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Find and Develop a License How to Make Sure the Property Fits

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With thousands of available properties, from cartoons to comic books to big-screen icons, finding the right licensing match for your company and your target consumer requires research and patience. Jay Kamhi, president of [Kamhi World](#), Robert Tonner, owner of [Tonner Doll Company](#), Mike Silberkleit of [Archie Comic Publications](#) and Tim Thompson, VP of marketing for [Imperial Toys](#), told *TDmonthly Magazine* what it takes to find and develop the right property:

"Read about it, watch it, talk to fans." — *Tim Thompson, Imperial Toy*

Do your homework. No matter how popular the character, your toy won't be a success if you don't immerse yourself in the property. "Read about it, watch it, talk to fans," Thompson suggested. And focus on what "best captures the favorite aspect of that character," Kamhi added.

Branch out. Finding a property that fits your corporate image doesn't mean you can't reach a new demographic. Kamhi World has traditionally focused on the teen and tween markets, yet Kamhi noted that Family Guy's appeal attracts men in their 30s and 40s. Tonner said that the Tonner Doll Company's Harry Potter line is more mainstream than most of the company's offerings, bringing even fathers and sons to doll signings.



Play catch up. Being on board years in advance might be ideal, but an abundance of sequels means franchises like "Pirates of the Caribbean" and "Shrek" don't require attachment from day one. [The NDP Group](#) estimates increased revenue from action figures this year, due in part to the "Spider-Man" and "Fantastic Four" sequels.

Use the back door. Nobody anticipated the earning potential of sleeper hits like "Napoleon Dynamite" and "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," which allowed Kamhi to acquire the licensing rights before the movies went to DVD. In the fashion doll market, "likenesses are a plus," Tonner told *TDmonthly*. But even without the likeness rights to "Dreamgirls," Tonner Doll found a product tie-in through their iconic clothing.

Don't expect control. The bigger the property, the more protective the company. "We demand complete control on accepting the art," admitted Michael Silberkleit, chairman of Archie Comic Publications. And that approval applies not just to character design, but also to advertisements, packaging, text and colors. Guidelines are also more stringent with cartoons than with live-action figures, leaving less room for interpretation.



Plan for delays. An ideal [licensing] schedule allows for 12 to 18 months," said Thompson of Imperial Toy. After contracts have been finalized and rights acquired, most companies are left with less than a year for design and production. "A licensed product requires approvals at every stage of development, and each of these stages requires a minimum of two weeks approval time," he added. Plan for additional revisions and delays to make sure you're ready for a release.

Remember, you won't find a character that can sell anything in any demographic. Finding the right match is about knowing fans and knowing what to look for. Or, if you want to make your own unforgettable character, read [How to Create a Licensed Character](#).

Here are a few can't-miss hits of the summer:

Draco Malfoy at Hogwarts by **TONNER DOLL COMPANY**

Draco Malfoy joins Tonner's Harry Potter collection. A wigged figure with a hand-painted face, Draco features a custom-knit sweater and flannel pants and a Hogwarts robe with the Slytherin crest decal, and comes with a wand and custom stand. Owner Robert Tonner of Tonner Doll told **TDmonthly** that the popularity of the Harry Potter line "hasn't slowed down in the last two or three years." Launch date: 2007. 8/2/2007 (MSRP: \$129.99)

**"Shrek the Third" Talking Pens** by **KAMHI WORLD**

Featuring high-quality audio from the hit movie "Shrek the Third," each pen features four classic lines of dialogue straight out of the film. The talking pens are available in Shrek, Donkey, Puss and Gingy varieties. President Jay Kamhi of Kamhi World told **TDmonthly** that when selecting a character for his talking pen line, "I look for a high level of dedication from the fans." 8/2/2007 (MSRP: \$6.95)

Dora Finger Puppets by **IMPERIAL TOY LLC**

From the popular Nickelodeon cartoon "Dora the Explorer" come these new collectible finger puppets. Based on characters from the show, including Dora, Boots and Swiper, each puppet comes with a background card and child-sized ring. These puppets are part of a new Nickelodeon collection that Imperial Toys promises will also feature Diego, SpongeBob SquarePants and The Backyardigans. Launch date: Fall 2007. 8/2/2007 (MSRP: \$2.99; Age: 3 and Up)

**Shrek Swamp Party DVD Game** by **b EQUAL**

Shrek and Fiona are throwing a swamp party ... and everyone's invited. With this DVD game for one to two teams or players, families will be off the couch and competing in side-splitting party games to earn the coveted title of "Life of the Swamp Party." Players must get ready to draw, laugh and play their way to becoming the life of the party. The game includes a DVD game disc, four collectible figurines, an activity mat, a donkey bean bag, Shrek ears and toss rings. 6/6/2007 (MSRP: \$24.99; Age: 6 and Up)

Spider-Man 3 Collection by **TONNER DOLL COMPANY**

The dolls' hand-painted faces strongly capture the likeness of Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst and Bryce Dallas-Howard in their respective roles in the "Spider-Man 3" movie. The dolls are crafted of fine quality vinyl and hard plastic and feature 14 points of articulated movement. Each doll stands 17" tall. Launch date: May 31, 2007. 6/18/2007 (MSRP: \$149.99; Age: 9 and Up)

**Giant Spiderman Appliqué** by **ROOMMATES**

Boys can swing into action with this officially licensed giant Spiderman III appliqué that measures over 40" tall and comes in five pieces for ease of installation. Users simply peel and stick it onto the surface (works safely on any smooth, dry and clean surface ... even painted walls). It removes without sticky residue and does not cause damage to the surface. It is fully repositionable and re-usable. Launch date: May 2007. 4/24/2007 (MSRP: \$21.99; Age: 4 to 16)

Esphera 360° Jigsaw Puzzle – 6" Disney Pirates of the Caribbean - At World's End by MEGA BRANDS

Esphera 360° takes puzzle players to new dimensions with its one-of-a-kind freestanding sphere shape. This plastic puzzle is composed of 60 curved pieces and is designed for kids ages six and up. The spherical puzzle is assembled according to the number system on the back of each curved puzzle piece. Players seeking more of a challenge can ignore the number system altogether and assemble the pieces based solely on image. When assembled, the puzzle measures 6" in diameter. Launch: June 2007. 6/13/2007 (MSRP: \$9.99; Age: 6 and Up)



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