



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Kroger, Unilever and Acosta Win Inaugural Consumer 360 Awards**

**(Phoenix, AZ; February 4, 2003)** — Kroger, Unilever and Acosta Sales & Marketing Company today were named winners of the inaugural Consumer 360 awards, co-sponsored by three VNU Business Media magazines: BrandWeek, Progressive Grocer and Retail Merchandiser. The awards were presented here at the first Consumer 360 conference hosted by ACNielsen U.S. and Spectra Marketing, companies of VNU.

The awards honor the retailer, manufacturer, and sales agency in the consumer packaged goods industry that have demonstrated the best understanding of the consumer in their year-round merchandising activities.

Winners were selected by a poll of readers of BrandWeek, Progressive Grocer and Retail Merchandiser. Retailers were asked to choose the manufacturer winner and manufacturers picked the retailer winner. Both manufacturers and retailers voted on the sales agency.

"At Unilever Bestfoods, we deeply appreciate the recognition of VNU Business Publications as the recipient of the Consumer 360 Award for the manufacturer community," said Art Drogue, senior vice president, Sales & Customer Development for Unilever Bestfoods. "We've made a concerted effort over the last two years to more fully leverage consumer and shopper insights into our category and total business-building relationships with our trading partners."

Drogue affirmed his company's belief that it is the consumer that guides retailers and suppliers to profitable business opportunities. "The support of ACNielsen, Spectra and other VNU companies has played a critical role in our execution of this strategy. We're off to a solid start. Keep your eye on us in the future."

Unilever's Home & Personal Care division takes a similar consumer-first view. "Our partnership with ACNielsen has been a significant contributor to assist us in delivering valuable insights to our customers to delight our shoppers in their outlets of choice," said Pat Peters, senior vice president, Customer & Category Development, for Unilever HPC-U.S. "On behalf of Unilever Home and Personal Care, we wish to thank our retail partners, ACNielsen, Progressive Grocer, Retail Merchandiser and Brandweek for the recognition of all our people."

John Steurer, senior vice president of Acosta Sales & Marketing Company, said the Jacksonville, FL-based sales agency's success starts with a strategy to be recognized by its clients and customers for superior category development and space technology. Steurer listed three keys to success: People, technology and an understanding of the importance of the business process.

"It always starts with having the right people," said Steurer. "We have the critical mass of 400-plus resources in category development and space technology. And, we have the most comprehensive training program in the market for both new associates and for veterans to upgrade their skill sets."

With proprietary technology, called Asset (Acosta Strategy Sales Evaluation Tools), Acosta provides the category development, space technology and business management teams with quick, easy-to-read analysis of clients and customers.

Finally, Steurer emphasized that Acosta views technology as simply an enabling tool. "Our understanding of the importance of the business process has enabled us to develop tools to address the key performance areas that drive the most profitable category sales," he added.

Mark Holdreith, retail group president, VNU Business Publications, said, "Today's leading marketers put the consumer at the center of all that they do, and the winners of this year's Consumer 360 awards exemplify that practice. Congratulations to each of these outstanding companies."

BrandWeek is the only newsweekly dedicated solely to the needs and concerns of America's top brand marketers. Progressive Grocer has been the comprehensive source of information for food retailers for over 80 years. Retail Merchandiser is the magazine that retailers in the mass, drug and specialty retailing fields turn to for information and analysis they need to profitably serve the North American consumer.

**Acosta Sales and Marketing Company**

Acosta Sales and Marketing Company is a leading full-service sales and marketing agency in North America, providing outsourced sales, merchandising, marketing, and promotional services to manufacturers in the consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., Acosta has operations throughout the U.S. and Canada. For more information visit [www.acosta.com](http://www.acosta.com).