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Bolek's marketing smarts stand out like a bouquet of roses

New Mexico Business Weekly - by [Kevin Robinson-Avila](#) NMBW Staff

It's rather fitting that Katie Bolek Rich chose to open a floral shop for her first foray into business.

As director of marketing for Albuquerque-based **MIOX Corp.**, Bolek Rich has already spent 12 years putting a colorful, artistic touch to MIOX promotions and sales. Now, she says the floral shop she opened in December with her husband, **Stems Floral Boutique**, will allow even more room for creative imagination.

"It's a place where artists can express their creativity," she says. "We'll offer artistic floral designs that you can't get elsewhere and with highly personalized service to meet the individual needs of customers."

That marriage of creative flare and business savvy had made her a cherished resource at MIOX -- a homegrown New Mexico company that markets breakthrough water-purification machines and devices worldwide. Her knack for easily translating complex technical concepts into universally appreciated, lean-green terms, have helped MIOX build markets in the U.S. and overseas, says Ioana Engstrom, vice president of international market development.

"Her outstanding ability to be flexible -- to really listen to and understand other people -- is a gift," Engstrom says. "She's very aware of cultural differences and appreciates the fact that other cultures sometimes require different, creative ways of getting a message across."

In addition to foreign markets, Bolek Rich's creative abilities have helped penetrate military culture as well. Bolek Rich played a key role in deploying MIOX technology among U.S. Marines under a Department of Defense contract that the company managed in partnership with Washington-based **Cascade Designs Inc.**, says Kevin Gallagher, military affairs manager at Cascade.

"Katie is just an excellent marketer," Gallagher says. "She's easily able to explain water-purification technology to highly technical people, and at the same time take that complicated subject matter and put it into effective presentations and materials for people who don't have technical knowledge. She really shines."

Bolek Rich says she entered the world of marketing and advertising because it allowed her to combine artistic talent with business. She earned a marketing degree from **Southern Methodist University** in Dallas, Texas, in 1994, graduating Summa Cum Laude.

She simultaneously earned a degree in Spanish that included a six-month stint in Spain and extensive studies about Latin America. That degree, which she also received Summa Cum Laude, has provided



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Tech marketing expert Katie Bolek Rich markets flowers as a family enterprise.

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Bolek Rich with invaluable communications skills and cross-cultural experience that fit hand-in-glove with her work at MIOX.

She helped spearhead MIOX sales in Latin American countries, particularly in Colombia, Mexico and Puerto Rico.

"Her fluency in Spanish has been fantastic for us," Engstrom says. "She's such a resource -- like a walking, talking encyclopedia for MIOX."

She also trained dozens of Spanish-speaking salespeople, helping MIOX contract qualified, on-site representatives in many countries south of the border.

Bolek Rich helped build MIOX's brand name and recognition from scratch. She started with the company as marketing coordinator in 1996 with **Los Alamos Technical Associates** -- a partner that helped launch MIOX that same year.

She transferred to MIOX itself in 1997, and within three years became marketing manager. She was promoted to marketing director in 2005.

Bolek Rich created all of the company's marketing and technical product information for customers and field personnel, encompassing more than 200 documents and 145 pages of Web content. She wrote the operation and maintenance manuals for MIOX's entire product line, and she is the designer and coordinator for MIOX's quarterly seminars that train approximately 60 new sales agents and customers annually.

She leads MIOX's team at trade shows nationally, and she's responsible for technical design and pricing of all prospective bids, order processing and freight logistics for nearly \$2 million in annual sales.

Thanks to Bolek Rich's marketing efforts, MIOX has been featured in major publications such as the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the Delta Sky and American Way airline magazines. National Geographic Today also did a 10-minute segment on MIOX.

Bolek Rich says she's just doing what she loves. "Marketing is very intuitive. It just sort of comes naturally to me," she says. "I love interacting with customers and potential clients."

Although she's not likely to give up her day job at MIOX, Bolek Rich expects the new floral shop to offer another level of creativity, and maybe some extra cash.

"The floral designer we hired is the one who did the flower arrangements at my wedding," Bolek Rich says. "He's a true artist -- an incredible florist."

The 1,800-square-foot shop at 2520 Juan Tabo NE carries jewelry from the designer who made the Bolek Rich's wedding rings. And, the couple plan to add Japanese metal designs to the store later this year.

"My husband and I love the creative aspect of growing this business, of building something," Bolek Rich says. "I did all the interior design for the shop."

As if that weren't enough, Bolek Rich is also participating this year in the 2007-2008 Fellows Program sponsored by the International Women's Forum Leadership Foundation.

She was one of only 22 candidates chosen from eight countries to participate in the program, which includes a customized week-long course at **Harvard Business School**, a four-day class at **Cambridge University's** Judge Business School, and leadership training and networking events with public and private sector leaders from around the world.

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