

## Know your yo-yos before selling them

**T**rends within the yo-yo market are not easy to spot. The depth of the market is clear-cut: it's based on units sold. But the width can be broken into two parts: "width of sales" and the "width of age range." The "widths of sales" are the repeat sales. These can be leveraged with judicious stocking from the category's many excellent lines of yo-yos. The "width of age range" means retailers should recognize older teens as potential yo-yo buyers in addition to the traditional

8- to 13-year-old purchasers.

Unlike many other toys, different models of yo-yos have truly different market positions. One line can rarely replace another. Enthusiasts use the different yo-yos like a golfer would use different clubs; they prefer one yo-yo for free-hand tricks, one for off-string tricks, another for string tricks and yet another for looping. In addition, there is a burgeoning collectors' market for yo-yos—especially online.

A customer who is hooked will not buy just one brand of yo-yo, but will pick and choose through a variety of brands. Stores that stock only one brand will find themselves selling four-to-five yo-yos per customer, while those stocking multiple brands will see strong sales through repeat purchases of as many as 30 to 40 yo-yos. In short, even if the market is saturated for one brand of yo-yos, you have not necessarily saturated the market. Repeat business is the watchword of yo-yo sales.

If you don't know a lot about yo-yos, here are a few of the brands in the market:

**Duncan:** the oldest of the yo-yo firms, still has an entry-level product line that

is under \$3. The company has followed up that line with its hard-core performance line in the \$30 range.

Specialty retailers may find sales success with brands not carried by mass merchants. The **Playmaxx** (ProYo) line is superb for looping, and their mid-range **Bee** (\$15) is a great all-around product. The **SuperYo** line can be divided into two groups. Their **Renegade** (\$20) is one of the best-playing products for string tricks, as well as for free-hand tricks while the rest of their line is intended for the young or beginning player. **Team Losi's** line is often used for speed play and free-hand tricks. Their models range from good loopers, to great string trick play (The **Cherry Bomb** at \$15) with three brand lines that vary in weight and durability.

The adjustable **Aerospin** (\$20), from **Superflight**, is a comfortable player, one that is both eye catching and easy to use. The **Henry** line of yo-yos (\$15-\$60) are designed in Germany and have a

different look and feel. These rubber-edged butterfly yo-yos have spawned entirely new styles of play including off-string play (Where the yo-yo is not tied to the string and is used as a diabolo). Metal yo-yos such as Custom yo-yos from **Mesa Industries** are known for their long sleeps and rapid response.

Sometimes overlooked is the wood category. There is a reason people are still playing with wood after 70 years of yo-yo history. Wood provides very fine control and tremendous looping that some of the rim-weighted models lack.

Also overlooked by retailers is selling string. The performance of a yo-yo drops exponentially with a worn or dirty string. Stocking good string is essential and can lead to an easy up-sale.

The "width of age range" is missed constantly. It's a misnomer to assume that the market is just 8- to 13-year-olds. Yo-yos are rapidly becoming a lifestyle product. The major yo-yo manufacturers

are actively promoting their products at concerts and tours. Popular musicians are playing with yo-yos, in public, including Ice-T, Less Than Jake and Rancid. Keep in mind older kids when you merchandise your yo-yo departments.

We are now well into fall, when yo-yo sales, having dropped off during the summer, pick up just in

time for Christmas. But don't forget that the category is a red-hot spring item as well, so expect another sales peak in late February to April, depending on your local climate. ■

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