



A BRANDTRUST INQUIRY



Radio Flyer represents
the ideals of childhood.

Evoking a feeling of innocence,
boundless play and freedom,
it has the power to usher
a child along the path of
independence while giving a
mother a handhold to guide
her child's journey.

Radio Flyer authors
the stories of childhood.



Transcending the Toy

As one of the most beloved children's brands, Radio Flyer has taken young children and their parents on journeys of imagination for generations. From the iconic little red wagon that launched the brand over 90 years ago to tricycles and playful ride-on vehicles that inspire kids to explore the outdoors, Radio Flyer has created a legacy that has become synonymous with early childhood.

As the guardians of the brand seek to establish Radio Flyer as the number one brand of children's outdoor active play products in the world, it is paramount to understand and leverage the deeper needs and motivations of those they serve so that the brand stays true to its core DNA moving forward.

We found that Radio Flyer facilitates the expression of children's emerging personalities by providing toys with a simple design that take them on important voyages of freedom. These ride-on toys carry mother and child to an idealized notion of childhood. As children develop, Radio Flyer provides playtime experiences that simultaneously give children more independence and mothers a semblance of connection to their growing children. And while the process of "letting go" can be painful for mothers, Radio Flyer's trusted legacy provides mothers with the emotional safety to loosen their grip.

Radio Flyer, like few other childhood toys, evokes such strong associations with childhood. What does this look like and why is this important?



Childhood's Natural Habitat

Mothers idealize childhood as a simple and innocent time, symbolized by playful excursions into the outdoors. They learn from their own childhoods that the highest form of play is found outside in nature where the eternal, unchanging ideals of youth are found. As mothers, they believe it is their mission to encourage their children to play in the fresh air of the outdoors where their children have the space to remain innocent through participation in simple, unadulterated playtime activities.

Toys that are native to the outdoors, including Radio Flyer, transport children away from the confines of the home and into the realm of imagination. In this realm, children play creatively by nature, allowing their genuine personalities to surface as they explore and process the world around them.

If the outdoors are characterized by imaginative, free play and childlike innocence, then the indoors are distinguished as a place that stifles their children's development and tethers them to technology. While indoors, mothers worry that their children are becoming passive recipients in their own transformations, wasting mindless hours playing video games and watching television. Indoor toys and activities with tightly defined play patterns end up processing the world for children and suppressing the natural inclinations of their inner child.

In order to maintain their children's purity, mothers seek to get their children away from the corrupting influence of the indoors and into the great expanse of the outdoors. It is here that children learn about their own potential through involvement in straightforward child's play.

Creative Toys, or Children?

Mothers with young children are confronted with a basic, fundamental conflict—the objects of their deepest affection are also mysterious to them. In order to understand their children more intimately, mothers look to outdoor playtime and the toys that define that sphere of time to help reveal who their children are becoming.

In response, mothers prefer toys like Radio Flyer, which allow children's imaginations to be front and center, not the toy. Unlike toys that fashion fictional stories through licensed characters, the straightforward, unembellished nature of Radio Flyer ride-on toys gives children props with which to write stories of their own making.

Because they do not prescribe any particular form of play, Radio Flyer allows children to take center stage, which gives mothers a front row seat to the production featuring their children's ongoing evolution. After all, parents are looking to be impressed with their children's development, not the development of clever toys.

Radio Flyer toys are beloved because they embody their simple, but vital, role so well. Radio Flyer's fame comes as a result of its celebration of the innocence that mothers seek to secure for their children. The more simple the toy, the more it elevates the child. Consequently, the more complex the toy, the more the toy becomes the star.





Vehicles of Transcendence

While Radio Flyer toys can transport children from one place to another, these vehicles are also capable of carrying children and their mothers into different frames of existence, where they feel unencumbered by the passage of time and the weight of reality.

These magical moments with Radio Flyer are powered by the feeling of speed. Though children are not literally traveling at high speeds, the powerful feeling of escape from the ordinary and the freedom it enables elevates these adventures into the realm of the extraordinary. Simultaneously, children experience the feeling that they are flying on the back of a Radio Flyer toy, and mothers are transported back to their own childhood flights of freedom with Radio Flyer. Together, children and their mothers are carried into the realm of imagination, where their own fantasies become reality for a brief moment, yet feeling like an eternity.

Radio Flyer's visual simplicity and lack of cues to any time period or flash-in-the-pan trend help create the illusion of transcendence. Without these references, children and parents are able to connect with the eternal, romanticized ideal of childhood that has been evoked by Radio Flyer for generations.

"I remember the first day of summer when my two-year-old and I were running down the block together. It's like freedom with nothing attached. With Radio Flyer, it's like you're literally flying through time, going so fast, with no constraints on the adventure. It was like I had been transported to the time when I was a kid, playing with my Radio Flyer wagon."

A Symbol of Cherished Ideals

As much fun as Radio Flyer toys are for parents and their children, they are also deeply symbolic of an enduring idea of what childhood should always represent. This symbol is so powerful that it is able to rewrite the memories of mothers' own childhoods, according to the future hopes they have for their children, and vice versa.

Radio Flyer is a brand with a truly lasting identity. Mothers believe that they build the core of their children's identities with toys that have a wholesome appeal that never fades. When mothers choose these kinds of toys, it is because they want to give their children the kind of playtime experiences they had, along with the kinds of relationships and values that have passed the test of time.

It should come as no surprise then that mothers are unable to part with Radio Flyer toys because of their connection to these same ideals. This is also why mothers view Radio Flyer as durable; they have to be so that these cherished memories can remain alive. They have become family heirlooms because of their enduring appeal, and because part of their appeal is in their endurance.

Radio Flyer tells the story of an eternal version of childhood. The fact that its identity has stayed consistent makes Radio Flyer the best choice for mothers and their children who want to be connected to the ideal of a timeless childhood.



Learning to Let Go

Young children are on a profound mission of self-discovery, learning to explore the exciting world around them and understanding their place in that world. Mothers are also on a mission of self-discovery, learning that the beauty and challenge of motherhood is that as tightly as they would like to hold on to their beloved offspring, they continually need to learn to let go for their own good, and for the good of their offspring.

This process of letting go provokes mothers' deepest insecurities and, at the same time, becomes their greatest source of joy. They feel proud of their ability to nurture their children into the next stage of life, but they also feel emotionally vulnerable as their children demonstrate a diminishing reliance on them. Mothers live to be needed, but realize they need to let go so their children can learn what it means to grow up.

Radio Flyer helps mitigate this conflict by providing toys that help children become gradually independent. Each ride-on toy carries children closer to their more self-sufficient identities as they learn to test boundaries and assert their newfound independence at each stage. Because it's gradual, mothers have time to adapt to this change so that the pain of letting go is dampened.

"I feel this conflict about my children growing up. In the stroller, it's almost like I'm still holding them, like we're still connected. There's part of me that's lamenting the idea of letting go of their baby stage. The wagon gives them some space to become a big boy or girl, instead of me smothering them, which is what I really want to do. I need to let them feel that little sense of freedom."



Extending the Umbilical Cord

Mothers recognize that there is a clear progression of ride-on toys that matches the progression of their children's development. The transition from stroller to wagon is especially evocative for mothers because it can feel like a second birth. Mothers release their children from a more contained environment that lets them still feel connected into a more exposed, less controlled place. Children, meanwhile, gain a sense of independence by shedding the straps of confinement found in a stroller and adopting the fun and freedom of the wagon.

To mediate these transitions, handles hold important symbolic meaning for mothers. Handles provide mothers a semblance of connection with their children, like an invisible umbilical cord, even while the distance between mother and child grows. Handles also give mothers control even though they are one step away; a step that eventually grows into two steps, and eventually what seems like a world away.

As children become older, scooters satisfy their desire to socialize and to leave their mothers behind. Scooters are the first ride-on toys that lack a handhold for mothers, accelerating the physical and emotional distance between mothers and their children.

All of these transitions come with tremendous angst for mothers. While mothers feel pride in the surging confidence of their young offspring, they begin to fear the consequences of that developing confidence. Radio Flyer reassures mothers that the toys their children ride on will guide them safely to the wholesome destination found by generations of children before them.



A Safe Kind of Dangerous

Children's play is dangerous—filled with desires to go fast, far and high. Mothers, however, seem blissfully immune to the consequences that could befall their children while they play on Radio Flyer toys. Because mothers inherently trust Radio Flyer, children are invited to take the kinds of risks that are still permissible.

Buying Radio Flyer also makes an important statement that mothers care about giving their children tools for success, allowing them to feel like a good mother. Equally as important, Radio Flyer ride-on toys make mothers' nagging cautions to play safely unnecessary, allowing them to focus on praising their children's efforts rather than on protecting them from harm.

When children do fall, and they inevitably do, mothers believe that the kind of pain that comes from falling off of a Radio Flyer vehicle is the right kind of pain. Mothers trust that just as a Radio Flyer wagon can get scratched and dented, children will learn resilience when they fall, despite superficial injuries.

Radio Flyer vehicles balance thrilling fun with safety while instilling a deep sense of trust in mothers. This trust allows them to stand back while their children discover growing independence. Mothers know that their children may get hurt on these journeys, but are confident that, with Radio Flyer's trusted reputation, any bumps and bruises will merely add character, rather than ruin their children's sense of adventure.



A Call to Play

So what is underneath the lasting bond with Radio Flyer?

Children embark on journeys into nature, away from the trappings of video games and TV, to uncover their own hidden natures on toys that encourage a purer, more imaginative form of play.

Because Radio Flyer gives children license to play as they please in the great expanse of the outdoors, children take center stage in the story of their evolution. Mothers eagerly participate in the child's journey from their front row seat, even as they manage their own mounting insecurities of "letting go." Children embark on playtime excursions that feel adventurous as they master new levels of independence, while mothers feel safe as they learn the necessary skills to handle increasingly mobile children due to their deep-seated trust in Radio Flyer.

Radio Flyer is not just a brand of ride-on toys, but an experience that transports mothers and their children to the idealized notion of what it means to be a carefree child.



“ With Radio Flyer, it’s like you are literally flying through time with no constraints on the adventure. It’s a feeling of freedom with nothing attached. Playing with my son transports me back in time, back to my childhood.”

THE EMOTIONAL INQUIRY® STUDY

This Brandtrust Emotional Inquiry® study involved one-on-one interviews with mothers of young children who are Radio Flyer loyalists. Respondents were guided through relaxation and visualization exercises and were asked to respond to a series of probes about experiences with Radio Flyer ride-on toys. These techniques are not new to psychological analysis, but Brandtrust is among the first to use them extensively in a commercial way.

BRANDTRUST
875 N. MICHIGAN AVENUE, SUITE 2945
CHICAGO, IL 60611
312.440.1833
WWW.BRANDTRUST.COM

What is it about Radio Flyer?

It started simply enough.
Just a shallow metal box on
four wheels. But somehow
this little red wagon propelled
flights of fancy and helped
hearts soar high.

We knew there must be more
to Radio Flyer than meets
the eye so we decided to
investigate.