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STATE OF THE ART

Wish List: 9 Innovations in Search of Inventors

By DAVID POGUE

YOU can say what you want about the bursting of the technology bubble (just not in front of the children). True, the Super Bowl lost some advertisers, 20-year-olds lost their beachfront condos, and investors lost their shirts. But for technology writers, it was a great time to be alive.

These days, though, there seems to be a measurable deceleration in high-tech innovation. Sure, PC's are getting slightly faster, palmtops slightly brighter, and DVD players slightly cheaper, but where are the big, bold new ideas for consumer products? Where are the

MICROWAVE PLUS+

It's beginning to dawn on manufacturers that we need better ways of getting data from one source to another. The redundantly named VCR Plus+ feature, for example, simplifies programming your VCR by letting you plug in a code found in the newspaper TV listings.

But even in 2002, frozen-food packages still bear ludicrously imprecise instructions like, "Heat at High for 3 to 7 minutes (ovens vary)."

"3 to 7"? Let's get our act together!

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/04/technology/circuits/04POGUE-EMAIL.html?pagewanted=print>

April 4, 2002

FROM THE DESK OF DAVID POGUE

When Conceiving New Products, 300 Brains Are Better Than One

By DAVID POGUE

My column in last week's Circuits featured nine ideas for high-tech products that don't exist but should.

Once again, your e-mail messages and letters to the editor show that 300 brains are mightier than one...

Finally, I described something called Microwave Plus+, whose electric eye would scan special food-package bar codes for perfect microwave cooking.

Steve Drucker, chief executive of Microwave Science, e-mailed to say that his company has developed a similar system.

"Getting new technology to market can often be like herding cats," he wrote.

But TrueCookPlus, the product of his company's labors, will finally come to market this year.

Mr. Drucker adds that several major food packagers have already agreed to print the necessary codes.

That's one great product that doesn't exist -- but will.