

# The Talking Machine

Thomas Alva Edison (1847 – 1931) was an American inventor, scientist, and businessman who developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the phonograph, the motion picture camera, and a long-lasting, practical electric light bulb.

Dubbed “The Wizard of Menlo Park” (now Edison, N.J.) by a newspaper reporter, he was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of mass production and large teamwork to the process of invention, and therefore is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory.

Edison is considered one of the most prolific inventors in history, holding 1,093 U.S. patents in his name, as well as many patents in the United Kingdom, France and Germany. He is credited with numerous inventions that contributed to mass communication and, in particular, telecommunications. These included a stock ticker, a mechanical vote recorder, a battery for an electric car, electrical power, recorded music and motion pictures.



*Thomas Edison and an early version of the phonograph*

An incident shows his determination to advance his theories. When Edison thought he had discovered the way to record and reproduce the sound of a human voice on a machine, he called in a model maker. Handing the man a rough pencil sketch of his idea, he asked that a working model be built.

The model maker surveyed the sketch, then declared, “Impossible. That thing will never work. No one has ever made a machine that could talk.”

Instead of accepting this verdict, Edison determinedly said, “Build what I have sketched here and let me be the loser if it doesn’t work.”

How many really good ideas have been lost because of skeptics? There is no way to know, of course, but there are many doubters around – people who are always ready to throw cold water on a positive thought, eager to proclaim that it just won’t work.

Let us always seek wise counsel, but be not turned away by naysayers who are quick to find fault with our due deliberations.

– Beecher Hunter