

Store Brands

The authority on creating retail differentiation

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Exclusive store brands research

SEGMENT STRATEGIES

Coffee and tea

Pasta and rice

Candy

Household cleaners

Golden Touch

In its 50 years of operation, Walmart has achieved a level of success no other retailer can match. And store brands could play a larger role in the retailer's growth strategy for the next 50 years.



Prestigious partners

Our third annual Supplier Pacesetter Awards applaud 14 companies for exceptional efforts in their categories of expertise.

By Randy Hofbauer



When it comes to helping retailers build successful store brand programs, some suppliers do much more than simply provide products. These exceptional private label suppliers partner with retailers to help them with everything

from product development to promotional support.

This is why we at *Progressive Grocer's Store Brands* ask retailers each year to nominate the store brand suppliers they believe are the best at what they do in 13 different achievement categories. Based on those nominations, we perform our own research to determine the suppliers that truly deserve recognition. Read on to learn more about the companies that came out on top in our third annual Supplier Pacesetters Awards.



ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY

Order Fulfillment

WINNER **Red Gold**

When it comes to getting a product shipment from the warehouse to the customer on time and in perfect condition, Elwood, Ind.-based Red Gold doesn't limit responsibility to a single department.

"Everyone — from our production-line workers to the CEO — is focused on exceeding our customers' needs," says Dewey Angell, product marketing manager, Red Gold.

Delivering exceptional customer service is one of the "core pillars" of success for Red Gold, he explains. By thoroughly training and continually being involved with

its employees, the company always strives to improve its operations to exceed customer expectations.

"Customers know they can rely on Red Gold to deliver products on time and complete," Angell notes. "[This] allows for our products to be in position for last-minute promotional opportunities."



ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY

*Quality Assurance/
Quality Control*

WINNER **Tower Laboratories**

To truly stand behind its brands, a retailer must have complete confidence in product quality. Therefore, it needs to make sure its supplier partners are able to meet every specification to create a product that meets or exceeds shopper expectations.

With retail giants such as Walmart, Kroger, Target and Walgreens as its customers, Tower Laboratories, Centerbrook, Conn., understands the importance of making sure its effervescent products perform to retailers' exact specifications.

"Tower has a longstanding history with regard to our commitment to quality and continuous improvement," says Don Mesite, vice president, administration for Tower. "This commitment translates into quality products and efficient business processes that allow us to bring value to our customers."

Tower invests strongly in the tools needed to meet its customers' product specifications. According to its website, the company boasts more than 220,000 square feet of manufacturing space that houses state-of-the-art development, analysis and processing equipment. At all levels of development and production, it guarantees product purity, consistency, uniformity and effectiveness.

"Retailers are putting more and more emphasis on their store brands, and they are demanding quality products for their labels," Mesite notes. "They know that we embrace this strategy and do our best to execute against it."

PGSB's Extra: Supplier Pacesetter Awards



ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY

Social Responsibility Commitment

WINNER **Distant Lands Coffee**

Tyler, Texas-based Distant Lands Coffee — which owns and operates several farms and mills throughout Latin America — understands that the wellbeing of its workers is directly tied to the quality of the coffee it grows, harvests and roasts. According to its website, the store brand coffee supplier pays significantly higher wages than many other growers do; it provides modern housing for a number of its workers and their families; it actively supports surrounding communities' public works; and it even runs its own fully equipped dental and medical clinic.

"We have been dedicated to environmental and social responsibility at origin for over 30 years," says Debbie Carolan, director of marketing for Distant Lands Coffee. "We produce high-quality coffee and believe that taking care of the coffee farmers and their families is a way to ensure that they will be dedicated to the quality of the coffee they grow, pick and process. Because of our vertical integration and commitment to quality, we can guarantee our customers a consistently high-quality, premium coffee."

Moving forward, Carolan says Distant Lands plans to continue its dedication to sustainability at origin through expanded projects in Colombia and Costa Rica.

"We will continue our focus on social responsibility by supporting local schools that are attended by coffee farmers' families and continue with our Rainforest Alliance certification," she explains.



ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY

Logistics/Transport Optimization

WINNER **RJW Transportation**

Led by Scott Oehlberg, a Walmart veteran and former initiative manager for a leading store brand manufacturer, RJW Transport's Private Label Division understands the importance of running lean and mean on the logistics front. According to a spokesperson for the Woodridge, Ill.-based company, this "multi-industry expertise" helped lay the foundation for "outside-the-norm and innovative thinking" the company offers in the areas of supply chain, transportation and consolidation.

"RJW can understand and know the needs of our customers — from sourcing materials all the way to the checkout — and the challenges they face," the spokesperson says. "We aim to have a central location that can serve as a resource that brings retailers and suppliers together and [works to create] a more efficient and cost-saving relationship for both — which ultimately leads to higher sales for all involved."

Going forward, RJW plans to continue its industry leadership by never being satisfied with the norm and always being up on the latest trends in both the overall retail industry and the private label sector, the spokesperson points out.

"We will strive with our strong leadership to push the boundaries on creative ideas and stand at the top with all of the companies that we currently serve by continuing to be that 'secret weapon' bringing value-added, knowledge-based and cost-saving ideas to the industry," the spokesperson explains.



ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY

Community Relations/ Community Involvement

WINNER **C&S Wholesale Grocers**

In August, the employees of Keene, N.H.-based C&S Wholesale Grocers and its family of companies completed another successful workplace-giving campaign, raising more than \$1,190,000 for the charitable non-profit United Way of America. During the same month, the company said it also held a charity golf outing that raised \$1.2 million to benefit organizations helping children who are battling cancer and nonprofits addressing childhood hunger and nutrition.

Gina Goff, senior director of community involvement with C&S, says giving back is one of her company's core values.

"It's our vision — which includes an America where every family has nutritious food and where communities are healthy and vibrant — that we believe sets us apart. Our leadership in the food and logistics industry, and our focused initiatives around hunger, children and families, the environment and volunteerism propel our belief that we're in a position to make a difference."

Undoubtedly, the impact of C&S' community involvement enhances the company's business proposition with both retail customers and vendors, Goff explains.

"As corporate citizens, we all have a role in advancing social issues," she notes. "We're inspired by how that takes shape at both ends of the supply chain at supermarkets or at independently owned stores — and by food manufacturers."

Goff says C&S is honored to receive a Supplier Pacesetter award in this category for the second time — the company first won an award here in 2010.

"It's wonderful to be recognized for creating and inspiring positive change," she states. **PGSB**