivian Giang**

March 24, 2015 · This article is more than 2 years old.

Apparently, the business of making love is a lucrative one. Just ask Alexandra Fine and Janet Lieberman, two US entrepreneurs who have recently joined the multibillion-dollar industry. Their product, the Eva, has been marketed as the world’s “first hands-free, strap-free, and non-intrusive couples vibrator,” and the toy has taken the Indiegogo

campaigning world by storm. By the time the campaign ended in December of 2014, Eva had raised close to half a million dollars more than the founders' goal of \$200,000, making it the top Indiegogo campaign for all-female teams and breaking the record for the most funded adult product in online crowdfunding history.

It seems the internet is finally realizing what consenting adults have known for some time—women-friendly sex toys aren't just good for your sex life, they're also good for business.

According to Fine and Lieberman, their success is due to two factors.

First, the world may finally be ready for a product designed specifically to close the gender “pleasure gap” in the bedroom. Some research has found that up to 70% of women need clitoral stimulation to orgasm. As a result, many couples experience a gender disparity when it comes to sexual satisfaction, with the deficit skewing female. Statistically speaking, women are four or five times more likely than men to describe recent sex as “not at all pleasurable,” said Fine.

The second reason? The two co-founders know how to tell a damn good story.





Just two entrepreneurs, making the world a happier place.

“I think women responded to the way that Janet and I approached it, which is that we weren’t oversexualizing it,” Fine told Quartz. “We weren’t over-medicalizing it. Instead, we were just talking openly and honestly about sex in a very informative way. I think we had fun too. We weren’t using sex to sell a sex toy. And I think that was very important.”

Eva’s success highlights the increasing influence of crowdsourcing. In the last year alone, there have been over 10 multi-million dollar campaigns on Indiegogo, company CEO Slava Rubin told Quartz. The crowdfunding platform has seen particular growth in technology, film, and personal funding campaigns. But regardless of industry, all of the most viral campaigns have succeeded in telling compelling stories in a way that resonates with a worldwide audience.

“That definitely seemed to be the case with the Eva Indiegogo campaign,” Rubin said. “There was huge support for Eva from Indiegogo’s global audience, with more than 7,000 contributors from 91 countries and counting. And now the founders have gone beyond their crowdfunding campaign by using the InDemand feature on Indiegogo to continue taking orders.”

The sex toy industry may be particularly well-positioned to take advantage of this new model, especially as some mainstream investors remain skittish of the industry.

The first electric vibrators were patented for consumer retail in 1902. More than a century—and several sexual revolutions

—later, the industry is pulling in an estimated \$15 billion in sales each year, according to Newsweek.

Given what we know about the pleasure gap, it goes without saying that much of the industry’s newfound success has been financed by women. This gives sex-positive products like the Eva a potential edge. At the same time, Fine and Liberman’s outspoken advocacy for female sexuality and wellness is indicative of the way female empowerment is de-stigmatizing sex toys designed for women.

Something for (almost) everyone.

But Eva’s designers believe their toy takes the idea of equality in the bedroom to another level. A hands-free design allows couples to keep their focus on each other, creating a mutually beneficial experience, according to the founders. Typically,

vibrators need to be strapped or harnessed around the body. But this vibrator's beetle-like shape was designed to be nonthreatening for men and stay out of their way during intercourse—a problem couples can run into with other products designed primarily for vaginal insertion. Eva is designed to stay in place by tucking the product's flexible “wings” under a woman's labia major.

The innovative design didn't happen by accident. Fine, who has a masters degree in clinical psychology with a focus on sex therapy from Columbia University found a natural partner in Lieberman, a mechanical engineer from MIT who built the device.

The pair met in June 2014 over coffee when both were trying to start their own sex toy companies in Brooklyn after becoming fed up with the lack of products capable of providing clitoral stimulation in a more couple-friendly environment. Fine and Lieberman immediately realized they had similar visions and complementary skillsets. Shortly after, sexual health startup Dame Products was created with Eva as its premier invention.

Lieberman cautions that just like with all sex toys, there's no such thing as one size fits all. Due to differences in women's labial sizes and personal preferences, Eva likely won't satisfy every woman out there.

“The most important thing was figuring out how to make it work for as many women as possible,” Lieberman said. Together, these two Ivy League women want to “make the world a happier place, one vagina at a time.”