



The soft-spoken, elegant Marcia Garrison Taylor is an “against all odds” success story. As president and CEO of Bennett International Group, Taylor’s vision and solid core values have sustained the company through bad times and propelled it to enormous success.

MARCIA GARRISON TAYLOR

By MARGUERITE KELLY

In 1974, she and her husband, J.D. Garrison, purchased George Bennett Motor Express. After taking over Bennett’s two customers and five trucks, the company boasted \$1 million in revenue.

In 1978, the company was able to purchase important new equipment and Garrison quickly secured a contact distributing new tractors from Ford Motor Company’s plant in Romeo, Mich. This contract set the stage for the capture of a large share of the agricultural machinery market throughout the country.

For Bennett, 1980 was a year of “firsts.” The company purchased its first computer and held its first annual agent’s meeting at the McDonough Holiday Inn. There were four agents present who shared the vision for Bennett’s success, this in contrast to the 550 who are expected to attend this year’s 25th Annual Symposium at the Atlanta Airport Hilton.

Tragedy often holds the hand of triumph, and such was the case in 1981. J.D. Garrison, Taylor’s partner in life and business, was lost to a sudden illness and subsequent death. It was a watershed moment in the company’s history. Taylor was faced with the daunting decision of continuing to run the business or closing the doors for good.

Employees, friends and family helped Taylor keep the business alive. Their support and loyalty have helped to take Bennett from a regional carrier to an organization with worldwide impact on the industry.

“We try to have a family culture. After all, this is a family business, so we look at our employees as part of our extended family. This means being supportive of each other.

“We also believe in giving outstanding customer service. Customer service is an integral part of our business. After all, service is a considerable part of what we have to offer.”

Taylor readily admits that the events of Sept. 11 triggered a refocus for the corporation and a more streamlined approach to the business. The cycle of change took about six months, after which came a period of adjustment.

“After 9/11, we went back to our core business,” says Taylor. “We closed down a couple of companies that were marginal. For the first time in our history, there was a small layoff. It was a one-time situation.”

To date, nine different companies represent Bennett in more than 90 countries worldwide. There are more than 250 terminals in the United States alone, and some 135 international offices spread across five continents. Bennett offers a myriad transportation, warehousing and logistics services to its client base.

The business community has noticed Bennett’s success and responded favorably to Taylor and her leadership over the years, and the accolades just keep coming. The Atlanta Business Chronicle recently honored Taylor for her leadership at Bennett International Group, naming her No. 1 on its list of

Atlanta’s Top 25 Women-Owned Firms. She was presented the prestigious Athena Award from Henry County in 1996, and in 1999, Bennett’s “Highway to the World” took the company to the Industry of the Year Award given by the Henry County Chamber of Commerce. Venture Magazine dubbed Taylor Entrepreneur of the Year in 1998. That same year, Ryder Carrier Management chose Bennett Carrier of the Year. In 2003, Atlanta’s Metro South named Bennett as its Business/Industry of the Year.

However, one of Taylor’s proudest moments came when Bennett joined the ranks of Working Women’s Top 500. This prestigious designation earned an invitation to the White House in 1999, where Bennett was recognized as being among the top 107 businesses in America owned by females.

But Taylor remains modest about her leadership and the recognition the company has garnered. Preferring to credit her employees, their dedication to the corporate mission and a faithful following of loyal customers, she admits to being a positive thinker who has loved the business for 31 years. A testament to this is the profitability and success of Bennett today.

“I am most proud of what Bennett, as a company, has become and the people who have helped it grow,” Taylor says. “I’m a little like a mother who is proud of her child. We are very blessed and we know it. We don’t ever take our success or our customers for granted.”



Photography by THINH BUI