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Business follow up

A Wide Back

By Ravit Naor

A year after an article that announced the new Israeli invention in the field of back pain – BackLife, was published – the inventor has kept his promises. The device is already marketed in Israel (at approximately 150 points of sale), is used in approximately 50 physiotherapy clinics, and marketing has also started in Britain and soon to start in Turkey. But the American market, which the developer was hoping to break into this year, is still in the planning stages.

About a year ago we published an article on BackLife, a revolutionary appliance that is due to solve our back problems. We told about the idea that was born as a result of the back pains of Danny Ilan, an ELAL pilot, and how his adolescent son Uri Ilan happened to discover the position that saved his father from pain, developed a device that would do the job, and had it patented. From that stage, Ilan required another four years of development which were accompanied by professionals, orthopedic department heads, physiotherapists, engineers, and product designers. The final product was registered as an exclusive patent in over 80 countries and received FDA approval. In our article of 21.5.02, Ilan junior promised that by the end of 2002 they would start marketing BackLife at professional stores, and said that in 2003 he hoped to reach the American market where he expected to sell hundreds of thousands of units during the first year - sales which promised to cover the investment.

With the publication of that article, we were flooded with requests from readers asking where they can buy this wonder machine- and the reason is quite simple. Here are some numbers that urged Ilan to find the solution, and will run

with him all the way to the bank: 80% of the world population suffers from back problems; 33% of the adult world population (over age 30) suffer from back problems at every given second. According to CBS figures, 750,000 people living in Israel suffer from chronic back pain, in addition to another 150,000 who suffer from slipped discs.

15 million Americans (10% of the general population) suffer from backaches, and thanks to them the backache market in the U.S. turns over approximately 100 billion dollars a year. These backaches cost the American economy some 25 billion dollars a year.

Ilan, from his part, has kept almost all his promises. After completing the development of BackLife, he started to market it locally about 5 months ago (a delay of two to three months in launching a new product is certainly reasonable), and up to now some 3,000 devices have been sold in Israel. BackLife has received positive reviews from the customers and support from professionals.

BackLife has started to be marketed by the Dr. Gav chain, which operates 10 branches around the country, as well as in 120 orthopedic specialty shops and pharmacies. Recently, BackLife has also entered the S.R.M. pharmaceutical chain, which numbers 93 branches. In less than half a year, the product managed to penetrate 150 points of sale, and is used by some 50 physiotherapy clinics.

About two months ago, the company started activity overseas. It was first marketed in Britain, and not the U.S. as Ilan thought last year. In parallel, negotiations are underway for entry into the Turkish market. The price in Israel = NIS 1500, abroad – about \$300.