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The canine designer

Nicholas Aretakis, 46, Scottsdale

By [Anne Fisher](#), Fortune senior writer

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(Fortune Magazine) -- With an electrical engineering degree from Columbia University, Nicholas Aretakis always felt at home in the semiconductor business, where he spent 22 years. In the '90s, as head of sales for ESS Technology, one of the first companies to introduce an audio chip for PC motherboards, he helped boost revenues from \$30 million to more than \$300 million in three years. Then he led lucrative IPOs at two other semiconductor companies.

All along, though, he had a soft spot for Jack Russell terriers, that feisty breed made famous by Eddie on *Frasier*. But the dogs have a couple of issues. First, they're strong for their size and will sometimes pull so hard on a conventional collar that they damage their own tracheas. And second, notes Aretakis, "their necks are the same width as their heads," which means they have a maddening tendency to slip out of their collars and go tearing off.

"There were no safe, humane collars or leashes available in stores to prevent these problems," Aretakis recalls. So about four years ago he designed some, starting a company called Puppy & Pet Products International (ezleash.com). The collars are filled with a special soft padding that won't damage the dog's throat no matter how hard he pulls, and the harnesses, also with comfy padding, don't touch the dog's neck at all (and are impossible to slip out of).

His inventions have turned out to be popular for lots of breeds (the EZ Harness is a particularly hot seller). The products are available online and at about 250 Pet Supplies Plus stores, and the business makes a nice profit. But what Aretakis enjoys most about it is the chance to spare Jack Russells, and their formerly beleaguered owners, no end of trouble. ■

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