



### **CoolBlox Story (How it was invented.)**

One afternoon I noticed all the sofa pillows in the living room of our home were missing. I didn't think much of it until I walked by the bedrooms to discover those pillows were missing as well.

At that point I decided to ask my sons about the missing pillows. As I was about to step in to my sons' bedroom I suddenly noticed my youngest son running by me into his room. He ran to jump onto a wall of pillows that was constructed out of all the missing pillows. My youngest son was laughing and having a grand time. His older brother and his cousins didn't share in his joy at first but quickly decided to join him as no harm was done.

It was then I decided to stand by the door to watch them stack the pillows to build their fort. They were playing together and having a lot of fun. The kids used all the pillows to build walls to fully enclose their bunk bed as a fort/club house. They played all afternoon building and taking apart their various forts, castles and clubhouses. They really liked building their own fully encloseable place. It reminded me of my younger days of using a fridge box and bed sheets to build my castle.

I thought wouldn't it be great to get my sons a building block toy set that they can build "life-size" structure for Christmas. A fun toy that's educational, safe and be able to finally satisfy the fantasy of building a "real life" structure. (This thought was reinforced that summer when my sons visited their cousins for a weekend. They tried to build a clubhouse in the backyard one afternoon. They took some plywood and two-by-fours and 4 hours later they abandon their project. The only thing they accomplished was to embed the plywood into the ground for a wall.)

To my disappointment I found nothing in the toy stores. I talked with a few close friends about it and they all thought it must be out there, somewhere. However, no one could direct me to where I can buy a set or two. I decided to investigate online sources. Again I was disappointed by the findings of what's available and how it worked.

Suddenly in a flash, it occurred to me on how to invent such a soft building block toy for my sons. The criteria were no small connecting parts to loose as one built a "life-size" structure. The design of the blocks must be simple and elegant and safe. It must be easy to play and yet sophisticated enough for all ages, multi players and/or a family can play-together.

A year went by without much success. The major obstacles were material and design. Around that time I met Dominik and we became good friends. Dominik is a professional engineer. We would brainstorm about the toy brick design every weekend when we got together. In year two we thought about using Velcro® and magnets. However, Dominik reminded me that we must stay pure to the original concept of no small pieces.

In year three Dominik and I were carpooling to work. The first four months led to no major breakthroughs to overcome the impasse. The second four months I told Dominik that I must resign from work to focus on the toy block project on a full time basis if we are to build this toy brick. The project must be worked on as a real business.

I talked with my mother and she supported me to build the business. I told my worried wife of the plan and I resigned in the third quarter of year three to focus on the design and material. As a family we tighten our budget to ride out the development. We even sold our house to raise needed funds. The wife was not too happy to say the least. Our standard of living fell down to the basement. My mother and a dear friend, John K offered financial assistance.

One fall evening Wayne called me to chew the fat. Wayne's mother and I are good friends for over 15 years. Our talk led Wayne to share with me one of his projects called "bed bumpers". He informed me he spent over a year researching a safe and durable foam for his bumper and had gathered an extensive file on foam manufacturers. I requested to meet with Wayne to discuss his findings the very next day. The reason was due to Dominik bring unable to find the time to research the material that we thought would do job. The material was from a Nerf® play set my sons got from their aunt.

Wayne and I met in a mall halfway between our homes. In the mall's food court he presented his files. I explained what I had in mind and that we welcomed his participation due to his enthusiasm and capabilities. Wayne accepts and we all met again within a week to formalize the project. We studied Wayne's list of OEM sources and narrowed it down to a handful of candidates.

That evening Dominik found an out of town custom foam company that was not on Wayne's list. He felt strongly that we should meet that company first. Wayne arranged the meeting. The custom foam company was unable to meet our requirements. However, during the meeting I had a revelation for a new design for our toy blocks.

Dominik and I had a late night meeting in a coffee shop to discuss the design changes. Wayne was unable to join us due to prior commitments, and the nature of the talk. I credit the new invention and design a Divine intervention. I sketched the changes to Dominik for technical translation and confirmation. The new specification were literally drawn on a table napkin. He agreed with the changes and we adopted it as our new toy block. At the time it was called "project toy brick".

The next morning I presented our design to Wayne for his input. Dominik and I worked on the new specifications for the patent and manufacturer every available night after we put children to bed. Wayne and I worked on meeting with other manufacturing parties, arrange financing, and plan our business. We contacted Wayne's list of OEM parties and referrals derived from it. It was teamwork at its best. Our final list was narrowed down to two manufacturers.

One turned us down right away. We tried the other one to produce our specification for almost 10 months but without any success. One evening I called Wayne about the manufacturer who rejected us 10 months ago, I suggested to Wayne to let me call upon them to see if they would be interested to produce some prototypes. Wayne agreed but warned me that they were very uncooperative the last time he called.

I called that company the very next day and they agreed to meet with us. The new tone from this foam fabricator came as a surprise. At any rate, months went by and we went through many prototypes before we finally were satisfied with the results.

We took our toy to have it examined by government health agency for toys and 3<sup>rd</sup> party toy safety testing organizations. We pass all required tests and our own mandated test for an exceptional high quality toy. The tests were done almost on the eve of the first toy show - the Cdn show. Although we did our patent investigation and filings, talked with industry experts, and other intellectual property due diligence, we were rather shocked to discover during the Cdn show that CoolBlox is unique and original and was highly regarded by all whom visited our tiny booth. The Cdn show was a success.

Three weeks later was the TIA show. We were convinced we might find something like CoolBlox during the TIA show. Again, we were surprised to discover that we have an original toy. We had to pinch ourselves that the whole thing was not a dream.

It hasn't been easy on my family. I couldn't have taken the first step with out the blessings and help from my mother and John K. CoolBlox would not have turn from concept to a real product with out Dominik. CoolBlox could not have become a real business with a cool name so quickly if it wasn't for Wayne (and his 'bed bumpers'). Al, the GTIW buddies, and the investors gave life to CoolBlox.

Winning Dr. Toy's Awards brought joyful tears to all our mother's eyes. The journey has just begun.

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