



Toy Talk

A new spin on yo-yos

Close up with the second-oldest toy in the world

It's a funny thing about yo-yos; you find someone who can show you how to do cool tricks and a party happens. Such was the case in the PLAYTHINGS office when, armed with the newest and best yo-yos on the market, I solicited reviews from my co-workers as to which models they preferred. Turns out, they liked them all, and when one of my office mates revealed he could do awesome tricks with a yo-yo, everyone gathered around him and begged to be taught how to do them.

The little experiment in our office proved a basic tenet of yo-yo sales growth that Gregory Cohen told me about. Cohen, publisher of *Fiend Magazine*, and an excellent source for all things "yo," believes that manufacturers cannot simply dump yo-yos into the marketplace and expect the toys to become immediately popular. Cohen says yo-yos have to be supported with demonstrators, teams and clubs. Kids have to be taught tricks, or shown them on a video, in order to make yo-yos a plaything they will return to again and again.

Sure enough, when we found a top-notch yo-yoer in our midst here, the toys became participatory and learning tricks became a group effort. (Productivity also fell off about 85 percent...)

If you have not already gotten involved in yo-yo clubs and demonstrations, take a look at our cover story this month. Some retailers have followed Yomega's program and created yo-yo play dates, teams and competitions in their communities. And, since yo-yo sales traditionally fall during the summer months when kids are out of school, now might be a perfect time to set up a yo-yo club or invite a demonstrator to your town to generate excitement for the category.

I learned more about yo-yos this month than I probably ever needed to know, but there is a lot of interesting trivia concerning the world's second-oldest toy (dolls are first). Here's something to drop at your next cocktail party: Radical Abbie Hoffman was a junior yo-yo champ in Massachusetts.

If you need help setting up a yo-yo department, there are retail coordinators at all the major suppliers. Plus, companies including Yomega, *Fiend Magazine* and What's Next are all participating in yo-yo tours this summer, one of the most active in years in terms of nationwide promotional support. Good luck and I hope the category is as successful for you as it is for the retailers in this month's cover story. ■

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