

1st Annual *Counselor* Product

We went in search of the best looking, most functional and classically designed products in the ad specialty industry. Here are the winners of this inaugural contest.



With such a focus these days on price and performance and reliability and functionality, the design of promotional products often gets lost. No longer. With this issue, we're introducing the first ever *Counselor* Product Design Awards.

This a program created to honor the best-designed products in the industry. Representing 12 different product categories, the winners here demonstrate the height of creativity in the market today. Of course, what makes most of these products great is not just that they look good (they most certainly do), but also that they're highly functional.

It's this element that truly makes them effective ad specialties. They combine smart and unique designs along with a high element of functionality. They're items that people want to look at *and* use. That's not an easy combination to achieve – just ask any ad specialty supplier. But the 12 products featured on the following pages certainly achieve both. Congratulations to all of the winning suppliers. It's a richly deserved honor. Listed to the right are the winners and finalists in each of the categories.

How The Winners Were Chosen

Counselor first asked for nominations from both suppliers and distributors. Each could nominate any number of products they thought were the best designed within 12 different categories. In all, we received 233 product nominations. A panel of the *Counselor* editors then reviewed each product and arrived at a list of finalists for each of the categories. The finalists were then voted on by distributors to arrive at the winner in each category. Overall, more than 1,000 votes were cast.

Design Awards

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Pumper Truck: Crystal D (asi/47759)

American Intercontinental Trade Group Inc. (asi/35530)
Awardcraft (asi/37650)
Digi-Crystal (asi/49715)
Jaffa (asi/63110)
Logomark (asi/67866)
Marketing Promotion Image (asi/68833)
R S Owens & Co. Inc. (asi/75530)
Visions Awards (asi/93986)
Winross LLC (asi/97485)
ZMarketing Group (asi/98900)

SPORTING GOODS

Jogger Pedometer: Calibre International (asi/43442)

Bullet Line Inc. (asi/42424)
FlexSystems USA Inc. (asi/54597)
Gemline (asi/56070)
Gold Bond Inc. (asi/57653)
Handstands (asi/59525)
Jornik Manufacturing Corp. (asi/63549)
Leed's (asi/66887)
Logomark (asi/68766)
Source 1 (asi/88251)
Z Marketing Group (asi/98900)

APPAREL/CAPS

Alo Women's Lightweight Jacket: Bella (asi/39590)

Caro-Line (asi/44020)
Charles River Apparel (asi/44620)
Cutter & Buck (asi/47965)
Dri Duck Traders Inc. (asi/50835)
Dunbrooke (asi/50930)
Imagein Leather Inc. (asi/62236)
Mill Direct Wholesale (asi/71185)
MV Sport/Weatherproof (asi/68318)
Revedore Apparel Inc. (asi/82271)
Rohde Royce Inc. (asi/83278)
Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)

CALENDARS

MousePaper Calendars Mouse Pad: Digispec (asi/49716)

Hotline Products (asi/61960)
International Merchandise Concepts (asi/62820)
Logomark (asi/68766)
Sourcery (asi/88209)
Triumph Calendars/Norwood (asi/92185)
Warwick Publishing Co. (asi/95280)

MEETING PRODUCTS

Talking Bag: Talking Bags Inc. (asi/90541)

Buztronics Inc. (asi/42963)
Calibre Intl. LLC (asi/43442)
Evans Mfg. (asi/52840)
Flappers USA LLC (asi/54563)
Leed's (asi/66887)
Meetings Direct (asi/70429)
New Products International Inc. (asi/73780)
Points of Light Inc. (asi/178865)
Quick Point Inc. (asi/80150)
Style-Rite Planners/Norwood (asi/89998)
Z Marketing Group (asi/98900)

BAGS

Victorinox Tourbach 22" Wheeled Upright: TRG Group (asi/90507)

Atchison Products Inc. (asi/37210)
Gemline (asi/56070)
Gold Bond Inc. (asi/57653)
Leed's (asi/66887)
Logomark (asi/67866)
Mobile Edge (asi/71854)
Ogio Intl. Inc. (asi/74773)
Paradise Promotions LLC (asi/75925)
Picnic Time Inc. (asi/78065)
Sunscope (asi/90075)

DESK ACCESSORIES

Spirit of St. Louis Desktop Clock Radio: Leed's (asi/66887)

A T Cross Co. (asi/47520)
Calibre International LLC (asi/43442)
Chass Inc. (asi/44623)
Idea Factory (asi/30993)
Jornik Manufacturing Corp. (asi/63549)
Nambe (asi/72848)
Points of Light Inc. (asi/78825)
Ruda Overseas Inc. (asi/84114)
Spector Image (asi/88660)
Sourcery (asi/88209)
The Quill Co. Inc. (asi/80220)

GIFT CARDS

Broken Bridges Music Download Card: Media Tree (asi/70303)

Best Buy Gift Cards
Certif-A-Gift Co. (asi/44500)
CFS Promotions for Now! (asi/42989)
Gourmet Gifting Inc. (asi/57876)
Jaffa (asi/63110)
Target Gift Cards
TRG Group (asi/90507)

ELECTRONICS/COMPUTER ACCESSORIES

Solar-Charging Backpack: Gemline (asi/56070)

Digispec (asi/49716)
Handstands (asi/59525)
KTI Networks Inc. (asi/63776)
Leed's (asi/66887)
Logomark (asi/68766)
Buztronics Inc. (asi/42963)
Sourcery (asi/88209)
S&S Creations Inc. (asi/84357)
Sunscope (asi/90075)
The Selco Companies (asi/86230)
TRG Group (asi/90507)

PENS

Laughing Pen: Points of Light (asi/78825)

A T Cross Co. (asi/47520)
BIC Graphic USA (asi/40480)
Custom HBC Corp. (asi/47934)
Imagein Leather Inc. (asi/62236)
International Merchandise Concepts (asi/62820)
Leed's (asi/66887)
KTI Networks Inc. (asi/63776)
Sanford Business-to-Business (asi/84833)
Sweda Co. LLC (asi/90305)
The Quill Co. Inc. (asi/80220)

WATCHES/JEWELRY

Clip-On Pulse Monitor Stopwatch: Sweda Co. (asi/90305)

Calibre Intl. LLC (asi/43442)
Express Time Source (asi/53411)
International Merchandise Concepts (asi/62820)
Leed's (asi/66887)
Logomark (asi/68766)
Skagen Designs Ltd. (asi/87560)
Steel Threads Inc. (asi/89475)
The Selco Companies (asi/86230)
Troika (asi/92220)

HOUSEWARES/DRINKWARE

The World's Best Pizza Cutter: Molenaar Inc. (asi/71980)

ETS Express Inc. (asi/51197)
Gordon Industries Ltd. (asi/57800)
Guild Line (asi/43425)
International Merchandise Concepts (asi/62820)
Leed's (asi/66887)
Logomark (asi/68766)
Nambe (asi/72848)
Picnic Time Inc. (asi/78065)
RelKey (asi/81723)
Sweda Co. LLC (asi/90305)
Sunscope (asi/90075)

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Winner: Pumper Truck

Supplier: Crystal D (*asi/47759*)

Just imagine being the designer who put this piece together. First, the artist went to see the live truck that this is a replica of. Then to create the item, the designer had to handcraft 52 separate pieces of optically clear crystal and sculpt them together. Quite the task? No doubt. But the result was a perfect crystal replica of a cement boom pumper truck that was designed for Schwing as a lifetime achievement award. “This product is unique because nobody has made such an elaborate truck out of crystal,” says Laura Jendersee, marketing manager for Crystal D. “When you see something full of 52 different pieces and they’re put together as immaculate as this award, I think it’s stunning.”



SPORTING GOODS

Winner: Jogger Pedometer

Supplier: Calibre International (*asi/43442*)

Jogging at night can be a dangerous undertaking. No, we’re not talking about strangers that lurk in the woods. We’re referring to not being noticed by cars driving by. The last thing a jogger needs, especially when they’re deafened from a kicked-up iPod, is to worry about drivers not seeing them. So this item, which is designed with blinking safety lights, is the perfect remedy. The product also includes a clock with a step, distance and calorie counter. In all, this item is a smartly designed gadget that was created with the user’s needs and safety in mind.



APPAREL/CAPS

Winner: Alo Women’s Lightweight Jacket

Supplier: Bella (*asi/39590*)

Performance apparel reaches new heights with this new women’s jacket from Bella’s Alo line. What’s unique about it? Seamed contrast pockets, contrast colors on the inside of the zipper, hand-warmer flaps on the sleeves and side contrast panels that make the product stand out in a crowd. It may not have been seen on runways in New York’s most recent fashion week, but it certainly could have. “There are a lot of little details that were put into the jacket,” says Brinden Asher, Bella’s director of marketing. “The designers that put this line together were retail designers, so they were tasked with finding styles and putting concepts and colors together that were more retail than promotional – and that looked really good.”



CALENDARS

Winner: MousePaper Calendars Mouse Pad

Supplier: Digispec (*asi/49716*)

Style and function most definitely collide, with this item. It combines a calendar, notepaper and mousepad all in one. Just think: Now we can practically not even swivel our chairs to get everything we need on our desk. Just look toward the computer, write down notes and make appointments all without moving the slightest bit. It's the ultimate in convenience. This item is available in stock and custom styles, and can be created in 12-, 18- or 24-month. We wouldn't expect anything less from such a flexible product.



MEETING PRODUCTS

Winner: Talking Bag

Supplier: Talking Bags Inc. (*asi/90541*)

Talk about unique. This item gives meeting planners the flexibility to make announcements to attendees on the fly. Talking Bags feature a patent-pending sounds mechanism that's available with prerecorded messages or a re-recordable version that creates long-lasting fun for trade show and meeting attendees. Just think of the possibilities: Attendees can take verbal notes, or even pass the proverbial audio note to a secret admirer in the next row. The bags come in a variety of sizes and can be graphically customized or imprinted with stock graphics.



BAGS

Winner: Victorinox Tourbach 22" Wheeled Upright

Supplier: TRG Group (*asi/90507*)

Users can travel in high style with this bag. Even more important, it won't show the wear and tear – especially those nasty mustard stains acquired from eating hot dogs in airport lounges – that many bags do over time. That's because the product is coated with Performax fabric that helps to repel dirt and stains. With this innovation, a user can simply wash away stains with water. The item took 18 months to go through concept, design and approval, but the time was well worth it. "It's a product unlike anything else out there," says Brooke Heitz, marketing manager for TRG Group. "It's really lightweight but can also withstand intense abuse and all types of handling."



DESK ACCESSORIES

Winner: Spirit of St. Louis Desktop Clock Radio

Supplier: Leed's (*asi/66887*)

Hark back to a more simple time, when flight was a new way to travel (instead of the headache it is often considered today), with this desktop clock radio. The nostalgic design of the item gives it major conversation appeal and would enhance the office atmosphere of any recipient. Such intricate design doesn't come easily, though – this item took about one year to come from idea to final product. "Customers have dubbed it very popular because of its retro feel and style," says Lindsay Hoylman, marketing specialist for Leed's. "It's functional and it's fun, but it's also well-designed."

GIFT CARDS

Winner: Broken Bridges Music Download Card

Supplier: Media Tree (*asi/70303*)

You know you've done something special when you make a piece of plastic functional and good-looking. This music download card features a custom die-cut shape and also represents an advancement in digital content delivery. The card allowed users to download any three songs off of the soundtrack for motion picture *Broken Bridges*. The success of such a card is in the customizability by both the creators and the end-users. The creator can decide what shape they want to customize the card in, and users determine which songs they want off of the soundtrack. Consider it the best of both worlds.



ELECTRONICS/COMPUTER ACCESSORIES

Winner: Solar-Charging Backpack

Supplier: Gemline (*asi/56070*)

Consider this the perfect item for business travelers and adventure travelers alike. The solar-charging backpack, which took about nine months to create, uses solar panels to power an internal battery, allowing travelers to charge their on-the-go technologies without having to find an outlet. It includes a USB adapter, AC adapter, four rechargeable batteries and four cell phone adapters. "Our designers wanted to create something that marries travelers' technologies with the idea of being away from home," says Peggy Dixon, product manager for Gemline. "This, which is very sleek and has a retail feel, does just that."



PENS

Winner: Laughing Pen

Supplier: Points of Light (*asi/78825*)

As far as pens go, this is by far the most unique item on the market today. For starters, it's the only pen with a voice chip in it. But it also has a suction cup on the bottom so it can stand up on any desk at any time. Even further, the product emits a goofy laugh whenever the top is pressed down. Trust us, this laugh will make anyone – even the most hardened executive – smile at any time of day. From start to finish, the design of this highly original product took only three months. “Laughing is universal and it makes everyone feel good,” says Scott Kennis, vice president of sales and marketing for Points of Light Inc. “This item becomes a conversation piece as well as a writing instrument.”



WATCHES/JEWELRY

Winner: Clip-On Pulse Monitor Stopwatch

Supplier: Sweda Co. (*asi/90305*)

The ultimate in functionality, this item combines creative design in a watch with the needs of today's healthy lifestyle. It features a pulse monitor, stopwatch, calorie counter, and has functions for date and alarm. Really, what else could the on-the-go health nut possibly need? The ability to combine all of the features into a usable and good-looking item is obviously what caught the eye of voters.



HOUSEWARES/DRINKWARE

Winner: The World's Best Pizza Cutter

Supplier: Molenaar Inc. (*asi/71980*)

I'd like a large pie with pepperoni, and please cut it into 16 pieces. Say what? No pizza parlor or even a mother making a pizza at home for her kids and friends would want to hear such an order. Yet, with this highly functional product, the extra slicing would be a piece of cake, so to speak. With a large imprint area on both sides, the handle is ergonomically pleasing, because a user's hand is completely on top of the actual cutting surface, rather than to the side as with typical pizza cutters. Also, the blade pops out for easy cleaning and is even FDA-approved. Molenaar went through 80 hours of design and five different product specs before reaching the right one. “I tried several different things before I came up with the one where the blade could pop out and easily be cleaned,” says Ron Markfelder, general manager of Molenaar Inc. “It's just a very functional product and a terrific means of advertising because it is constantly used in the home.”