

Toy recall



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Mattel is multinational toy company that has been beleaguered by problems involving massive toy recall. Indeed, the company has been announcing product recalls and providing details about them since 1998. In 2007, wooden toys were ordered recalled by the state Department of Consumer Protection because the toys were found to have high lead content.

Moreover, the excessive amount of lead found in the toys was considered violations of the federal prohibition on the use of lead paint on children's toys (U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2007). Apparently, the toy was already sold in several stores. Thus, the Department of Consumer Protection instructed customers to return the purchased items to stores for a cash refund (Krechevsky, 2007).

Mattel is taking a beating with the repeated product recalls of Chinese-made toys, due to excessive levels of magnet and lead content. The staggering number alone of the toys recalled, coupled with the frequency and short duration in between recalls, is sure to cause damage to the company's credibility and financial performance (Microsoft, 2008).

Reports would show that in the previous year, Mattel recalled 1.5 million Fisher-Price infant toys to be sold all over the world. A few weeks later, Mattel announced another recall order of 9 million toys, such as Polly Pocket dolls, "Cars" movie souvenir products, and Barbie dolls. Other popular toys that are included in the toy recall are Tanner play sets and action figures of Batman and One Piece Triple Slash Zoro Roronoa action figures. These toys, which were all manufactured in China, are feared for having lead-paint and small magnets that could be swallowed (Microsoft, 2008).

Several injuries related to the recalled toys had been reported in the United States, which include the death of one child and the surgery of 19 children since 2003, as a result of the swallowing of little magnets found in the toys. Children who swallow more than one magnet are in danger of intestinal perforation, blockage, or infection caused by the magnet's attachment to each other. Intestinal perforation requires surgery, and could be fatal (Microsoft, 2008).

On the other hand, the high levels of lead content in China-made toys present a different risk. It is not necessarily dangerous for children's toys to have lead paint. However, there is a limit to the lead content of toys because there should only be a maximum of 0.6 percent of lead that is accessible to users. Children who are exposed to more than 0.6 percent of lead could ingest the toxic substance (Microsoft, 2008).

These frequent and massive toy recalls would create a huge dent on the company's credibility among consumers, specifically parents. This would easily translate into huge losses in terms of profit. Thus, Mattel is trying very hard to convince parents not to lose trust in the company. The company is undertaking campaigns such as full page ads at popular newspapers like the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and New York Times, in order to convince parents that they should still be trusted to provide entertaining and safe toys for children (Microsoft, 2008).

Officials of the company say that they started investigating as soon as they learned of potential problems with the toys in late July of the previous year. Bob Eckert, the chief executive of Mattel, declared in a press conference that

the company is exerting effort to beef up its oversight and testing procedures in its production processes. Thus, they expect to recall more toys to protect the public.

Testing in the high levels as the company is currently doing, it cannot be guaranteed that there would be no more recalls this year. In order to help consumers who may have concerns and questions about toy recalls, Mattel set up an online site where such concerns could be ventilated (Microsoft, 2008).

The company's response to the toy recalls is to counteract the damage done. Thus, they spent resources in printing huge and expensive ads in popular newspapers in order to reach out to their primary consumers, or the parents. They try to convince parents that their foremost priority is the safety of the consumers' children, and the toy recalls are steps in the right direction towards protecting children.

Mattel's lack of objection, and instead, full cooperation and support for the toy recalls shows that the company is taking full responsibility for the situation, and that they are not shirking from their responsibility to the consumers. The company's actions send a strong message that they know that something is wrong, but they are doing all that are necessary to address the problem. Moreover, the establishment of a hotline and a website that would provide relevant information to all concerned is a responsible initiative that shows how serious Mattel is in helping out consumers.

In the given situation, Mattel could not have handled the situation in a better manner. An irresponsible manager would try to keep the controversy under

wraps in order to avoid humiliation and damage to the company's reputation. However, it is better to address the issue head-on in order for the company to maintain the customers' trust and confidence.

If I were an official for Mattel, I would put more vigor to the campaign and marketing of Mattel products. I would not stop at newspaper advertisements and appeal to the intellect of parents; rather, I would again tap into the interests of children so that they would want Mattel's products. This way, parents would feel pressure from children to reconsider Mattel as a toy producer.

Before Mattel took a definite course of action, it was possible that they considered to keep the controversy a secret. They could have taken a risk in not recalling products and simply hope that no injury would result. They could have chosen to be irresponsible. However, such alternative action would have resulted in more damage in the credibility of the company. If such act were discovered, it would make the company appear greedy and selfish, without regard for the health and safety of its consumers. Therefore, Mattel's strategy of coming out in the open, supporting the recalls, and providing support to consumers, is the best strategy possible in the given circumstances.

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