

Einstein's Smart Refrigerator

Killer Appliances

Although many people know Albert Einstein as a scientist, many are probably not aware that he was also an inventor. After winning the Nobel Prize in the 1920s, he began looking for a solution to a deadly problem. Entire families were being poisoned to death in their sleep by the toxic ammonia coolant leaking from their refrigerators.

Einstein invented a safe refrigeration system and tried to market it, but was not successful. Refrigerator companies had developed a safer coolant and replaced the chemical in the existing refrigerators, which meant that there was no need for Einstein's invention. Or so it seemed. Years later, studies would show that the industry coolant, Freon, was harmful to the environment.

Lesson: Genius alone will not guarantee success in the marketplace. Einstein did not factor the competition's Research & Development departments into his plans. Sometimes industries solve their own problems in a simpler cost-effective way.

Reference

The Essential Engineer: Why Science Alone Will Not Solve Our Global Problems. Henry Petroski. Knopf, 2010.