

the **toybook**®

SPECIALTY TOY PREVIEW 2020

GET A SNEAK PEEK AT
WHAT'S COMING TO
SPECIALTY STORES THIS YEAR

THE COVID-19 BATTLE PERSISTS

THE INDUSTRY
CONTINUES TO ADAPT
TO A CHANGING
LANDSCAPE



SPECIALTY RETAIL RESPONSE

HOW SPECIALTY TOY STORES
ARE CONNECTING
WITH CONSUMERS

CHATting WITH THE INDUSTRY

RETAILERS AND MANUFACTURERS
TALK TRENDS AND THE EVOLVING
SPECIALTY TOY INDUSTRY

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What's New in Specialty Toys



Pedro the Fine Motor Peacock from Learning Resources

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SURVIVING A CRISIS BY SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY

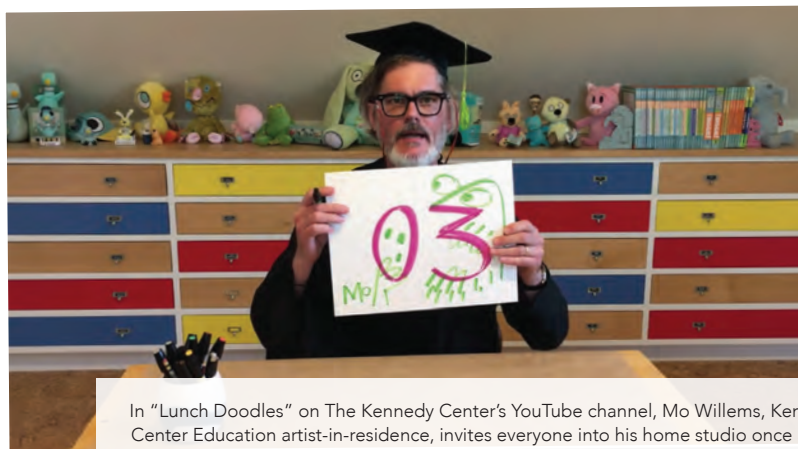
Local toy stores can continue connecting with their customers during a “new normal.”

by **AMY OPHEIM**, *freelance marketing consultant*

THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE TAKEN

a devastating toll on small businesses everywhere. Many toy store owners closed their doors in compliance with local and state regulations at great personal expense. While we’re all committed to doing our part to protect the greater good, few of us can afford to lose even a day’s worth of income, much less weeks’ and months’ worth. However, some toy stores were able to find ways to continue to do business with — or at the very least to partner with — their customers, cementing their roles as valued community resources. Below are some innovative things store owners and manufacturers have been doing to stay in contact with customers during these recent difficulties:

- **Creative Order Taking:** Some store owners already had an online business and shifted their resources to marketing and fulfillment during the shutdown. Others used this time to launch an online business. And still more took orders over the phone, via email, and even by Facebook Messenger, offering curbside pickup service to avoid shipping costs and to maintain social distancing.
- **Drop-Shipping:** Many manufacturers and distributors offer drop-shipping. Taking advantage of this service allowed some stores that were unable to stock and ship orders on their own to continue to service their customers, even when their doors were closed.
- **Giving It Away:** A few store owners reached deep into their hearts — and pockets — to share some of their inventory with customers whose families were impacted severely by these shut downs, enabling parents in need to brighten their kids’ days.
- **Product Bundles:** Making things easy for parents is a great way to get their attention. Some stores marketed bundles of products by age, interest



In “Lunch Doodles” on The Kennedy Center’s YouTube channel, Mo Willems, Kennedy Center Education artist-in-residence, invites everyone into his home studio once a day while families are staying at home. Photo: The Kennedy Center’s YouTube channel

area, or academic subject, which made shopping easier and increased average order values.

- **Free Activities:** Finding and sharing helpful resources via email and social media is a great way to stay in touch with your customers when you can’t see them in person. Savvy store owners were on the lookout for things such as free subscriptions, virtual museum and zoo tours, downloadable worksheets and coloring pages, free drawing workshops with famous illustrators, step-by-step instructions for crafts and science experiments, children’s authors reading their stories online, etc. Then, they shared them via social media and email with their own customer base to help keep kids busy during the downtime at home and to build that relationship with parents.
- **Deliver an Experience:** Some store owners went so far as to create their own, custom content to share with customers, such as taking a daily video showing different ways to play with toys, reading a story and showing the camera the pictures, or putting on a puppet show. We are in the business of play, after all.
- **Beefing up Your Website:** Most manufacturers offer a variety of product

photos and videos as well as descriptions, features and benefits lists, and more. Smart store owners used the last few months of downtime to beef up their websites with better imagery and descriptions, gather customer testimonials, add employee picks, and other additional information to help push the sale.

If we can find any silver lining at all in the past few months — in addition to the lives saved and our proven ability to work together for the greater good — it’s a blueprint for survival during future crises. One of the smartest marketing activities you can conduct now to prepare for the next time is to build your customer database and social media followings so they’re available when you have news to communicate or have to shift the way you’re doing business. So start gathering email addresses and promoting your social media pages today! »



Amy Opheim is a toy industry veteran, specializing in creating clear, concise copy that compels consumers to action. Contact Amy at C3 Copywriting for help defining or differentiating your product or brand today.

2020 SPECIALTY TOY LAUNCHES

YOTTOY

Yottoy introduces three new plush toys inspired by Richard Scarry characters, each of which comes in a plush car with working wooden wheels and clear, plastic headlights. The designs include Huckle Cat in Blue Car, Lowly Worm in Red Apple Car, and Bananas Gorilla in Yellow Banana Car.

The **Classic Paddington 8.5-inch Seated Bear Soft Toy** is a plush bear inspired by Peggy Fortnum's original *Paddington* illustrations. It features a flocked nose, an embroidered smile, and a "please look after this bear" tag. The plush bear is wearing Paddington's signature blue fleece coat and red felt hat.

Kids can create their own stories with the **Mo Willems' Pigeon and Duckling Finger Puppets**. These puppets are handmade of sewn tricot with screen-printed eyes, felt wings, and beaks.

When kids turn the crank on the **Little Blue Truck Jack-in-the-Box**, they will hear "Pop Goes the Weasel" until a plush toad pops out. The tin box is decorated with Jill McElmurry's illustrations of Little Blue Truck traveling down a muddy country road.



Little Blue Truck Jack-in-the-Box



SD TOYZ

With **R/C Knuckle-Headz** from SD Toyz, kids battle the R/C vehicles against each other, trying to pop off the opponent's head. The vehicles feature hairpin turn, drifting, and multidirectional speed capabilities. Triggering the front bumper button will send the character's head flying up to a foot in the air. The characters include Crisp the dragon, Shred the knight, Clawd the Lion, and Smash the rhino.

RUBIE'S COSTUME CO.

The **Imagine by Rubie's Wonder Woman Child Dress-up Set** from Rubie's Costume Co. includes a red and blue, gold-trimmed tutu dress featuring the iconic Wonder Woman logo. Young superheroes-in-training can complete their Wonder Woman look with the included belt, cape, and handbag.

