Fun Friends: Proposal for a new children's magazine

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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A Special Thanks...

to Jose Armando Perez

for the use of his artwork
Proposal for Fun Friends  
(A unique new children's magazine)

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to recommend a new children's magazine for widespread commercial distribution.

Background:
Children's magazines are a rather diverse area in the publications realm. Perhaps this is because there are so many adults trying to figure out what their young readers want and need. A search through Writer's Market and Standard Rate & Data indicates there are 45 children's magazines on the market today. Some are old standbys, such as Jack and Jill and Child Life. These two were established in 1922. Others are much newer, with initial publication dates ranging from 1983 to the present.

One strike against many of the children's publications is they are not readily available. It only makes sense that for a publication to achieve popularity it must be seen. However, it is often difficult for a potential consumer to locate a children's magazine on the newsstand shelves or at his local library.

For example, a search through the local and college libraries in Muncie, Indiana, ended with the location of only 12 of the 45 magazines found in the children's market.

Unfortunately, the magazines stocked by these libraries seem to all have the same, basic general interest approach. This is not to say all children's
magazines are confined to the same editorial matter. Instead, there are several interesting specialized publications already being produced. Some of the more popular types are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Specialty Area</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chickadee</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>4-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobblestone</td>
<td>American History</td>
<td>8-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digit</td>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>10-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The) Dolphin Log</td>
<td>Oceanography</td>
<td>7-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebony Junior</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Times</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nautica</td>
<td>Oceanography</td>
<td>8-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odyssey</td>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>8-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranger Rick</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specialized magazines also include a large number of religious publications. According to the 1984 Writer's Market, 23 out of 39 juvenile magazines available were Christian oriented.

Among the remaining publications are Humpty Dumpty and Stickers&Stuff. Although Humpty Dumpty had its own advertising and editorial staff in the past, it is now part of a group of magazines owned by one organization. Stickers&Stuff is also published in conjunction with several other children's magazines. The sponsoring organizations and their magazines are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's Better Health Institute</th>
<th>Children's Television Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stork</td>
<td>Sesame Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtle</td>
<td>3·2·1 Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humpty Dumpty</td>
<td>Ira Friedman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Playmate</td>
<td>Dollstars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack and Jill</td>
<td>(The) Electric Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Life</td>
<td>Stickers&amp;Stuff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As one might conclude, a new publication might have a lot of trouble trying to gain recognition unless it is somehow affiliated with an organization. An organization provides some safety for the magazine, as it provides an instant, receptive audience. Examples of these types of magazines include religious publications, those that act as an extension of popular television programming, and the junior versions of well-established adult magazines. Sesame Street and The Electric Company magazines are obviously an extension of the popular children's shows for which they are named. Among the junior versions of adult magazines are Ebony Junior and National Geographic World.

**Editorial Position of Proposed Magazine:**

The proposed magazine will be facing a solid, but not saturated market. Research indicates there are several gaps in the market where an innovative publication can gain a strong foothold and climb to success. A new publication can soon become a favorite one if it incorporates the positive attributes of current publications and generates new ideas of its own. These new ideas might include a reinforcing attitude and special interactive sections.

Other specialty areas proposed in this magazine are a foreign language section, comprehension testing and word clarification.

Perhaps the most special item which can appear in a children's publication is a caring attitude. Although not a tangible part of the magazine, it can make the best even better. A good publication should reinforce the child's self concept and sense of exploration. The magazine should also help a child realize others are experiencing similar difficulties in life.

The following sections will show where the gaps occur and how this proposed publication will attempt to fill them.
Editorial Content:

The basic decisions made in this area evolve from the name, emphasis and demographics of the proposed publication.

1) Name: Fun Friends

This name was chosen because it radiates with a positive feeling about interpersonal relationships. As a positive self concept and good interpersonal relationships are an important aspect of the magazine, the title of the publication fits well. Another important component of the title choice is it incorporates another unifying theme found in the magazine. The special sections are all made up of the "Fun Friends." These friends are pals to each other, as well as the children.

2) Emphasis: The emphasis of Fun Friends is self-confidence, positive interpersonal relationships, learning and fun. There are few children's magazines that go beyond a general interest approach and get in touch with the individual child. In an attempt to touch as many readers as possible in this way, the activities in the proposed magazine will be challenging, yet geared toward completion and not frustration. By removing threatening elements, it is hoped the readers will be more receptive to the positive aspects of the publication.

3) Demographics: Fun Friends is aimed at a broad audience, as it will seek to cover a broad range of topics. All racial and ethnic groups should be receptive to this publication, as it will strive to be representative of all. To provide a starting point, there will be a particular economic class which will receive a slightly higher concentration. Middle class parents are targeted, as there is a strong tendency among this economic group to seek items that will stimulate their child's growth and creativity. The magazine itself is aimed at a five to eight year old audience, with the understanding that it is the parents, not the
youth, who will be making the actual purchase. This publication will be distributed in all 50 states of the United States of America.

Other editorial decisions include departments, writing style, story length, comprehension testing, word clarification, use of free lance material and fillers.

4) Departments and story ideas: Each of the six sections is associated with one of the Fun Friends group. These special sections allow the child to become a close pal with each of the Fun Friends, showing the positive aspect of one-to-one interactions. When seen as a group, the Fun Friends show the child how group interaction can also be positive. As each Fun Friend has a specialty, all are showcased on a different page in the publication. The Fun Friends consist of Cuddles, Cotton, Huggles, Snuggles, Strawberry and Andy Panda.

A) Cuddles' Corner
   1) "Grab your pillow and sit really close to Mommy as she and Cuddles read poems, naptime and bedtime stories to you."
   2) Story ideas-
      How Huggles got his magic pen
      How Cotton became a master craftsman
      Wanda and the Woodsman
      Listen to the Bumblebee buzz
      Teddy Bear Hugs

B) Cotton's Crafts
   1) "Slip on some old play clothes and put some papers down on the table as Cotton helps you create simple crafts from safe, easy to locate household and nature items."
   2) Crafty Crafts-
      Leaf rubbings
      Penny rubbings
      Making a candle from crayons
      (Note: Adult supervision required)
      Adopt a Tree (measure; bark rubbings)
C) Snuggles' Snacks
1) "Step into the kitchen with Snuggles. Don your apron, too, and follow these step-by-step illustrated instructions to whip up simple dining treats."
2) Recipe ideas-
   Peanut Butter Special
   Floating along with ice cream
   Sunday sundaes
   Cheesy ham rolls
   Tricky tuna tidbits
   (Note: Requires adult supervision, as a can opener must be used)

D) Strawberry's Science Experiments
1) "Put on old play clothes while Professor Strawberry slips on his lab coat. Now you are ready to enter the fascinating world of simple science. Don't worry about danger, all the learning activities are using only safe, easy to find household and nature items."
2) Science "experiments"-
   How does a snowman melt?
   Which objects float? Sink?
   How does water differ from ice?
   Growing seeds on a wet sponge; dry sponge
   Seasons (what causes changes in nature?)

E) Andy Panda's Page
1) "Andy knows how difficult it can be to be a kid. There is a bright light at the end of the tunnel, as most of the things you are going through are also experienced by others."
2) Dealing with Dilemmas
   "Timed math/spelling tests terrify me!"
   "Why can't I see the board?" (Need for glasses)
   "I don't want to play today."
   (Scared of sports)
   "I feel scared when I am called on to read aloud in class or answer a question."
   "Is it wrong to tattle on Johnny if he is in danger?" (if Johnny is playing with an electrical item near water.)
3) **Special Note:**

This is a section not readily found in children's magazines, although it is a hit in magazines aimed at their parents. It's a self-help section with answers to the problems encountered by most primary school children. Although their problems may seem small and even comical to adults, to the children they seem massive. Andy will help fulfill the child's need to know someone else has experienced these same feelings.

**F) Huggles' Hideaway**

1) "Stand beside me as I whip out my reporter's pen, and listen as I magically speak to a variety of people and objects. Who are my subjects? Why, anyone from inanimate objects to both real and fictional people."

2) **Interview Ideas—**

   Let's look inside a computer—how does it work? An interview with Humpty Dumpty (so, tell me, why do you sit on this wall?)

   Meet Mr. Mailman (How do you know which mail goes where?)

   Looking inside a living tree (How is it that you die in winter and return in spring?)

   Meet Mr. Gardener (How do you know when to plant and harvest?)

3) **Special Note:**

   Each edition of Huggles' Hideaway will also feature a series of new words in a foreign language to expose the children to other cultures.

**Requirements for crafts, snacks and science:**

Only minimum adult guidance will be required for the craft, snack and science projects. All of these projects will be tested prior to publication and must contain clear, brief instructions.

Children at this age like to do things for themselves. Without Mom and Dad around, the child has much more freedom to dream he is a master chef cooking with Snuggles or a brilliant scientist assisting Prof. Strawberry in his experiments. These three types of projects will be tested to ensure they will be reliable. Nothing is more quick to frustrate a child and deflate his ego than a failed project. If the magazine has failed a child in this area, it has failed its editorial guidelines.
5) **Writing Style:** The writing style will be informal, with activities suitable for those from ages five to eight. Vocabulary will often be used to broaden the child's repertoire of words, but the magazine will appeal to both the beginning and non-reader. Sentence structure and length will be closely monitored to ensure the articles remain within the children's range of comprehension. According to children's magazine editor Beth Wood Thomas, the length of sentences is very important and the shorter they are, the better.

6) **Story Length:** The length of the main articles, including Huggles' Hideaway, will be limited to three pages. The other Fun Friends sections, along with the game and learning pages, will generally not exceed a maximum of one and one-half pages. These minor articles will vary according to ad sizes.

A child's attention span is limited, so stories should be told as creatively and concisely as possible.

7) **Testing Comprehension:** As a way to further the testing process being learned in school at this age, a comprehension test will accompany one of the major stories in each issue. The test will be given in an entertaining form, such as a coloring page.

Not only will this page help determine whether a child understands what he has read or heard, but it will also help him recall the story when he thumbs through the magazine later.

A parent or other adult must explain the test page to the child initially, but after that he will be able to associate it by a special cue located at the end of the story and on the coloring page.

The page would be simple to complete. For example, if a red-haired boy name Bill carried around a baseball mitt in the story, the child should color the hair of the boy on the coloring page red, provided he has a ball mitt in his hands.
8) Word Clarification: Ideally, the words used will be simple and easily understandable. However, there does come a time when the child's vocabulary needs to be broadened. To facilitate the understanding of these new words, a miniature version of Huggles will appear in the margins of the magazine to help explain these new words.

The child's vocabulary needs expanded, but this must be done gently. By providing his new friend as a resource, the child will tend to be more at ease learning the new words. Huggles will be tiny and located in the corners so as to remain unobtrusive. In this way, he can aid those who are confused without disturbing the children who understand. This idea is not a new one. It is modified from Cricket magazine, where a little cricket also lurks among the pages to aid his troubled readers.

9) Fillers: Intermingled with the departments will be items that combine learning and fun. These pages of math and reading games, connect the dots, mazes, coloring and hidden pictures will rotate as needed throughout the publication.

Many will combine several elements of learning, so as to strengthen the child's skills. Given to the child in the guise of games and puzzles, the filler items will provide a solid learning experience.

Budget:

1) Funding for Fun Friends:

Affiliation with a corporate-owned group of magazines is a top priority of the Fun Friends staff. In this way, the magazine may learn both good and bad aspects of more established publications. Another plus of affiliation is that expenses are shared for the most part, so a new publication need not bear all of its financial burden alone. This is an important consideration, as most publications are in debt their first three years.
2) Use of Free Lance material: Free lance material will be used. Payment will be made upon publication.

3) Paper: Newsprint will be the stock used in the magazine. This type of paper has a rougher texture than most, making it easier to color on. Just as the rest of the magazine is interactional, so is the paper. The use of newsprint also lowers the cost of the publication, making it a good magazine at a good price.

4) Number of pages: Ideally, there will be at least 40 pages, but the exact number will depend on the budget and ad lines.

5) Price: Although the subscription price might work out to be slightly cheaper, as is the norm, the per issue price is $1.00. This is comparable to or less expensive than similar publications.

6) Advertising Guidelines: Advertising should be interactional, as this is a major thrust of the rest of the magazine. If ads appear as if they are editorial matter, this is a plus for the advertiser, as the parents will see the businessmen have put out an effort to educate the children.

   Examples of potential ads might include clip out coupons to send away for free samples, a small maze or game or a coloring section. Another possibility is for a doll manufacturer to have a doll in the ad that the child can cut out and play with. The illustration of this doll should be fairly large and have clear cut-out lines surrounding it. If the lines are bold and fat enough, little fingers will not slip as easily and chop off arms or legs on the doll.

   Another aspect of the ads is that they should be large print. This will allow the ad to blend more with the editorial matter while allowing the child to interact with the item while reading about it.
6) Advertising Guidelines (cont.): To elaborate on a previously mentioned point, parents will possibly be more receptive to advertisers who try to promote something along with their product. For example, as the children pay more attention to and become more involved with the ads, the parents also are exposed to the product.

**Distribution:**

1) Frequency: Fun Friends will appear on the newsstands and in mailboxes monthly.

2) Lead time: The lead time for the magazine is six months. This will allow the proper story to appear at the proper time, while still allowing some editorial flexibility. This time period is comparable to other, similar publications.

3) Distribution areas: As mentioned previously, the publication will appear in mailboxes and on newsstands. Other high children visibility areas will also be utilized. These areas include toy and candy counters.

**Design and Typography:**

This area of the magazine is just as important as the editorial matter. After all, if the publication does not look good even the most impressive writer will have difficulty reaching and maintaining his audience.

The main concerns in this section are color, format, and photos/illustrations. Each will be discussed in further detail and relevant illustrations will appear at the end of this section.

1) Color:

   A) Spot color:

   Color will definitely be used, but this will be dictated by the budget. This might mean just a sparse use of spot color at the outset. However, the magazine is flexible in this area and will easily accommodate the four color process.
(cont.) Color enhances the magazine's looks, but it is the content that really carries it. There are several good magazines currently on the market that have four color covers, while the inside consists of black and white with a few pages sprinkled with spot color. Cricket magazine is a good example of this type of magazine.

B) Black and white:
One area will deliberately be left black and white. This is the coloring page used to test the child's comprehension. (Please see editorial section for further explanation if needed.)

2) Format:
A) Size:
The finished cut size will be 8½"x11". This is comparable to other, similar publications.

B) Table-of-Contents page:
Big, fat numbers and illustrations will accompany the stories and little oval pictures of the Fun Friends will be used on the page.

The larger numbers will be easier to read and the illustrations will make the articles easier to locate for the non-reader. Section characters will be illustrated next to their page numbers so they become recognizable to the children and their respective departments may be easily located.

C) Logo:
The logo will be stationary and will appear in the middle of the upper one-fourth of the cover. The color
C) (cont.) of the logo will reflect the dominant color in the cover's continuous tone copy. The typestyle used will be original, art-like balloons. The typestyle was chosen because it represents the connection aspect of interpersonal relationships. Balloon letters are appropriate, as they are a fun part of childhood.

D) Typestyles:
The type used for body copy will be Souvenir medium in 12 pt. These serif letters will allow young eyes to read more without fatigue, especially in such a large point size. (Please see appendix for illustration.)

Section heads will appear in Mecanorma's "Polka Bold," a casual balloon-like lettering which will complement the cover logo. The section heads will appear in whatever spot color is used for the issue. (Please see appendix for illustration.)

Other heads will be flexible in order to properly reflect their subject matter. Except in unusual cases, all will be sans serif. A limit was made on these heads, as sans serif is more legible than roman text when used in headlines.

E) Layout:
The departments will be based on a three column design, with variations allowed to accommodate accompanying photographs and artwork. The layout will be similar for all the departments, which will signify that they are not a
E) Layout (cont.): part of the games or other stories.

A relevant item, Huggles' pen or Snuggles' cooking spoon, may be used as a border on the top and outer side of the page. The repetition of this element will serve to further identify the page as one of the departments. (Please see appendix for illustration.)

Other portions of the magazine will also appear in a three column modular layout, as it is easy to work with and pleasing to the eye.

3) Photos/Illustrations:

Photos and illustrations will be abundant in the magazine. They will be used for both education and entertainment. For example, an illustration is educational if it helps guide a child in completing a craft or preparing a mid-morning snack. An entertaining photo might be one that shows the child's favorite sports star.

A) Use of photo captions:

Captions will generally be short, due to the brief attention span of the Fun Friends audience. If a photo is used in conjunction with a major story, a name line may only appear under the photo.

For example, if Huggles is interviewing a famous athlete and a file photo is used to accompany the interview, then just a name line will appear. Use of captions will be dictated by and controlled with the surrounding copy and headlines.

B) Byline/Photo credit placement:

Lines which credit the author will be integrated as part of the design, along with the headlines.
B) Bylines/Photo credit placement: (cont.)

Photo credits and credit to submitting artists will be located at the bottom of the table-of-contents page.

The reason for placing these credit lines in the aforementioned places is that children are a lot like adults. They are more apt to pay more attention to the work than who did it. However, it is important to include the author's name and acknowledge his active participation in the publication. Consequently, credit, though subtly located, does appear.
Sources


Thomas, Beth Wood. Interview with magazine editor. 21 December 1985.
Appendix One
"Logo"

Fun

Friends
Appendix: Typestyles

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
123456789

Rendering of Souvenir - medium

CUDDLES' CORNER

Rendering in Polka Bold

Huggles' Hideaway
Snuggles Snacks

3 eggs

1/4 stick butter

□ □ □ □