

Interview: LEGO® Rebrick

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Pictures by HispaBrick Magazine® and LEGO® System A/S



The Rebrick concept has completely changed from the initial idea to the actual site. We are going to explore the initial idea and what's behind this change. To do this, we interviewed Mette Frøkjær Hansen from the Rebrick team. Although she is quite new in the team, she had the knowledge to shed some light on our questions.

HBM: What was the reason to start ReBrick a few years ago?

Mette Hansen: I actually started here in October, so that was way before my time, but back then, essentially it was trying to enable people to bookmark things and create their own galleries on sort of a LEGO® site so we would have a more centralised place for all the cool things that you find online. It was kind of like an old Pinterest. A lot of other pages do that very well and way better than ReBrick did, so what we discovered was that when we had building challenges on ReBrick, that's where we got engagement and what people were really excited about. That's why it was decided to streamline the concept, let other sites that do link sharing and galleries do that because it works so well on Flickr and all the sites that are out there, and focus on the challenges. So that's what we are doing with the new ReBrick we launched in March this year. It is still early days and it is really exciting to see how it is evolving already.

HBM: Regarding those other pages that link content; at the beginning, did LEGO want to compete with these pages or to complement them?

MH: I wasn't part of the strategy back then so I honestly don't know what the original strategy was, but knowing LEGO I'm sure it wasn't to compete with anyone. I am sure it was to enable people to do something that we felt was not possible at that time, trying to facilitate that. And then learning as you go along that we are not up for it, it doesn't make sense, they just do it better. We should let them do it and focus on what we can do well. And we learned that that was the challenges.

HBM: How do you evaluate the success of the first period of ReBrick?

MH: Being part of LEGO you are always being measured on reach and things like this, I'm sure that was also a metric back then. I could imagine something like "how many links are being shared", but it was also a big success criterion to make sure to celebrate the builders, I guess the intention was that if you could facilitate that and get things into one gallery and on one page then you would have a place where you could get totally inspired from all the different kind of builds that people do. To my knowledge I would say that was the success parameter back then. And to some extent it was that, it was just difficult to keep the momentum as other platforms were evolving so well whereas ReBrick really unfortunately didn't at that time.

HBM: Did you get the audience you set out for at the start?

MH: I would think yes. We wanted to be able to capture people who were really interested in LEGO and fans basically. People who were good builders and users, but also people who were interested in browsing. And we did see that, so I would say yes.

HBM: Recently ReBrick changed to a contest platform. Why did you decide to make this change?

MH: It was because we could see that on the old ReBrick people were really into the challenges. And because we are LEGO we are able to give some prizes that are different, like limited edition stuff or behind the scenes. Because we have access to that we can deliver it, which is of course a cool thing to be able to give out. That was where it started to make sense to us and we could see that people were really engaged. It's also an opportunity for us to work with the different product groups a bit more tightly and make sure they realise that there is this amazing AFOL community and 13+ community of builders who they can actually think of and work with in regards with what they do. We feel that it makes more sense to do it like we do it now, where we work with the product groups to figure out cool building challenges for the 13+ community that will challenge them creatively, but also give some entries that we can show to the different product groups at LEGO so they can really see that that is some inspiring stuff.



And we can use it to show to kids as well who can get inspired and see ways of playing with LEGO® and building with LEGO that they might otherwise never see.

HBM: How many contests do you plan to organise per year?

MH: This year we have 11 planned. Almost 1 a month which is quite a lot actually, because some of the people who build and participate are the same people, so there is a lot of building going on.

HBM: How are the themes of the contests decided?

MH: We work with the designers of the product groups and the marketing team to talk about what cool stuff they would like to see the community do. For example, for the Speed Champions contest we just had, they said they would love to see something that showed crazy ways of racing with race cars. So not necessarily on the track, but it could be races in the jungle or races in space - anything, just come up with what you want. We wanted to see cool races, because that's what they are about. So that's what we did with the community. We teamed up with Speed Champions and Porsche and asked people to build their dream race in LEGO Stop Motion. People built some very cool stuff and the talent is just overwhelming. Brickfilming and stop motion takes a lot of time to do; it is really difficult. And then to see such high quality. The creativity and geniality is just amazing. And we are able to actually send the winner to the 24 hour race in Le Mans in June, so tomorrow we are going to Stuttgart. There's a Brickfilm festival going on called Steinerei and we will announce the winner there. In that sense it is a really good example. It is a building contest, but it is also more than that. We can really go out there in the brick filming community and meet with these people and celebrate what they do. So we are really excited about that. And

this video will go live tomorrow on the on the LEGO social channel, and that's also a way to celebrate all the talent of those who participated. And it can show exactly what Speed Champions talks about: cool, fun, crazy ways of doing races. Hopefully that will inspire all ages to build.

HBM: Do you expect a certain specific number of participants? Is there a minimum number of participants?

MH: We talk a lot about that. It is actually difficult to set a benchmark like that because when is it enough, or when is it not enough? So for something like stop motion, that is so difficult to do and it takes a lot of time, we said if we were to have 40 entries that would be crazy. We got 38, so that was really good. We had one for LEGO Dimensions - we asked people to customise the portal for the game - for that we got around 120. So it is really different in terms of the popularity of the theme, and how difficult the entry barrier is. At the moment we are monitoring how much activity we get and then maybe in the future we can set criteria for how many we want. But for us it is more about the quality and getting people engaged. And the stuff people enter is of such high quality that we are able to share it in the broader LEGO Group and on the different social channels, so even more people can see it and get inspired by it. That is the main goal, so not necessarily how many, but we want it to be that good that we can show everybody how amazing it is so even more people can be inspired.

HBM: Do you follow any rules to decide the winners?

MH: Yes, we have really strict rules. We actually meet up with the design team and the marketing team. And we talk about the criteria, what would we like to see. So it has to be 25% LEGO humour for example - for the Speed Champions challenge it was also about humour - and building technique, inspiration, originality and creativity. So we set the rules to "this is what we are looking for" when we select winners. And we really have to do that because there are so many good entries. Otherwise it would be "They are all good, what do we choose?". So we have criteria and there is the judging panel from the design team and the marketing team and they can look at the criteria that we set up and say "that is the best one according to what we are looking for". That helps, because it is difficult to choose.

HBM: Teenagers can also participate in those contests, but their skills and the number of parts they have available are different from AFOLs. Do you take this into account when deciding the winner?

MH: When we decide the winners we don't look at age and who they are. For us it is important that it is the best, because that's what's most fair. But it is a good consideration, that if you are a teenager you might not have as much LEGO and you might not be able to do that big model that someone else did, but all the contests are also open for LDD and general digital building entries and that's where we actually see that the teenagers are really good. We had a contest for LEGO Worlds, for the game, and the participants were mostly teenagers. And since the contests are open for that too, there is a fair chance that you can build just as impressively, even if you don't have the bricks, you can also build digitally.

HBM: Who are participating more at the moment, teenagers or AFOLs?

MH: Mostly adults.

HBM: Do you plan to do any contests in collaboration with the registered LUGs, the community of fans?

MH: Yes, that is something we would definitely like to do. Right now, we have a Friends contest and for that one we teamed up with the different fan communities in North America. At the events, there will be a Friends area where we have the contest, but you can also participate on ReBrick globally. So basically we are doing it on ReBrick to allow other people to also enter even though they are not able to participate in the fan event in the US. That's one way of doing that. It is something that we would definitely like to do more of in the future. It's still early days. We are developing this and making sure that the concept works and then we can look at other cool stuff. I feel it's an area where there is so much opportunity, so many possibilities. There aren't really any limitations - it's just what you can come up with that could be fun and be cool and make sense. I hope we will be able to do that in the future.

HBM: What is the demographic profile of the ReBrick users?

MH: To be honest, we don't have a profile of the typical ReBrick user. We can see that a lot of participants are from the US, all over Europe, including Eastern Europe. We don't have an average age. For LEGO® Worlds and Ninjago it is mostly teenagers, and for animation and building stuff it is more older participants. I guess that speaks to what the theme of the contest is. If it is Ninjago, teenagers will be interested, and if it is Bionicle or Technic it's people who have that interest and they might be older.

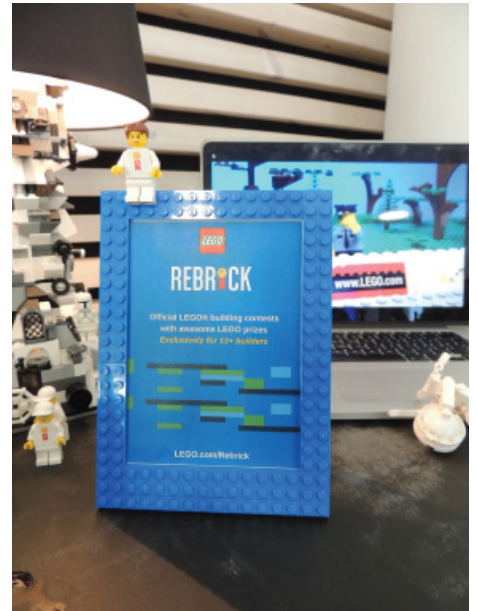
HBM: What about Asia? Is Asia also growing in participation in LEGO related contests and other activities?

MH: Yes, a little bit. We were lucky to have people from Asia in the ReBrick curator program back in the day. They were aware of the site and spread it in their LUGs. For Speed Champions we had some cool entries from Asia as well. And I got an email from a person I met over there who said that she had never done anything like stop motion before, but she thought it would look cool and she wanted to try it and she made an amazing entry. But there are some challenges, including technically. The LEGO platforms are a bit slower in Asia, and that is something that is being worked on.

HBM: Could the ReBrick site be used to collect inspiration for future sets?

MH: I doubt it. That's not what it is about. That is LEGO Ideas. Of course everybody is welcome to come and look at all the cool stuff that people build there, but it is not our focus. But we all get inspired all the time.

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