



Promotion  
**MINNESOTA**  
 WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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# Mother, Then Daughter, Steer With a Steady Hand

## *Smead Manufacturing Company Sails Toward the Future*



**Ebba C. Hoffman became President and CEO of Smead in 1955. Her common sense leadership guided phenomenal company growth over the next 43 years.**

While the Smead name is familiar to nearly everyone who frequents the office water cooler, fewer are familiar with the Smead story.

For more than three generations, the Smead Manufacturing Company has been a records management staple in countless offices and in virtually every industry. Its transformational impact on our personal and professional work spaces — the conduct and flow of business as we know it — would be tough to overstate. While Smead has grown mightily since introducing its first market concept, the Bandless Filing Envelope, in 1906, its name still conjures a certain indelible image: strong roots, innovative ideas and industry leadership.

### **Bold Women, Clear Vision**

From one product and six employees in 1906 to an industry leader today, Smead is in its third generation of family ownership and has been a woman-owned business since 1955. In an era when a woman running a business was a rarity, Ebba C. Hoffman stepped up to the challenge after her husband's passing. Blessed with common sense, a pragmatic eye, and the help and support of loyal Smead employees, Hoffman accomplished amazing feats in creating a foundation of high ideals within the company and reaching out to the community. During her 43-year tenure as Smead's president and CEO, Hoffman transformed the company into a booming, \$315 million enterprise.

In 1998, at age 86, Mrs. Hoffman passed the family legacy to her daughter and longtime Smead employee, Sharon Avent. Avent is every bit her mother's daughter: bold, sensible, gracious, adaptable and prone to think outside the filing cabinet. Under Avent's leadership, Smead has seen its annual revenues soar past the \$500 million mark.

"My mother achieved business success by simply following her instincts at a time when very few women had a seat in a board room," Avent says. "I strongly believe, as she did, that by making practical decisions, treating your people well, and staying attuned to your customers' concerns, you really can accomplish anything."



**President and CEO Sharon Avent is the third generation and second female to lead the 102 year old family-owned business.**

### **Industry Giant Simplifies Work, Life**

So many workplace essentials we tend to take for granted — vertical file folders, hanging folders, color-coded filing, end-tab filing and file tracking software, to name a few — were Smead firsts. With each new, groundbreaking concept, Smead has brought unprecedented ease and greater efficiency to offices large and small.

"Our innovative spirit defines us," Ms. Avent says. "As our office products have gone wireless, paperless and eco-friendly over the years, and as the recent launch of our Web-based Smead Organomics™ program reflects, we are continually moving and growing while remaining committed to helping people get organized."

After more than 100 years, Smead continues to be a leader in the office products industry with its state-of-the-art document management software, a continued focus on recycled and sustainable materials, and the introduction of new and innovative products every year.



**Smead is known for its innovative new products like the spill proof Secure Pocket.**



**Smead Manufacturing Company**  
*A Century of Leadership and Innovation*

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