

The Making of a Toy Expert



Toy Town Titan Wendy Munt

With 23 years in the retail and the toy industry, retail consultant Wendy Munt helps entrepreneurs, suppliers, licensors and retailers identify the key ingredients of what sells best...

Toy specialist Wendy Munt started out in the industry at the tender age of 18 after falling into Argos' Toy Buying department as a temp. It was that chance beginning that started her on a lifelong love of toys, the industry and Argos. "From day one, I adored both 'Toy Town' and retail buying as well as the buzz of how fast they move," Wendy says.

Wendy's passion for the job and focused commitment to succeed saw her rise through the ranks to Argos' Senior Buyer. "Argos are an excellent employer who I'm proud to have worked for," she says, "I had a

fantastic time there, hence why I gave them 21 years of my life!" During her climb up the Argos management ladder she spent four years buying homewares with another two years spent across various ranges, but her heart was firmly in the toy industry. "I was so keen to get back in it," she says. "Its fun products, high energy and the professionalism of those in it makes ours a special industry, which is why us 'industry dinosaurs' have stayed forever!"

One of Wendy's most exciting highlights was securing Argos' first ever Dragons' Den exclusive with i-teDDy. Knowing Argos' strength on feature plush and high-ticket toys, she knew it could be a huge seller for the catalogue giant. Four months of tough negotiations ensued directly with Theo Paphitis and the inventor, Imran Hakim, resulting in i-teDDy being exclusive for its first six months and driving exceptional sales for Argos.

Although she briefly left Argos twice – firstly as a Buyer for Mothercare and then Head of Product Development for Re:Creation, she was lured back by Argos who valued her knowledge, experience and talent.

In May 2010, after 21 years service with the retail giant, Wendy felt she wanted a change and was keen to take on new challenges, combined with a better work/life balance that didn't involve as much time abroad. Knowing the value of her industry knowledge, retail experience and passion for product, she set up Be Inspired Consulting to give business advice across an extensive range of matters. Now she helps

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Wendy, i-teDDy inventor Imran Hakim and former Argos MD Sara Weller with Theo Paphitis and Peter Jones dresses as teddys



companies with trading, product development, licensing and how to achieve the best relationships with licensees, licensors and retailers, something she is well placed to do after inspiring fear and respect amongst suppliers in her previous job as Argos' Senior Buyer.

"With my buyers hat on, I assess the commercial viability of a product concept before inventors and companies decide to invest in further development," Wendy reveals. It is this experience that is

already bringing great success to the companies she is working with.

"It's fantastic to see products I've helped create flying off the shelves," Wendy tells us, "notably Magic Choc for The In Thing (the world's first no mess, magical, sculptable chocolate) and Interplay's myStyle jewellery craft kits. I've also re-vamped several branded ranges, which needed some attention to revitalise their tired look to improve sales."

With retailers rationalising their supply base, smaller distributors and manufacturers are finding it increasingly difficult to become taken on as new suppliers. Wendy

coaches clients in their approach to retailers and reviews range presentations prior to the clients meeting a buyer to highlight gaps and potential questions. To aid clients drive product sales she devises promotional plans and uses her infamous negotiation skills in negotiation training sessions through role-play. She has now built a solid client base, which includes many of the key players in the toy industry.

Following Wendy's association with Dragons' Den, she also presents at seminars at the Peter Jones Enterprise Academy (PJEA) and assists entrepreneurs with their pitch who aspire to go onto Dragons' Den as well as assist getting products to market following them appearing on the programme.

Wendy's success is also propelling her out of the world of toys and licensing into gifting, homewares and gardening.

"My knowledge and experience enables me to completely understand and assist with the issues my clients face, on

both sides of the retailer/supplier fence." All of this is already being recognised as Wendy won the Entrepreneurs Circle entrepreneur of the month for the Northants area in August and is determined to win the national award. All in all, the business of toys and consulting in retail is looking like an exciting and healthy one for Wendy.

Visit Wendy's new website at www.beinspiredconsulting.net



Dragon's Den Theo and Peter at the i-teDDy press launch



Toy Town Titan



TnP is proud to announce that Wendy is joining us as a regular contributor with her first column as the Toy Town Titan, **How To Get The Best Out Of The Fair Season**, featuring in December's issue of the magazine. Don't miss the expert advice from the woman who knows what sells – only in Toys 'n' Playthings.

