Purple Pawn's

2010 Worldwide Game Industry Survey

Covering non-sports, non-video games

http://purplepawn.com
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Introduction

This report contains the results of a survey of over 7000 companies conducted in January, 2011. The companies surveyed are companies that make money by means of analog, tabletop games, which are games that are not sports (ball games, yard games, bar games) and not video games (console, PC, mobile, and handheld electronic games). Products of interest include:

- Board games
- Card games and collectible or trading card games
- Tile games
- Dice games and poker materials
- Role-playing games
- War games and miniatures
- Puzzle or Solitaire games (but not true puzzles, such as jigsaw, brainteaser, etc)
- Any products used to create, enhance, organize, market, sell, or package these games

Any company, regardless of its primary industry, that makes at least some money by means of analog games – via licensing, publishing, producing, selling, and so on – was considered.

For year-round coverage of game news and industry information, visit Purple Pawn at **http://purplepawn.com**.

Summary

Of the companies surveyed, those that did not close reported good results, with 85% reporting that they had done at least as well or better in 2010 than they had done in 2009.

Single-game game companies (sggc's) make a significant portion of publishers. Sggc's are eager to get the news out about their products, but likely to not actively build relationships, maintain an accurate website, respond to emails, and ultimately survive more than a year or two.

Top CCGs continue to provide steady income for game stores; Catan, Carcassonne, Dominion, Munchkin, Warhammer, and Warmachine lines also performed well. There is still room for new games, as demonstrated by the success of Dixit, Rory's Story Cubes, Dominion, Small World, and Forbidden Island, all of which are games released in the last year or two. A successful new game should be followed by expansions or additional games; many new games perform well initially but drop off due to lack of continued innovation.

Participate

To participate in future surveys, send your name, company name, website address, and email address to **admin@purplepawn.com** .

Background

At the beginning of 2010, I saw a need for a wide-ranging survey of the analog game industry. The problem with existing industry reports is:

- They typically cover a specific country or region
- They typically cover more than just the game industry, such as toys and games, or gambling and games, or video games
- They typically cost $1,500 or more to obtain

For that price, a price that someone like me is unable or unwilling to spend, I didn't know what I was going to get. How many companies did they survey and how many responded? What kind of information did they get and how is it broken down? How much of the game industry did they actually reach? What is the game industry, anyway?

The Game Industry

Over the course of 2010 I started compiling a list of companies that were involved in the "game industry". When I started, I didn't know how many there would be, but I figured, counting the entire world, that it would be somewhere between 10,000 to 100,000 companies. I was wrong.

I quickly discovered the problems. I was interested in every company in the world that made money from analog games. If a sports company licensed their name to a board game, I was interested. If a plastics company provided materials for games, I was interested. It became obvious to me that, using the most liberal definition "made money from games", the number of companies "in the game industry" numbered in the millions.

Think about how many companies and people are involved in the production of a game. From the mining companies who make machines to mine bauxite to turn it into a mold that can be used to make a plastic pawn, to the gas station that prints a word search puzzle on the back of a gas receipt, to an artist who paints custom-made Chess board in Shanghai, the number of companies involved, however tenuously, in making money from games is probably more than the number of companies that don't.

And what, exactly, is the analog game industry, anyway? Is an electronic Chess set an analog game or a video game? What about Chess for the iPad? Or a program for tracking RPG characters and encounters? Or a TCG with codes that can be used in an online MMOG? What about unrelated companies that use game-like mechanisms to boost productivity, or gamification companies? What about tabletop versions of sports or bar games; is Hungry Hungry Hippos a sport or a game?

The unfortunate truth is that no one can count satisfactorily every dime made through "analog" games by everyone, everywhere, while also excluding exactly what is irrelevant. I had to define boundaries and make cuts. Those expensive industry research reports must face the same difficulties; though I have yet to see any of their reports, I'd wager that they survey companies who declare themselves to be in the toy and game industry. At the very least, that excludes some of the largest companies making money from analog games, such as Microsoft – licensees to several games, Fox – many games published with their TV shows, and Harper Collins – who have published numerous books with games in them. These companies should rightfully be considered part of the game industry, regardless of how they list themselves at the IRS.

I also came to realize that gathering information for thousands of companies is a huge job for someone who doesn’t do this full time. The majority of companies are not online, have no websites, no email contact info, and so on. How many tens of thousands of companies in China make Chess pieces, or in India make Chaupati boards? There is no simple way to know this; some information about exports is available, but exports represent only a small part of the overall industry of a country.

Company Categories

I divided the industry into the following categories:

- **Suppliers**: Provide products or services to help other companies make or play games, including miniature manufacturers, designers, illustrators, painters, consultants, printers, paint, plastics, and paper manufacturers, and other companies with ties to the game industry.
- **Publishers**: Create in-house games, products, and books; may use suppliers to help create the products, and distributors and retailers to help sell them.
- **Single-game Game Companies**: A subset of publishers, a sggc designs, publishes, and markets a single game or line of games (including differently themed versions of the same game, or college or junior versions of a single game). These companies are particularly of interest to me.
- **Distributors**: Buy or take on consignment games that they did not publish and sell or distribute these games to retailers. If you only distribute your own games, I don't count you as a distributor.
- **Retailers**: Receive from publishers, sggc's, or distributors games that they did not publish and sell these to the general public.
- **Facilitators**: Provide space for or run games for people to play, such as organizations, convention organizers, retailers with gaming spaces, lotteries, and casinos.
- **Journalists**: Provide information about games.

This report ignores the latter two categories; I surveyed retailers who provide gaming space, but only noted them as retailers. I do not list casinos and lotteries, despite that fact that these probably represent more money made with games than any other group on the list. I do not list companies making money from writing about games; I suspect that there’s not much money being made there, despite the continued prevalence of Bridge and Chess columns and 24 hour a day TV channels devoted to Go and XiangQi in Japan and Korea.

Many of the respondents had trouble with these categories. Some designers who license their designs to publishers don’t understand why I considered them suppliers; neither do some miniature makers, especially those whose products are used by gamers but who don't make them specifically for gamers.

Companies that don't see themselves in the game industry, even though they had published a game or licensed their name to a game, etc., often confusedly assumed that I was mistaken in contacting them. Of course, I ran into many issues like these during the survey.

Methodology

I limited the companies to those that have a working website and those that have some kind of contact information. For those companies that did not provide an email address on their site, but provided a contact form, I used the form to ask for a press contact email. When it came time to asking 10,000 companies about their business, I was not prepared to manually complete 3,000 contact forms, each with their peculiarities of required information or registration. I was only willing to send the survey by email.

I limited my list to only those companies that made money from their games; companies that gave away their games for promotion or other reasons I excluded.

From previous experience, I knew that I could not ask many private companies, especially ones with which I did not already have a personal relationship, specific questions regarding finances.

I didn't ask any questions about information that I could find on a company's site, such as country, product lines, etc. Instead, I asked a very limited set of general questions, hoping that the shorter and less threatening the survey, the better the likely response.

I assured all companies that no information identifying their company will appear in the results. The majority of the companies had never heard of me, and had no reason to trust me, but some were willing to. I sent the questions by email, which ended up being around 7150 emails; I'm sure that my questions ended up in many spam folders.

Questions

These were the questions that I asked.

1. What is the name of your company and your name? If you are a subsidiary of another company, what is its name? If you have subsidiaries that would fit into one of the above five categories, what are their names?

Note: This was asked for two reasons. One, I wanted to ensure that the information I pulled from their web site was correct and up to date. Many web sites are simply unclear about the nature of their business. And two, if the response I get is not from an email to which I originally sent the survey, as it often was, I will have no idea for what company the respondent is answering.

2. With respect to the game industry only, I have your company listed as XXX. Is this correct? If not, what are the correct categories?

Note: Believe it or not, many companies' sites do not indicate if the items they feature are ones they publish, distribute, or retail.

3. With respect to the game industry only, did your company start, expand, consolidate, merge with another company, acquire another company, or cease to operate in 2010?

4. Considering only games, and compared to 2009, how was 2010 for your company? Great (+10% or more), good (+2% - +9%), average (-1% - +1%), poor (-9% - -2%), very poor (-10% or less).

Note: I figured that this question, rather than one asking for specific profit values, would be more likely to receive an answer. Some companies did not know if this question referred to number of units sold or to profits collected.

Some companies declined to answer this.

5. Considering only games, what were your best selling products in 2010?

Note: I also asked for new products to the first 500 or so publishers, before realizing that a) I could get that information myself, b) I wasn't going to do much with the information, and c) the next question is more useful anyway.

Some companies answered separately regarding units sold and profits collected.

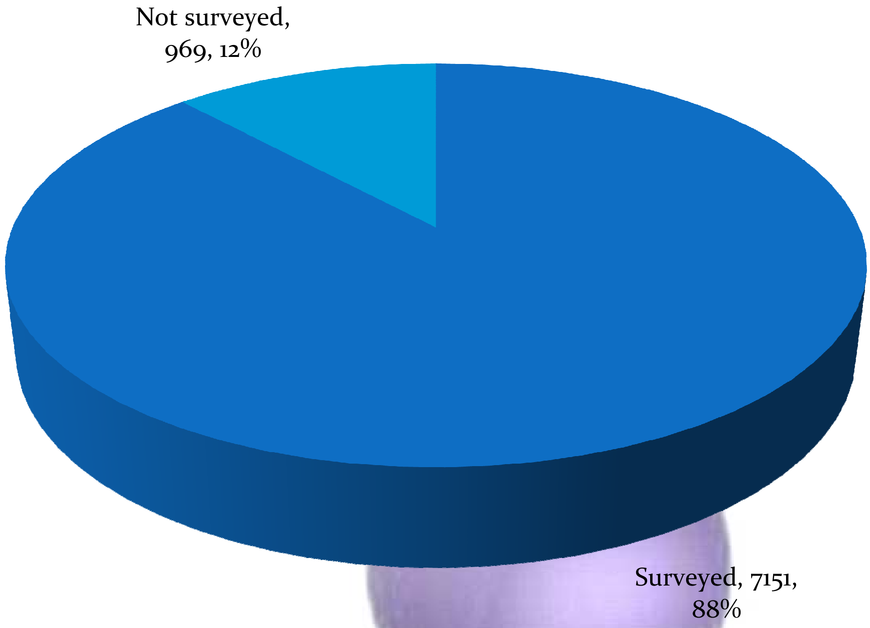
Some companies declined to answer this question, as well. Certain miniature manufacturers, for instance.

6. (Suppliers, publishers, and sggc's) Do you have any products that you would like Purple Pawn to note, review, or promote in the next quarter?

6. (Distributors and retailers) Would you be willing to answer additional questions for a dedicated article about your company?

Note: This question was a not-so-subtle attempt to increase the number of respondents by offering them something in return for answering the questions. However, the information will actually be used (and is already being used) for posts on our site. There is mutual benefit for companies to give us interesting information and for us to have access to that information.

Having established relationships, next time I will ask a few more questions, such as company size and number of years in the game business.



Of the 8,120 companies in my database, I had a contact email address for 7,151 of them. Several hundred of these addresses were only gathered after filling out the company's contact form and specifically asking for an email address.

The companies surveyed were from around the world, including (but not limited to) the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Italy, Russia, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, India, Brazil, Israel, New Zealand, and Australia.

I only sent the survey questions to those companies for which I had email addresses. If the email bounced, I checked the website to see if the site had disappeared since I had added it to the database (sometime in 2010) or if the email address had changed, which was the case in many circumstances. When the email address had changed, I sent a second survey email to the changed address.

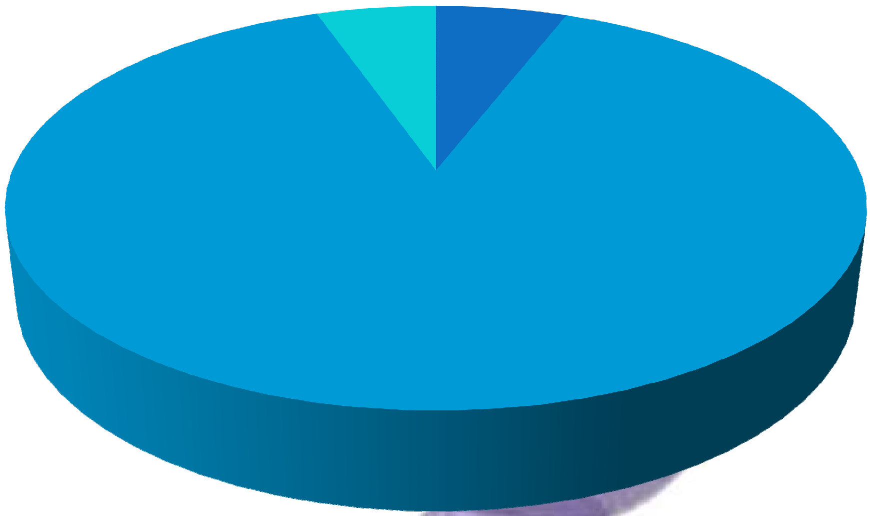
The number of companies in my database when I began to survey was not 8120. As I received responses, I learned that some websites that I thought belonged to two different companies in fact belonged to the same company, and so these entries were merged. In addition, I received information about additional companies, either as a response to the survey or simply from my ongoing research, as the survey continued; I added these companies to the survey as I went.

Since sending the survey, I have learned of additional companies, and I expect to continue to do on an ongoing basis. I will have several hundred or more companies to contact next time.

Responses

This section presents the responses to the survey.

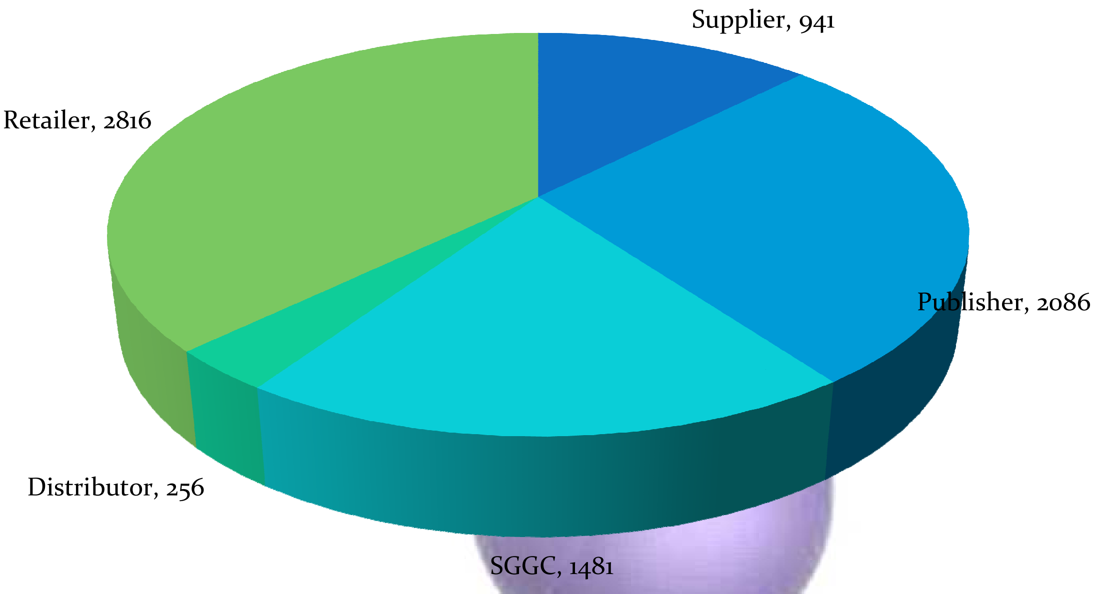
Response Rate



I expected a response rate of between 5% to 10%. The above bounce rate is after sending a second email, if the email address had changed since I first recorded the site.

Of the 419 responses, 14 indicated that their companies were not in any of the categories I was looking at (not related to the game industry), and an additional 31 declined to participate in this or any future surveys. Most of those who declined did so politely.

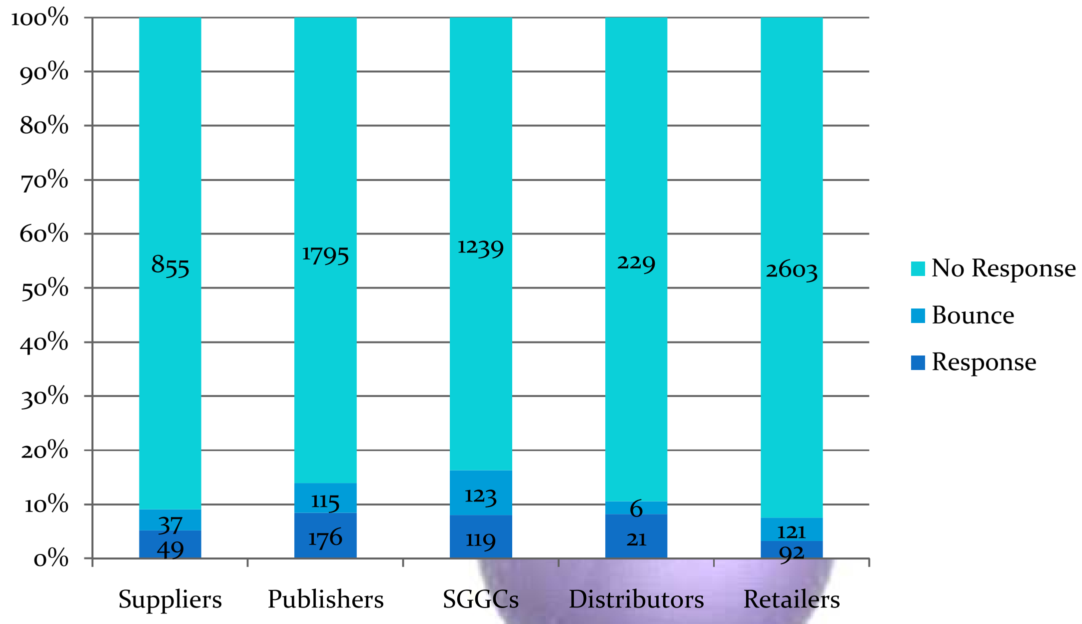
Company Type



Since most companies didn't respond to the survey, it's possible that I have some of these companies listed in the wrong category. Many companies fit into more than one category.

A point of interest: In "out of the way" countries, i.e. ones that don't have strong original game publishers, game retailers are nearly always also game distributors, and often also game "publishers", in that they produce the games locally in the prevalent language, either legally (by license) or illegally.

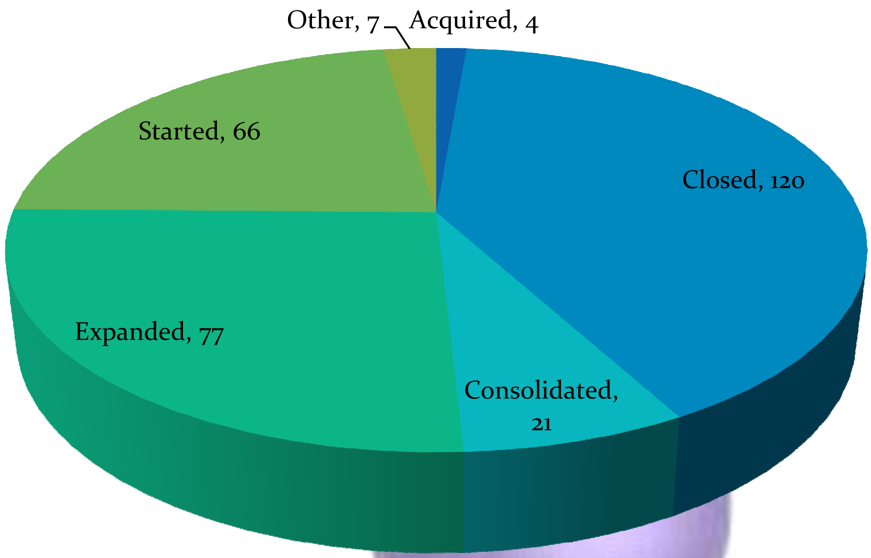
Response Rate by Company Type



Note that some companies fall into multiple categories; they are considered in each category for which they apply.

The best response rate was from publishers and sggc's. Sggc's are particularly hungry for any avenues, especially free ones, to market their products; several responded to the survey by including marketing material about their game (as if I hadn't already read it on their web site). Also note the high rate of bounces for sggc's; these companies are the most likely to be newer companies with changed email addresses, or to have gone out of business between the time I entered them into my database sometime in 2010 and the time that I sent the survey.

2010 Activity

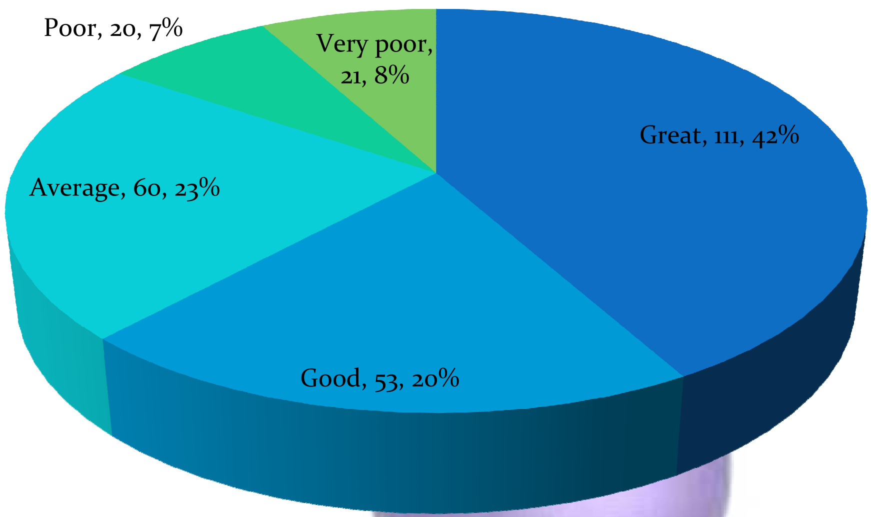


Acquired indicates that the company acquired another company, or another company's line of products (this is actually a subset of expanded). Other indicates a company that expanded in one place but consolidated in another, merged with another company, or incorporated.

Among companies that closed, most were retailers and sggc's. Among companies that started, most were publishers and sggc's. I expect that companies that started, especially sggc's that started, were particularly eager to tell me about it. A few of the companies I surveyed had not actually begun selling any products, yet.

Among companies that closed, only 4 responded to tell me this. The others I could no longer find on the web; I checked these after their email bounced. It is highly likely that many companies whose web sites persist have also de facto ceased to operate. Furthermore, it is highly likely that many companies whose emails didn't bounce have also ceased to operate. It is slightly possible that some companies who no longer maintain an obvious web presence continue to operate.

2010 Sales Results



In addition to the above responses, all companies that started in 2009 or 2010 responded with "NA" (the request was to compare 2010's results with 2009). A handful of companies, not included in the above chart, said that one subdivision was good, while the other was great, or that one product line was average, while the other was great.

I have no independent means of checking whether the companies were telling the truth, or if they responded that sales were "great" because they wanted to sell me something. In particular, I am suspicious of any "great" response from an sggc that also sent me marketing material.

I will use these responses as baseline data in the next quarter and next year to establish trends.

Best Sellers

When I started the survey, I thought it would be interesting to compare the bestsellers claimed by the publishers with those claimed by the distributors and retailers. In practice, this didn't work. Bestselling games are from a handful of publishers; the bestselling games from the other publishers don't show up on the radar of responses. This doesn't mean that they're not selling just fine as far as the publisher is concerned.

The following are bestsellers from retailers and distributors, considering only items that appear in at least two responses.

Product	Publisher *	Count	Comments
Magic CCG line	Hasbro / Wizards of the Coast	32	Some of the retail stores I surveyed dealt only in Magic cards. Nevertheless, Magic continues to be a strong seller in all types of retail outlets.
Catan line	Mayfair Games	22	Catan and Dominion were neck and neck for top selling family game lines. Both had new products in 2010.
Dominion line	Rio Grande Games	21	
Warhammer lines	Games Workshop	12	Including minis and RPGs, 40k and fantasy. GW produces new products every year.
Carcassonne line	Rio Grande Games	11	
Dungeons and Dragons lines	Hasbro / Wizards of the Coast	8	Mainly 4e material. D&D was essentially neck and neck with Pathfinder.
Munchkin line	Steve Jackson Games	8	Still a strong seller, with much crossover appeal.
YuGiOh CCG line	Konami Digital Entertainment	8	New expansions in 2010.
Dixit	Asmodee	7	
Forbidden Island	Gamewright	7	
Pathfinder	Paizo Publishing	7	
Ticket to Ride line	Days of Wonder	7	
Warmachine	Privateer Press	6	Gave GW a run for its money.
World of Warcraft CCG line	Cryptozoic Entertainment	5	New ownership in 2010.
Agricola line	Z-Man Games	4	
Pandemic	Z-Man Games	4	Eclipsed by Forbidden Island by the same designer / publisher team (FI is much cheaper).
Pokemon CCG line	Pokemon	4	
Axis & Allies line	Hasbro / Milton Bradley	3	
HeroClix	WizKids	3	
Jungle Speed	Asmodee	3	
Rory's Story Cubes	Gamewright	3	
A Game of Thrones LCG line	Fantasy Flight Games	2	
Arkham Horror line	Fantasy Flight Games	2	
Bananagrams	Bananagrams	2	

Product	Publisher *	Count	Comments
Battlestar Galactica	Fantasy Flight Games	2	
Bohnanza	Rio Grande Games	2	
Civilization	Fantasy Flight Games	2	New in 2010.
Colorku	Mad Cave Bird Games	2	
Fluxx line	Looney Labs	2	
Hordes	Privateer Press	2	
Katamino	Fundex	2	
L5R CCG	Alderac Entertainment Group	2	
Quoridor	Fundex	2	
Rat-a-Tat Cat	Gamewright	2	
Saboteur	Z-Man Games	2	
Set	SET Enterprises	2	
Small World	Days of Wonder	2	
Wits and Wagers	North Star Games	2	Family edition from 2010, I presume.
Zombie Dice	Steve Jackson Games	2	

* Multiple publishers publish most game/game lines; only one is presented in the table.

The largest retailers, such as Toys-R-Us, Wal-Mart, etc, didn't answer my survey; that's probably why Monopoly and other famous games are missing from the list.

Also, just because a game sold well at 10 retailers, but a second game sold well at only 2, doesn't mean that the first game sold more units or produced more profit overall than second one did.

I didn't break sales down by country or region, or offline vs. online. For that, you're going to have to wait until the next installment.