Euro-Pro LLC earns the fifth annual DRMA Marketer of the Year Award, while finalists Hampton Direct and Tristar Products also earn big voting blocs for their successful products.
There are many companies doing great work in this industry today, as evidenced by the outstanding list of candidates for this award,” says George Fettig, chief marketing officer of Newton, Mass.-based Euro-Pro LLC, the winner of the fifth annual DRMA Marketer of the Year Award. “As a company with a long-standing history in the direct response industry, Euro-Pro is very proud of our achievements and exceptionally proud to be honored in this way. There are now more than 400 Euro-Pro team members, working in every facet of the business all over the world. It’s important to recognize that, although this award is for Marketer of the Year, every single Euro-Pro team member should — and will — share in this recognition.”

Due to the continued success of its Ninja and Shark housewares brands — built by a true direct response-to-retail brand model — Euro-Pro earned a solid margin of victory among the more than 1,400 votes cast by DR industry marketers and vendors. The other two finalists — Hampton Direct (marketers of such recent hit products as Chillow and Wraptastic) and Tristar Products (whose recent successes include the Genie Bra brand and HealthMaster juicer) — edged the fourth and fifth place finishers by a small margin (see the full results on page 28). Tony Hoth, Euro-Pro’s vice president of consumer services, accepted the award in front of an overflow crowd at a ceremony and cocktail event on Sept. 25 at Las Vegas’ Vanity nightclub, inside the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.

Euro-Pro has utilized DRTV for many years to drive retail success and branding. Its model centers around developing innovative housewares products on a continual basis, launching with DRTV support and widespread retail distribution. Its Ninja blenders are the top-selling professional-style blender in many national retail chains, while Shark is the top-selling steam mop brand in the world, and the Shark Rotator vacuum is the fastest-growing vacuum brand.

Hampton Direct earned finalist recognition for the
third consecutive year, jumping up to second place after third-place finishes in 2011 and 2012. The company again gained recognition for continued short-form-to-retail success, adding to its long line of popular and successful products during the past year.

Fairfield, N.J.-based Tristar Products credits its third-place finish to its sales, marketing and operations team; its social media efforts online in support of its megahit Genie Bra brand; and its expansive efforts to grow the brand in international markets.

These three standouts earned finalist status in an industry vote among the top 13 nominees for the DRMA Marketer of the Year Award. During the coming months, many of the 13 nominees will be profiled in the pages of Response. Once again, though, these three finalists — and the winner — have truly set themselves apart.

Blending DR to Prey on Retail

“Euro-Pro is extremely pleased and honored to be voted Marketer of the Year by the DRMA membership. To be recognized by our peers in this way is especially rewarding,” Fettig says. “Our dedicated team members make it possible for our company to continually introduce 5-star consumer products every year. We are very proud of our accomplishments, and equally proud to accept this award from the DRMA.”

And while Fettig is keen on pointing out the work of the entire Euro-Pro team — “from consumer research, product development, engineering, quality, production, sales, operations, customer experience and all the support staff in between” — he’s just as thankful to Euro-Pro’s marketing partners.

“I’d be remiss if I didn’t include all of our marketing partners and agencies that support our efforts,” Fettig says. “There are many to thank, but this year, Marketsmith, Script to Screen, GoConvergence, Mayhew Breen, Mercury Media, Cannella Response Television and Horizon Media deserve special mention for their contributions to our most successful campaigns.”

During the past year, Euro-Pro has launched the Ninja Mega Kitchen System, the Ninja Cooking System, the Shark Sonic Duo, the Shark Professional Steam Mop and a refreshed version of the Shark Rotator Lift Away. This is part of the reason Fettig says that the industry’s voters responded so well to Euro-Pro’s candidacy.

“This year, as in the past several years, the company has had successful DRTV long-form campaigns, running concurrently, in several different segments of the housewares category,” he says. “Maybe voters recognized how challenging it is to have one big hit every several years, let alone have four or five successful product introductions annually — over an extended period of time.”

One product, however, stood out to Fettig in the past year — the Shark Sonic Duo, a floor-care appliance that cleans both hard floors and carpets. “This product is entirely different than anything we have marketed before,” Fettig says. “The Sonic Duo was an incredible team effort. It was developed and brought to market faster and more efficiently than virtually any product in our recent history. And it was a huge success right out of the box.”

Fettig believes that the success of both the Shark and Ninja brands come as a result of a well-defined model, exemplary work and great relationships with retail outlets — all of which are crucial for products with higher price points in a still-muddled economic environment.

“In this economy, value is king,” he says. “Shark and Ninja products always provide superior value. We build in as much multi-functionality as possible. Shark Steam Mops have multiple settings for different types of floors; Shark Lift-Away vacuums convert from uprights to portables to canisters at the push a button; and the Ninja blender not only blends, it makes dough, chops salads, and makes ice cream! And all of these quality products — with all of these added features — are priced well below premium competitive products that offer less but cost more.”

And while Euro-Pro’s tried-and-true DR-to-retail efforts are successful, don’t think for a second that Fettig and the team isn’t keeping their eyes on technological changes. “Technology is an integral part of our business. Our consumers are utilizing digital tools more and more during each step of their relationship with us,” he says. “As such, we’ve engaged in several key business-changing initiatives to satisfy this demand during the trailing 12 months. Specifically, we’ve increased the traffic to our sites by employing more aggressive digital media tactics such as retargeting and affiliate marketing, as well as expanded on our paid search efforts. And in terms of on-site development, we executed a content management approach that ensured the right message reached the right audience at all times.”

Tony Hoth, Euro-Pro’s vice president of consumer services, proudly accepted the DRMA Marketer of the Year award.
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Those technological changes are also crucial in what Fettig and the Euro-Pro team see during the coming year. “As we look forward to the next 12 months, we plan to explore new platforms. Basically, we want to be where our customers are going,” Fettig contends. “One example: we will focus on transitioning our sites to be mobile fluid in the upcoming year. Additionally, we plan to manage our customer relationships more closely by increasing our use of social media.”

Fettig continues, “Although I cannot share specifics about upcoming product launches, I can tell you Euro-Pro will continue to innovate, and improve performance and value for all our products in every category. We look ahead — not only 12 months, but several years — and we have pipelines full of innovative new product ideas that will ensure our continued success well into the future.”

Hampton Direct Nudges Up to No. 2

“It is gratifying to be recognized by our peers as one of the top marketers of 2013,” says Steve Heroux, founder and CEO of Hampton Direct. “To be considered again for this award, together with so many innovative companies, is an honor. It’s greatly appreciated by all of the hard working team members of Hampton Direct, in both our Los Angeles and Williston, Vt., offices.”

This is the third straight Marketer of the Year finalist nod for Hampton Direct. After a pair of third-place finishes, Heroux and his team moved up one notch to No. 2. And while Hampton’s continuing streak of DR hits — which expanded in the past year to include products like the Chillow, Wramtastic, the WaxVac and the FaceMaster — helped earn more recognition, Heroux credits “innovation, integrity and broad-spectrum integrated marketing.”

He says, “Hampton is recognized for its innovative and principled approach to direct response and business. Our diverse backgrounds, focus, marketing expertise and retailer relationships have enabled us to maintain our 60-percent success rate in both long- and short-form commercials. Additionally, we do what’s right for our business model and for our business partners. We are in it for the long haul. And, finally, our integrated marketing plan includes television, online social media and strategic advertising, PR and other channels.”

During the past year, Heroux points to three key accomplishments for Hampton Direct. “Our expansion and the opening of our Los Angeles office, including a partnership with Suzanne Somers, is a crucial part of our growth plan,” he says. “We’ve continued to have great success with multiple products and partnerships — just another remarkable year with multiple products at retail. And, third, our long-standing relationships with retail partners, vendors and inventors are truly what help us develop products and bring them to market successfully.”

Hampton Direct has also expanded the vertical markets in which it is working. “While we have continued to focus on housewares and consumer/lifestyle products, we are also growing in the personal care and beauty categories,” Heroux says. “For instance, FaceMaster, Chillow and Air Curler are consistent with this overall effort and calculated growth model.”

Hampton Direct has also been quick to respond to new technology in the DR space. “As the Web continues to evolve and mature, we are changing our online marketing mix and shifting budgets in terms of social media, monitoring and pay-per-click opportunities,” Heroux says.

With a growing reputation of consistent success, the pressure is on Hampton Direct to continue to churn out the hits. While Heroux says the company will maintain its key footprints, he’s most excited about expanding the company’s influence in the next 12 months.

“We are in the process of launching new short-form campaign in the fitness arena — as well as long-form commercials and line extensions for existing products,” he contends. “Also, we’re launching a new area targeting the children’s market, as well as new problem solvers, and we’re planning on shooting another item involving a celebrity host.”

After three consecutive top-3 finishes, there’s no doubt that Hampton Direct will be a major contender for next year’s DRMA Marketer of the Year award.

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Tristar Works Its Magic

Keith Mirchandani, president and CEO of Tristar Products, doesn’t mince words when crediting those around him for the company’s third-place finish in DRMA Marketer of the Year voting. “It is a great accomplishment for Tristar. In order to become a successful marketer, you need to have great employees — which I have! You also need to be supported by a strong partnerships with telemarketers, manufacturers, inventors, etc. — all of which I have been fortunate to work with.”

Mirchandani also believes that Tristar’s two decades of success helped voters take notice. “After 20 years, we continue to produce winning shows,” he says. “We give value to consumers and offer great products. We have been working with some of our partners in the industry for more than 20 years and, not only have we made each other very successful and built solid working relationships, we have also become friends.”

It certainly helps that Tristar’s recent successes in its DR-to-retail model have been even more impressive than usual. “The Genie Bra brand is now in it’s third year and continues to grow by leaps and bounds as we expand into the lingerie/apparel category,” Mirchandani says. “This clearly fits into our overall concept as a company as we continue to focus on building brands. As we have seen with the Power Juicer and other categories: we take a product and build a brand that lasts well after DRTV has slowed down — and we move to more traditional advertising to support retail.”

Tristar’s expansion of those retail relationships is another key to its success in the past 12 months, according to Mirchandani. “We have taken some of our retail relationships to a whole new level — the most significant being Walmart, which is not an easy retailer to service. But we have done a great job.”

Tristar has also responded to the technological changes affecting DR marketers. “The Web has clearly changed the way business is done. At least 50 percent of our business comes from the Internet,” Mirchandani contends. "We have a strong team that is dedicated to making sure we fully understand and utilize social media platforms, such as Facebook and Pinterest.”

That focus makes planning for the next year — and beyond — easier for Mirchandani and Tristar. “I am very excited as I look at the upcoming year,” he says. “Tristar is continuing to build on its existing brands, such as Genie, as well as introducing a number of great products in various categories. Haircare and beauty will see some great products introduced through Tristar in the coming year."

This fits with Mirchandani’s overall outlook for the space. “We believe the housewares, fitness and beauty categories will thrive in 2014,” he says. “Women will always buy lingerie and great haircare products. Everyone wants to look good, and with the help of fitness products, they can achieve their goals. Consumers will want innovative items like our patented Flexible hoses, juicers and HealthMasters, which will continue to thrive in 2014 and years to come.”