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Do You Understand PCI DSS?

While new research shows that small business owners are aware of Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS), the fact that the standards are difficult to understand remains a huge hurdle to compliance, reports the National Retail Federation. To help clarify some of the complexities, SearchCompliance, a free online resource for IT professionals, provides answers to frequently asked questions about PCI DSS.

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BestToys For Kids 2009

The Best Toys for Kids list released by the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association gets back to the basics – toys for good, old-fashioned, make-it-up-yourself, belly-laughing play that's great for kids. ASTRA will be promoting this list on a national level and giving retailers the tools to promote it locally. The campaign will

Retailers Recommend 10 Fabulous Products

by Anya Harris

Marianne Kearns from Second Star to the Right in Bridgehampton, New York

"We sell a lot of **Magna-Tiles (1)** by **Valtech**. They are very easy for younger children to use, and they stick together well. They are fun – not frustrating.



"We've sold a couple of orders worth of **WOW toys (2)** this summer, too. **Ravensburger** distributes these preschool toys from Great Britain. They're very durable and high quality with a lot of play value.



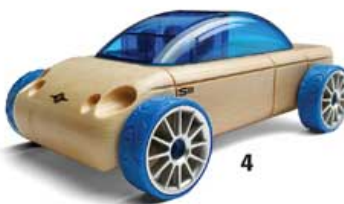
"The **Sticky Mosaic kits (3)** from **Orb Factory** do really well for us. Parents like them because they're not messy, and kids are totally fascinated by them. The feedback we get from parents is that they keep kids busy and quiet for hours."

Shawnta Ray of Once Upon a Toy in Edwardsville, Illinois

"**Automoblox (4)** have finally hit the Midwest. It took a long time to get them in but they're doing really well. They're gorgeous. They're interesting to adults as well as kids. They are an unusual take on the car idea as they're not completely plastic, nor are they die-cast.



"Another product that's been very popular and continues to do well is **BluTrack (5)**. It's a great open-ended toy and encourages parents to get out and play with their children, helping them pull off jumps and so on. It's a really engaging product.



"We just received the **Woodman Concept kits (6)**. It seems like there was a hole in the market waiting to be filled by them. They're little woodworking kits – there's a car, a catamaran and a sailboat – that are nicely put together. They come with some things already done, like holes that are pre-drilled, but the kids need to put the pieces together with glue and dowels before painting the finished product. Children end up with a pretty substantial toy for their efforts, and the kits are really well thought out and high quality. The company also makes real hand tools, such as a hammer and saw, scaled down for kids.

"Another category that does well for us is fun, food-related items for adults, from companies such as **Fred & Friends**. We've carried them for several years now, and though I ordered timidly at first, every year I become braver. Fred has a number of goofy things, like the **Batterfinger (7)**, a giant finger used to scrape batter out of the bottom of a bowl, the Potpuppets, puppets that are actually hot pads, a ton of novelty ice cube trays, and something called Food Face, a plate with a blank face that you can give a moustache, beard or hairdo by arranging the food a certain way.



"I keep finding more cool novelty items for adults. Right now, for example, we have what is called the **Condiment Gun (8)** from **Dacor Craft** up on our marquis. It shoots ketchup and mustard on your food. It's just hilarious. We're getting a little outside of our usual product mix with these lines, but the category is doing well for us with playful adults who are in the store buying toys for their kids anyway.

"I continue to be excited about the **Taro Gomi series of coloring books (9)** from **Chronicle**. He has several titles, such as *Squiggles*, *Scribbles* and *Doodles*. They're coloring books that are only half finished. They give you ideas of where to start – a benefit for the kid who complains, 'I don't know what to draw.' His drawings are nice but crudely done, so kids don't feel intimidated about drawing next to them. Several pictures continue for multiple

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emphasize the expertise of ASTRA members as independent toy retailers who know their toys and their customers, and will promote these as toys that are healthy for kids.
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pages, and lots of them require you to add hair, finish a face or draw an outfit. They're expensive for a coloring book, but they're as fat as a phonebook.

"**Djubi (10)**, a slingshot kind of game played with a racquet, is a new version of an older concept. It's a ball with a rubber band on it that you shoot back and forth. What's new is that you shoot the ball with a hook located on the side of the same racquet that you use to catch it. It's fun and really well made by a small company whose people are just great."



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