

7Towns
Game and Toy Invention

**INVENTOR
INFORMATION
DOCUMENT**

Inventor Information Document

Seven Towns is an international organisation creating new product ideas for the Toy and Game industry worldwide. Over nearly 50 years the company has introduced more than 300 original toys and toys games throughout the world. Some of these successes, such as Rubik's Cube, Boggins, Pig Goes Pop, Rolling Weebles, Do Nutters, Sectaurs, Dream Phone and Junior Monopoly, have all been successful globally for many years.

A few years ago inventors dreamt up great ideas and simply contacted toy companies, (through agents or directly), in order to show them. Recently and increasingly, it is necessary to demonstrate the play value, TV appeal, methods of manufacture and price-value relationship of prospective products. Seven Towns has a fully integrated range of facilities and expertise needed to bring ideas to life as commercially viable products. This expertise includes invention, evaluation of ideas, collaboration with free-lance inventors, detailed design, prototype development, production engineering, sourcing, manufacture, Licensing and legal services.

Seven Towns strive to build on our reputation in order to attract the best inventing and design talent so that Seven Towns becomes the first port of call for inventors and manufactures alike. As an organisation we are small enough and as individuals committed enough to stay with an idea at every stage of its evolution into a fully fledged game or toy.

New products are the lifeblood of the toy industry. Certainly original ideas are the source of our own existence, and we are conscious that some of the greatest ideas did not originate from professionals; Cabbage Patch doll, Trivial Pursuit, Scrabble, Rubik's Cube were all invented by individuals who had nothing to do with the business prior to their success within it.

Hundreds of ideas every year find their way to us from all over the world. We evaluate each one of them carefully and such is the competition we take on only the very best.

We are sure you will understand that we do not have time to personally meet with you in the first instance. On the other hand if your ideas do have commercial merit we can work closely and on a personal level with you to bring your ideas to fruition.

In order to ensure we have everything we need to fully evaluate your idea there is an inventor submission form which must be completed. Please email or call to request one of these forms, or click the link above to download it. Your idea needs to be submitted in a form which clearly defines it and describes it. Detailed drawings and / or prototype photos and preferably a video demonstration which illustrates and explains it can be sent to the email address below.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Inventor Relations Team
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What are we looking for?

We're really looking for anything in the Toy and Game Industry. However there are a few things to consider. It must be inventive, and the more unique and compelling the better. When we show concepts to Toy companies they want to see something 'new' that they've never seen before and they wouldn't think of themselves. For a Toy company to invest in an inventor concept it really must be something with the wow factor to justify investing in something they do not own and therefore are not building equity for themselves.

So we are happy to review anything if you think it fits the above. More specifically we would like to see...

Games; remember the above, versions of well established games or generic pawn and path games or those with a niche audience are going to be difficult for us to license. New action games, new ways to play off the table, activity games, or to include new technology is always of interest. Classic concepts totally re-invented is also good. Familiarity by default is easy to communicate but when it appears new at the same time creates an attraction.

Toys; Yes we want to see toys, remember the above particularly the inventiveness and the potential TV advertisable features. We would love to see, Boys, Girls, pre-school, infant, bath time, vehicles, dolls, collectables, radio control, flying toys, outdoor, sports and novelties etc. If it fits the above we'd love to see it.

Craft activity; new ways to make, build or create things or new trends in fashion or popular science. New compounds and technology perhaps is always on our radar.

Technology; if you have something cool, simple or high tech, but perhaps don't know how to apply it to toys we can help and would love to see it.

Rubik's; Seven Towns has the alliance with Rubik's Brand Ltd to be it's strategic development partner and as such we want to see new concepts which can be Rubik branded. The above applies more than ever where Rubik's is concerned. Rubik's Brand Ltd is not just looking for puzzles and brainteasers but also games, electronics, digital and anything that the brand DNA could be applied to.

Key Ingredients; first of all any concept needs to fit with our business model. 100% of our income is from Royalties, and when we work with an inventor this royalty is shared with them. Royalties are generally a small % of the trade price of the product, and a trade price might be as little as half the retail price. Therefore our income is usually in the pennies per item sold. Where the business model works is when we license a concept which sells in the hundreds of thousands of units.

Since our services include professional services such as contracts, legal advice, patent advice, product development and royalty collection there is a minimum cost to licensing any



concept. Therefore with the royalty based income and a minimum cost expectation, any concept must represent something which can be sold in high volume. This would preferably mean in main stream mass market retail and suitable for TV advertising. Finally, some advice which may not be obvious...

Research, don't just research the technology of your concept, research the market and look historically and not just current. The internet is a great resource and there are many collector and fan sites with lots of historical info.

Beware of 'Me-Too' concepts, because there has been a similar successful product to yours does not necessarily pave the way for another. Nor does it mean brands or companies are looking for more of the same. Quite often because the world has one successful product is exactly why it doesn't need another similar one. That said companies are always looking for line extensions to their brands with new ways to play and new features to keep their brand relevant. The key is to understand the difference between 'me-too' which feels too familiar or adding more layers to an existing concept which makes it too niche; verses being a compelling reason to buy another product from an existing brand.

NDA Policy

Seven Towns prides itself on its reputation built over 40+ years. While it is the company policy to treat all submissions by inventors as strictly confidential we are sorry to say we cannot sign most forms of NDA's in advance.

The reason for this is twofold, 1) that in our experience such documents in reality are of little practical value. 2) There is a high potential for any form of legal NDA to then conflict with another such agreement previously signed and would then likely restrict our abilities to function in the future.

The extent to which we are immersed in the industry means we are constantly dealing with confidential information be it internal ideas, ideas from inventors, information and concepts from distributors, manufactures, licensees and licensors and have done for more than 40 years. A traditional NDA would require us to sign in advance to reviewing a concept and to exempt all ideas we may have previously seen and prevent us from acknowledging those we are yet to see. Clearly this is something we can't do.

Our review process includes a formal receipt of your concept and acknowledges that all information received will be treated as confidential and not shared outside of Seven Towns without prior consent. Any copyright or intellectual property contained cannot be formerly acknowledged as having rights reserved though we do and will give written reviews for every concept received. This is sufficient to ensure your concept remains 'confidential' to protect your rights and ability to register or patent your concept. Beyond this our trusted reputation has served us well and we hope continues to do so



IP Notes

PATENT

The most comprehensive protection of an idea is a patent. Many attorneys / solicitors advise this form of protection. This can be arranged through a patent agent. However it is usually impractical to patent ideas for two main reasons:

1. The fees: and costs in pursuing a patent are considerable. Even for professional inventors, the ratio of ideas to successes is such that it is economically not justified to take out patents on their ideas.

2. The time taken for a patent to be granted and enforced is usually much longer than the lifecycle of a product. There are very few items of longevity in the toy world. Most companies change at least one-third of their line every year. Although court action can be retrospective in most cases the damage has already been done.

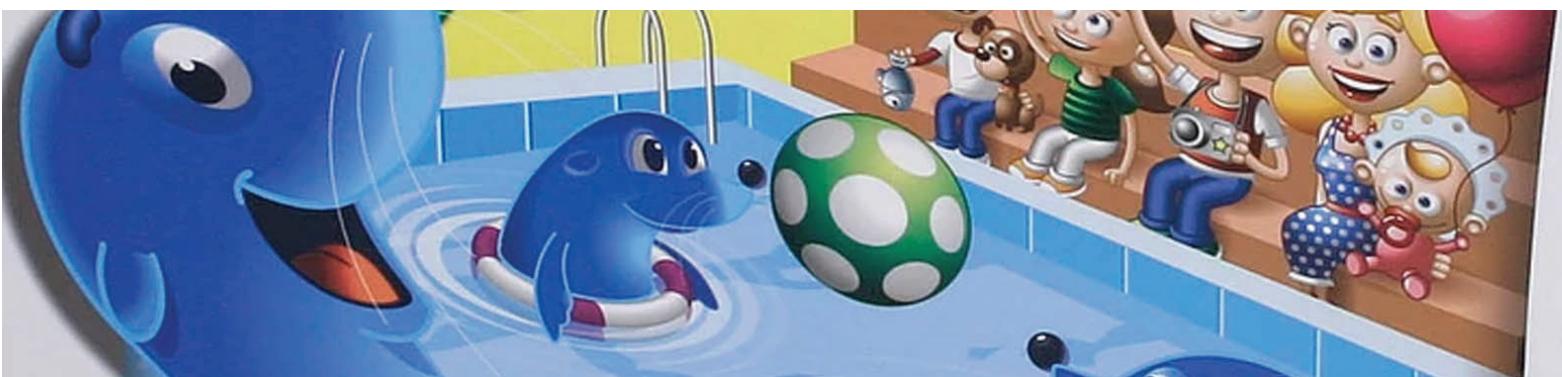
Patents can be taken out for the USA, United Kingdom, Europe or any individual countries throughout the world. The Patent Convention Treaty (P.C.T.) now enables one filing to be made for all the countries who are party to this treaty which covers almost all of the countries that a toy or game inventor would consider filing in. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION IN THE TOY & GAME INDUSTRY.

DESIGN REGISTRATION.

The next strongest form of protection is design registration. Any graphic material can be registered (provided it is original) for a few hundred pounds at the Design Registration Office. This protects against all similar designs even if those designs were conceived separately and are coincidental. Photographs or drawings with an aesthetic content (not industrial product engineering drawings) can be registered. Again this is expensive if registration is done speculatively. The biggest disadvantage of Design Registration is that a different design working in the same way and achieving the same effect probably will not infringe the design right.

COPYRIGHT

A good and much used form of protection is copyright. Any graphic or textual material can be copyrighted by writing Copyright or putting a 'c' in a circle followed by the name of the person or company who owns the copyright and the date. (For extra security, a copy of the work may be deposited with a solicitor / attorney or at a bank to prove a date of copyright.) Copyright gives good protection for games and for items that can be manufactured and/or made up into three dimensions from drawings without further invention. However, there are disadvantages: It is difficult and expensive to detail a design or mechanism comprehensively. Small deviations from the original material may invalidate a copyright infringement. In order to make a claim, it is necessary to prove that the infringing party has directly copied the original material. Coincidental similarity is not covered.



NON-DISCLOSURE LETTER

Some solicitors / attorneys advise that inventors should get companies to sign a non-disclosure letter or confidentiality form before they see a new idea. This gives protection specific to the relationship between the inventor and person or company to whom the idea is submitted. However because this type of document is legally biased in favour of the inventor and is constrictive, most companies will not sign. There need to be huge disclaimers in order to protect the viewing company and that when agreed to will probably make the document fairly worthless. In order to evaluate a product it is difficult to treat it with confidentiality and a company may unwittingly be liable to the inventor in the future no matter how many years later. An employee may dream up a new idea (even at a new company) without remembering the inspiration it came from being material they viewed years earlier, and the original company could still be liable. Please note and remember that although this seems unfair, toy companies are besieged by inventors with "fabulous" ideas. They can easily afford not to bother to go through complicated and expensive negotiations on a legal document with severe implications before they view what more often than not turns out to be an item of no interest.

CONCLUSION

Whatever form of protection an inventor has, it is important to keep an accurate record of what was shown and submitted to be signed by both parties. Litigation is rarely financially successful. The simplest and most effective protection is reputation, and I suggest that anyone wishing to submit an idea should call or write for references. The toy and game industry is small enough for word to get around very rapidly of any unethical business behavior. Once an idea has been licensed it is usually up to the licensee to protect the product. They have the expertise and, more importantly, the money to do so.

Submit Your Idea

If you would like to submit your idea please fill in the submission form from on our website and click submit.





Staccups

PREVIOUS INVENTOR SUCCESSES



Boglins



Rubik's Cube



Secteurs



Splashy the Whale



Seal Show