



**\$99**

**99**  
**IDEAS**  
**for your**  
**Stuffed Toy**  
**Invention**

**Brought to you by Binkley Toys**



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## Introduction

Thank you for choosing my 99 Ideas for 99 Dollars! There are some real gems here that can make you a lot of money and others that can save you a lot of money! I like to think of this as a valuable checklist for new toy inventors. You can breeze through the written guide here and listen to the audio version. Some tips and tricks will be in the audio version and not in the written portion so I would recommend that you review both. Over time I feel that you would benefit by reviewing this information periodically because some of my advice will be more meaningful to you as you get deeper in to your toy idea.

I belong to a high level marketing group. I go there to learn about how I can sell products, give more value to my customers and help you to market your toy idea as well. I hear all types of experts who show how they have become successful. When I hear these experts speak I listen to them in three ways;

- 1) I am first listening for how I can use this information in my own business to sell my product.
- 2) I also listen at the same time for what information would apply to you for you to sell your toy.
- 3) And lastly I think about how I can put together helpful information in an easily digestible format to benefit your business.

Every year I travel to a big conference with my marketing group. The day before the conference there is a “Bonus Day” where the leader goes over ‘what’s working’ in business. It is called the A to Z Blueprint Day. It is basically a start to finish overview on what elements I should include in my business to be successful. The first year I went I thoroughly enjoyed the Bonus Day. It is approximately 9 solid hours of a lecture and I took notes the entire time. I learned quite a few new ideas and also several that I knew but was not implementing. I came back to my office after the conference and made a list of those things that I should implement. I worked through my list over time and was very happy with the results.

The second year, the leader was promising a new and improved version of the same A to Z Blueprint Day. I sat through the first half an hour of the lecture thinking, “What am I doing here? This is all a repeat.” Soon after though, I was making new notes as fast as I could as I was reminded of ideas from the previous year taken from the Bonus Day. The list of business ideas that were being presented to me weren’t really new but I hadn’t implemented quite a few of them from the year before. Even though I had implemented a number of good ideas the year before, there were many more that were not in place yet. It was a great reminder to me about how much there is to do in business. After the second year of sitting through the lengthy lecture I thought, wouldn’t it be great if I could provide my customers a guide which touched on many of the aspects they should be considering when you are bringing your own toy idea to market.

This spurred the creation of the 99 Ideas Guide. Work through this guide as you’re getting your toy idea started. Refer back to it periodically when you come to major milestones in your toys development. I believe that this guide will jog your memory and help to keep you on track. You may not be able to use every idea here but I guarantee just one good idea or tip from this guide will save you hundreds or thousands of dollars. Another good idea or tip may make you hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Let me tell you a little bit about myself before we get started...

## **Binkley Toys - A Brief History**

Hello Fellow Toy Inventor! My name is Rob Bishop, I am the owner of Binkley Toys Inc.

### **A Big Problem Hits Close To Home**

I remember it like it was yesterday. It was October of 2002 and Mary Reynolds, a good business friend of mine had called me in tears. She was a good corporate customer of mine who didn't think twice about ordering large orders of 50,000 to 100,000 pieces. They had 40 trade shows every year and gave out thousands of toys at every show. Mary was also a mother of two and had a stuffed toy idea that she was looking to invent and wanted to sell.

### **Trying To Save A Buck**

A year before she was asking if I would help her work on her toy. I gave her my best advice that I had and corrected a few assumptions that she was making. Mary asked me if I would be offended if she used someone else with a lower price. An alarm went off in my head but I wanted to make sure I was fair with her since the company she worked for was such a great customer. So a year had past since she first started and I was now on the phone with her and she was in tears. Since it was October, it was too late to do anything about getting her new toys for Christmas. The biggest shopping day of the years (Black Friday) was weeks away and even with all of my skill, connections and production capabilities I wouldn't be able to save the day.

She was a smart woman. She tried her best to work through another small supplier who promised a quick delivery time and cheaper prices. At her big corporate job she didn't think twice about spending six figures on our custom toys, but this was different. This was her own money now and her family depended on her.

That is the day I decided to make a difference! I decided that I wouldn't allow another individual to get sucked in by companies over promising and under delivering. I had made great money from working with the big companies but I now saw a need for my expertise.

She had been so excited and passionate about her toy idea that she was ripe to be 'sucked in'. Mary was so frustrated, upset and had lost a lot of her family's money. She had been told incorrect information and had been made false promises. Her excitement and creativity had been used against her. But it doesn't have to be that way!

Before I tell you about how I am helping people now, let me tell you how this all got started.

I want you to question everything you read and hear on my website and especially on other websites that you go to. I have no interest in "selling you" something that is not a good fit for you, but I also do not want you giving your money to the 'rip offs' that are out there. I have made my money in business by dealing with the 'big boys' from corporations like Serta, McDonalds, Boeing and other big money companies.

### **Strict Standards**

Serving those huge corporations was not easy money of course. They have very strict standards. You have to match their logo colors exactly, and if they have a trade show you need to be on time, early or they throw all the toys back at you. They take International Safety Standards and cut them in half making us comply with Super strict safety rules. They inspect our factories looking for poor and inhuman working conditions.

Of course I was happy because I was dealing with orders that were 50,000 - 100,000 and 250,000 pieces at a time. But this is where it gets ugly...

### **Sad Phone Calls and People Getting Ripped Off**

As time passed, I was getting the same phone calls. An example is one woman from Florida who

had sent money to an ‘agency’ promising to market her stuffed toy idea, or a man I remember from California who thought it was cheapest to use a factory direct from China. It was the same type of phone calls over and over with only a few details different. These people were looking for me to track down their contacts in China, or fix toys they received from an agent in the USA. They had lost thousands of dollars because they were looking for a quick and cheap deal.

I really hate talking about that time with all of those phone calls, because I feel bad that I wasn’t doing more to help them... and then that changed.

### **How It All Began**

I left University and was thinking about what I should do about a career. What did I know then? I promised my father I would help him with his business. He had run the same business since 1974. As I worked in his t-shirt business, I put pressure on my father telling him that I wanted to make more money. I was working 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. After pushing him for more money, he decided a second company was the answer.

I was busy running his t-shirt production and he mentioned buying a stuffed toy company that he had done printing for called Binkley. It was a Teddy Bear company that manufactured stuffed toys locally. It was a moderately successful toy company at one time, selling its toy line to retailers all over North America but that company was getting squeezed out of the market because its toys weren’t made in China. Binkley’s sales were below \$70,000 which was too low to keep it going. My father purchased it and went to work. I knew that he was spending a lot of time with the new business and he was complaining about the manager that came with that toy company. At this point I still had nothing to do with the toy company, but that changed fast!

### **When Everything Stopped!**

I remember that day like no other. My father threw up his hands and looked at me and said I could do what I wanted with the toy company. He was done. He was frustrated with the manager that came with the company and with the sales that were not coming through as he had hoped. I really didn’t know what I was talking about at the time, but I agreed to try my luck with making the toy company work and I said that I would give it a shot. I guess that is the optimism of youth. I had no idea what I was getting in to.

This all started a decade long struggle. I won’t bore you with all of the details, but here are some of the highlights.

### **Rock Bottom**

Not only could I not increase my income, which was the plan, but I took a huge pay cut. This made it so the only option I had was to move in to a small 10’ x 10’ room in the back of the toy factory. I was living in the factory. I supervised staff during the day, and designed new toys at night.

I scraped all the money I could together to pay for a booth at the International Toy Fair. I presented our locally made bears (super expensive because they weren’t made in China) and nobody was very interested. People kept smiling politely at my stuffed toys and then they would say “That is nice, but can you make my toy idea?”

That is where CustomPlushToys.com came from. That is what led me to dealing with the big corporations and making their toys.

### **The Next Decade In A Paragraph!**

I spent a decade studying hard simply because I had to so that the company could survive and my father and I could get out of debt. Looking back I am not sure if I was being stupid or being loyal to my father and not leaving him with that debt. Let’s say it was loyalty. I was learning on the job about selling to businesses, selling wholesale, selling retail, selling on the internet, selling at trade

shows and so on.

I was asked to speak at Colleges about selling on the internet. My website at the time which I built from scratch (they didn't have fancy software back then to build websites - you used Notepad) was selling tons of toys online. That site which sold the locally made bears online as gift items, was featured in a book called Selling Online by Jim Carroll and Rick Broadhead. This book was officially endorsed by Visa which was a huge accomplishment since the banks were not very excited about the internet back in the year 2000. Developing that retail site allowed me to master the art of convincing people to give me money over the internet. Mastered international logistics (shipping stuff around the world) and I grew an intimate understanding about what an individual wants and needs who is trying to invent their own stuffed toy.

Which brings us back to the point when I decided that I was sick of those phone calls where you have been ripped off again by someone promising the world and delivering crap, or worse... nothing.

Don't take my word for it. Look at some basic facts.

### **Made In China -Bad Right?**

When you call me and say, "I don't want my stuffed toy to say Made in China" what do you want me to tell you?

The facts are that my company was one of the last stuffed toy factories in North America. If I could make loads of money by manufacturing toys that say Made in USA, I would still be doing it, but people don't want to pay \$28 for a stuffed toy. They want to pay \$5 for a stuffed toy. Look at your shoes, look in the hood of your car. All the parts are made overseas if the whole product isn't. I am not looking at getting into a debate over whether we should save our manufacturing jobs or not, what I am saying that in the toy industry, Made in China has won. There are no other options (other than Made in Mexico or Made in Philippines). I bet on the "Made in USA" idea and I lost 5 years out of my life and hundreds of thousands of dollars. So trust me, your choices are Made in China, or doing nothing and putting your stuffed toy idea on the shelf until next Christmas when you will be kicking yourself for not having done something about that nagging excitement in your belly.

I have no interest in you choosing my company as the one you would like to work with by scaring you. No. If any of my insider secrets disturb you, then it is best that you not make a stuffed toy at all, rather than sign up with my company. I do not tell you any of this to "sell you" but rather, I just don't want anymore of those terrible phone calls.

### **It Takes So Long**

When you have dealt with where the toys will be made you will start to get so excited about getting your toys made that you will want your toys created, manufactured and in your hands tomorrow. You are excited to get started and that is normal to want to see the results fast. That is the society we live in these days. There are ways to fast track a new idea, but be careful. Please! I don't want you to be another phone call to my office saying that you bought in to the idea that some company could get you custom toys in your hands in 10 weeks or 8 weeks, or even 6 weeks. This is crazy to think this. There are physical limitations that prevent any company on the planet from getting your phone call and having a unique custom stuffed toy on your doorstep in 6 weeks.

### **The Magic Toy Company**

Give me a few minutes and I will tell you some ways that they CAN do it, but at your expense.

#### **1) They Send You Stock Toys**

The 'magic' toy company can take all of your well thought out ideas for your new stuffed toy idea, ignore them, take a stock toy off of a shelf, put it in to a box and ship it to you. This is one type of phone call I get, where the product shows up and it looks nothing like how they described. Now, I



am not talking about someone being picky, I am talking about a person who received toys that looked nothing like what they asked for. This is after you have wired (wiring your money is a method of payment from bank to bank - there is no way to get a refund and this is the only way that this 'magic' toy company will accept your payment) all of your money to the toy company.

You should be looking for a toy company that gets your approval on every step. This will ensure that your toys show up looking how you want. I spent years developing what I call the SEED system. This guarantees that the toys look the way you want. I will tell you about the SEED system when you get a quote.

## **2) They Ship Express On Your Account - Ouch!**

The 'magic' toy company can make your product, and they may look pretty close to the way that you wanted. After telling you that there were some additional charges that you must pay before shipping you are still happy because the total price is still below what you were quoted from my company. You are then told the goods are ready for shipping and they need your UPS, Fed Ex or DHL number. You don't have one, so they tell you that you must get one. You get one, and they ship the goods to you. Well, if the goods do make it into the country (skirting 3 dozen rules and regulations) then you find yourself writing checks to several companies for dozens of charges. The courier (UPS, Fed Ex or DHL) charges alone will equal the expense of the toys. Yes, I am saying that the shipping charges will cost as much as the toys themselves since they were shipped Express, and not by ocean which is way cheaper. Then you have an arms length worth of fees that may or may not be included in the courier fees. DDC, Brokerage, Duty, Customs, Paper Handling, Fuel Surcharges, Reg. No., Surety Bond, Dock Charges, and so on. This is about when you pick up the phone and call me, wondering how you can get out of paying all of these fees. At that point my price is looking much more reasonable.

When you get a quote you will understand how our 5 point Guarantee works. You only get a final invoice for exactly what we said it would be. No Surprises! Guaranteed. If your toys get inspected by customs at the border, which with heightened security levels this is more common then ever, I won't be sending you the bill.

## **3) Now You See Them...Now You Call Me!**

One of the worst calls I get is from the woman who did her homework, wasn't trying to get a 'great' deal, did what the toy company told her to do, and she still lost. When she saw her new toy for the first time, she had some changes. She emailed or faxed the changes to her toy manufacturer and waited. If she did see changes come back to her they were wrong. So she politely requested the changes again. When she doesn't hear back for several weeks she escalates the number of calls, or her intensity. This is when normal people turn ugly and start to say things they would be embarrassed to be repeated back to them later. She leaves messages cursing the man she has been speaking to and his entire family. I am exaggerating somewhat here, but you see what I am getting at. The next thing she knows, the emails bounce back, the calls and faxes get a "this number is not in service" message and she has nothing.

Do yourself a favor and do your homework. Protect yourself from rip offs.

# 99 Ideas for your Stuffed Toy Invention

## 1) Non-Disclosure

- Protect your ideas from others profiting from it
- Protect your ideas from those people who may tell others not under your NDA
- Simple Free, Fast

## 2) Work for Hire

- Maintain 100% ownership over your ideas
- Critical even on small jobs
- Important to compartmentalize

## 3) Copyright

- Protect the look of your toy
- Keep a note book
- Use Design Guide
- Ultimate Package has Copyright Trail

## 4) Trademark

- Protect your logo and brand
- Graphical representation of your brand
- Expensive

## 5) Patent

- Not used by many toy inventors
- Very expensive
- Can enable you to block competition

## 6) Discussing Your Ideas With Others

- Check your ego at the door
- Need to know basis
- Protect against negativity

## 7) Opinions - who to trust

- Everyone wants to be a critique
- What is their agenda?
- Become immune to criticism
- Only vote is with a wallet

## **8) Budget**

- Be realistic
- The 'toy' is 1/3 of your expense
- Work with what you have
- Save money where it won't be noticed
- Spend time to save money

## **9) Sketches**

- Spend time sharpening the ax
- Too good is no good
- Keep future production in mind
- Be flexible to save in your budget

## **10) Technical Drawings**

- Critical to success if needed
- Use someone in the toy business
- Too much detail can be as bad as not enough detail

## **11) Color**

- Learn how to speak about color
- Get a professional color guide
- Visit a toy store
- Get help with this complex topic

## **12) Feel**

- Learn about the value with feel
- Visit a toy store
- Speak to other parents

## **13) Size**

- Look at many other toys
- There are expenses associated with size
- There is value associated with size
- Consider the bulk or volume of the toy

## **14) Complexity**

- Details should add value to the toy
- Production limitations should be accounted for
- Being flexible with complexity at smaller quantities (under 10,000 toys) is recommended

## 15) Age Target

- What age is the toy intended for?
- What are the joys or pains of the purchaser? (Dad needs child distracted, Mom feels guilty for being at work)
- Focus your energies on one specific age and you'll find 'creep' of other age brackets

## 16) Niche Target

- Does your toy satisfy a specific sub-culture? (ex. Wow, dog lovers, newborns)
- Identify as specifically as you can the market you are going after
- Speaking to everybody means you are speaking to nobody
- Target your conversation at your specific customer

## 17) Functionality

- Does your toy do something?
- Does it fit over, in or around another object?
- Are you going to be trying to incorporate another object with the toy?
- Check your target customer's local market to make sure that the 'objects' they have available to them will work with your toy as you intended

## 18) Price Target

- Very tricky topic
- If you do not have experience, start higher and lower your price over time if you have to
- Keep your price high and add value!
- Use many of the tips in this guide to increase the value of your offer

## 19) Gender Target

- Boy, girl, neutral?
- Just because it's pink doesn't mean it's for girls
- Keep language gender neutral

## 20) Electronics

- Must add enough value to justify the expense
- Higher minimum order for stock electronics (3,000-5,000 toys)
- Extremely high minimum orders for custom complex electronics (30,000-50,000 toys)
- More potential for defects
- Make batteries accessible

## **21) Poseable**

- Potential to lose value in feel for pose
- Wire
- Plastic armature
- Jointed
- Stiffer feel

## **22) Plastics**

- Eyes, nose, mouth
- Pellets (beans - beanies)
- Can add value to toy (feel / weight)

## **23) Embroidery / Screen Printing**

- Eyes, nose, mouth, paws, logos, markings
- Embroidery is richer looking
- Screen Printing can give smaller details
- Be realistic with the use of embroidery or printing

## **24) Hangtags**

- An overlooked opportunity
- Incorporate coupons
- Incorporate upsells
- Direct the consumer back to your website
- Multi-page available
- Any size is available
- Custom shapes should hold value to justify the expense

## **25) Labels**

- Legal requirements can be strict
- Labels should be designed by country
- Multi-color should hold value
- Permanent vehicle for your message

## **26) Packaging**

- Be sure any packaging enhances the value of the toy
- Plastic bags, display hooks
- Double check the real cost of the packaging (see boxes below)
- Think ahead to wholesale orders, retail display, or individual shipments.

## **27) Boxes**

- Full color retail window boxes
- L display boxes
- Clamshell packaging
- Be sure that the box adds enough value to warrant the expense
- Calculate the full cost of boxes - the artwork, the design, the box, extra shipping to you, extra shipping out to customer

## **28) Certificates (collectors/ authenticity)**

- Consumers find great value in toys with traits of collectability
- A certificate of authenticity can add prestige to your toy
- Retired toys create an after market which increases demand for new designs

## **29) Limited Editions**

- Limited edition toys have a greater value
- You can change the toy slightly (like the color) and identify that as a new version (2nd Edition)
- Numbering is a popular choice but it is difficult and expensive on the toy because of physical printing limitations
- If you number the hangtags or a certificate you will have an easier time creating a limited edition
- You should keep careful notes to prove the quantities available in your limited edition to media or large buyers

## **30) Clothing**

- Hats, jackets, t-shirts, pants, backpacks, shoes and other clothing will add to your cost but if they add value to your toy or are integral to the character then the added expense is warranted
- Be sure to list somewhere on the toys documentation that accessories should be removed when given to children under 3 years of age

## **31) Removable Items**

- Other items and accessories can add value to your toy
- Toys pets, tools, and other accessories
- Clothing which is removable can add an educational factor with real Velcro, buttons, zippers and other items which children would find on their own clothing

## **32) Collars/Tags**

- Collars can be soft felt, plastic or vinyl
- Collars can be imprinted or embroidered depending on their size and the materials used
- Horse reigns, bridles and other animal accessories are included in this category
- Closed loops can be dangerous on a toy if they are too large
- Check with a manufacturer that has experience in this area and is honest with you about the dangers of closed loops on a toy

### **33) Gift Card**

- Making a gift card with the senders personal message inside available can increase sales
- Normally used for direct to consumer sales online
- A gift card can enable multiple purchases from one buyer since they can personalize the gift
- A gift card can add pennies in materials and labor if done properly but can add great value to the purchase

### **34) Booklets**

- If you have a message, a personal story or more information to relate to the end consumer a multi-page hangtag folded in half can act like a small book
- Booklets increase your cost but can increase your sales message greatly
- Selling online will not benefit from a booklet before the sale, but it can act like a 'stick letter' after the sale
- A stick letter is a follow up letter after the sale to encourage a customer to keep the product

### **35) Books**

- A children's books is a natural marriage with a stuffed toy
- A full blown adult book can make you a celebrity in your industry

### **36) Viability**

- Research can tell you whether your toy idea will sell at the price you desire
- Your expense must be less then all of your costs added up to make a profitable idea
- Doing preliminary work before investing tens of thousands of dollars is time well spent

### **37) Research Google**

- Google has a research tool which tells you the number of people who have searched for your product
- You can see the number who have search last month and over the last 12 months
- Google can tell you how many other people are paying to advertise on your keywords
- Check the resource section at the end of this valuable guide for the Google research tool

### **38) Research WordTracker**

- Using WordTracker is like a getting a second opinion
- WordTracker does not have the reach in numbers that Google does, but it does have diversity that Google does not
- Numbers reported in WordTracker will be very different then in Google - reported numbers should be used to compare within each engine and not to compare between engines
- Skipping research steps is a bad idea

### **39) Research Local Retailers**

- Talk to the people who would be selling your toys even if you intend to sell online only
- Understand the expense of space in retail - a well designed toy can increase sales

### **40) Research Sales Reps**

- Sales Representatives have a good feel for what is selling now and what their buyers are looking for
- Getting feedback on your 'presentation' will help tremendously even if you don't intend to sell to retail stores
- Much of their advice can be applied online

### **41) Choosing a Manufacturer**

- Look for experience
- Look for a guarantee
- Think big, is your manufacturer multi-national?

### **42) Manufacturer's Design Help**

- Be cautious with praise for your idea from a sales person
- All elements of your idea should be represented in image form
- Manufacturer should seek your approval at every step

### **43) Manufacturer's Sales Help**

- Getting a toy made is helpful but having sales materials to support the toy is essential
- Look for help from someone with huge success (millions \$) both online and offline

### **44) Manufacturer's Prototyping**

- Should be a realistic representation of the toy in mass production
- Be wary of a 'perfect' toy
- Be open to interpretations
- Be realistic about limitations
- Push for the details or great substitutions that make your toy what it is (the essence)
- Don't stop your progress over details that do not matter

### **45) Manufacturer's Safety**

- Show you are serious by placing a refundable deposit and then ask for proof of safety procedures
- If unsure or unimpressed with proof you receive then you should get back your deposit
- With assurance of safety focus on growing your toy idea and concentrate on sales



#### **46) Manufacturer's Competing With You**

- Does your supplier sell to the same people you will be selling to?
- Your idea should be given to a 'dead end' - meaning, given to a company that cannot use any part of your idea for their own use

#### **47) Manufacturer's Quality Control**

- Ask about quality control systems that are in place
- No manufacturer can deliver 0% defects, be cautious if that is promised
- Get promises and guarantees in writing

#### **48) Manufacturer's Product Liability Insurance**

- Is PLI (Product Liability Insurance) available?
- Quotes for your own PLI direct from an insurance broker should range from \$8,000 - \$15,000 per year
- PLI costs from a manufacturer should be a small percentage of this amount (5%)
- For larger orders (over 6,000) you can try to negotiate a better price on PLI

#### **49) Manufacturer's Minimum Order**

- Most manufacturer's will make 500 - 2,400 pieces as a minimum order
- Working directly with China you would be expected to fill a container (approx. 10,000 toys)
- Look for lower minimums (500 pieces) so that you can test your market and also get samples out to media representatives

#### **50) Manufacturer's Memberships (TIA, BBB, IMAA)**

- A manufacturer that is 'in the loop' has a greater chance of staying on top of the immense amount of regulation changes and industry standards
- Companies with ties to associations have to maintain a reputation so will be encouraged to help you if something 'goes wrong'

#### **51) Selling Your Toys**

- 60% of your time and energy should be directed towards selling your toys
- Focus on creating clear sales paths that can be duplicated over and over again

#### **52) Selling Direct To Consumers**

- Study large companies like Tupperware, Avon, Mary Kay and other direct to consumer companies
- Learn the various methods of going direct to the consumer

### **53) Selling Wholesale**

- Retail stores are still the major supply chain to the world
- A good network of Sales Reps can help you maintain sales across the country
- Keep strict payment terms to start and relax them over time

### **54) Selling Online**

- Don't compete with retail customers
- Get help unless you have vast experience in many areas
- Use online sales to support other sales channels
- Plan ahead and have all sales channels support each other

### **55) Selling In Kiosks**

- Consumers still like to go to malls
- Turn your toys in to a Biz Op
- Start with a prototype model and keep good statistics

### **56) Selling Retail**

- Bypassing sales reps and selling direct to retailers can save you 9% - 13% commissions
- More leg work
- Opening your own retail store is a huge undertaking

### **57) Guarantee**

- What is your guarantee to the retail store and what is your guarantee to the end consumer?
- Order product catalogs and use portions of their guarantees
- Go to competing websites and view their guarantees

### **58) Return Policy**

- What is your return policy for the retail store and for the end consumer?
- Your policies do not have to match the retailers

### **59) Privacy Policy**

- Required online
- Helpful for offline sales
- Remote chance of liability but worth reviewing and monitoring

## **60) Follow Up**

- Huge opportunity to give your sales a bump
- If you do nothing else with this entire guide please pay attention to this area of business
- Buyers typically are exposed to a sales message 7 times before buying
- Stopping after one 'No' is business suicide
- Be persistent, automate it or hire someone who will be persistent

## **61) Email List**

- Start to collect emails from the beginning whether you know what to do with them or not
- Treat your email list with care
- Setup a monthly (as a minimum) email to go out immediately and consistently
- Think of yourself as a business friend, not as a sales person
- Trade something of value to get information

## **62) Prospect List**

- Keep a list of all prospects that you have been in contact with about your product
- Full contact information (mailing address, phone, fax) is preferable but name and email address as a minimum
- Offer a contest, a giveaway, a color catalog or some other means to build your prospect list
- Follow up with this list

## **63) Customer List**

- Your most valuable list is your customer list
- Treat this list with respect and protect it
- Go to your list for repeat sales, referrals, testimonials, feedback, new product ideas

## **64) Systems**

- Create systems for each step of the sales cycle with step by step instructions and scripts for future employees to use
- Keep your response to prospects consistent so that you can tweak it and discover what is an improvement
- Systemize every step of your company - lead generation, conversions, fulfillment, delivery, follow up, and contacts

## **65) Delivery**

- Think of delivery as an experience
- Bonus items with an order can 'stick' the sale
- A longer return policy can reduce returns / refunds
- Keep packaging as small as possible without hurting the value of the toy since carriers use dimensional weighting for your shipments

## **66) Payment Methods**

- Provide as many payment methods as possible
- Cash, check, money-order, bank wire, fax order form, Visa, Master Card, Amex, Discovery, PayPal
- Keep current with what payment methods are increasing in popularity
- Learn about charge backs

## **67) Merchant Accounts**

- A merchant account is viewed as a loan from your bank
- Monthly fees add up fast

## **68) Payment Terms**

- Put your payment terms in writing
- Enforce payment terms strictly
- Keep payment terms tight to begin and relax them overtime

## **69) Credit Checks**

- Request permission on order forms to perform credit checks on retailers
- Do not be afraid to refuse an order
- D&B logo on your order form can deter slow paying retailers

## **70) Ascension Ladder**

- Establish levels of customers
- Whether you are selling wholesale or direct online consumers like to be rewarded for loyalty
- Show the customer the higher levels
- Have incentives only given to higher levels (tell the lower levels about them)

## **71) Expanding your Line**

- What can you sell to existing customers?
- What can you up sell to customers?
- VIP version for consumer?
- Display rack for retailer?

## **72) Children's Book**

- Many children's book authors use toys as secondary sales
- Why not use a children's book as a secondary sale if the toy was your first idea?
- Online download can be put together for less than a couple hundred dollars
- Can be given away with purchase or used as an up sell

### **73) Newsletter**

- Include a free newsletter
- Even better is to offer a paid newsletter of value
- Good excuse to stay in touch
- Mix content with offers and sales

### **74) Monthly Membership**

- Good revenue like a newsletter
- Quicker delivery
- Promotions or discounts
- Valuable information

### **75) Joint Ventures**

- Swap lists with a non-competing company
- Straight profit sharing
- Information exchange
- One way information provider

### **76) Affiliates**

- Online sales people
- Look for the Super Affiliates and nurture the relationship
- Commission based sales
- Pay for performance

### **77) Sales Reps**

- Having a network of sales representatives to sell to retail stores is essential to offline sales
- Making Sales Reps successful will only make you successful
- Your job is to sell the Sales Rep since they have other products they can push

### **78) Stats**

- Keep careful statistics of key performance indicators (KPI)
- Start with a handful and work up from there

### **79) Cost Of Lead**

- Keep careful track of what a lead costs you
- Much easier to calculate online
- $(\text{Adv. Costs} / \text{Num. Leads}) = \text{Cost of Lead}$

## **80) Lifetime Value**

- Your first sale to a customer may not be as profitable as you want
- Build back end products to extend the lifetime value of a customer
- Sell related products from other suppliers to your customer list
- Keeping track of the Lifetime Value of your customers will tell you how much you can spend on advertising

## **81) Back End Value**

- Selling to customers after the initial sale is easier than selling to them the first time
- The best time to upsell or add on to a sale is immediately after the first sale
- Back end value increases the Lifetime Value of the customer

## **82) Refund Rate**

- No refunds, means you're not selling enough
- Extended guarantees reduces the refund rates
- Add a few nickels to every toy sale to account for refunds
- Safe, unused toys can be resold as seconds
- Retailers may have their own refund policies which may not agree with yours

## **83) Churn Rate**

- Getting new customers to replace old 'dead' customers is your churn rate
- Securing new customers faster than old customers are dropping out means your business is growing
- Maintain contact with your customers to maintain the relationship and to prevent them from 'dropping out'

## **84) List Responsiveness**

- Your list of customers and prospects will tell you how responsive they are when they reply back or order from you after a marketing campaign
- Low response rates means that one of the M's is wrong
- The three M's are Message, Market, Media

## **85) Marketing**

- Picture marketing as a funnel
- As important as each of the 3 M's Marketing is the most neglected
- Study several great marketers to understand what style suits you best

## **86) Lead Generation**

- You need to constantly be pouring new leads in to your marketing funnel
- Joint Ventures can be a quick and easy way to get a lot of qualified leads

- Go outside of your industry to test new lead sources

## **87) SEO**

- When marketing online Search Engine Optimization is critical
- Spending on advertising online can help your sales short term
- Be wary of SEO Experts and get good references

## **88) Logo**

- Important but too much energy is focused on the logo
- Customers care about what your product can do for them, not your logo
- Keep your message front and center and your logo as a small reminder of where the message is coming from

## **89) Website**

- A website is like a shopping mall on an island, you must bring the people to the island for them to shop
- Study this guide for the key components of what website visitors are looking for
- Example- guarantee, trusted vendor, full contact information.

## **90) Shopping Cart**

- Keep it simple to start with a PayPal Buy Now button
- A full blown shopping cart requires a SSL certificate (Secure Socket Layer)
- Choose a shopping cart that can grow with your business

## **91) Phone Number**

- Important for sales online
- A virtual receptionist or voicemail will give the illusion that you are a legitimate business

## **92) Fax Number**

- Look for email-to-fax and fax-to-email services which are inexpensive
- Some nervous shoppers prefer faxing their orders instead of ordering online
- Retailers still prefer faxing

## **93) Mailed Orders**

- Make a simple order form in pdf format that can be downloaded, printed out and mailed to you
- Remind the consumer of the benefits of your product on the order form

## **94) Sell Sheet**

- A professionally design brochure can remind prospects of the benefits of your product
- Include full contact information, order information and clear photos of your product

- A separate price sheet will prevent you from having to reprint Sell Sheets

### **95) POP**

- When selling in a retail store a Point of Purchase display does the heavy lifting for you
- Test many different designs to see what works
- Talk to retailers for their feedback since retail shelf space is expensive

### **96) Industry News**

- There are a ton of industry specific news feeds both offline and online
- Check your local book super store for any magazines related to your target market

### **97) Google Alerts**

- Google News will alert you to news articles related to the keywords you choose

### **98) Trade Shows**

- Walk a trade show
- Register for a free trade show and don't go - you'll get on the list of vendors and other industry professionals
- Exhibit - but be careful

### **99) Profit**

- Isn't this the point of doing all of this
- Keep thinking about profit and how your actions are leading to sales and profit

### **Bonus #100 - LIVING THE DREAM!**

- Won't be easy!
- Only you can ensure your future
- Find professionals to help you live your dream!



## **RESOURCES**

### **Free Non-Disclosure Agreement**

<http://www.customplus toys.com/clients.shtml>

### **Design Guide**

<http://www.customplus toys.com/products-design.shtml>

### **Expert Phone Time - Targeted Advice**

<http://www.customplus toys.com/products-expert.shtml>

### **Samples Box and Monthly Membership**

<http://www.customplus toys.com/samples.shtml>

### **7 Scams and Rip Offs to Watch Out For**

<http://www.customplus toys.com/freecd-page.shtml>

### **Virtual Fax Number Services (and more)**

<http://efax.com>

### **Follow up**

<http://www.aweber.com>

### **Affiliate programs**

<http://shareasale.com>

### **Google News Alerts**

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

### **Specialty Retail**

<http://www.specialtyretail.com>