



Supplier of the Year

Leed's

Leed's dominated the 2009 *Counselor* Distributor Choice awards by winning in a record eight product categories. Read on to learn why its brand is this year's best.



By Michele Bell

When *Business Week* magazine culls together its annual list of most trusted brands, the venerable and revered companies rise to the top – Disney, Coca-Cola, GE, Google, Microsoft, McDonald's. In the ad specialty industry, there is one supplier who consistently stands apart from the others, due to its unyielding emphasis on product innovation and creativity, and unrelenting service it offers clients.

"In order to be an innovative, market-driven distributor, you have to partner with suppliers that most closely mirror your business model and culture," says Mitch Weintraub, president of Pinnacle Promotions (*asi/295984*). "We recognized early on that Leed's (*asi/66887*) was the driving force behind new product innovations and new ways to deliver better service to the distributors, which ultimately leads to better, faster service to the end-users. They have consistently been the best all-around supplier in this industry for the past decade."

But don't just take our, or Weintraub's, word for it. The ad specialty pros who voted in this year's *Counselor* Distributor Choice awards have spoken and their answer is clear: Leed's garnered the most votes of any supplier in the awards program and earned some of the highest combined Supplier Ratings in ESP Online. For Leed's those results translated into winning the coveted *Counselor* Supplier of the Year award, as well as winning the

top award in a record eight product categories – Business Accessories, Clocks & Watches, Computer Accessories, Electronic Products, Housewares & Tools, Luggage & Bags, Office & Desk Items and USB Drives – the last of which Leed's just rolled out in 2007.

"Leed's is, by far, one of the leaders in the industry," says Sandy Campagnolo, director of procurement for *Counselor* Top 40 distributor eCompanyStore (*asi/185782*). "Not only do they consistently bring innovative products to the table, but they have outstanding service from all levels of their organization. They truly understand the word 'partnership.'"

Service Superstar

It is in this area, stepping up to provide a level of service that's well-beyond what others are offering, and in this economy, where distributors need all the help they can get to run their businesses more efficiently, that Leed's really shines.

“The clear leader in service in the industry, says Chuck Fandos, president of *Counselor* Top 40 distributor Gateway/CDI (*asi/202515*), in reference to Leed’s. “They do the blocking and tackling of processing orders very well. They have excellent management, systems and people to make this happen. In addition, the sales force for Leed’s is very knowledgeable and really partners with distributors to help us serve our clients. Also, their product innovation and attention to testing and regulatory matters puts Leed’s at or near the top in the ad specialty arena.”



David Nicholson, president of Leed’s.

So what does the company that’s inspired so much loyalty have to say for their accomplishments? Well, they’re not resting on their laurels, and have plans to roll out even more new products and service applications as 2009 wears on. In fact, the company’s 2009 catalog includes 446 items completely new to the Leed’s line. Distributors in the industry, it seems, can’t wait to see the new wares.

“We couldn’t be more excited about the Distributor Choice awards for this year,” says David Nicholson, president of Leed’s, which is part of *Counselor* Top 40 supplier Polyconcept’s family of industry companies. “To be recognized in eight categories – from USB Drives to Business Accessories – is a testament to our commitment to excellence across all of our product categories. More importantly, it’s a reflection of the hard work and commitment provided by each of our 1,000 employees every day.”



Sam DiBiase, the head of the extensive sales effort for Leed’s.

TOP SELLING PRODUCT

Leed’s Focus Flash Drive offers clients the ability to consistently provide marketing messages to their target audience.



COUNSELOR DISTRIBUTOR CHOICE AWARDS METHODOLOGY

The initial criteria of the *Counselor* Distributor Choice Awards is based on distributor ratings of suppliers within ASI’s ESP Online system. To be considered a semifinalist a supplier had to achieve an overall rating of at least four stars (out of a possible five) and had been rated by at least five distributor firms. To be considered a finalist in a specific category, a distributor had to achieve an overall rating of at least four stars, been rated by at least 40 distributor firms, had reports on at least 100 distributor transactions, and had at least 5% of their overall product line within a specific product category. The top 12 in each category, based on overall rating, then made the final ballot. ASI member distributors then voted for their supplier of choice in each of the 46 categories. Please note: Some of the finalist criteria was relaxed in certain instances to accommodate new categories.

And with its continued cultivation of premier designer and cache lines such as Alicia Klein, Balmain, Laguiolle, Karim Rashid, Slazenger and Wenger, Leed’s gets the premise of combining style with substance, elegance and economy. Ultimately, Leed’s knows what its clients want and delivers it in spades.



Craig Morantz, vice president of sales development for Leed’s.

“We find that Leed’s continues to stay several steps ahead of their competition – by the time other suppliers catch on to another great idea of Leed’s, the company has already moved to the next level,” says Alejandra Castillo, president of Blueberry Ink (*asi/141717*). “Whether it’s coming out with great products or implementing another service level like its Sure-Ship program, we always look forward to what Leed’s will do next. Often an industry leader will slack off and be over-confident, but the company doesn’t let up. The Leed’s team is like eight-time Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps – even when they’re a pool length ahead of the competition, they’re still asking how they can be better and faster.” ○

Michele Bell is senior editor of *Counselor*.