



Where are they now?

In 2004 Toy Fair introduced the Greenhouse Area to the show, where smaller companies with big ideas can exhibit and reach the toy industry's VIPs. Over the last four years, the Greenhouse Area has been a springboard for many talented companies and individuals. Toys 'n' Playthings speaks to some of the companies that have exhibited within the Greenhouse Area about their experiences and asks them to offer advice to new exhibitors at Toy Fair in 2008.



Imran Hakim, managing director, iTeDDy

"We decided to exhibit at Toy Fair last year as we needed a showcase that would give us instant access to retailers, distributors and licensors and allow us to be agile in getting our products to market. We knew that we had a great product but then again no one ever says their own baby's ugly. So we needed confirmation from the experts within the industry that we were onto a winner. The overwhelming response we had from licensors, distributors and retailers, not just

in the UK but worldwide, simply confirmed that our confidence in iTeDDy was well founded. The Toy Fair served as a great platform to launch iTeDDy to the industry. It gave us instant exposure not just to other businesses but also to consumers through the numerous media interviews we gave including the BBC, Channel 5 and Sky News. After Toy Fair, we were inundated with offers from most of the major retailers and due to the finite production capacity we had in our first year, as well as the product being in its infancy, we decided on an exclusive deal with Argos, which has tipped iTeDDy to be quite high up on its top ten toy list for this Christmas."

Rasib Khan, Alphabet Runner Ltd

"As the inventor of Alphabet Runner I wanted to show my invention to the world, but I had no financial backing and could only afford one shot at bringing my unique game to the attention of the games industry. I felt that the 2006 Toy Fair was the perfect event and by exhibiting in the Greenhouse Area, I was not overwhelmed by major international companies. I had so much support from other small companies in the Greenhouse Area, as well as the show team, which helped to build my confidence in marketing Alphabet Runner and its unique cards. That's why I am returning in 2008 with my new game RAS as well as the latest version of Alphabet Runner.

The Alphabet Runner board game was signed up after the Toy Fair 2006 by Findel Education, the biggest educational supplier in Europe. Alphabet Runner received five licensing offers for the Alphabet cards from major companies. The show exceeded my expectations on all fronts, including friendliness, and the interest in Alphabet Runner and the Alphabet cards was such a boost after working on my own for so long to develop this game.

With all the contacts made at the event and follow up meetings, I gained invaluable feedback, hence my new game called RAS - 'Run and Score'. Alphabet Runner is a great game for the educational sector, but RAS is for the whole market. The Toy Fair opened up a new world for me, it helped to change me from being just a games inventor into an entrepreneur with games, such as Alphabet Runner and RAS, that people all round the world now want to play."

Alan Pascoe, brand development manager, Siemssen Electronics UK

"We exhibited at Toy Fair for the first time in 2007 to show our new range of Disney and The Simpsons character electronics products. We were new to the toy market as our core business has been in consumer electronics and we needed a low risk environment to evaluate the market potential.

Our expectations were surpassed in two areas. Firstly, we developed leads with key retailers and this has been followed up with orders for the UK and Eire. Secondly, we attracted interest from other licence holders. We were able to cherry pick from various opportunities to ensure we could grow our business with non-conflicting products. Our products are now in wide distribution in the UK for 2007 and we are looking to improve on this for 2008 and beyond. We now have a business model, which has become pan-European and are now exhibiting in China and Nuremberg.

Since Toy Fair the initial Disney and Simpsons products have received wide distribution in many key retailers and we have serious interest in our new Thomas the Tank Engine and Bob the Builder products for launch in 2008."

Advice for new Greenhouse exhibitors

Imran Hakim

"Don't be put off by the larger presence of some of your competitors and work to your own strengths. Highlight your unique selling point so that passers-by can instantly relate to your product / service. Browsers don't have much time and usually make a decision within the first five seconds of stopping."

Rasib Khan

"It doesn't matter how small your stand is, mine was minimal, make it look bright, cheerful and welcoming and then just share your passion and belief in your game or toy with your visitor and you too will find new doors and opportunities opening up."

Alan Pascoe

"Chase up every lead as you never know what will result. We ended up doing business in Australia on the back of an obscure lead! Also follow through on buyers' comments as some can result in new lines being produced."