



# Alumni Spotlight

**Dave Rock**

MAB Class of 2003  
Division Sales Manager, John Deere Company  
Dallas, Texas



by Cristina Mansfield

*The Alumni Spotlight focuses on an MAB alum, and is written by Cristina Mansfield, a 2004 graduate.*

When Dave Rock enrolled in K-State's M.A.B. program he already had experience developing strategic business plans for Deere & Co.'s Agricultural Equipment Division, traveling as far as China to develop a business plan for their joint venture combine business. At the time he was looking to learn new analysis and quantitative decision making skills. During the program Dave left Business Planning and became manager for the Ag Division's parts and service sales. The new responsibilities included sales as well as development of dealer parts and service management practices and electronic parts marketing information systems. Not having anticipated the promotion, he was relieved to find that the flexibility of the program allowed him to balance his increased responsibilities and prepare a thesis that was directly related to his new position. Also, a majority of the classes related directly to the new job's responsibilities.

## Lifestyle customers

are large property owners who buy tractors and implements to care for their property and grow plants and crops.

Dave's 2003 thesis examines parts and service sales outlet options for agricultural machinery dealerships. Production agriculture continues to consolidate: large commercial farms and "lifestyle customers" are

steadily increasing in numbers while traditional and small farms are decreasing. Concurrent with this change in the ag equipment customer base, dealerships are consolidating and providing product support via flexible approaches such as mobile repair services and on-farm parts stocking. The traditional and small farmer represents a significant amount of the repair parts business and ease of access to purchase these parts is needed to retain that business. Dave's thesis evaluated one potential response to the changing environment, creating dealer owned, low overhead "all makes" parts and service centers. As a result of the findings of the thesis, pilot locations were established with results continuing to be monitored. The thesis exercise allowed Dave to prepare a business-level analysis and present it to management. "While we had been informally kicking the idea around at the time, the thesis motivated me to develop the concept so it could be taken to the pilot stage."

Since September 2005, Dave has been Division Sales Manager for the west side of the Mississippi Delta covering the states of Louisiana, Arkansas and the Missouri Bootheel. He is responsible for machinery, parts and service sales, dealer location and development and John Deere's overall market success for the region.

Primary crops produced in the Mississippi Delta are cotton, rice and soybeans. The increased costs of fuel and fertilizer, seed

technology fees and need to be globally cost competitive has producers looking for enabling production cost management tools that improve productivity and efficiency. The emergence of precision ag technology is providing those tools. Cotton in particular responds readily to intensive management of inputs such as water, fertilizer, growth regulators and insect control to insure optimum yields are achieved. Tractor guidance systems eliminate over-lap or skips in coverage when working with wide equipment and allow mixing 6, 12 and 18 row equipment in the same field without problems handling the "guess-row."

Some systems are capable of sub-inch variation. Additional benefits are reduced operator fatigue, improved productivity and improved performance from lower skilled operators. Variable rate application equipment enables planting and spraying to a prescription to control inputs and achieve the highest economic yield. These variable rate prescriptions are written based on information from yield maps created from the previous harvest, soil sampling or from aerial images taken of the growing crop.



*John Deere Ag Management Solutions (AMS) provides precision ag products such as GreenStar™ AutoTrac with RTK (Real Time Kinematic) that allows the operator sub-inch, repeatable accuracy when making passes through the field. Photo from JohnDeere.com*

An important aspect of Dave's division sales manager job is working to develop the John Deere dealer organization to sell and support these new technologies and services to meet the customer's needs and provide the desired experience today and in the future. The MAB financial analysis and management course learnings are used daily in working with field managers and dealers. The logistics course content on the agricultural food value chain increased his awareness of changes occurring beyond the ag machinery business and gave insight into opportunities broader than being an equipment provider. Its critical to understand the interconnectedness of agriculture - it is about so much more than machinery - including the impact of agricultural policy and globalization of agriculture on producers, dealers and his company. Dave sees an extremely bright future for agriculture for those who are willing to adapt to change and apply innovative solutions to these emerging opportunities.



## Dave's personal philosophy:

**"Keep moving the ball forward! It is not a perfect world, there are things you can't control."**

The pace of the M.A.B. program taught him that he had the capacity to handle a full workload and get the class assignments done.