



**One-on-One**

with the Inventors of

# Let's Hang

*The Top Creative Innovation of 2017*

By Kristen Farrell

**W**hen Armando Ulloa first told his brother, Alfredo about an idea he had that could resolve a very common problem, he never thought it would leave a powerful mark on thousands of professionals in the creative industries. Armando and Alfredo were behind one of five products selected for our inaugural The Ultimate Pitch contest, which was held during Creativation. The brother duo pitched their product, Let's Hang, a tool that helps you hang frames and pictures level and precise the first time, to a panel of executives from well-known retailers and manufacturers and won the grand prize of \$10,000. I sat down with Armando and Alfredo just a couple of hours after their big win, while their new reality was still sinking in.

**CIT: What were your initial goals for participating in the Innovations Center and The Ultimate Pitch?**

**Armando Ulloa:** "We were trying to get our product out so people could actually visibly see it, understand it, touch it, hold it, feel it and understand what the purpose of the tool is. As creators we also wanted to get reaction and feedback from people – what they like about it, what they don't like about it, what they would change, what they would add – just because

we are still in such an early stage where we can still make some adjustments to it."

**Alfredo Ulloa:** "Yeah, I'd agree with my brother. One of the things that's really nice about doing something like Creativation and being a participant in the Innovations Center is you get to tap a lot of markets that normally you probably wouldn't be able to do unless you were already in the industry. So, when we came here our expectations were, honestly, let's see what the people say. So, we think it's a great idea, right? It solves many of our issues, many of our friends' and colleagues' issues, but what is the industry actually going to say about it?"

**CIT: You mention that one of the reasons why you came here was to get feedback. What was some valuable feedback you got out of this experience?**

**Armando Ulloa:** "The feedback was...it's priceless. Like my brother says, if we were to try to get all of this feedback, we would have to drive to a million different stores, drive to a million different cities, drive to a million different states. We got all of that here. First of all that's valuable, and it's not as

expensive. The feedback that we got here just confirmed what we've heard from other people, which is that they love the idea.

What I personally like is you have engineers walking around. I met an engineer from Slovenia, and he gave us some input on what he would do a little bit differently. And then we got advice from a consumer who said, 'I want it, I love it, I wouldn't do anything to it.' And then we got feedback from distributors of what they thought about it, and people from fabric stores who probably won't use it in their stores but want to use it at their homes...You're getting a lot of creative people all in one room who are giving us input and feedback on a product that we want to take to the masses."

**Alfredo Ulloa:** "I would also say this gives you the power of brainstorming. Most of the thought process that went into developing Let's Hang was my brother's initial thoughts, some input from our wives, and then some input from our engineer. But when you start bringing in individuals from different parts of the markets, you have individuals who say, 'What if you don't want to do a wall,' or 'Think about maybe doing something where you can have a marker that is removable or erasable.' It just gives you the ability to step back a little bit and get the input of the actual consumers who would be purchasing this product, whether it is for their homes or to put in their stores. And, a lot of it was positive. Gauging some of the price points – what we thought was a reasonable price, and confirming it. We had some people say, 'It's actually cheaper than what I would have paid for it,' which is good to hear because what we want to do is mass distribute this."

#### **CIT: What are you going to do with the \$10,000?**

**Armando Ulloa:** "We are going to file for our utility patent with some of the winnings. We definitely have to tweak some stuff on our final drawings before we do that, but the priority is going to be the utility patent. Then, we have to think about marketing, when we do get it going."

#### **CIT: What's next for the two of you and Let's Hang?**

**Armando Ulloa:** "It's kind of crazy. We never expected to get the response that we got. We came here thinking maybe a couple of people would like it. Maybe we would get a little recognition on our Kickstarter campaign. We've talked to every major company, huge companies that we pass the stores of every day. We have so many phone calls and meetings to make next week. The good thing is we're open to everything and willing to hear everything. What the future holds, we're still not sure. We made amazing contacts. And I would recommend anyone in our situation with a new tool, or a new invention, or a new product to come to Creativation. It's overwhelming, but it's awesome."

#### **CIT: When and where can people purchase Let's Hang?**

**Armando Ulloa:** "We're hoping that this can launch sometime in the June-July timeframe. Where you can buy it or where you will find it is very dependent on which direction we go in getting it to the consumers. We're currently about to embark on a lot of conversations with a lot of different entities, so it just depends on which direction we go. We're still hoping whichever direction we take it will be consumer-ready in the June-July timeframe."

**Alfredo Ulloa:** "We want to get it out to the market ASAP. Like my brother said, June-July is the time we're thinking, but that could be dictated by the amazing contacts we made here."

#### **CIT: Who would you say is the ideal customer for Let's Hang?**

**Alfredo Ulloa:** "Everybody. Everyone. Whether you want it in your store for resale or if you want it at your home to save your marriage, it's for anybody who hangs any type of apparatus, whether it's a shelf, a wall mount, a TV mount, frames, fabric, art. It's for everyone."

**Armando Ulloa:** "We had a bunch of people pass by our table in the Innovations Center who said, 'That's not something I could sell'. I would say, 'It's not, but it's something you could have in your home.' And when I showed them our product video, they would say, 'Thank you so much for stopping me because I couldn't sell that in my store because it doesn't work with my products, but I definitely want one for my home.' So, everybody!" **CIT**

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