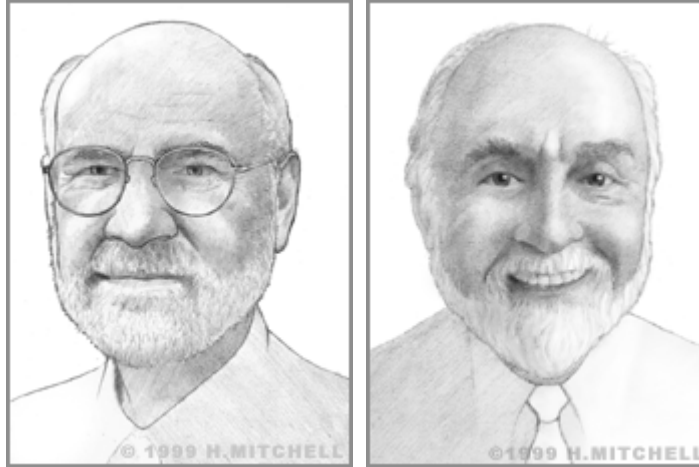


**MISD Literature Unit 6.1—Exploration and Discovery—Linking Text
Post-it® notes: Looking for one thing can lead to finding another.**

ART FRY & SPENCER SILVER



In the 1970s, Art Fry invented what is probably the most significant office supply product since the paperclip: the Post-it® Note. But he could not have created this now ubiquitous item without the previous invention of his colleague, Spencer Silver.

Silver is now named on over 20 US patents; but his most significant invention was not an immediate success. In 1968, when Silver was trying to develop a strong adhesive, he instead developed a high-quality but "low-tack" or weak adhesive, made of tiny, indestructible acrylic spheres that would stick to a given surface. The adhesive's grip was strong enough to hold papers together but weak enough to allow the papers to be pulled apart again without being torn. More importantly, the adhesive could be used in the same way again and again. Silver wanted to market the adhesive as a spray, or as a surface for bulletin boards on which temporary notices could be easily posted and then removed.

Over the next five years, Silver shared his revolutionary product with colleagues at 3M, informally and in seminar presentations. A marketable form of the product proved elusive, and Silver's temporary adhesive might have been consigned to a shelf indefinitely; but then Art Fry attended one of Silver's seminars.

In his spare time, Fry sang in his church choir. Fry was frustrated by the fact that, when he stood and opened his hymnal to sing, the paper bookmarks that he used in his hymnal to mark the songs on the program would slip out of sight or even onto the floor. In a moment of insight that has become legendary in the realm of contemporary invention, Fry, musing during a rather boring sermon, realized that Silver's reusable adhesive would provide his bookmarks with precisely the temporary anchoring he required.

Appendix #2b1

Returning to work, Fry wrote up his idea for a reliable, reusable bookmark, and presented it to his supervisors. Management initially worried that the product would seem wasteful; but the staff could not get enough of the samples Fry was passing around. Soon, 3M gave the invention its full support. It took another five years to perfect the specifications and design machines to manufacture the product, but in 1980 Post-it® Notes were introduced nationwide.

Within two years, Post-it® Notes were established as an outright necessity in the office. As the basic product evolved into an entire product line, Post-its® could also be found in most schools, labs, libraries, and even in homes. Meanwhile, both Spencer Silver and Art Fry became heroes of innovation: they have both won 3M's highest honors for research and numerous awards within the international engineering community.

Adapted from "[Inventor of the Week: Art Fry and Spencer Silver](http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/frysilver.html)". *MIT*. <http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/frysilver.html>.