



All in the family

DynAgra takes home retailer of the year award

By Heather Hudson

When Tasha and Remi Schmaltz took over the family business five years ago, they had every reason to coast on cruise control.

DynAgra is a household name in each of its four Alberta locations with a loyal customer base that, in some cases, spans three generations. Business was good, the staff was efficient and they held a respectable place in the community.

But just like their father and grandfather before them, these two brothers couldn't leave well enough alone.

Since Tasha came on as general manager in 2005 and Remi as manager of corporate development, DynAgra has added variable rate technology (VRT) and the agronomic expertise to support and sustain it, a new finance component that provides bridge financing and a host of stunning new technologies and services, including an online management tool.

It's no wonder DynAgra was named CAAR's Retailer of the Year at February's convention.

According to Tasha, the secret to DynAgra's recent success is threefold.

Employees

"When you're running a business, you find out that you've got assets and rolling stock and products but, at the end of the day, what makes DynAgra DynAgra is the team. I'm always looking at making the team stronger and at how everyone kind of fits in together."

To that end, Tasha says he consults closely with staff when introducing new technology and assessing its effectiveness. He also emphasizes the importance of capitalizing on the strengths of each individual.

"You see a person who's a spray operator and also has a computer background and can maybe take on this other role. I look at people's skills and how they can develop and grow with the company."

Commitment to customers

Since DynAgra opened its doors in the 1940s, service to local growers has been a cornerstone of the business.

"I think we have some of the greatest growers in the world around our area and I believe part of the reason they're great is because we've been working together for two and three gen-

Member Profile

erations. The growers are learning from us and we're learning from them. We're constantly working with them.

"I grew up with a lot of kids that ended up being farmers and I ended up being the retailer and that would have been the same for my father and grandfather."

Hiring locally and supporting sports programs and charities within the community also gives the Schmaltzes a sense of pride.

Networking and new technology

Though the Schmaltzes are happiest in their own community, they recognize the importance of networking within and outside of industry to build partnerships with suppliers and source new technologies and ideas.

This big-picture thinking has led to the development of their own in-house financial software, which has changed the focus of the business. "We used to have four administrative people making sure prices were right in our computer – now we have one person doing billing for all four locations.

"Those other three people haven't gone away. They're doing call-outs to customers, looking at developing better relationships with them. So, instead of sustaining the business process, we're looking

at reaching out and communicating better with customers." Using VRT to develop prescription maps for growers is also a new and growing portion of the business. "We believe it's the future of farming."

And through all the changes comes a pervading sense of excitement and gratitude.

"For a guy who lives in Beiseker, AB to be able to work with satellite companies and have this amazing group of people surround me and then also to be able to work with some incredible growers, that's what fuels us to continue to move technology forward.

"Success is about listening to the grower and listening to the industry and then having lots of discussions with employees to figure out if we're on the right track. It's about persistence and really focusing on trying to make the right decision."

And that's where family comes in again. Though the brothers often take dramatically different approaches to their work, Tasha concedes that they do complement each other.

"It's pretty exciting to be able to work with your brother day in and day out. Some days we yell at each other but 90 percent of the time we're excited to work together." ♦



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