



Photos courtesy of
The Op Games

THE NAME OF THE GAME: FUN

At The Op Games in Carlsbad, board meetings are never bored meetings.

Written by Lois Swagerty

Why is Dane Chapin so excited to go to work every Monday? Because, he says, "I make board games!" Board games and puzzles and dice and more. The 66-year-old founder and CEO of The Op Games (formerly known as USAopoly) spends his workday developing and marketing family party games that are played by millions worldwide. Says the man who has a monopoly on fun, "I create joy, laughter, memories and connection."

Chapin's enthusiasm for board games runs deep, reaching back to warm memories of playing Canasta with his grandparents as a youth. He's never forgotten the special joy of connecting with family around games.

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."
—George Bernard Shaw





"The perfect family board game is one that can be played each time with fewer pieces."
—Robert Breault

ADVANCE TO GO AND COLLECT \$200

He started in the game business in 1994 when his two younger sisters hatched the idea of putting a twist on the classic Monopoly game by creating custom city editions and licensed them with Hasbro. They brought Dane on board, and he also convinced Hasbro to license an Olympics edition for the 1966 games in Atlanta, which was a great success.

Chapin says, "We expanded from 40 different cities—including San Diego Monopoly—into pop culture, with Harley Davidson, NASCAR, Disney, Warner Brothers and everything in between. Over the years we've made more than 1,000 versions of Monopoly, and we're still at it 31 years later." Some popular brands include Harry Potter, Super Mario Brothers, Scooby-Doo, Peanuts and Grinch versions of iconic games such as Chess, Candy Land, Clue, Jenga, Operation, Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, Yahtzee and more.

"We pride ourselves on making games that all ages can play," Chapin says. The company's mainstay is family party games, which include some of the most popular games in the industry. "Tapple was the #1 board game in the U.S. last year, and we also had four out of the top 10 family/party games in the country." (see sidebar)

GET OUT OF JAIL FREE

Along with new twists on classic games, The Op Games also designs originals such as Telestrations and Flip 7. "Our new game Flip 7 is the hottest card game globally, on track to becoming our best-selling game ever," says Chapin. "It's an easy-to-learn, multigenerational card game that's quick to play, super fun and versatile. The Grinch Flip 7 game [exclusively at Walmart] is on fire. If you like Uno, you'll like Flip 7 even more!"

The inventor of Flip 7 is a math teacher in Boise, Idaho, named Eric Olsen, whose royalties so far have allowed him to quit his day job and devote himself to creating more games. "We love to tell stories about our inventors," Chapin says. "They have tremendous passion, and it's exciting for me to be a part of it." Of the 2,000 to 3,000 new games The Op Games reviews annually, the company

launches at least five each year.

Chapin's company is on target to sell more than 7 million games this year. He says spreading the word about new games is essential, as their success relies on word-of-mouth advertising. "Customer satisfaction is our lifeblood, and we do a ton of social media. People love to post themselves playing our games on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube."

TAKE A WALK ON THE BOARDWALK

The family-owned business has been located in Carlsbad for 15 years. "I'm a San Diego native and I think the North County coast is the greatest place in the world," he says. "I can live a rich life within a 6-mile radius of my home and work. I'm really, really fortunate in what I get to do."

If you're wondering about the future of board games in an age of cell phones, Chapin observes, "I've never been more bullish about the board game business. I think there's a craving for connection like never before. While playing games, everyone is forced to sit around the table, put their phones away and connect with each other.

"I frankly think board games will become more important than ever. Smart phones are a great tool to improve our lives and they're here to stay. And board games are a great tool to help us disconnect from a wired world and connect in a personal way."

THE OP GAMES

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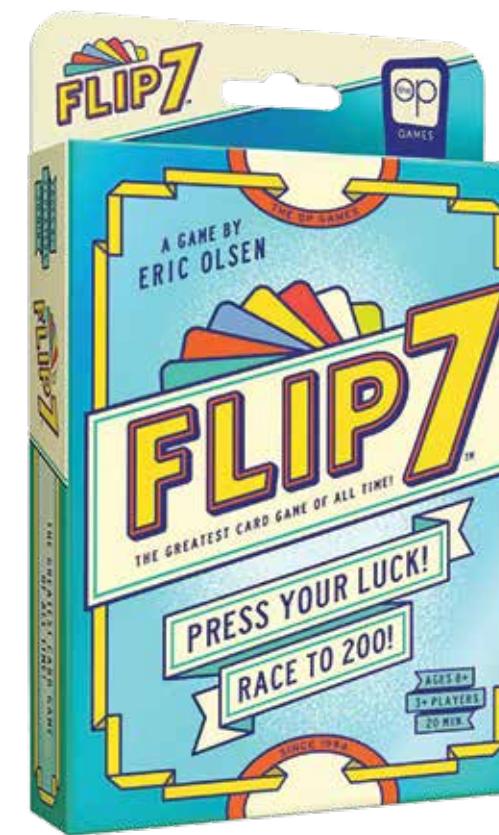
Photos courtesy of
The Op Games

THE OP GAMES'S TOP 4 BOARD GAMES IN 2024

Tapple
Blank Slate
Telestrations
Hues & Cues

WHERE TO FIND THE OP GAMES:

Amazon
Target
Walmart
Barnes & Noble
Geppetto's Toys (in the Carlsbad Forum)



"OUR NEW GAME FLIP 7 IS THE HOTTEST CARD GAME GLOBALLY, ON TRACK TO BECOMING OUR BEST-SELLING GAME EVER," SAYS CHAPIN.

