



MARKETING STAR



Mike Moynihan: Vice President of Marketing for LEGO

[By Anique Gonzalez]

“There are a lot of things that people have done throughout their lives, even in high school or college summer jobs, that would really indicate a strong potential for careers in marketing...I used to caddy at a country club, and there were a lot of unique things that I'd done, without even thinking about it, to serve members,” said Mike Moynihan. Subconsciously, he was always a marketer, even if he didn't consciously discover his ability or act upon it until he graduated from business school.

Moynihan, who is now Vice President of Marketing for LEGO Group, graduated from Bowdoin College with a dual degree in math and economics. After graduating from Harvard University with his M.B.A.-and taking a few marketing courses which he said provided a “good opportunity to combine different strengths and perspectives”-he decided to pursue marketing. He admits, though, that his decision was “less based on an inherent interest in marketing and more based on a general interest in management.”

Moynihan started out at LEGO Group 11 years ago. While consistently working in a brand-management capacity, Moynihan worked his way through various product lines at LEGO Group, including its preschool, play theme, and educational divisions, before obtaining his present position. This experience allowed him to develop a broad understanding of and familiarity with the company's product lines and the consumer segments the company served. More importantly, though, it provided valuable insight into how, on a strategic level, the company should market the brand, as well as each product line's role in the future success of the company.

Currently, as vice president of marketing, Moynihan oversees the marketing of various product lines within North America's marketplace, including the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This entails, among

other things, “managing development and implementation of marketing strategies and plans for various product launches in a given year.”

Founded in 1932 by Ole Kirk Christiansen, LEGO Group seeks “to inspire children to explore and challenge their own

creative potential,” the company's website explains. The name of the company itself is a combination of two Danish words that translate to “play well.”

And this ideal is taken to heart by all LEGO employees. As Moynihan elaborated, “We are very serious about the role that we can play within the lives of kids.” Employees of LEGO view their company's products not only as toys but also as vehicles by which children are able to develop skills, pride, and self-esteem.

Yet marketing to children presents unique challenges. “With adults, they tend to respond much more to rational messages and functional benefits, and children obviously are very much caught up in the emotional end of things,” Moynihan explained. This has forced the company to create marketing communications that are carefully tailored to appropriately address its audience.

“In the case of children, they obviously have different language and a different perspective on things that is very different from the way that adults converse. We oftentimes have to be very mindful of all of the communication that we put out there and make sure that we're being very respectful of children and mindful of how they process things.”

Q. What do you like to do in your free time?

A. I love to play golf. I love to spend time with family and friends-particularly nieces and nephews. And I also love to read.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. Dave Matthews Band, *Live at Fenway Park*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *ESPN SportsCenter*, if that counts.

Q. What was the last magazine you read?

A. *Sports Illustrated*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. Kerry Phalen (Moynihan's first manager at LEGO Group and the current head of licensing for DreamWorks Animation SKG). I think that, without question, she is somebody who has been a great mentor to me not only because of the business insights that she's imparted on me from strategic thinking and a marketing perspective but, more importantly, from a leadership perspective. She's one of those rare people that just have a great balance of incredible intellect with exceptional people skills.



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In addition to its matchless enthusiasm for and dedication to children, LEGO Group has been able to develop a deep emotional connection with its core consumer base.

"We're now getting into the first generation of kids who grew up on LEGO being parents of LEGO consumers. We're seeing, for example, that dads are much more engaged in the play experience," said Moynihan.

And how is LEGO's brand equity maintained and enhanced?

"A lot of the marketing that we do is, in probably overly simplistic terms, kind of a two-tiered approach where a lot of the mass

marketing is really intended to reach out to those folks who are perhaps not quite part of the core but who are open to LEGO and need to be reminded of it from time to time. And then we also have another tier of our marketing program which is a lot of direct-to-consumer initiatives," Moynihan said.

For this strategy to be successful, though, LEGO Group must remember its objective as an organization, as well as its role in the marketplace. Moynihan explained, "We had a stretch years ago in which we had tried to be everything to everybody, and we learned the hard way that focus is much better. So we are now defining a marketing strategy that is very squarely rooted around those

people who have an affinity for LEGO and for building."

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