



Marketplace relies on you. [GIVE NOW](#)

[https://contribute.publicradio.org/contribute.php?](https://contribute.publicradio.org/contribute.php?refId=apmmktp201203w)

[refId=apmmktp201203w](#)

How to get parents to pay \$169 for a toy robot



Play-i

by **Adriene Hill** (</people/adriene-hill>)
Wednesday, June 25, 2014 - 12:38

[STORY](#)



When you're covering educational technology, you see a lot of gee-whiz tech gear and toys that claim to make kids smarter. Lots of those toys make similar sounds. And we wanted to find out why.

So we went in search of the real meaning in the sounds of ed tech.

Lots of those toys are also pretty pricey. And it turns out getting parents to fork over for them also has something to do with sound, too.

Think of it as the sound of the sell.

Because this story is a story about, yes, sound, we encourage you to take a few minutes to listen to it.

[Audio interactive: Can minor chords make you cry?](http://www.marketplace.org/topics/education/learningcurve/can-minor-chords-make-you-cry)

(<http://www.marketplace.org/topics/education/learningcurve/can-minor-chords-make-you-cry>).



MARKETPLACE®

Cookie policy



Marketplace
Full LearningCurve story: The noises of edtech

SOUNDCLOUD

4:36

575

Along the way we meet a robot named Bo, whose sounds were developed by folks who'd worked at Pixar, the movie studio behind Cars and Toy Story. Bo is an educational toy, meant to teach young kids to code.

We meet Vikas Gupta, who heads [Play-i \(https://www.play-i.com/\)](https://www.play-i.com/), the company that makes Bo. He tells how sounds can establish an emotional connections between a child and the robot.

We meet director and composer [Steven Wilson \(http://www.beautimusproductions.com\)](http://www.beautimusproductions.com), who wrote the music for Play-i's [promotional video \(http://youtu.be/uLDQDaPHy9E\)](http://youtu.be/uLDQDaPHy9E). He tells us about all the tricks composers use when writing music meant to make us feel a certain way. To put us in a buying mood, as it were.

And, we meet [Bruce Walker \(http://sonify.psych.gatech.edu/~walkerb/\)](http://sonify.psych.gatech.edu/~walkerb/), a professor in the School of Psychology and School of Interactive Computing at Georgia Tech. He talks us through the future sounds of our technology and how sounds help create emotional connections that can encourage us to buy.

What do you think? How do sounds influence your emotions? We've got a cool audio quiz [here \(http://www.marketplace.org/topics/education/learningcurve/can-minor-chords-make-you-cry\)](http://www.marketplace.org/topics/education/learningcurve/can-minor-chords-make-you-cry).



Featured in: *Marketplace for Wednesday June 25, 2014* (</shows/marketplace/marketplace-wednesday-june-25-2014>)



About the author

Adriene Hill is the senior multimedia reporter for LearningCurve.

Follow @adrienehill

2,090 followers

[Read More » \(/people/adriene-hill\)](/people/adriene-hill)

Comments for this thread are closed.

2 Comments



BBoB T June 26, 2014

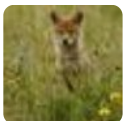
What "don't do evil concept"?

* * *

It seems that “Bo” may be a fun toy to play with, for some children of well-healed parents. Maybe fun for the parents, too.

There’s utterly no evidence that playing with such a toy would be better for cognitive or any other flavor of development or useful skills of any kind, than playing with any other fun toy.

The second half of the segment is all about a typical _Marketplace_ theme - the sewer of the Schools of Communications; specifically, advertising and in this instance the “educational technology sell”. It’s a confidence trick to reel in the rubes. The art and craft of such deception absolutely fascinates journalists, who are the poor relations of Communications Schools' Big Money Trio - public relations, marketing and advertising.



Jerrold_Richards June 26, 2014

So how does this relate to the don't do evil concept?