



Diana Brobmann and Lauren Nichols / Photo by Bob Giglione

Team players

GiGo Toys is riding into the fast lane.

The two-year-old Lake Success company, which markets ride-on toys for young children, secured deals this year to have its products sold online by several major retailers, including Walmart, Toys R Us, Buy Buy Baby, Costco, Sears and Kmart.

GiGo was born after Diana Brobmann acquired a business from a retiring sales representative, who marketed ride-ons along with other toys from Chinese companies.

Brobmann took the name in part from her previous company – Global Inception Group, or GIG, a branding, licensing and marketing consulting firm.

GiGo designs, manufactures and imports battery-operated and non-battery-operated ride-on toys for children ages 18 months to 7 years old. Brobmann has applied her expertise in licensing to secure licenses to produce ride-ons for Indian Motorcycles, the New York Police Department, the Fire Department of New York, New York City Taxi and, most recently, Care Bears.

The company also has its own line of trademarked brands, including MotorTycle, Li'l Tankster and Li'l Skootah.

Its newest offering is the Care Bears Plushy Ryder, which features a plush covering that can be removed to double as a companion.

“It is currently the hottest-received item we have,” said Brobmann, who got the idea on a scouting trip to China last year, when she was looking for “the next hot item – the next Furby.” She found the plush ride-on concept “buried in the back” and modified it. The Plushy Ryder will be in stores in 2016 in addition to being offered online (due to their large size, the other products are offered primarily online).

With so many new retailers on board, “the business is growing so fast it’s almost running away,” said Brobmann, who has two employees.

But there have been some logistical bumps along the way.

Until recently, GiGGo partnered with an upstate third-party warehousing/shipping company to fulfill orders, and there were issues.

“The systems were antiquated, and a lot of things were falling through and not being shipped,” she said. “There were too many problems for a new company like ours to have early on.”

Brobmann said things improved considerably when she partnered with a local, high-capacity warehouse and logistics firm, Farmingdale-based 3G Warehouse.

“Companies like GiGGo are the growing niche-type companies that we’re working with that have great products and are taking off,” said Lauren Nichols, founder and president of 3G Warehouse. “They need really great foundations to successfully scale their businesses.”

A good partnership with an experienced logistics partner can provide a wealth of information to a young company.

“When you’re doing business with these big retailers, there are lots of rules, routing guides and strict labeling requirements,” Nichols said. For instance, she said, “Electronic data interchange rules can be scary waters for new companies to navigate.”

With EDI transactions, orders are communicated electronically rather than by phone or fax. Retailers send an EDI transaction; the logistics company then picks, packs and ships the order and sends back an EDI transmission.

“Product-based companies are focused on manufacturing, design and marketing, and not necessarily logistics, routing and shipping notices,” Nichols said.

Client expansions have helped fuel growth at 3G Warehouse, which Nichols founded in 2009, choosing the name because she is the third-generation member of her family to work in the industry, having followed her father and grandfather into it.

3G Warehouse recently added 30,000 square feet in Farmingdale, bringing its footprint there to 150,000 square feet in two buildings. The company also secured more space in its two satellite locations; its Edison, N.J. warehouse now has 65,000 square feet, after the recent addition of 25,000 square feet, while the addition of 7,500 square feet brought its Nevada site up to about 50,000 square feet. Within the last year and a half, 3G Warehouse has secured new warehouse management systems, streamlining tracking and other processes.

Entering into a relationship with 3G Warehouse “was a huge sigh of relief,” Brobmann said.

Part of her comfort level, she said, has come from partnering with a woman-owned business.

“Warehousing is such a male-dominated industry,” she said, likening prior dealings to the feeling many women get when they walk into an automobile mechanic’s shop. “When you go in to get your car repaired, you don’t know what they’re talking about and trying to sell you – it’s not your area of expertise. Lauren was completely transparent – I felt an instant trust.”

Nichols finds that many customers – men and women – expect that as a woman-owned business, 3G Warehouse will provide excellent attention to detail.

“Whether it’s a stereotype they have, they trust the fact that we’re going to dot our I’s and cross our T’s,” she said, noting this applies when it’s business as usual – or not so usual.

“When Oprah calls and wants to feature a product as one of her favorites, we’re going to package it up right away and hand-deliver it – when a company gets a phone call like that it’s once in a lifetime for them,” Nichols said.

Though it wasn’t quite Oprah, 3G fielded a request earlier this month to expeditiously deliver GiGGo’s Li’l Tankster to a movie set. Unless it winds up on the cutting room floor, the toy will appear in next year’s “Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising.”