

How to Drive Parents Insane: A Toy Manufacturer's Viewpoint

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Setting: The boardroom of a toy manufacturer called The Insanity Toy Company. A meeting is taking place with toy executives sitting at a long table. Donuts and coffee are being served. Al, the head of the group, begins to lead the meeting.

AL: OK everyone, with the holiday season upon us, what can we do to really drive parents crazy this year, yet still make them buy our products?

BOB: How about a toy where you insert a chip and the chip makes a really loud, repetitive noise and catchphrase? The chips also get lost easily, since they're really small. The parents will have to buy more and more chips if they don't want to keep hearing "Yowza! Boiiiiing!" all day.

AL: Perfect!

CARL: You know how you sometimes have to use scissors to open a package? What if we sold our toys with packaging that required a special tool to open them? Again, make the opener super tiny and easy to lose so parents will have to keep buying more.

AL: Great idea, Carl.

DAVE: We talked about annoying sounds, but I think annoying smells is really an untapped market. I mean, what if toys made smells that kids would find hilarious, but adults would find unbearable? I'm thinking dog poop, moldy socks, rotten eggs...

AL: Brilliant. Who else has ideas?

ED: How about we just try to confuse the heck out of parents? Make a bunch of toys that have similar names but are really different. The parents will buy the wrong toy, the kid will be upset, and they'll have to buy another one. Maybe more than one!

AL: I love it. Keep 'em coming, team.

FRED: What if we manufacture a toy that requires a separate, very specific part, and then we discontinue that part after awhile? The parents will have to buy an entire new toy that way.

AL: Yes! Anyone else?

GARY: Maybe we can put really inappropriate age guidelines on the boxes? Some people might return the toys, but chances are, the kids will play with them a few times, maybe break or lose a few pieces, and render the toy unreturnable. Then the parents will have to just suck it up and buy different one.

AL: Great strategy. Who's next?

HANK: Let's add messes to the mix. We can create synergy with the division of the parent company that manufactures laundry detergent. I'm thinking of a volcano that erupts with dye that stains. It has to be lot more sophisticated – a.k.a. expensive – than the old homemade baking soda and vinegar volcano. It will create stains that are really difficult to remove. Maybe the furniture division of the company will also benefit from this.

AL: Fantastic.

IRVING: Let's go back to basics for a moment. Don't forget to make the setting up and putting together of the toys as time-consuming and frustrating as possible. It's easy to slip up and make the directions reasonable; the directions really need to be inscrutable. Always make sure some of the directions are missing from the box. It'll drive traffic to our website as parents look for help. Then the kids will see other toys on the website and will ask the parents for more toys, because the ones they just received are too complicated and take too long to set up.

AL: These are all terrific ideas, everyone. We'll make sure to incorporate them into our plan for this season. Remember, we have to be just annoying enough that the parents are forced to re-engage with us. Studies show children play with new toys for an average of 1.4 days before wanting more new toys. So really, we just have to keep pumping 'em out. No idea is too crazy, no toy too flimsy for the Insanity Toy Company. I can see our sales numbers skyrocketing this holiday season and beyond!



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