

October 3-9, 2003

**WOMEN  
BUSINESS**



PHOTOS/BYRON E. SMALL

**1 SHEILA LOWDEN**  
Lowden & Associates Inc.

Sheila Lowden is a bit surprised that her company is the fastest-growing woman-owned firm in Atlanta. The year 2002 was filled with ups and downs as her Norcross human resource management firm landed a major account but lost several clients.

“It was a tough year,” Lowden said. “It would have been a heck of a year if we hadn’t brought on the new [client].”

The account reflects a new focus for Lowden & Associates, which has provided services primarily to small and mid-sized firms averaging 30 employees. The client, which Lowden declined to name, is much larger, with 180 employees. “[It is]

our largest client ever in our history of five years. It helped in motivation, it helped in sales, and it’s helping in marketing,” she said.

As a result, Lowden & Associates topped \$26 million in revenue in 2002 compared with \$18.4 million in 2001.

With eight employees, the firm offers a range of professional employer organization services and human resource consulting services. Ninety percent of Lowden’s clients are headquartered in Georgia with employees in 26 states.

The biggest challenge remains being a “little guy” in a competitive industry with large corporate players, Lowden said. “They’ll play dirty, taking advantage of our small size and turning it into a negative. We spin it around,” she said.

That aggressive attitude is a strong piece of Lowden’s strategy to grow the firm. A new marketing plan also is in the works. “In 2004, we’re going to blow it out. That is going to be our year,” she said.

— Lori Johnston

**ATLANTA’S 10 FASTEST-GROWING WOMEN-OWNED FIRMS**

ranked by weighted average growth score

Rank	Company	Weighted average growth score*	Percent change in revenue 2000-2002	Percent change in number of employees 2000-2002	Factors leading to growth	Brief description of services offered	Chief Atlanta officer(s)	Year est. in Atlanta
<b>1</b>	Lowden & Associates Inc. 3105 Medlock Bridge Road Norcross, Ga. 30071 (770) 248-0401 www.laihr.com	219.07	158.14	0	focus on delivering what we do best, desire to meet clients’ needs client referrals	human resource services including full outsource solutions, project work, payroll, benefits administration	Sheila A. Lowden	1998