

Values for life

Business can be a force for good, says The Entertainer's Gary Grant

"We've just completed our 41st Christmas," says Gary Grant, Founder and Executive Chairman of the successful UK toy retailer that he started, aged just 22, with his wife Catherine in 1981.

It is appropriate that Grant charts the business's success in terms of Christmases; as well as being the annual high-point for revenue, it also encapsulates the positive experience Grant is striving to create for the company's young customers.

Growing from a single store in Amersham, Buckinghamshire to 173 stores across the UK, 35 in Spain, and a number of franchise locations, The Entertainer trades heavily on core values that have seen it continue to thrive on the traditional retail experience, despite the rise of e-commerce.

"When you get a five- or six-year-old in a store and you put an action figure or radio-controlled car into their hand, that moment is a memorable life experience for the child," he says.



Case study

Despite his belief in the value of the traditional in-store experience, Grant is also fully alert to the fact that the internet and social media are helping develop and inform younger consumers' attitudes, particularly around issues such as ethics and sustainability. Higher levels of awareness are helping shift their expectations as to what they buy.

"Whether it's from a green or a sustainable perspective, young people are seeing things quite differently and they are now making choices based on that," he says. "For me, doing the right thing is about just that, and not doing something simply because it ticks a box. It should happen whether people are watching you or not."

Strict standards

The Entertainer's approach to supply chain management reflects this values-led philosophy. Through its sister company, which produces the Addo Play toys range, the business carefully monitors its offshore source manufacturing. Factories have to meet minimum standards of hygiene and safety "as a given", and demonstrate fair treatment of their workers. They also receive a handbook clearly outlining the lines suppliers are expected not to cross.

"In the last two years, we have also signed up to the Slave-Free Alliance, through which people can alert us to any slavery issues within our supply chain," adds Grant. "We can't survive as a business without profit, but we don't want our success to have a detrimental effect on others."

The business is not overrun with customer letters demanding supply chain transparency, however. Where customers do focus attention, says Grant, is on plastics waste – something that Grant reads as a call for better product quality and durability. "The quality of what we buy is going to become more of a concern," he states. "Are we buying something to use once and throw away, or are we buying something that we can get lasting value from?"

As part of packaging reduction measures, Grant estimates that the business has saved more than 50 miles of Sellotape as part of moves to reduce supply chain wastage – although he accepts that the action businesses need to take implies much more than "using less diesel and turning the lights down".

It's a journey that The Entertainer is still on, and one that plays well with the consistency of its values.

"We say that our values are for life, not just for the good times," concludes Grant.

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Conducting business in a consistently ethical manner, he says, is simply the right thing to do – whether or not it involves a financial benefit.

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Gary Grant
Founder and Executive Chairman,
The Entertainer