

BEST in CLASS



By The Editors

F *FE&S* recently conducted a survey in order to determine from our dealer and consultant readers their choices of preferred suppliers in the industry categories of heavy and light equipment, smallwares and tabletop products. The poll was conducted earlier this year by a New York City-based independent research organization that circulated our survey form to dealers and consultants on *FE&S* subscriber list. There were two rationales for doing this survey. The first was to provide professional recognition to E&S manufacturers who best satisfy the needs of those who sell and specify their products on a daily basis. The second was to help manufacturers enhance their understanding of the factors that are most important to dealers and consultants when they select manufacturer partners.

The “Best In Class” results were, in most cases, clear-cut and yet remarkably consistent among dealers and consultants who voted separately (see tables). Many of the top choices of both dealers and consultants were in sync. The “Overall Best In Class” status was determined by the cumulative vote of all dealer and consultant respondents in all product categories.

Table 1

Total Respondents

Heavy Equipment	Light Equipment	Smallwares	Tabletop
TOP 3			
1. Hobart	Hatco	Vollrath	Libbey
2. Vulcan-Hart	Hobart	Lincoln Foodservice Prods.	Oneida
3. Garland	Star	Adcraft	Homer Laughlin

Dealers

Heavy Equipment	Light Equipment	Smallwares	Tabletop
TOP 3			
1. Hobart	Star	Vollrath	Libbey
2. Vulcan-Hart	Hatco	Lincoln Foodservice Prods.	Oneida
3. True Mfg.	APW/Wyott	Adcraft	Homer Laughlin

Consultants

Heavy Equipment	Light Equipment	Smallwares	Tabletop
TOP 3			
1. Hobart	Hatco	Vollrath	Libbey
2. Vulcan-Hart	Hobart	Forschner	Oneida
3. Garland	Robot Coupe	Adcraft	Walco

Overall Best In Class

Total Respondents	Dealers	Consultants
TOP 5		
1. Hobart	Hobart	Hobart
2. Vulcan-Hart	Vulcan-Hart	Vulcan-Hart
3. Hatco	True Mfg.	Hatco
4. Garland	Randell	Garland
5. True Mfg.	Garland	Delfield

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Both dealers and consultants named Hobart as the overall Best In Class manufacturer, with Vulcan-Hart, a sister ITW company, in second place. Hatco was voted into third position, followed by Garland and True Manufacturing. Hobart, Vulcan-Hart and Garland were also the cumulative top three choices in the heavy equipment category. Hobart was voted the leader in dishwashers/warewashers, mixers and electric slicers, and second in food processors, while Vulcan-Hart was named by our respondents as the preferred supplier of broilers, griddles/grills and ranges, and second in convection ovens.

Upon hearing of the results of our survey, Hobart's Vice President/Sales Kurt Wacker said, "We are very appreciative that our dealers and consultants have voted us as overall Best In Class. General service support, both pre- and post-sale, continues to be a top priority with our territory sales managers, inside support personnel and Hobart service offices. We have also just completed an 80/20 analysis of our product lines, which will enable us to provide our customers even higher quality products on a timely basis."

"[We're] an engineering company that happens to manufacture."

In a related award, Hatco was named the overall Best In Class in light equipment. Hobart was voted into the runner-up position, even though it was represented solely by its slicing machines, and Star Manufacturing, which received the most dealer votes, was third in the cumulative polling. Hatco occupied the top position in the heat lamp, drawer warmer and conveyor toaster categories. Hot water boosters, of which it is widely regarded to be the biggest supplier, were not on the ballot.

Hatco President David Hatch defined his more-than-50-year-old company's identity as that of "an engineering company that happens to manufacture." He added that while Hatco places great importance on maintaining effective customer relationship management, "we are truly focused on product innovation, which requires a state-of-the-art factory capable of making feasible that which can be imagined." He described Hatco's culture as one that "fosters an open and creative atmosphere that generates products that meet the needs of the market."

Vollrath was our respondents' Best In Class selection in the smallwares category, followed by Lincoln Foodser-

Table 2 **BEST IN CLASS DEALERS**

First

Heavy Equipment

Blast Chillers	Traulsen
Broilers	Vulcan-Hart
Chef Counters, Prefab	Randell
Dishwashers/Warewashers	Hobart
Fryers	Frymaster
Steam-Jacketed Kettles	Groen
Griddles & Grills	Vulcan-Hart
Ice Makers	Manitowoc
Mixers, 12-Qt. & larger	Hobart
Combi Oven Steamers	Blodgett
Conveyor Ovens	Lincoln Foodservice Products
Deck Ovens	Blodgett
Convection Ovens	Blodgett
Cook & Hold Ovens	Alto-Shaam
Ranges	Vulcan-Hart
Refrigerated Prep Tables	True Mfg.
Upright/Reach-In Refrigeration	True Mfg.
Walk-In Refrigeration	Kolpak
Rotisseries	Hickory Industries
Steamers	Groen
Ventilating Systems	Captive Aire

Light Equipment

Blenders	Hamilton Beach
Coffee Brewers	Bunn-O-Matic
Disposers	In-Sink-Erator
Heat Lamps	Hatco
Drawer Warmers	Hatco
Microwave Ovens	Amana
Parts & Accessories	Franklin Machine Products
Food Processors	Robot Coupe
Scales	Edlund
Self-Leveling Dispensers	Servolift/Eastern
Serving Carts	Lakeside
Shelving	InterMetro
Sinks, Prefab	Advance Tabco
Electric Slicers	Hobart
Conveyor Toasters	Hatco
Worktables, Prefab	Advance Tabco

Smallwares

Cutlery	Russell Harrington
Cookware	Lincoln Foodservice Products
Disposables	Dart
Thermometers	Cooper
Hard Surface Cleaners	3M

Tabletop

Dinnerware	Oneida
Flatware	Oneida
Glassware	Libbey

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vice Products and Adcraft. “Vollrath prides itself on the service and support given by our factory sales force and our team of inside sales support people who work with our customers every day,” commented Tom Belot, Vollrath’s president. He added that Vollrath “has been ISO 9001 Certified since 1999, with our products being manufactured in one of our five U.S. plants or selectively outsourced to provide the best value to our customers.”

Belot also noted that Vollrath has recently completed bar coding all its products, has installed a new

“We have supplemented our direct people with manufacturers’ reps, who work in concert with our sales force to form strong geographically defined teams.”

computer system in its distribution center to help to reduce shipping errors and has placed emphasis on daily fill rate measures by product to respond more quickly to customers’ needs. While not a first-place finisher in an individual product category, Vollrath had strong support from our respondents across the board. Lincoln Foodservice Products, which was voted first in the cookware category by our dealers, finished in second position in the Best in Class smallwares poll results. A diversified manufacturer, Lincoln was also voted the preferred supplier in conveyor ovens in the heavy equipment category.

The leading tabletop vote-getter and Best In Class company was Libbey, with Oneida in second position and Homer Laughlin China in the third slot. Dutch Ashton, vice president of sales for Libbey, commented that, whereas this company was represented in years past exclusively by its direct sales force (the largest in the industry), it has recently taken more of a team approach. Under this model, Ashton explained, “we have supplemented our direct people with manufacturers’ reps, who work in concert with our sales force to form strong geographically defined teams.” He added that Libbey has structured its teams so that they are concerned

Table 3 **BEST IN CLASS**
CONSULTANTS **First**

Heavy Equipment

Blast Chillers	Traulsen
Broilers	Vulcan-Hart
Chef Counters, Prefab	Delfield
Dishwashers/Warewashers	Hobart
Fryers	Frymaster
Steam-Jacketed Kettles	Groen
Griddles & Grills	Vulcan-Hart
Ice Makers	Hoshizaki
Mixers, 12-Qt. & larger	Hobart
Combi Oven Steamers	Blodgett
Conveyor Ovens	Lincoln Foodservice Products
Deck Ovens	Blodgett
Convection Ovens	Blodgett
Cook & Hold Ovens	Alto-Shaam
Ranges	Vulcan-Hart
Refrigerated Prep Tables	Delfield
Upright/Reach-In Refrigeration	Traulsen
Walk-In Refrigeration	Kolpak
Rotisseries	Hardt
Steamers	Cleveland
Ventilating Systems	Captive Aire

Light Equipment

Blenders	Hamilton Beach
Coffee Brewers	Bunn-O-Matic
Disposers	In-Sink-Erator
Heat Lamps	Hatco
Drawer Warmers	Hatco
Microwave Ovens	Amana
Parts & Accessories	Franklin Machine Products
Food Processors	Robot Coupe
Scales	Edlund
Self-Leveling Dispensers	Servolift/Eastern
Serving Carts	Lakeside
Shelving	InterMetro
Sinks, Prefab	Advance Tabco
Electric Slicers	Hobart
Conveyor Toasters	Hatco
Worktables, Prefab	Advance Tabco

Smallwares

Cutlery	Forschner
Cookware	Vollrath
Thermometers	Cooper

Tabletop

Dinnerware	Oneida
Flatware	Oneida
Glassware	Libbey

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about territory sales growth, rather than their individual performances. Ashton commented that this change in Libbey's sales methodology has been largely responsible for its success since its acquisition of Syracuse China and World Tableware. While voted into first position only in glassware, Libbey received sufficient support in the dinnerware and flatware categories to edge out Oneida for overall Best In Class honors.

According to the responses of the dealers and consultants we surveyed, the predominant reason for selecting Best In Class winners was factories' ability to provide service and support, which clearly ranked ahead of product quality. (See Table 4.) Both dealers and consultants placed their most-preferred factories' ability to provide support services first, by a significant margin (78% vs. 57% who stated that the quality of factories' products was the number one determinant). Consultants voted most strongly (87%) for service over product quality (69%), while dealers voted 73% to 49%, presenting a clear indication that support and service are the attributes they prize most from E&S manufacturers.

The third-most influential factor in the selection of Best In Class companies, according to our respondents, was knowledgeable sales reps, with this attribute receiving 52% of the total count. Interestingly, virtually the same preference for knowledgeable reps was expressed by dealers (50%) and consultants (55%). The other determinants for choosing our Best In Class companies were training/education, timely responsiveness, breadth of product line, creativity, inventory/delivery availability, companies' experience and reputation, and skill at building a long-term relationship. Whereas dealers and consultants generally agreed on most of these factors, dealers understandably placed greater importance on inventory/delivery, while consultants felt more

strongly about suppliers having broad product lines and offering creative solutions to problems. —F&S

Table 4
Best In Class
Poll Results

Reasons Chosen Best In Class	Total	Dealers	Consultants
General Support Services	78%	73%	87%
Good Service	46%	37%	61%
Personalized Service	23%	16%	33%
Good Customer/Service Support	20%	24%	15%
Experienced Support Staff	8%	4%	13%
Quality Products	57%	49%	69%
Quality Products	41%	34%	53%
Reliable Products	17%	10%	27%
Durable Products	9%	10%	9%
Good/Knowledgeable Reps	52%	50%	55%
Good/Great Rep	46%	45%	46%
Knowledgeable Reps	12%	7%	18%
Good Training/Education	37%	37%	37%
Good Training Program	34%	33%	37%
Timely Response	28%	28%	27%
Provides Timely Information	16%	14%	18%
Quick to Respond	9%	8%	10%
Broad Line of Products	25%	22%	30%
Creativity	20%	18%	23%
Creative Solutions	14%	11%	19%
Inventory/Delivery	19%	25%	9%
Prompt/On-Time Delivery	7%	11%	0%
Good Inventory	8%	10%	5%
Well Known/Experienced Company	10%	10%	12%
Long-Term Relationship	8%	7%	11%

NOTE: The survey results and findings presented in this article represent the opinions of surveyed dealers and consultants on our subscriber list, and should in no way be construed as editorial endorsement of companies and products mentioned in the story.