

## BEST PRACTICES | Turning things upside down



**Bernadette McDevitt (from left), Camille Vieux, Kevin Clune and Mary Kay Clune of Clune & Co. with some of the new marketing tools they use to change business.**

# Clune adapts to market

By RUTH BAUM BIGUS  
Special to The Star

**Company:** Clune & Co. provides equipment vendors with financing and leasing arrangements for customers.

**Telephone:** 913-498-3000

**Address:** 5950 Roe Ave., Mission

**Web site:** www.clune.net

**Employees:** 10

**Ownership/management:** Kevin Clune and his wife Mary Kay Clune own the company. Kevin Clune is president and chief executive officer; Mary Kay Clune is corporate secretary and treasurer. Tracy Galvin works as general manager and director of operations.

**Challenge:** How to increase business in fluctuating market.

**Background:** In the last couple of years, Kevin Clune said, the introduction of corporate credit cards and preapproved microloans for financing equipment purchases have dented Clune's bottom line.

"We were seeing demand soften," Clune said.

His company needed to respond quickly, Clune said, but its top-down triangle management structure hindered this.

"It was myself and the general manager making all the decisions, and they trickled down," he said.

Employees did not see financials and had little knowledge of the company's performance.

"I decided we need a good kick in the tail to get things going again," Clune said.

**Action steps:** In 2005, Clune hired consultant Rob Dowdy with Kansas City-based ProStrategist "to objectively analyze everything and challenge me."

Dowdy recommended turning things upside down.

"He said, 'You're going to have to upend your management structure and consult with your employees and show them your books,' and that's what I did," Clune said.

Clune shared the company financials, and employees were empowered to help make decisions on the company's direction. Clune also changed the compensation formula.

"A significant part of the employees' compensation (now) is a bonus handed out at year end based upon the company's performance," he said.

Employees joined various action teams

to discuss problems and come up with solutions.

"They voted on what needed to be done with the company," Clune said. Priorities were set with goals and how best to achieve them. Based on action-team recommendations, a new logo was created, the Web site was revamped and enhanced communication with clients has taken place.

"Our employees even voted to reduce some of their benefits to cut costs. ... and I had nothing to do with it," Clune said.

**Results:** Since empowering employees, Clune said, the company has seen positive changes.

"The first year (2006) we increased by 42 percent in revenue over 2005, and while last year's increase was not as dramatic at 7 percent, I was pleased considering the economy," Clune said.

Communication has improved with the establishment of regular meetings.

"There is a different attitude," he said. "Instead of being told what to do, the employee is in charge of things, and they see a direct impact. We're all on the same page with the same goals."