

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 2004 - VOL. CCXLI11 NO. 75 - ★★★★★ \$1.00

DEALS & DEAL MAKERS



◇ BIDS & OFFERS ◇

*Inside the World of
Corporate Finance & Wall Street*

Toys Are Back in Town

Bankers are back in toyland.

When the merger deals dried up on Wall Street, so did “deal toys,” those ubiquitous chunks of Lucite that line the shelves of the investment world and pay homage to secondary-stock offerings and corporate divestitures of years past.

Now, the toys are back, Kim Russo, founder of the deal-toy maker **Global Design Network of New York**, went months without revenue in 2002. With the return of mergers and IPOs, however, sales are booming. Her biggest problem lately is finding new salespeople and getting the factories to deliver the toys on time.

“These are good problems to have,” she says.

Ms. Russo, a former stockbroker, launched the company from her living room in 2002. Last summer, things picked up after she got an order for 100 Trident gum replicas to honor Cadbury Schweppes acquisition of the Adams candy business, and her March business this year more than tripled that of a year earlier.

The new toys are more fun than the old somber slabs of plastic. She shipped out about 25 toy vans this week to commemorate a stock offering road show. She sold dozens of mini-lava lamps for Vivendi’s sale of its Spencer Gifts unit, and a batch of toy freezers loaded with tiny acrylic ice-cream pints for the Dreyer’s ice-cream deal with Nestlé.

“It’s truly 0%-fat ice cream,” she jokes. “And it travels well.”