Google, a world leading innovative company, employs the three primary colors “red”, “blue”, and “yellow” in its company logo. It’s not widely known that this color scheme originates in Lego basic block.

The Google co-founders, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, are enthusiasts for Lego blocks. They claim “Lego is a great tool which stimulates creativity”, they even built “Lego playground” in the office where the employees drive their creativity. Also, Google’s employment examination had once included Lego session. Plus, Google finally achieved forming business partnership with The Lego Group last year. Google’s smartphone now under development also reflects their Lego preference in its concept, which says “Lego-like modular phone”.

In automotive industry, one new production system is drawing attention where in “Lego concept” is interpreted. Such that common components are assembled like blocks, then producing variant models. It’s considered as an antithesis of “adjustive integral style” that Japanese manufacturers had adopted for a long term. The German Volkswagen promptly implemented such Lego model, pursuing the world automotive giant Toyota.

Powerful creativity induction even NASA count on

Also in education field, people are aware that Lego could be an outstanding educational tool. In contrast to passive leaning style where students sit and just input knowledges, they’re getting aware of the importance of “education with experience”. In this new scheme, students are required to express their experience-based opinion or thought by their own way. Lego has attracted lots of attention as one of the powerful way to express something. A variety of Lego-based teaching material has been invented, which are found from infant’s educational toys through NASA training programs.

Not only stimulating creativity in top-class internet companies, Lego also has a variety of application to provoke innovation, as a tool that helps us create edged business concept, or as educational materials, etc. The Lego influence reaches beyond toy field up to industry or even society domain.

Why such a simple block toy has spread around the world? One of the reasons is that the toying process “assemble blocks” is the best way to materialize ideas.

Combination becomes 24 with 2x4 sized 2 blocks presented upper-right side of the graph on page 27. 3 blocks produces 1060 combinations, and 6 blocks produces over 1 billion combinations. People have found unlimited possibilities in such flexibility that enables us to “build anything”.

Well, this only explains why the block has spread so widely.

The true reason why Lego is widely accepted in the world is that it is the Lego company, who develop and manufacture blocks, itself never stop creating successful products, and always making innovative changes by their own.

The Lego is a private company founded in 1932 in Denmark. Today the founder still holds 75% of the share, and has never done corporate acquisition throughout over 80 years of the company history. The Lego has grown by concentrating their business in block development and manufacture.

Since Lego’s basic patents were expired in 80’s in each country, today anybody is able to produce the same structured blocks as Lego’s. In fact, a number of competitors emerged in 90’s that provided more affordable and Lego-compatible blocks.

In general, if too many competitors enter one market in which their products have similar functionality, such products turns into commodity, resulting market shrink.

The largest block company among all the toy competitors

The Lego Group, however, still has been keeping its top rated position among similar competitors. Over the last 5 years, the sales have grown by 21.5% annually on average. Despite of the financial crisis in 2008, The Lego Group has continued growing in a significant pace comparable to Google’ pace. Lego exceeded Mattel, Inc., which is known for Barbie dolls, in sales of the first half of 2014, turning into the largest toy company in the world. It’s expected that the annual sales will reach 4500 billion yen.

The Lego Group has concentrated its business area only on block development and manufacturing, then achieved higher operation efficiency, 58.4 ROE(Return On Equity) in fiscal year 2013. The Lego brand also has got more recognized followed by the business base expansion. Lego has been listed in the top 10 brand reliability ranking surveyed by an U.S. research agency for 3 consecutive years. Today Lego has become such an influential brand comparable to other global brands like “Disney” or “BMW”.

The Lego business, however, was not always sailing well. In late 1990’s, “innovation dilemma”, emerged competitors and digital toys hit the Lego’s business model, having fallen back one step away from bankrupt. Lego once failed to keep following the market change due own arrogance.

Later on, Lego re-polished their own strength and made dramatic comeback from their rock bottom. What actually caused Lego’s innovative regain? We begin this story by unveiling secrets behind Lego’s successive hits.

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