

2015 POWER 50

MEET THE MOST INFLUENTIAL EXECUTIVES IN TODAY'S AD SPECIALTY MARKET.

BY ANDY COHEN

Power can be defined in many ways: influence, money, success, growth, innovation. They all fuel power in a market that has experienced major growth over the past few years.

In fact, the ad specialty industry has surpassed its record annual revenues, and in 2014 recorded a total of \$21.5 billion in revenues. While 2015's full-year numbers aren't in yet, the market has grown by an average of about 4% through the first three quarters of the year. So, yes, another annual sales record is about to be tallied.

And, with that growth, some in the market are capitalizing. They're finding fast success, creating new opportunities, and identifying new ways to innovate in the promotional products business. They're the ones that are helping their companies – and the industry as a whole – to grow quickly.

Welcome to the 2015 Power 50. These are the movers and shakers of the ad specialty market, helping to set the industry's agenda at the same time as being influential and successful players. They not only inspire their own employees, but they make others in the market – competitors, clients and

vendors alike – change the way they do business.

And, some of that change is tilting toward digital and e-commerce. In fact, many of the newcomers on this year's list (a total of 12, which is a new record for the Power 50) are e-commerce players, and even the person at the top of the rankings heads a distributor firm that is the biggest pure digital and mobile player in the market today.

On the following pages, you'll find the 1-50 rankings along with reasons for why they place where they do on the list. Indicated along with each profile is where they placed on last year's list, to reflect their changing influence on the market. Rankings are often based on a survey *Counselor* conducts, which asks the industry and the Power 50 members themselves to rate whether each person on last year's list has gained or lost influence over the past 12 months.

Read on to see the 2015 Power 50.

1 KEVIN LYONS-TARR



4imprint (asi/197045)

2014 Rank: 2

Within the past year alone, Kevin Lyons-Tarr has taken over the helm as CEO of all of British-owned 4imprint and has overseen the explosive growth of the North American division of the company to the tune of more than 25% sales increases in 2014 alone. Plus, as the head of online seller 4imprint, Lyons-Tarr is espousing the business model of the future in the promotional products industry – leading the way in the market for e-commerce, social network marketing, and a digital-first approach that others are trying to emulate. In all, it adds up to an unmatched influence in the market today – one that's recognized in his overwhelmingly positive scores in *Counselor's* survey of both the industry at large and the members of the Power 50.

2 NORM HULLINGER



alphabroder (asi/34063)

2014 Rank: 10

Hullinger, the winner of *Counselor's* Person of the Year award in 2014, oversees the largest supplier in the promotional products industry. And, it's a company that is only gaining in influence, as it has recently added on acquisitions such as Ash City and Imprints Wholesale. And besides receiving

high marks for influence from both the industry and the members of the Power 50, Hullinger recently told *Counselor* that his company is in the market for additional acquisitions. "We're always on the lookout for good deals that can help us to grow our business," Hullinger said. "We'll definitely be looking for more deals."

3 MARTY LOTT & JEREMY LOTT



SanMar (asi/84863)

2014 Rank: 1

The heads of Top 40 supplier firm SanMar retain their typical spot in the top five of the Power 50 this year after receiving positive marks for influence from both the Power 50 and the industry overall. A perennial winner of *Counselor's* Distributor Choice Awards for many of the apparel categories, SanMar's influence – and that of its two leaders – on the market is often felt through its top-notch customer service.

4 BILL SCHMIDT SR. & CJ SCHMIDT



Hit Promotional Products (asi/61125)

2014 Rank: 6

The duo at the helm of Hit Promotional Products has turned this supplier firm into a growth machine. The company is now the fifth-largest supplier in the ad specialty

industry, after reporting 2014 North American revenues of \$270 million, a 30% increase over the previous year. It has now grown sales by 150% in the past five years, and it's poised for even more growth after closing on a deal to acquire Admints & Zagabor earlier this year.

5 GREG MUZZILLO & VERA MUZZILLO



Proforma (asi/300094)

2014 Rank: 5

The husband-and-wife team that founded and operate Proforma have turned their company into an increasingly influential distributor firm which is now the third-largest in the market. After increasing sales by 7.3% last year to eclipse \$370 million in North American promotional products sales, Proforma continues to oversee acquisitions of its owners at a rate that will surely provide ample growth in 2015, as well. And, the firm just launched a new company, Global Graphics Network, designed to help commercial printers grow their businesses.

6 MARC SIMON



HALO Branded Solutions (asi/356000)

2014 Rank: 4

With a clear strategy of growing both organically and through acqui-

sition, Simon has steered HALO to 36% revenue growth over the past five years. The trend will continue this year, as the company has closed deals to acquire former Top 40 distributor Newton Manufacturing and Texas-based Harvey-Daco. Those two transactions alone are expected to add at least \$20 million to HALO's annual revenues.

7 GENE COLLERAN & DAVID NICHOLSON



Polyconcept

2014 Rank: 3

It was a year of change at the top of global supplier Polyconcept, after Gene Colleran took over the CEO helm from Michael Bernstein, the organization's previous leader. Yet, the company's North American division maintained its pattern of growth along with its consistent leader, David Nicholson. Nicholson and Colleran now lead the third-largest supplier in the North American market, after the company tallied revenues of \$526 million in 2014, an 11% increase over the previous year.

8 GENE GEIGER & JO-AN LANTZ



Geiger (asi/202900)

2014 Rank: 7

Geiger and Lantz maintain their solid position in the Power 50's top 10 after receiving high influence

ratings from their fellow Power 50 members and the industry at-large. Geiger also grew its sales by 7% in 2014 to reach more than \$160 million in annual revenues. Plus, Lantz recently told *Counselor* that she has a "very bullish" outlook for her company and the industry as a whole.

9 RICH WITASZAK



Staples Promotional Products (asi/120601)

2014 Rank: 13

Witaszak, the head of Staples Inc.'s promotional products division, jumps four spots into this year's top 10 after receiving high influence ratings on *Counselor's* survey from both the industry at large and the members of the Power 50. Plus, Staples acquired fellow Top 40 firm Accolade Promotion Group in April to expand his influence even further and lead the distributor past the \$500 million mark in annual sales.

10 DAVID WOODS



AIA Corporation (asi/109480)

2014 Rank: 9

An industry veteran with a lot of sway in the market, Woods regularly receives high influence ratings from both the Power 50 and the industry overall. Plus, he has overseen a reve-

nue turnaround at AIA, to the tune of 50% growth over the past five years. The company is now the seventh-largest in the industry, after reporting sales of \$162 million last year.

11 JONATHAN ISAACSON



Gemline (asi/56070) 2014 Rank: 8

Isaacson, an influential voice in the market that many look to for economic and global insights, drops a few spots after receiving lower influence ratings from the Power 50 than in previous years. His company, though, has strategically partnered with many name-brand product lines, such as Isaac Mizrahi, Igloo, Thermos, Samsonite and Brookstone.

12 JEFF LEDERER, RICK BRENNER & PAULA SHULMAN



Prime Line (asi/79530) 2014 Rank: 11

The group that heads up Prime Line are expanding their influence as they grow their company with both acquisitions and organic expansion. Following deals with suppliers Points of Light, Source Abroad and Get it Global, the company struck a recent exclusive partnership with Energizer that has it supplying the

brand-name's charger products to the ad specialty market.

13 ROSS SILVERSTEIN



iPROMOTEu (asi/232119) 2014 Rank: 12

Silverstein remains solidly in the top 15 of this year's Power 50 after leading his company to continued growth. After increasing its revenues by more than 100% over the past five years, iPROMOTEu now ranks as the 12th-largest distributor in the industry and totals more than \$120 million in annual sales.

14 BILL KOROWITZ



The Magnet Group (asi/68507) 2014 Rank: 27

Korowitz, who was named *Counselor's* Person of the Year for 2015, makes the biggest jump on this year's list after expanding his company, gaining high influence marks on our Power 50 survey, and starting an equity company aimed at acquiring other suppliers. So far, TMG Capital has invested in supplier firm Castelli and Korowitz recently told *Counselor* that he expects "four deals to be announced soon."

15 TREVOR GNESIN



Logomark (asi/67866) 2014 Rank: 15

Gnesin maintains his spot on the Power 50 after receiving positive influence ratings from the industry at-large. The industry innovator is overseeing a consistently growing supplier in Logomark, which increased its sales by 30% over the past five years to reach a total of more than \$100 million annually.

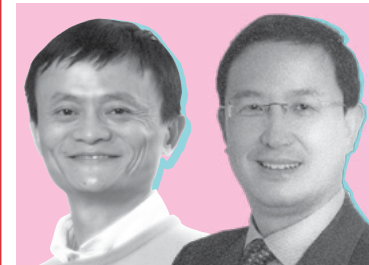
16 EDGAR HERNANDEZ & EMMANUEL BRUNO



BIC Graphic (asi/40480) 2014 Rank: 16

Hernandez, who oversees all of BIC's global promotional products business, and Bruno, who manages the company's vast North American operation, maintain their spot on this year's Power 50 after receiving positive influence ratings in *Counselor's* survey. BIC Graphic has also introduced some new imprinting options on its line of products that have helped to expand its business in recent years.

17 JACK MA & DANIEL ZHANG



Alibaba Group 2014 Rank: 14

The duo in charge of global e-commerce giant Alibaba drop three spots on this year's list after the organization made a CEO change in May 2015 – Daniel Zhang took over for Jonathan Lu. However, founder Jack Ma remains heavily involved and sets the vision for this fast-growing company that has disrupted much of the supply chain operations, not only in the promo products industry, but also in many other economic sectors.

18 AMIN RAHMAN & ALAN TABASKY



BEL USA 2014 Rank: 18

This duo debuted on the Power 50 last year and maintain their spot in 2015, as BEL is parent to both large distributors (DiscountMugs.com and Branders.com) and suppliers (BEL) in the market. They also embody the expansion toward e-commerce, as its distributor companies are hyper-focused on selling online and through mobile means.

19 GLENN CHAMANDY



Gildan Activewear (asi/56842)

2014 Rank: 19

Chamandy, who oversees a \$2 billion apparel operation in Gildan, maintains his slot on this year's Power 50 after receiving positive influence ratings from the Power 50 members. Gildan T-shirts are ubiquitous in this market, and his company's recent acquisitions of Anvil Knitwear and decorator New Buffalo Shirt Factory are expanding the company's impact on the industry overall.

20 IRA NEAMAN



Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)

2014 Rank: 21

The head of Vantage Apparel, a leader in the expanding decorated apparel sector, jumps one spot on this year's list after receiving higher influence ratings from both the Power 50 and the industry at large.

21 MARC KATZ



CustomInk

2014 Rank: N/A

The highest-ranking newcomer to the Power 50 this year, Katz is the founder of CustomInk, a leader in the movement of personalized apparel and do-it-yourself T-shirt decoration. Capitalizing on both e-commerce and shifting buying habits of promotional products, CustomInk is shaking up the industry and its impact on how distributors sell will be felt for years to come.

22 JAY DEUTSCH & ERIC BENSUSSEN



BDA (asi/137616)

2014 Rank: 17

Deutsch and Bensussen – the B and the D of Top 40 distributor BDA – fall five spots on this year's list after receiving lower influence ratings from the industry at large as well as other members of the Power 50. BDA, though, is at the cutting edge of big-ticket sports and live-event promotions in this market and has annual sales of more than \$250 million.

23 ELY, TALY & SHARON EYAL



ETS Express (asi/51197)

2014 Rank: 22

The family in charge of Top 40 supplier ETS Express oversees a continuously growing and influential supplier of drinkware. ETS has grown its ad specialty revenues by 63% over the past five years and now surpasses more than \$62 million in annual sales, making it the largest single supplier of drinkware in the industry.

24 ERIC BELCHER



InnerWorkings (asi/168860)

2014 Rank: 20

InnerWorkings, with Belcher in the CEO seat, has expanded its business in both the ad specialty industry and the print and point-of-sale markets by more than double digits in recent years. Its ad specialty business has grown by 60% in the past five years, and the company is now the 11th-largest distributor in the industry with more than \$110 million in sales last year. Belcher finds himself leading the charge in the market to mix print and promo businesses.

25 MARC ROY, FRED PARKER & ALAN CHIPPINDALE



A Brand Company (asi/145177)

2014 Rank: 29

It was a year of change for this trio of influential executives. In July, A Brand Company, parent to Activate! Promotions + Marketing, said it was merging with Canadian Top 40 distributor BrandAlliance. Now, Activate will be rebranding under the BrandAlliance name and A Brand Company will be the holding company for the whole organization, which also acquired Design Accessories and expanded into the incentive sector. All combined, *Counselor* estimates that A Brand Company will be near \$100 million in annual revenues and be a Top 15 distributor firm.

26 JOE FLEMING



Hub Pen (asi/61966)

2014 Rank: 23

Fleming oversees Hub Pen, a consistent finalist in the most competitive category in the *Counselor* Distributor Choice Awards – pens. And, his company has increased its revenues by more than 50% over the past five years, and won *Counselor's* Supplier of the Year award in 2012.

27 CHUCK FANDOS



GatewayCDI (asi/202515) 2014 Rank: 36

Fandos, who runs perennial *Counselor* Best Places to Work member GatewayCDI, leaps nine spots on the Power 50 this year after receiving high influence ratings from both the Power 50 and industry overall. Fandos also heads up The Facilis Group, a technology and consulting company for industry distributors – a level of influence that has helped to shoot him up the Power 50 list.

28 DEB TAYLOR



Taylor Corporation 2014 Rank: N/A

Another newcomer on the 2015 Power 50, Taylor is CEO of Minnesota-based Taylor Corporation, which is the parent company to both Top 40 supplier and distributor firms. In addition to owning the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Taylor Corp. acquired Top 40 distributor Standard Register this year and owns the Top 40 supplier organization that's headed by ADG Promotional Products.

29 KURT KAESER & GREGG EMMER



Kaeser & Blair (asi/238600)

2014 Rank: 30

The duo in charge of Top 40 distributor Kaeser & Blair have led their company to 23% revenues growth over the past five years and now have about \$100 million in annual revenues. They've also grown their profile, as the industry at large rated the Kaeser & Blair pair with increased influence over the past year.

30 PAUL BELLANTONE



PPAI

2014 Rank: 32

Bellantone, CEO of industry association PPAI, jumps two spots on this year's ranking after receiving high influence ratings from both the Power 50 members and the industry at large. As PPAI makes annual marks with its January PPAI Expo, the industry's largest trade show of the year, Bellantone also connects with his constituents throughout the year on social media and in one-on-one meetings.

31 ALAN VAUGHT



Evans Manufacturing (asi/52840)

2014 Rank: 28

While the head of Evans Manufacturing received influence ratings a bit lower than last year, Vaught continues to lead a company that is a model of efficiency on the supplier side of the market. It has used technology to quickly ramp up its operations, and the result has been rewarded with consistent wins of *Counselor* Distributor Choice Awards.

32 DAVID THOMPSON



National Pen (asi/281040) 2014 Rank: 31

A traditional catalog company, Thompson has begun to transform National Pen into a digital powerhouse seller of pens and promotional products. The company garners sales of more than \$150 million per year, much of which is now done through its website at www.pens.com – which you'll find advertised on just about every search engine possible.

33 ROBERT BEAVER & HENRIK JOHANSSON



Zazzle.com (asi/365646) & Boundless (asi/143717) 2014 Rank: N/A

The industry felt a little tremor at the very end of December 2014 when Top 40 distributor Boundless announced that it was merging with e-commerce and personalization giant Zazzle.com. Now, Beaver, the head of Zazzle, and Johansson, the head of Boundless, are working together to determine how Boundless can capitalize on Zazzle's business model. Will one-off personalization work for promo products? Can a traditional distributor gain economies of scale when buying smaller quantities? Those industry-changing questions will be answered by watching this new marriage.

34 CRAIG CALLAWAY



eCompanyStore (asi/185782)

2014 Rank: 26

Callaway is the CEO of eCompanyStore and Instawares Holding Company, an organization that has more than \$130 million in revenues. eCompanyStore, a perennial member of *Counselor's* Best Places to

Work list, checked into the Top 40 this year at number 40, and its business model of running online stores for clients has been copied by many others in the market.

35 DILIP BHAVNANI



Sunscope Group of Companies (asi/90075)

2014 Rank: N/A

Bhavnani, who had been on the Power 50 list a few years ago, made his way back onto the ranking of top industry influencers this year after striking a deal with the former Camsing Global brands to form a new company, Aprinta Promo. The combined organization, which Bhavnani oversees, represents more than \$120 million in annual sales and ranks as the 10th-largest supplier in the industry.

36 TED STAHL



GroupeSTAHL

2014 Rank: 35

Stahl is the head GroupeSTAHL, the largest international manufacturer of heat-printing products and services that complement embroidery and screen printing. Stahl, a decorating technology pioneer who has led the way with new printing processes, maintains his spot on the Power 50

after receiving high marks from the industry at large for influence.

37 JASON ROBBINS & STEVE PARADISO



ePromos Promotional Products (asi/188515)

2014 Rank: N/A

Yet another newcomer to the Power 50 list that has an e-commerce focus, Robbins (above) and Paradiso head up New York-based ePromos Promotional Products. The company has grown exponentially in recent years and debuted on the Top 40 this year after increasing its sales by 37% between 2013 and 2014. It is now nearing \$50 million in annual sales – almost all of which is generated through e-commerce.

38 MARK GODSEY & KIM NEWELL



Gold Bond Worldwide (asi/57653)

2014 Rank: 38

Godsey, who heads up the Gold Bond operation, and Newell, who had headed up the former WorldWide before the two companies merged last year, together steer the ship of this Top 40 supplier that is highly decorated in the *Counselor* Distributor Choice Awards. Plus, the company is growing – 11% last year and 21% over the past five years.

39 PAULA SCHNEIDER



American Apparel (asi/35297)

2014 Rank: N/A

Schneider took over the helm of financially-troubled American Apparel last December and has steered it through a year of change. It fired its founder Dov Charney upon hiring Schneider and burgeoning losses and sales decreases forced it to declare bankruptcy this past October. The company has vowed to move on and become stronger after it restructures its debt through the Chapter 11 proceedings. Can Schneider lead American Apparel to overcome its financial troubles and capitalize on the one bright spot in its business (promotional products and wholesale)?

40 CHRIS VERNON



The Vernon Company (asi/351700)

2014 Rank: 43

Vernon jumps three spots on this year's list after receiving positive influence ratings from his fellow Power 50 members and the industry at large. He has also overseen revenue growth at his company to the tune of 19% over the past five years, making it a \$70 million firm.

41 PAUL LAGE



Gill Studios (asi/56950)

2014 Rank: 33

In an off-year for election business, sales at Gill Studios tend to decrease. As a result in 2015, Lage drops eight places on this year's Power 50 ranking despite receiving positive influence ratings from his fellow Power 50 members. Lage, though, is a major and respected voice in the industry – one that many people turn to for advice. And, he engineered the coming together of two Top 40 companies two years ago when Gill acquired the assets of financially-troubled Barton Nelson.

42 ERIC LEVIN



Jetline (asi/63344)

2014 Rank: N/A

Levin, CEO and founder of supplier firm Jetline, debuts on the Power 50 list this year after steering his company through years of growth. He began the company in 1997 in New York and has since moved it to South Carolina where it has been able to expand its inventory and rush-order business, leading it to extreme growth and a total of more than \$40 million in annual sales.

43 RICK MOUTY



Profill Holdings (asi/90518)

2014 Rank: 40

Profill Holdings, the parent company of wearables suppliers such as TSC Apparel, WearMagic and LightHouse Apparel, has increased its business by 45% over the past five years and is now the 12th-largest supplier in the industry. Mouty, who has been with the company since 2001, has become a growing influence in the apparel sector of the ad specialty market.

44 BILL SMITH JR.



Brown & Bigelow (asi/148500)

2014 Rank: 44

Following recent acquisitions of JSA Promos in September 2013 and CPI Promotions in January 2014, Smith has been able to steer Brown & Bigelow to 10% growth over the past five years. And, the industry has noticed, as fellow Power 50 members rated Smith with increasing influence over the past year.

45 MITCH MOUNGER



Sunrise Identity (asi/339206)

2014 Rank: 46

With more than \$30 million in sales and big name-brand clients such as Starbucks, Microsoft, Nokia and Gillette, Sunrise Identity is an innovative company that runs unique promotional campaigns. Led by Mounger, the company has been a member of the *Counselor* Best Places to Work list since its inception and espouses an agency approach to its business that others in the industry would like to emulate.

46 LORI KATES



Imagen Brands

2014 Rank: 41

Kates oversees Imagen Brands, which is owned by EBSCO and is the parent company to supplier firms Vitronic Promotional Group and Crown Product. Kates won *Counselor*'s Supplier Woman of Distinction award in 2013, and her organization increased its revenues to \$67 million last year.

47 CRAIG NADEL & CRAIG REESE



Jack Nadel International (asi/279600)

2014 Rank: N/A

A traditional distributor firm that is finding fast success recently, Jack Nadel International has grown its revenues by 50% over the past five years and is now the 17th-largest distributor in the industry. Nadel and Reese helm the day-to-day operations at this creative West Coast distributor, and the company is on *Counselor*'s Best Places to Work list and was named the magazine's Family Business of the Year in 2015.

48 MARIBETH SANDFORD



Bag Makers (asi/37940)

2014 Rank: 47

Sandford, the winner of *Counselor*'s Marvin Spike Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013, maintains her spot on the 2015 Power 50 after receiving positive influence ratings from the industry at-large. Bag Makers has also increased its sales by 20% over the past five year to reach nearly \$50 million annually.

49 LARRY & JUSTIN ZAVADIL



American Solutions For Business (asi/120075)

2014 Rank: 48

Larry Zavadil, founder of ASB, and son Justin, who now runs the day-to-day operations of the distributor firm, drops just one spot on the Power 50, but have steered their company to 20% growth over the past five years. ASB is now a \$115 million business and ranks number 14 on the *Counselor* Top 40.

50 LARRY COHEN



Axis Promotions (asi/128263)

2014 Rank: N/A

Cohen's creativity and success led to his inclusion in the 2015 Power 50. He leads Axis Promotions, an innovative distributor firm based in New York that operates more like an ad agency than traditional distributor and has found rapid success as a result. By focusing on the entertainment sector (including clients such as A&E Networks, ESPN, NBC Universal and the New York Knicks), Axis has grown its sales by 33% over the past five years and now is a \$45 million company.