

# MINNESOTA

## WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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## AgVantage® Software for Agribusiness

**Powerful Relationships. Sophisticated Solutions.**

*"We are very satisfied with your software and your support staff, and we would highly recommend AgVantage® Software to anyone."*

— Office manager, Freeborn County Co-Op Oil, Albert Lea, Minn.

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 nine 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 — a 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 2009, and AgVantage® is thriving. The management team, formed



Michelle  
Blomberg

in 2001, with Blomberg at the helm, has increased corporate gross sales revenues by over 50 percent, and the staff has grown by over 60 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.

The company needed a turnaround, and this team of company owners knew it. Blomberg grew up in a small town in Iowa with nine brothers and sisters, played four sports through high school and was a two sport athlete through college. She "lived" team. "I could not survive in a large family without teamwork." And as the point guard of the college basketball team, leadership became the strongest quality she brought to the team. "I have a knack for finding people's strengths and then using them to stimulate group excellence."

"We started listening to our customers," Blomberg says. "We sat down with them and asked them what we could do

### Our System. Your Office.

If you have a PC, a solid Internet connection and a printer, then AgVantage®'s sophisticated software solutions are only a mouse-click away. There's no need for you to purchase your own server, because you can run the software on AgVantage®'s IBM Power Systems from the convenience of your office, through a process called Application Service Provider (ASP).

"When we started the ASP solution in 2000, we were pioneers," Blomberg says. Today, nearly 70 customers are taking advantage of the highly secure service.

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," Blomberg says, with a new "no blame" corporate philosophy that emphasizes internal team building and customer input and feedback. "I already had great people working for me, but they were each doing their 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 — which has been successful for over eight years.

"Our culture today is based on genuine relationships and care for people," Blomberg says. This philosophy applies to employees, business partnerships and to our customers.

*"AgVantage® Software has worked hard to provide the products we need to help us grow our business and become as efficient as we can."*

— CFO, United Farmers Cooperative, Lafayette, Minn.

**AgVantage®**  
Software

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