

*Woman to Watch***Bonnie Lee**

Since 1994, Bonnie Lee has been owner of Travel Quest, which ranked No. 9 on the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's* Top 25 List of Travel Agencies. With \$18.2 million in sales, the company was up from No. 25 on the list in 2002. Starting with one outside agent eight years ago, Lee's host agency has grown to 70 independent agents, with plans to expand further. Travel Quest recently moved to a storefront and became affiliated with Carlson Wagonlit to better accommodate its growing business. Upon founding the business, Lee's business model took the approach that 100 percent commissions would attract top-producing agents. Now, large host agencies like Nexion are offering a 100 percent plan. Lee has created partnerships with Planet Beach, Stems and Vines, multiple stores at Albertville Premium Outlets, and Midwest Dental, among others. She also works with her photography-loving husband to take pictures during familiarization trips of the resorts they visit. Seeing a niche in the market, Lee has taken this project a step further and is working with Web designers to create a Web site where travel agents can purchase access to the photos and use it as a selling tool to their clients. Lee also is steering Travel Quest toward being a socially responsible business and has joined Responsible Minnesota Business. In addition to changes around the office (compostable utensils and mugs instead of paper cups), she is looking into offering clients the opportunity to purchase carbon credits

to offset the environmental impact of air travel. In 2006, she was the first recipient of the Funjet First Award from Funjet Vacations and was given a spot on the Funjet Advisory Board. Prior to Travel Quest Lee owned a manufacturing company called You and Me Windflowers, which employed women with families working from home. She is a member of the American Society of Travel Agents and Cruise Lines International Association.

*What professional accomplishment makes you most proud?*

Funjet First Award is my most accomplished award. The award is given not for sales volume but because of my contributions to the travel agent community.

*What do you see as the biggest issue in your industry right now?*

Communicating to the traveling public the value of travel professionals

*What are your goals for this year?*

Building the corporate side of my business, in both the on-site and in-house areas.

*What are your long-term goals?*

I want to continue to build a culture in the agency that is both family and environmentally friendly.

*What was the single most defining moment in your career?*

The first time someone trusted me to make their family vacation happen

*What advice would you give to women professionals?*

Be consistent; good things take time.

*Family:* Married 32 years; children Nathaniel, 29, Andrew, 28, Stephanie, 26, Bridget, 21

*What do you enjoy doing in your leisure time?*

Gardening! If the whole world could start their day in a beautiful garden, I think peace would prevail.

TITLE: Owner

COMPANY: Travel Quest, Carlson Wagonlit Albertville

WEB SITE: [www.travelquestonline.com](http://www.travelquestonline.com)

*What is your favorite book?*

*An Open Heart*, by the Dalai Lama

*What is your motto or catch phrase?*

In the grand scheme of things, is this really important?

