

Goosie Cards: Educating and Entertaining Kids Using Your Photos and Your Captions



Jen Marchetti, founder and CEO of Goosie LLC, has brought to market customized flash cards that help toddlers and children learn about their families and the world around them.

BY PHIL SONNEMA
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

WHAT DO PARENTS JENNIFER LOPEZ, MARC Anthony, Jessica Alba, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner have in common? Yes, they're famous and "A" list superstars. But did you know that all of them have customized flash cards called Goosie Cards to educate their kids?

The brainchild of Ridgewood, New Jersey, entrepreneur and former Kraft executive Jen Marchetti, Goosie Cards were awarded a "2008 Kids Product of the Year Award" by *Creative Child Magazine* and continue to be a hit with moms, dads and grandparents that see the value in customized flash cards with photos and captions.

Goosie Cards are a unique educational tool that combine your text and your photos to create a learning experience with family, friends, pets and aspects of your favorite child's life that are specific and special.

To find out how Goosie Cards went from idea to product to the shelves of FAO Schwarz and Learning Express, *COMMERCE* magazine interviewed Goosie LLC Founder and CEO Jen Marchetti.

COMMERCE: *What inspired you to create customized, educational flash cards for children?*

JEN MARCHETTI: I was feeding lunch to my son Zach, who was about 6 months old at the time. I used to show him flash cards while he was eating just to keep him busy and entertained. I wanted this mother/son activity to be educational too, but I found the cards and their content lacking. I wanted something more for Zach.

Q. *What was wrong with the flash cards you were using?*

A. All of the flash cards had no particular meaning to him or me. I remember I got to one card and it had a picture of a horn with a bird on top of it. I didn't even know how to explain what that was. In a moment of clarity, I realized that if I could just get photos on flash cards of my family and of the things I wanted to teach my son about, that would be more fun and a better learning experience. At first, I figured somebody had to already be doing something like this, so I looked for a product that would fit the bill, so to speak.

Q. *Did you find anything?*

A. Everything under the sun was being created with a photo—mouse pads, ties, mugs...so I searched the Internet and there was nothing available that resembled customized flash cards to teach kids. It was at that moment that the idea for Goosie Cards was hatched. I called my husband at work and said, "I've got a great idea for a business—we're going to create custom flash cards. It's going to be an online business." We started making them the next day, and the journey began.

Q. *How have you marketed your product?*

A. We launched in 2006 and I was literally walking the beaches of Sea Girt, New Jersey, meeting a lot of teachers that were on break. I did one trade show in New York City at the NY Junior League. Even though I had produced everything to be online, my cards got into the hands of Ed Schmultz—the CEO of FAO Schwarz. About four months after that show, Goosie Cards were for sale in FAO Schwarz. Basically, it was all word-of-mouth. I'm always meeting customers and talking about

continued on page 44

continued from page 42

the business. I've been given so much free PR: interviews, word-of-mouth through moms, etc. It's been such a grassroots effort.

Q. *Word of mouth gave birth to Goosie Cards. What's next for your product?*

A. Last year, all of my energies went into getting into FAO Schwarz. This year, we kicked off our new marketing campaign at the Toy Fair in Manhattan, where we were exposed to a whole new group of retailers. Now Goosie Cards are sold in Learning Express too. This year has been all about doing trades—I haven't done any advertising.

Q. *How can clients customize their Goosie Cards?*

A. You can literally do whatever comes to mind. You can upload any image. You could do a card set for a family, for example. One card would be the face of their mother, their father, and their siblings and then there's a caption space underneath that you can write up to five lines of text. You can write any caption you wish. You can write nothing at all and just have the flash cards with the photo. You can do short stories, teaching your children how to read as they start to grow.

The 26 card set is really popular and people have been customizing their own ABCs with their own photos. It's also a huge learning tool for families that are adopting children that don't speak the language. You don't need to really speak a language if you look at a photo, so people are creating cards if they're adopting a child. For example, we had a friend that adopted a baby from China. They had photos of everyone in the family and friends that their daughter was going to meet. They were able to show her some of the new faces that she'd see before she came over.

Q. *What other niche groups can benefit from Goosie Cards?*

A. Another interesting avenue that I was introduced to is the need for an advanced learning tool for children with autism. The cards that children learn with are flash cards. The problem is that everything available on the market right now is either an illustration or an icon. Children really need to see the actual visual photo of what they're trying to communicate. It's a stronger, more direct relationship to the object. So, Goosie Cards really help the families and the teachers teach children with

continued on page 46



Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie received Goosie Cards to educate and entertain their children.
Photo Courtesy of Goosie LLC



To promote Goosie Cards on ABC-TV's *Good Morning America!*, Correspondent Diane Sawyer got her own Goosie Card.
Photo Courtesy of Goosie LLC



Talk show host and television cook Rachael Ray (pictured with celebrity chef Bobby Flay) had custom Goosie Cards made for her.
Photo Courtesy of Goosie LLC

continued from page 44



Learning about foods and family from Goosie Cards is a fun way to educate kids, as these samples illustrate.

autism because it's the actual photo. Anybody can do it and use it for whatever way they see fit; it doesn't necessarily just have to be for children. People also use them for stroke victims as well. It can really be for any age.

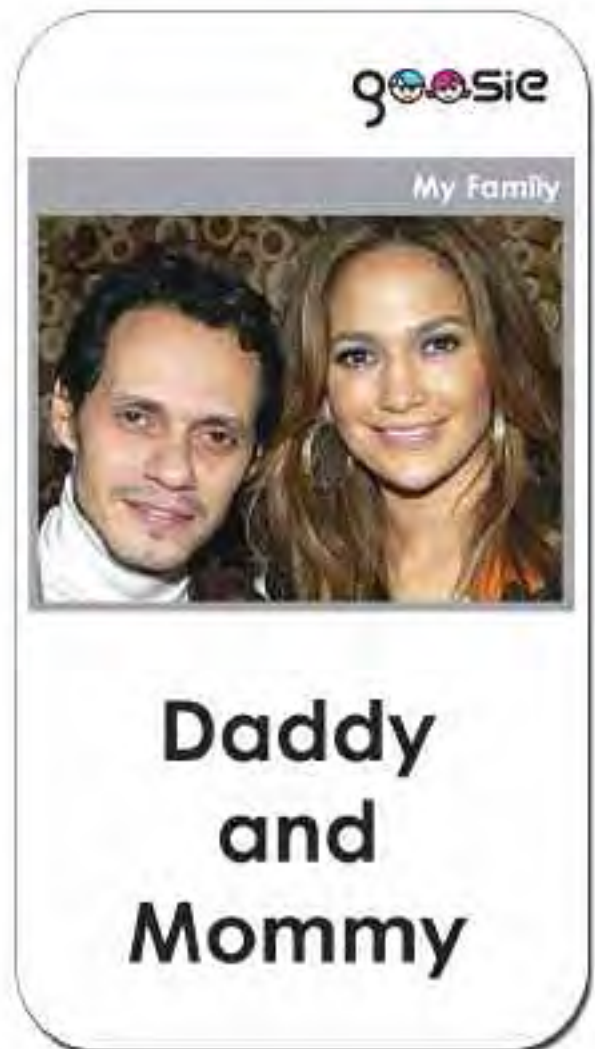
Q. Are there cards for the blind and deaf?

A. People have asked us to do Braille, but we're not there yet. But my business is so broad that I will be expanding into every avenue I can possibly get into. Again, in the beaches of New Jersey where I promoted Goosie Cards, we had a couple that came up to us and asked to do sign language cards for the alphabet. This couple came up to me on the beach and the wife was deaf...her husband was speaking to us for her and he said, "What you created is a learning tool not only for the person that needs it, but also for the family members around them." They were trying to emphasize the fact that if only one person is deaf, everyone around them has to learn sign language in order to communicate. It's amazing, because we never even thought of that.

Q. What prepared you for the success of Goosie Cards?

A. I worked for Kraft for 11 years as a sales and marketing executive, with hands-on experience in marketing and branding. Because of that experience, I was able to understand how to take the idea of Goosie Cards and turn it into a product and then a business—my background gave me an understanding of getting from concept to retail shelves. For example, I created the packaging with a sense of what would sell. Working for Kraft taught me the skills I needed to be a successful entrepreneur. ■

For more information on Goosie Cards, visit www.GoosieCards.com.



Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony received Goosie Cards as a gift to assist with teaching their young family.

Photo Courtesy of Goosie LLC