

From: Rick Woldenberg
Sent: Thursday, December 18, 2008 12:19 PM
To: 'ctc-editor@tribune.com'; 'JHirt@tribune.com'
Cc: Jim Whitney; Etienne Veber
Subject: Need for Retraction

The article written by Kayce Ataiyero damaged our company's reputation by presenting unresearched, misleading information about one of our products. The article also reflects on our company's ethics and integrity by implying an indifference to consumers and their safety.

Because the Chicago Tribune did not bother to talk to us before publishing this misinformation, the public has the wrong impression of our company. Our commitment to toy safety is longstanding and complete. Our investment in safety goes back for decades – it's not something new or something Congress or the State of Illinois had to demand of us. I believe the Tribune should retract the reference to our product in that article, and further ask that you undertake appropriate measures to ensure better research and balance in your future coverage of safety risks relating to toys. It is unacceptable for the Tribune to attempt to sell papers by savaging an entire industry over and over again. That's not news – that's politics. If the Tribune can give credence to something as self-serving as George Ryan's "apology" to the Willis family and enhance his efforts to break out of jail, I am mystified by your refusal to recognize the profound and real response of industry to the CPSIA. If you take seriously that George Ryan "has learned his lesson", then why can't you see that toy companies and other children's product companies have renewed their commitment to product safety? Your newspaper provides no coverage of that, just a steady drumbeat of relentless and often poorly researched articles bashing everyone in our industry for the failures of the few.

Richard Woldenberg
Chairman
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Dear Ms. Ataiyero,

I am writing in response to your article entitled "Dangers of 2nd-hand Toys" dated December 16, 2008. In this article, which ostensibly informs consumers about "real" threats to the health of their children, you pictured one of our products, namely Educational Insights' Ring Toss Game under the heading "Do Not Give". You correctly state that this item was recalled because of high levels of lead (the yellow peg only). The necessary implication of your article is that this item could be found in second-hand stores. I wonder how you were able to reach that conclusion. Certainly not by either reading the recall notice (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml08/08553.html>) or by contacting our company or, heaven forbid, going to a second-hand store to find one.

Had you done your homework first, rather than printing an unresearched article with the intent to rile up the public damn the consequences, you would have found the following: Educational Insights found the lead problem in its Ring Toss Game while performing routine lab tests on our inventory. We are continually testing our products to assure their quality. Upon discovery, we were able to stop sales after only 128 pieces had been sold (to 14 purchasers). [This is probably more than were actually sold from the defective lot but is a conservative assessment.] Just for perspective, this was the first and only recall in company history - after sales of perhaps as many as a billion units since our company was founded. On the day we discovered the problem, we called the 14 purchasers, one by one, and personally told them to return the defective merchandise. We also asked them to call their customers and get back any units which they had

sold. We had multiple contacts with the 14 purchasers to ensure compliance, and believe that they found and returned all 128 pieces subject to the recall. In fact, we took back at least 220 pieces, more than we recalled. You quote Cara Smith saying that typically less than 7% of items are returned in a recall. Had you spoken to our company (with the intent to actually report the news), you would know that we received back more than 150% of the recalled quantity. You would also have been able to determine then that it is exceptionally unlikely that even one unit of the defective lot of our Ring Toss Game remains in the hands of schools or consumers. You won't find a set in a 2nd-hand store anywhere.

It is exceptionally unprofessional of the Chicago Tribune to publish what amounts to commercial slander by so carelessly distorting the facts of this situation. Our reputation is our most valuable asset. We spend a great deal of time, energy and money to protect consumers and our other customers, and will stand by our hard-earned sterling record. Your newspaper's coverage of the "toy crisis" is absurdly one-sided and imbalanced - and you seem to have no shame in smearing all toy companies with the same brush or asserting a risk you can't document (namely that these recalled items are found in second-hand stores). You even go so far as to quote an activist recommending that consumers only purchase wooden toys (presumably unpainted), cloth toys and books for safety's sake. What's next - moving back into caves and playing with rocks? I think it is entirely irresponsible to reprint such silliness.

It's time the Chicago Tribune started to take its responsibilities as a public institution seriously and stop attempting to terrify the general public about imaginary health risks.

Sincerely,

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