



No Small Feat: How Small, Specialty, and Independent Toy Companies Survived 2020

For smaller-scale toy companies, in-person experiences can be the key to making connections with retailers and consumers. Whether putting their name on the map at trade shows or drawing in shoppers at specialty toy stores, these toymakers rely on others being able to touch, hold, and play with their product to understand just how well-made and innovative it really is.

When COVID-19 hit, this was no longer an option. Many toy companies had to adapt by strengthening their online presence, participating in virtual trade shows, adjusting product launches, and more. Though there were challenges in the past year, some companies even came out stronger on the other side. In this article, they share how they pulled it off.

For **Thin Air Brands**, readying back-up stock in late 2019 helped the company navigate the factory shutdowns in China in January and February of 2020.

Then, in March, the company's retail partners began to close, "which really was a blow to our first quarter," says founder and CEO Mike Searls.

In response, the company quickly pivoted to e-commerce and began offering drop-ship to specialty stores and to their customers.

"This helped the retailer, the consumer, and us," Searls said. "Being proactive allowed us to thrive in Q2 and beyond."

The result was that, by the end of 2020, the company had doubled in size.

"We see many companies taking a step back which inspires us to take two steps forward and grab even more market share," Searls said. "We feel it is our time to be aggressive, not passive, with dozens of new product introductions in 2021."