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## Rich Frog Capitalizes on Smart Design

### Creative Basics and a Fresh Color Palette Define Children's Line

By [Elizabeth Greenspan](#)  
[October 2008](#)

*Maarten van Ryckevorsel had been working as a national sales manager in the toy industry for about five years when a "brilliant play on words" popped into his head — a wooden ruler with measurements on one side and rulers of the world on the other — and **Rich Frog** was born. Maarten, self-described president and janitor of Rich Frog since starting the company with his wife, Sarah, in 1994, told **TDmonthly Magazine** how it grew from one idea into a success.*

**"It doesn't cost more to make a well-designed product than to make a less-well-designed product."**

#### "RULING" THE BIZ



Rulers of the World

It took quite a bit of time and phone calls to develop the ruler because we had to find someone who could make it for us. We use a U.S.-based manufacturer for the ruler, although we use manufacturers in China for other products. We have about 20 versions of the Rulers of the World, though we started out with three — the kings and queens of England and the Pharaohs.

We lived off our savings for a while, and my wife had a job. I had our first prototypes in April 1994, we sold our first product in September 1994, and we did our first trade show, the Atlanta gift show, in January 1995. By that time, we had more than rulers — stuffed animals, wooden puzzles, pencil sets, wooden hangers, pajama racks, toothbrush holders and bookends.

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Our products are defined by a sense of design and color that comes directly from Sarah. Her color palette isn't tomatoes and green peppers. It's lively and bright and attractive, but not the traditional one you see in children's toys.



Maarten and Sarah

### GOOD PRODUCT FOR GOOD STORES



Pull Toy Family

Our customers — almost exclusively small, independently owned specialty gift shops — are smart business people. You can bombard them with all kinds of marketing literature, but what they really want is good product at a good price.

It doesn't cost more to make a well-designed product than to make a less-well-designed product. Our best marketing tools are good products that are attractive to the buyers who put them in their stores, the adults who buy them and the children who receive them.

It would be great for companies like us if we could make a product, bring it to market, and sell it for five years. But we're under pressure to have new things for our customers all the time.



Office in Vermont

We, ourselves, do the New York Gift Show, and we have reps who do all the regional shows. On our website, storeowners can register and find out what's in and out of stock, and place orders.

### FAVORITES THAT WEAR WELL



Squeak Easies - Elephant

Two of our best-selling items are **The Original Rubber Duck**, made from real rubber tapped from a rubber tree by a third-generation family company in Spain, and the **Reversible Hat**, for children from birth to age two. One side is a frog and the other a prince, or a dog and a cat, or a princess and a pea.

Two new top-selling items are **Terrible Two Shoes**, slippers that look like monster, duck or bear feet, and **Squeak Easies**, tube-shaped squeakers with animal heads on top and feet on the bottom.

There are two things I consider our biggest successes:

- The first is when we get an e-mail from a mother: "My little girl cannot sleep without the hippo and we lost him in the park. He was given as a gift and I don't know what store he came from, and we need a new one."
- The other is when we see one of our employees blossom into a new job and new responsibility.

The advice I'd give to someone starting out in the toy business is "Don't be afraid to ask questions." Ninety percent of the people in this business are really cool and nice and will be happy to help. If they don't, try someone else.

Need Gifts?

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### Recent Products



**Black/Orange Hat**  
By [RACHEL ON THE FLOWER INC.](#)

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**Apple Red Beanie**  
By [RACHEL ON THE FLOWER INC.](#)

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**Peach Variety Pettadress**  
By [RACHEL ON THE FLOWER INC.](#)

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See some of Rich Frog's products below:

### Dog Cat Mouse Pull Toy Family by RICH FROG INDUSTRIES

Children can watch the baby animals follow them as they pull the animals along on sturdy wooden wheels. This product is intended for children over the age of 18 months. Launch date: January 1, 2008. 4/11/2008 (Price: \$26.95; Age: 1 to 2) [\[Add to my Inquiry Basket\]\[?\]](#)



[Watch Video Now](#)

### Squeak Easies by RICH FROG INDUSTRIES



These hand-held squeakers come in six fun animal shapes and squeak with the greatest of ease. They feature vivid colors and patterns and delightful soft velour heads and feet. The squeakers fit nicely into a diaper bag or purse, ideal for on-the-go entertainment. Launch date: January 2007. 6/25/2007 (Price: \$5.95; Age: All Ages) [\[Add to my Inquiry Basket\]\[?\]](#)



[Watch Video Now](#)

### Kids Rule! (Painted Rulers) by RICH FROG INDUSTRIES

Measuring is more fun than ever with these brightly painted wooden rulers. Six styles available: Monkeys Rule!, Ladybugs Rule!, Poodles Rule!, Dinos Rule!, Kids Rule! and Teachers Rule! "The colors are great and the measurements are easy to see," said John Gallagher, manager of Rich Frog. Launch date: 2007 8/25/2008 (Price: \$3.95; Age: 5 to 10) [\[Add to my Inquiry Basket\]\[?\]](#)



### Bouncy Mobiles by RICH FROG INDUSTRIES



Pull down on these silly creatures and their floppy legs and wings will bounce up and down hilariously on a 12" spring which extends to 20." With 8 styles to choose from, this mobile is a must-have for any kids' room. 6/6/2008 [\[Add to my Inquiry Basket\]\[?\]](#)

### Original Rubber Duck by RICH FROG INDUSTRIES

Bath time just isn't complete without our classic rubber duck! Made in Spain of all-natural, phthalate-free latex, the Original Rubber Duck comes in 7 fun and goofy styles. 6/6/2008 [\[Add to my Inquiry Basket\]\[?\]](#)



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**Writer's Bio:** Elizabeth Greenspan edits and writes for trade and technical publications. She has interviewed and collaborated with some of the top practitioners in their fields. She lives in Philadelphia and travels extensively for her work. [Read more articles by this author](#)

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