

Fragrance as Consumer Influencer

“Fragrance is one of the key elements of personal care and home care products,” says Dominique Bession, category brand fragrance manager at Unilever, following the Unilever Fragrance Awards, which were held May 23 in London and honored projects launched or delivered between November 2010 and the close of 2012. Nominees were drawn from among all of the company’s brands across the home care and personal care categories. In addition, the company issued a “Best Iconic Fragrance Award,” selected from projects from the company’s history. Nominations were submitted by Unilever and its fragrance suppliers beginning in January. Fifty submissions were then subjected to a multi-step judging process among Unilever experts and four retired perfumers: Annie van As (formerly of Quest), Bernfried Warnecke (previously of Symrise), Charlie Beck (formerly of IFF) and Matthijs van der Waal (formerly of Givaudan and Firmenich). The judging culminated in two brand finalists for each category, which were invited to create an interactive exhibition and video, in partnership with the fragrance houses, for the awards ceremony. Winners’ trophies were presented by Paul Polman, Unilever’s CEO.

Bession explains, “The Unilever Fragrance Awards are an important way of recognizing the fragrance successes we have in the market and the exciting partnerships we have with our fragrance houses.

Fragrances influence consumer behavior at point of sale and throughout the usage of the product. They can enhance product attribute perception and create an emotional bond with the consumer. They influence consumers’ opinions of the overall product, com-



Unilever CEO Paul Polman.

municate functional attributes such as cleanliness, softness or care, are tied up with the brand’s identity and help to develop brand loyalty.”

Bession notes that Unilever considers fragrance a part of its overall brand design, and so category brand fragrance managers, Unilever’s internal experts, work closely with fragrance houses to drive the creative process and deliver optimal brand-supporting and consumer-preferred scents that produce business growth. Unilever is investing in growing its fragrance capability and developing this strategic expertise. The fragrance houses that stand out, according to Bession, deliver on fragrance hedonics and innovative technologies, trend and



A view of the Unilever Fragrance Awards, held May 23 in London.

consumer understanding support, regulatory compliance, and general proactivity and responsiveness.

“Typically, a fragrance winning in the market is a fragrance that is so memorable and close to the brand identity that the consumer can immediately recognize it and identify it with the brand itself (like the core *Dove* bar, *Lifebuoy Total* or the *Omo* scent),” Bession explains.

“The awards celebrate this contribution not only from a purely innovative point of view, but also rewards best practices, sustainability programs and competitive advantage gained through superior hedonics and performance of their creations,” says Bession.

This year’s winners were:

- **Best fragrance creation:** *Axe Apollo*
- **Most innovative fragrance:** *Tigi Bed Head Candy Fixations, Totally Baked Hair Meringue*
- **Most iconic fragrance:** *OMO/Persil*
- **Best fragrance technology:** *DIG/Skip*
- **Best fragrance contribution to competitive preference:** *Fair & Lovely Fair & Lovely Multi Vitamin*
- **Best fragrance value creation:** *Wheel*
- **Best fragrance contribution to Unilever Sustainable Living Plan:** Firmenich
- **Best Unilever reputational compliance:** Updated safety standards, Unilever’s SEAC and all partners

“We create compelling brand ideas and quality products for the consumer to buy into,” says Tamara Rogers, senior vice president for the deodorant category at Unilever and chair of its Fragrance Leadership Team. “It’s [fragrance] a critical part of all our products and of our brand mixes, which drives product loyalty strategy into action. Fragrance is what people fall in love with when they try our products. Fragrance is what makes them come back and buy it again and again and again, and it’s one of these subconscious things you can’t explain and makes it [the product] irresistible.”

“It’s a positive energy you’re creating here, and for what that energy translates to in terms of wonderful projects and the results that you see here, you should all be congratulated,” said Polman, in conclusion. “It’s that partnership, obviously, that builds that trust and the transparency that leads to these results.”

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