



# Don't call them 'Legos' and other lessons from 10-year-old Brick Loot CEO



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Chicago Tribune  
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Brick Loot's custom Lego subscription boxes have racked up \$250,000 in sales in just six months. Founder and CEO Parker Krex has been featured in magazines and been asked for his autograph. On a recent summer day, he shared some of the secrets of his success — before his baby sitter picked him up at his Northbrook office.

Parker is 10 years old. He proposed Brick Loot during his family's garage sale at their Glenview home, where he was selling some of his toys to finance his Lego habit. He had been thinking about another type of subscription box he received in the mail.

"It had no Lego, and it was boring," Parker said. "So I came up with my own."

That was one year ago, said Brick Loot President Erin Krex, who is Parker's mom.

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"We had a lot of time on our hands at the garage sale, so we literally plotted out the entire business plan," she said. "We put together a 'Shark Tank'-type presentation for my husband, as the investor. It took a little bit of convincing. He's a numbers guy, so he had to process everything."

Parker already had a track record. Lego has been practically a fourth member of the family since he was 3. Parker safeguards his individual Lego sets in zip-top bags with instructions and pieces all present and accounted for. Those bags are stored according to theme in bins in the basement.

That fastidiousness extends to Parker's business, which fulfilled its first orders last December. Brick Loot boxes are shipped out monthly and contain one custom Lego set and several small brick sets that are tied to a theme — July's is military; June's was dinosaurs. (Brick is a generic term for many brands of snap-together blocks).

The sets result from Brick Loot's exclusive collaborations with third-party Lego designers and purveyors. Boxes also often include brick-related support pieces, such as mini-figurines, that are not Lego-branded.

"We did ask Lego if they wanted to partner with us, and, well, Lego doesn't really partner with anyone," Erin said. "They don't need us. But they certainly didn't discourage it, and nothing we are doing is wrong."

Designed for Lego and generic-brick fans ages 6 to 99, each box reads "Kid invented - AFOL approved," for Adult Fan of Lego; 40 percent of Brick Loot customers are adults. A single box is \$27; a three-month subscription is \$25 per month; a six-month subscription is \$23 a month; shipping is extra. Parker points out that sometimes just one of the sets in a Brick Loot box would retail for around \$20 if sold separately.

"Like here's one we did," Parker says, reaching to the glass shelves in his office for a car assembled from the March box. The box included a separate light kit that made the car's headlights illuminate.

In his head, Parker tallied the estimated value of the sets in the July box, had they been sold separately: "About \$57," he said.

"Many of the companies we partner with give us stuff for below wholesale in return for marketing and promoting their products," Erin said. "A lot of these are small companies who make third-party Legos."

"AHHHHHH, you said Legos!" Parker protests. "That's not a word!"

She drops her chin and cops to the offense.

"In the Lego community," she explains, "you can never say 'Legos.' But it sometimes slips out because it's easier to say than 'Lego sets.'"

The specific contents of each month's box are kept confidential to allow a surprise on receipt.

"The Brick Loot label is on the (shipping) box, so everybody is like, 'Yay, my Brick Loot came!' We do an unboxing video contest," Parker said. "If they take a video opening it and playing with it and upload it to YouTube, the best one wins a giant prize of a Lego set."

As "chief entertainment officer," Parker uses his iPad to research prospective collaborators and explore themes. He does some continuing education, including two weeks of iD Tech summer camp at Lake Forest College (one week on designing apps for smartphones and another on programming Lego robots).

"It's an amazing camp," Erin said. "He's not really the outdoor sports type of kid."

"I only like watching sports," Parker said. "Hockey. It's my favorite one to watch."

As CEO, Parker's compensation package includes the 2 percent that the business's credit cards give them back on purchases, which goes into his college fund, his mom said. He also gets paid for packing boxes.

"It's kind of rolled into his allowance," Erin said, "and since he's not really in camp all summer, he's been helping out a lot."

"And getting paid a lot!" Parker said.

He leaves the hand-wringing over parts stuck in customs to his parents; his father, Steve, is vice president of the company. "Yet somehow he gets the biggest office," Parker said.

When Parker attends events and conventions such as Brickworld in Schaumburg over Father's Day weekend, fans stop him to ask for his autograph for themselves or their kids.

"There is a following for him," Erin said. "A lot of families feel that, 'You know what? This kid had an idea, and he followed through with it, and his parents invested in it.' They're pushing their kids to understand that you just need one good idea, and you can make it happen."

It helps that Parker's parents are entrepreneurs; they have owned a domestic placement agency, First Class Care, for nine years, placing nannies and housekeepers in high-end Chicago-area homes. But when the family started Brick Loot, the inventory and truck deliveries soon strained their basement, the local post office and the neighbors' patience. So they moved both businesses to an office/warehouse park.

"We're working on new, like, companies and stuff," Parker said, "but those are confidential. We cannot risk our idea being stolen, because nobody's doing it yet."

As he prepares to enter sixth grade this fall, he has two expansion ideas for Brick Loot, his mom said.

"Two or three," he said, smiling.

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