



Meet the LEGO® CEC Team

In this edition of Hispabrick Magazine we are take a closer look at the CEC Team at the LEGO Group, the people that make up this team and the different areas they cover.

Text by Hispabrick Magazine
Pictures by The LEGO® Group

CEC stands for Community Engagement and Communications. CEC is a part of Consumer Experiences (alongside e.g. Consumer Service, VIP and LEGO® Club) which is a Business unit in CED (Community, Education and Direct) This unit also includes Direct to Consumer sales (D2C - LEGO Shop online and Brand Retail Stores), LEGO Education and LEGO Digital.

To get a better understanding of what CEC is and how it interacts with AFOLs, Hispabrick Magazine talked to Tormod Askildsen, head of the CEC team.

HM.- When was the Community team set up and why?

TA.- The Community team was starting to take shape back in 1999 after the launch of LEGO MINDSTORMS in 1998. The way the product/technology was “hacked” by a very diverse group of adult users took us by surprise. After the initial shock, we decided to establish contact to this community of very innovative and talented users. Around the same time we started FIRST LEGO® League in collaboration with FIRST and the concept of “user communities” started to become a focus area for me and some of my colleagues.

HM.- What was its initial goal and what resources did the team have?

TA.- I would say that the initial goal was to find out how collaboration with these Lead Users could help us develop better products and also to drive publicity around all the interesting things users did with the LEGO MINDSTORMS technology. We did not really have a dedicated “community team” at that time. A bit later, around 2002 I think, I became part of the LEGO Direct organization. Jake McKee who had reached out to fans in the US from our New York office independent of our work with the LMS community moved into my team and started to drive a much more systematic effort in building relationships to fan groups. That led to e.g. the LEGO Ambassador and LEGO Certified Professional programs in 2005. Around that time, Jan Beyer also joined the team to focus on Europe.

So let's have a closer look at the team, the people who are part of it and their different responsibilities. The CEC team is currently made up of 11 people. They are:

Tormod Askildsen, [T] is head of CEC and as such a member of the

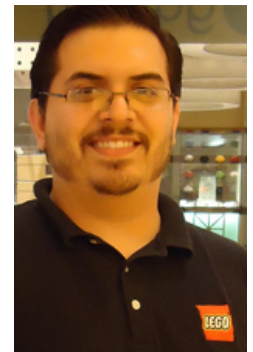


CX (Consumer Experiences) Leadership team. “In addition to doing my best to support my team doing their best, I spend my time on continuously evolving and driving our strategic consumer engagement agenda with focus on building relationships with LEGO fan groups. These relationships are important to us because LEGO fans (like you) represent a strong passion for the LEGO brand, more than a million of years of building experience and a lot of talent! I am also responsible for the LEGO Certified Professionals program which currently has 13 members.”



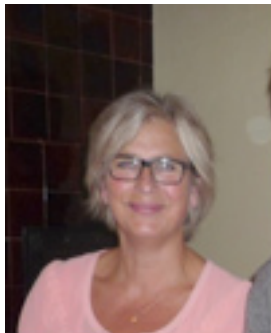
Jim Foulds is responsible for relationships with fan groups in North America, Middle/ South America and AUS/NZ. Jim is also currently the driver of the LEGO Ambassador program. He cannot do this himself obviously, so most of the team is involved as much as we can.

Kevin Hinkle, the latest addition to the team, is a Community Coordinator with focus on North America specifically reports to Jim.



Jan Beyer [J] is responsible for relationships with fan groups in Europe and now also starting to establish relationships with groups in Asia which are growing very fast. In Asia, LEGO offices in several countries are already quite involved in working with fans. The CEC team is working hard to make sure collaboration with fan groups is as consistent as possible globally. Jan is also responsible for the LUGbulk program and he is being supported by **Rikke Zethsen**.

Rikke also works with **Camilla Torpe** who is responsible for the *LEGO® Inside Tour* (LIT) and *LEGO Build the Change* events. Camilla started the LIT back in 2005 and this year all three “tours” were fully booked and there is even a waiting list for 2012. LIT is designed to give LEGO fans an extraordinary



experience inside the company. Each year the LEGO Group creates an exclusive set for LIT guests. The 2011 “LEGO Molding Machines” set turned out to be extremely popular. *Build the Change* is a LEGO event concept which is focused on empowering children and their families to e.g. suggest changes in their local communities. It is becoming increasingly “popular” among e.g. politicians to involve citizens in their community in dialogue about

future development. The LEGO brick is a great tool for these kinds of co-creation projects.

Peter Espersen is the Online Community Lead. **Signe Lønholdt** works with Peter. They are driving an online community project which is still in development and which will focus on all the incredible creations made by LEGO fans.



Steven Canvin is responsible for relationships to the global LEGO MINDSTORMS community. He works closely with everyone else on the team as LEGO MINDSTORMS cuts across most fan groups, but at the same time is pretty specific. LEGO MINDSTORMS lead users continue to amaze the team with innovative MOCs.



Andrew Arnold is responsible for PR and Communications across the CED Business area. This includes both internal and external communications. He works with Consumer Experiences, LEGO Education, D2C, LEGO Digital and also other PR colleagues across the LEGO Group.

Lars Silberbauer is the Social Media Strategist. He works with Tormod and colleagues across the LEGO group to evolve their use of relevant Social Media opportunities, learn and drive strategy. Their first initiative in the “Social Media space” was the official LEGO Facebook page which went live in early May. The page was handed to LEGO by a fan.



Social Media:

The LEGO Group has recently released a set of guidelines for LEGO employees who engage in Social Media on behalf of the LEGO Group

HM.-Why was it necessary to create these rules and which are the most important points?

TA.- Good question. We have created a set of guidelines for LEGO employees who engage with consumers in the online “social space” on behalf of the LEGO Group. These guidelines will evolve and change as we learn more. We created the guidelines to make sure that we use Social Media appropriately and that we act consistently. Consumers see the LEGO group as one company and we need to do what we can to act accordingly. The most important guidelines are the points that related to personal data, children’s safety, that we do not “outsource” dialogue with LEGO consumers and that we are open, honest and transparent in our dialogue.

HM.- What does the LEGO Group expect to get from engagement in Social Media and what can it offer?

TA.- We expect to get closer to LEGO consumers on a day to day basis. We expect to learn a lot about the very diverse groups of consumers who share an affinity for the LEGO brand. Rather than just expecting consumer to come to us (visit LEGO.com and call Consumer Service), we also want to have a presence where they are e.g. on Facebook. We do not target children under the age of 13 on 3rd party Social Media sites, but there are lots of parents, teachers, adult and teen fans on these platforms. LEGO.com and LEGO Universe are the primary destinations for kids under 13 and these spaces are moderated 24/7.

HM.- Does the fact that LEGO has decided to take an active part in SM mean that interaction with LUGs is too limited/limiting?

TA.- No, I would rather say that that our interaction with LUGs, which has gradually increased over the years, has shown us that a close relationship to users/consumers is very good for the LEGO business and for the LEGO brand. Not only do we learn a lot from LEGO fans, they are passionate and positive, but they are also our biggest critics. Critical feedback helps us stay on our toes and not rest on our past successes. Also, these relationships contribute to a high level of LEGO fan activity, just look at the events, shows and displays that take place around the world and the enormous amount of user generated content online. When we now start to engage with consumers on platforms like Facebook, it is simply to increase our reach especially towards parents, teens and also many young (and not so young) adults who are not members of or

10 principles for engagement in Social Media

The LEGO® Group recently released a set of guidelines for how LEGO employees should approach Social Media on a larger scale. These rules are a starting position that will be constantly reviewed and evolved to adapt to the needs and demands communication with consumers through the Social Media.

1. In the LEGO Group, we consider clear objective setting as important in social media as in everything else we do.
2. We pride ourselves in creating and sharing “official” LEGO objects of high social quality, and we will also stimulate creation of and promote consumer-created social objects that are in line with LEGO Brand values.
3. We see engagement with consumers in the social space as a commitment and we won't start a project without first defining an exit strategy to avoid disappointing consumers if we abandon an initiative.
4. LEGO employees in the Social Frontline are connected to each other and each of them know about all social media initiatives that are active across the business.
5. To ensure we engage with consumers in a relevant way, we listen to their dialogue and engage on their terms. We share learnings and “alerts” across the Social Champions network continuously and without delay.
6. We measure the performance of our social media initiatives against set objectives. Execution is adjusted and improved on an ongoing basis.
7. We handle personal data collected in social media in compliance with company guidelines and local legislation.
8. We do not target children under the age of 13 on third-party social media platforms where personal interaction is possible.
9. Dialogue with consumers in the social space is always handled by a LEGO employee with a Social Driver's License. We do not outsource this dialogue to agencies.
10. We do not pay people (e.g. bloggers) to drive LEGO product, experience or company related engagement on Social Media platforms.

even know of the LUGs, but still have a LEGO® affinity. Our engagement with consumers on Facebook though will be pretty “light”, nothing like the many personal relationships we have with people in the AFOL community.

Ambassador Program:

The Ambassador program has now entered its 9th cycle, although after the profound changes made to the program and the 6-monthly enrolment windows that is maybe not the best way of naming it.

HM.- What fundamental changes have been made in the program to get to the current format?

TA.- When the LEGO Ambassador program started back in 2005, our idea was to let a number of AFOLs (I think it was around 15 of them) act as ambassadors for the LEGO brand towards the public. LEGO Ambassadors were selected by the LEGO Group. Also, LEGO Ambassadors were invited to a series of “top secret” development projects. Therefore, the most important criteria to become a LEGO Ambassador were outstanding building skills and a good attitude towards the public and fellow AFOLs. We have gradually changed this to the current form, which is very different from the initial idea. Today, the LEGO Ambassador forum is a place for LEGO User Groups to have a dialogue with TLG representatives about issues which occupy them. The LEGO Group can also bring issues, questions and projects to the LEGO Ambassador forum. All LUGs (which fulfil the LUG criteria [criteria]) have a right to be represented on the LEGO Ambassador forum and they select their LEGO Ambassador themselves. Initially the LA cycle was 6 months. That was increased to one year. Up to 2010, a new LA cycle started with a new selection of LAs. But from 2010, we changed this to a biannual “open window”. This means that during the “open window” period, LUGs currently represented can withdraw from the program or replace their representative. Also, LUGs not represented can enter the LA program if they fulfil the LUG criteria during this “open window.”

HM.- What has motivated the change in enrolment windows?

TA.- A couple of things. Primarily because of feedback from the LAs and LUGs saying that replacing almost all LAs each year was disruptive and hurt continuity. Also, moving from the old “cycles” to the “open window” demands much less admin both on the LUGs part and ours.

HM.- Are you satisfied with the way the program is working?

TA.- No, I'm not, simply because we in the CEC team have not been able to be as responsive as we should be. This has actually been a problem for some time now. With the broader and deeper engagement over the past years, our workload has increased quite significantly. We have promised to the LEGO Ambassadors that we will step up, but even with the best of intentions I must admit we have not been able to improve significantly. Having 70 AFOLs from 30 countries, representing clubs, online communities and blogs in one place is wonderful. We know very well there is a value potential there that we are not taking full advantage of.

HM.- What changes would you still like to introduce?

TA.- I think the format is good. Primary improvement will be for CEC to find more resources for dialogue and feedback. The technology can also be improved and we are working

to establish more direct contacts between other LEGO® departments and LEGO Ambassadors.

HM.- How would you like fans to interact with the company and how does the Ambassador program fit into this?

TA.- Ideally, I would like fans to interact with TLG both via central functions in Billund and via local LEGO offices. Even though this works to some extent today, there is a long way to go before we are where I would like us to be. The LEGO Ambassador program plays an important role as being the overall forum that is not "subject specific", but where all kinds of challenges and opportunities can be discussed. But next to the LA forum, I can see a potential for networks between TLG and fans/LUGs which is focused on specific topics like events, innovation, consumer service, etc.

HM.- Why do Ambassadors no longer have the possibility of participating in secret projects like in previous cycles?

TA.- They do, but not because they are LEGO Ambassadors. "Top secret projects" require people with a certain experience and skill set. The primary skill of a LEGO Ambassador is a strong ability to network and dialogue. We expect LEGO Ambassadors to represent their LUG, not just themselves and "have the finger on the puls of the community". In many cases when we are looking for fans to participate in a "top secret project", a LEGO Ambassador might point at him/herself because he/she has the experience and skills required, but in many cases the LA will point at fellow LUG members.

Events:

HM.- What is your policy regarding attending fan events?

TA.- We participate in most larger events where there are



many fans and public visitors. Both me and colleagues from the CEC team, but also LEGO people from other parts of the business. We have recently made an agreement with Product and Marketing Development that LEGO Designers to a higher degree should participate in LEGO fan events. But in addition to the larger events, we often participate in smaller events in new areas to support new "startups". Fan organized events are fantastic, we feel extremely privileged to see all the event, show and display

initiatives which are pulled off by LEGO fans globally. Last year we know of more than 180 fan organized events which combined attracted more than 2.5 million public visitors! It is precious.

HM.- How do you support fan events?

TA.- Event support has been too sporadic and randomly given up to now, we realize that. Therefore we are working on a support program which should be more consistent and fair globally. We expect to start rolling this out in 2012. We will still not be able to support all event initiatives, but we will work more systematically to ensure that as many LUGs as possible who put their enthusiasm and long hours into organizing events will be recognized.

[T] You can read more about Tormod Askildsen, his work at the LEGO Group and his involvement in the fan community in HBM 003

[J] You can read more about Jan Beyer, how he started at the LEGO Group and how he got involved in Community Development in 005

[criteria] – link to online criteria for the Ambassador Program: <http://www.eurobricks.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=47767> #

