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Ken Faier

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Published: June 13, 2011



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As the company name implies, Nerd Corps Entertainment is committed to creating animation for film, television and online that is cutting-edge, but it is also stylistically innovative and grounded in great storytelling. *Storm Hawks*, *League of Super Evil* and *Rated A for Awesome* are among the series created at the Canadian state-of-the-art studio. Its president, Ken Faier, talks about a new property in the works and about extending the fun of a TV series beyond the screen.

TV KIDS: Which new properties will you be focusing on at the Licensing Show?

FAIER: We are focusing on *Slugterrainea*, a 39-half-hour series that we created and Disney XD has bought the worldwide cable and satellite rights [to].

Slugterrainea is about an underground world filled with magical creatures called slugs that have certain powers. When launched from slingers they transform into what their power might be—it could be a fire slug, a wind slug—it's a variety of characters. Our hero, Elias Stone, is on a quest to become the best slug slinger in *Slugterrainea* and stop evil Dr. Blakk who is disrupting the balance of this world. The whole goal on the merchandising side is for kids to love this world and have fun with it and be on a track to become a great slug slinger.



TV KIDS: Securing shelf space at retail is always a challenge. What characteristics of this property will help you get that very coveted real estate?

FAIER: You have to check off every box on a retailer's list to even be considered as a possibility. You have to be on a great network, you have to be on air long enough, you have to have a unique play pattern or offer a unique opportunity when compared to other products at retail right now. Ultimately, you have to knock someone else off the shelf. Maybe 10 percent of that aisle is up for grabs every year; that is really the only space to get, because you're not going to knock *Star Wars* off, or *Transformers*, or some of the Marvel or WWE properties that are traditionally in that aisle.

If you have an existing property that is being relaunched, there is awareness among retailers that it has worked in the past and they will be more apt to give it a shot. On an original, they really have to see how it sits in an aisle and how it is different from some of the other [products], but at the same time, how it taps into all the success factors of previous properties that have been successful. How does it emulate some of that and at the same time how is it different? With *Slugterrainea* we feel we tap into some very key mechanics of properties that have exploded in the action aisle and have been successful in the essence of competitive play. *Slugterrainea* has the collection mechanic—collecting these really cool little slugs that have personalities. There is the escalation mechanic of them getting to be more powerful the more time you spend with them, and then there's the slinger mechanic. And kids can compete, [as the video] gaming mechanic is tied in to it. Ultimately, we are delivering all of this through a good-versus-evil action-adventure comedy. The lead character has a group of fun friends and the slugs themselves have personalities; some can be very funny. So the show delivers comedy in a very organic way, and comedy is important for the replay ability of the show. Retailers look at ratings, too.

Finally, you need a property that has the ability to go on for years and also has the ability to hit various price points. You need an entry into a property that doesn't cost 30 dollars or 40 dollars. You need that under-ten-dollar opportunity that has a lot of volume but you also need something that is more premium deluxe as well, for those \$20 or \$30 price points.

TV KIDS: What do you need to be thinking of as you plan licensing and products?

FAIER: If you have a potential success you have to think ahead, because in the end you are probably dealing with thousands of people, from licensing agents, licensees, retailers, broadcasters, promotional agencies, to marketers that are all tying in to the property to use it, to help promote it, but also to sell their own product. Thousands of people will touch the property and make decisions on what do they do with it, so there needs to be a very clear road map of what the essence of the brand is, what's important to it, what should never be done and what should mostly be done. You need to give the tools to very creative companies, whether they are a sock manufacturer or they make games, board games or fruit popsicles. So many different people touch the brand and they all have their own unique industries and ways of selling to retail or whatever their product might be. You need to give them the tools to do it and you need to think about all of that.



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