

# INVENTORS

THE MAGAZINE FOR IDEA PEOPLE

DIGEST

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**BY DESIGN**  
Patent Drawings

**BRAIN CHILD**  
GoldieBlox

**PROFILE**  
Robots Need Add-Ons

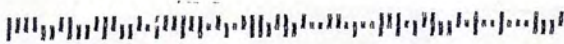
**LANDER ZONE**  
Why Advertising Fails  
Part 1

**UNITED STATES  
PATENT AND  
TRADEMARK OFFICE**  
Supplemental Examination



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF INVENTORS

**Inspiring Innovation:**  
The National Academy of Inventors turns 3



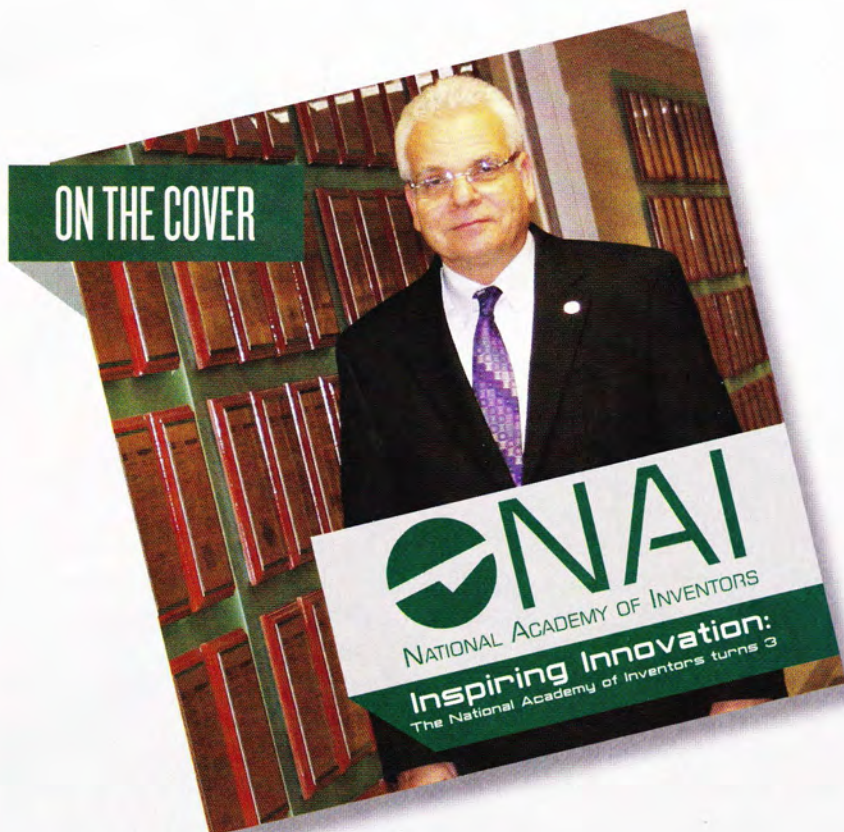
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Part 1



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# GoldieBlox™

The Building Toy With the Feminine Touch

by: Edie Tolchin

Established in 2012 by Debbie Sterling, an engineer from Stanford University, GoldieBlox, Inc. is setting out to conquer the male dominant (89%) engineering field by encouraging young girls to consider this career option. According to the website, their "mission is to create really fun toys that develop spatial skills and teach basic engineering principles." Legos®, Lincoln Logs®, and Tinker Toys® in years past were typically manufactured in "guy colors," with rugged, guy themes and guy characters. GoldieBlox are pastel-colored building toys that pique the imagination, with characters such as Goldie, her two friends Ruby Rails and Axle Rosie, and colorful little animal characters with cutie names such as Nacho and Flavio. Included is a storybook.

Girls (and yes, boys are allowed, too!) can work on pulley systems for elevators, and build a parade float. The toys are currently in production, will be safety tested, quality control-checked, then imported into the USA. Anticipated delivery of the first shipment of Goldie Blox will be April 2013.

**Edie G. Tolchin:** Tell us a bit about your background. Did you play with Legos® and other construction toys while growing up? What got you interested in engineering? Was that your college major?

**Debbie Sterling:** I grew up in a small town in Rhode Island with my parents, Sam and Amy, my sister, Stephanie and our dog, Bunky, a Bichon Frise. My sister and I didn't play with construction toys, my parents never thought to buy them for us. We played with lots of arts and crafts toys. Our favorite family game was Pictionary. I didn't know what engineering was until I was a senior in high school. I asked my math teacher to write my recommendation letter for Stanford and she wanted to know what I planned on majoring in. I told her I didn't know and she suggested engineering. I thought she was crazy! But sure enough, I got into Stanford and toward the end of my

freshman year, I couldn't forget about that thought she'd put into my head. So, I took ME101 (Introduction to Mechanical Engineering) thinking it would be my first-ever "F". On the contrary, the class blew my mind! It was nothing like the stereotype I'd had in my head (old men fixing train engines). I loved the class and immediately declared Engineering / Product Design as my major.

**EGT:** How did you create GoldieBlox? Who made your first prototype? What steps did you take to create the prototype?

**DS:** I made my first prototype using things around the house: thread spools, ribbons, wooden dowels, a pegboard from the hardware store, clay, etc. I wrote and illustrated a rough draft of the storybook. I researched about child safety regulations and talked to some industry veterans so I had them on my radar during the prototyping process. I tested the prototype on over a hundred kids, constantly iterating it and making improvements based on what I observed. The entire process was very inexpensive. Once I'd worked out the kinks with the crude prototype, I collaborated with an Industrial Design Engineer to take the specs into CAD. I had the parts 3D printed and I used those (plus the videos of the kids playing with the rough prototypes) to raise a seed round of capital. I also hired a sculptor to make the figurines. Then, I sent the CAD files and sculptures to the factory in China to produce the sample that was in the Kickstarter video.

**EGT:** I read somewhere that you used [www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com) to fund your idea? How long did that process take?

**DS:** I spent about 6 weeks prepping for Kickstarter, creating a PR and marketing strategy, writing, producing, editing the video, and so on. The Kickstarter campaign lasted 30 days (from September 18 - October 18, 2012). The Kickstarter process is not yet over though. I still get tons of messages on the platform daily to respond to, and we are





now starting to ship out our prizes and will continue to be shipping them through February '13.

**EGT:** Is there a "Team" GoldieBlox? Tell us about the members involved.

**DS:** Yes, currently we have four full-timers: Myself as CEO, plus Lindsey in Sales, Sydney in PR and Stephanie in Customer Service. We also have very dedicated contractors helping in Operations/Supply Chain, Fulfillment/Shipping, Graphic Design and Financials.

**EGT:** Did you test market the product to assess interest before taking the first big step in placing an order with your supplier? How did you locate the factory?

**DS:** I tested the prototype with hundreds of kids before going into tooling with the factory and then used Kickstarter as my "test market." I located the factory through a friend and former co-worker who has managed toy production overseas for over 30 years.

**EGT:** Do you have any advice for our readers who might have encountered obstacles along their journeys to develop their inventions? Did you make any mistakes or find stumbling blocks you might share that may help inventors avoid problems you've experienced?

**DS:** My advice is to invite friends, family, mentors, etc. to help you. Host a brainstorm session at your house or take friends out for a drink to pick their brains. The biggest mistake I made at the beginning was being too paranoid to show my ideas to anybody in fear they'd get "stolen." In retrospect, I ended up spending a lot of time holing up in my apartment like a hermit; it was lonely and depressing. As soon as I took my ideas out into the world to get help and collaborate with different viewpoints, everything changed.

**EGT:** Do you have a product line or series of GoldieBlox™ planned for future development and production? Will you be selling on your website, or via retail as well?

**DS:** Yes, the intent for GoldieBlox has always been to be an entire brand, not just a one-off product. Upcoming products include new "books plus toys" that take Goldie on new adventures and have her building new machines like a pulley elevator and a parade float. We'll be selling on our website as well as other online retailers and retail stores. We are talking to all those folks right now and working to get GoldieBlox on the shelves as early as Spring '13.

**EGT:** Thanks so much for your time. Inventors Digest wishes you much success! How can our readers contact you, and/or purchase GoldieBlox?

**DS:** They can purchase GoldieBlox on our website: [www.goldieblox.com](http://www.goldieblox.com) and we can be reached at [info@goldieblox.com](mailto:info@goldieblox.com).

Visit [www.goldieblox.com](http://www.goldieblox.com).

