



HISTORY & BACKGROUND

SPALOO is a toilet seat integrated with a built-in, multi-function bidet and automated features. An early iteration of the product was invented in the US in 1965. That patent was purchased by a Japanese company that dramatically enhanced the functionality and design. SPALOO is the most modern adaptation of that technology. Bidet toilet seats are standard in Eastern culture. They are known as "*Washuretto*" (translation: "Washlet"). They are the standard in over 200,000,000 Asian locations, in addition to other countries. The American adaptation of the Washlet is SPALOO.

SPALOO is owned by Bruce Santhuff and his wife Kate. "We are building the SPALOO industry, town by town, coast-to-coast, across the USA. We have no investors, and no large amount of capital. I truly believe in the benefits of this product, and I have my wife and my two kids behind me." The Santhuff's company and family are headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia.

Santhuff works as a location sound recordist for television in his "other" job. While working on a TV assignment in Japan honoring the 50th anniversary of the armistice between the U.S. and Japan after WW II, Bruce experienced "shower toilets" (and no toilet paper) in his hotel guest room. He describes his initial reaction as "...funny, very funny...but after trying it a few times I thought, 'This is a better mousetrap.' It is much more sanitary, it feels good, and there are countless people who would benefit greatly from this product. What more would anyone want from a toilet seat?"



Over the next year Santhuff contemplated bringing the "shower toilet" to America. Most of his friends and family thought the idea was a little risky, if not completely crazy. Having no prior import experience, he started by researching what would be involved. Finding the right name for the product took more than a year, Bruce recalls. "Then one day while getting a massage, the word 'Spa' came to mind. Combining it with the quirky yet classic British term 'loo' clicked in my mind. I raced home for Kate's opinion. She was elated, agreeing that we finally found the right word to capture the essence of our product."

Thinking he had the hard part behind him, Santhuff moved ahead with the idea to import "shower toilets" under the name Spaloo (Spa of Dutch origin; loo best known in Great Britain), with the mission to "Americanize" them. "If I had known the magnitude of what I was attempting, I may not have undertaken the challenge," Santhuff says. He formed an LLC corporation, developed a logo, researched a manufacturer willing to private label, determined which of the manufacturer's products he thought could sell for a reasonable price, found an importer, visited and selected a warehouse and fulfillment manager, applied for a trademark, secured a catchy toll free number, and found a 24/7 call center that would take orders. Given the amount of personal capital he was putting into the project, he also got his wife, Kate, on board so they could double their efforts as a creative team and be even more productive. She has been a project and content manager for several websites, and her writing skills and knowledge of the web were essential to the next steps in the process.

In order to re-label the product and make it more user friendly for the American public, the Santhuffs changed the control panel design and the product literature (which had been translated from Chinese and needed major overhauling for the American public), as well as the shipping box. They worked with a graphic artist to design a unique tri-fold brochure and artwork for their Flash-animated website, which features an avatar and several entertaining features. "Since the product is new and innovative, we felt our website should be too," Santhuff explicates. The result, online at www.spaloo.com, was conceptualized by the Santhuffs and created in collaboration with a web development company.

Through the process of building this "new-age small business", the Santhuffs have developed a uniquely multi-national team of people from Taiwan to the U.S. – from Washington State to California to Utah, to Chicago, Illinois to Falls Church, Virginia. Except for one trip to meet the importer, everything has been accomplished using the computer and phone. Spaloo offers not only an innovation for a function in everyone's lives that hasn't been improved in more than 100 years, but also a story of international collaboration and ingenuity.

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