

40

YEARS

The AgVantage team—40 years and going strong.



AgVantage[®] Software

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AgVantage Software for Agribusinesses

Powerful Relationships. Sophisticated Solutions.

To visit **AgVantage Software, Inc.**'s bustling offices today, or to attend one of its lively user conferences, you would never guess the position the company was in just 15 years ago.

But in 2000, AgVantage Software, Inc., which provides accounting and business software for cooperatives and other agribusinesses, was in turmoil, says Michelle Blomberg, president and CEO of the Rochester, Minn.-based company.

The founder and previous CEO passed away suddenly, and the company's future was in doubt, says Blomberg, whose parents founded Be-Rich Software—an Iowan competitor that merged with AgVantage Software in 1995. Customers were dissatisfied and sales were flat—and no wonder: According to Blomberg, the company's software offerings weren't keeping up with the industry or with customers' needs. As a result, the firm hadn't had a new customer in three years and was surviving solely on customer-support fees from current customers.

Employee motivation was also low. Many long term employees had not been given an increase in their compensation in years. And attracting new talent was difficult with the unknown future.

Still, the company did have one thing going for it: **loyalty**. Customers and employees were staying put despite all the problems, Blomberg recalls. But clearly something had to change.

Dramatic Turnaround

Fast forward to 2016, and AgVantage is thriving. Since 2001, the newly formed management team with Blomberg at the helm, has increased corporate gross sales revenues by over 100 percent, and the staff has grown by over 80 percent. The company has added a number of well-received software solutions that allow customers to run their businesses more efficiently and effectively. "We provide offerings for every

aspect of the agriculture business," Blomberg says.

"We started listening to our customers," Chuck Bohanon says. Bohanon, who has been with the company since 1979, rode the tide of the company waning waters and is now the VP of Technology. "We sat down with them and asked them what we could do better." The process elicited a "lot of good input," which the company took to heart.

"We did plenty of soul searching and, even though we had been in business for 25 years, we basically started over from scratch," Paul Hawes says reflecting on the year 2000. Hawes, the company's CFO, has also been with AgVantage since 1979. With a new "no blame" corporate philosophy that emphasizes internal team building and customer input and feedback, Paul comments "We already had great people working here, but we were each doing our own thing and not working together to achieve bigger results, faster."

Another important change: The decision to turn the National Conference over to customers. Now, customers have direct input into the session topics, dictate the agenda, help teach the classes and even vote on the enhancements for the products they want AgVantage to develop over the next year—the "Customer Driven Development" process—successful for over 15 years.

"Our culture today is based on genuine relationships and care for people," Theresa Willems, the VP of Service says. Willems came to the company in 2004 and brought with her an uncanny ability to read people and connect with them at a deeper level. This philosophy applies to employees, business partnerships and to our customers. "Changing the culture of the company requires 100% teamwork and an 'all in attitude' from the people at the company."

1976	2	Owner/CEO: Don Udenberg	1 State: Minnesota	\$250,000
YEAR	EMPLOYEEES	EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP	AREAS SERVED	GROSS REVENUES
2016	38	CEO/President: Michelle Blomberg; Executives: Theresa Willems, V.P. of Service, Chuck Bohanon, Chief Information Officer and Paul Hawes, Chief Financial Officer	20 States; Specifically strong in MN, WI, WA, OH, IN, MI, ND, IA	\$5 million