"LAST YEAR WAS the best year ever, both sales-wise and profit-wise, in the history of the company," says Floyd Deguyer, chief executive of CLM Equipment. "We've been working for two or three years on focusing the way we work, and it is really paying off." CLM posted about an 8 percent sales gain in 1991 to close the year with $105 million in revenues, putting the company at No. 59 in the 1991 Acadiana Top 100.

CLM sells heavy equipment to the construction industry, the petrochemical industry and to municipal or governmental entities. It also maintains a rental fleet and service and parts departments.

"The pick-up in economic activity has certainly helped us," Deguyer says. "But we have become more aggressive and goal-oriented within the company, stressing a team approach and accountability. We've become more creative in our sales efforts and have become more customer-oriented in the way we present what we have to sell."

A key to increased sales, Deguyer notes, has been to emphasize the need for dialogue with customers, learning about their businesses and needs and finding the right matches. "We're successful when we can offer solutions that work for our customers at the same time they're profitable to us," he says. By listening, and by being creative, and by offering solutions to problems, we've created a lot of business this year that just wouldn't have existed otherwise. We spent a lot of effort on training in 1990 and 1991, and it has really paid off for us."

CLM has recently opened a store in Houma that shows signs of being productive and profitable and may expand further this year by adding new lines of equipment. "We're trying to take advantage of what comes our way," Deguyer says. "But we stay focused on the idea that people like buying from people."

Looking ahead to 1992, Deguyer believes that CLM might be reasonably expected to enjoy revenue growth of 10 to 15 percent. "The overall economy is a little spotty, but there are projects out there," he says. "There are some road projects, and petrochemical activity in the Lake Charles area seems to hold promise." CLM has proven to be good at promoting itself to the people it sells to, from the serious problem-solving that characterizes its sales efforts to the lighter side: The company hosts heavy equipment rodeos that allow backhoe buck-o's and dozer drivers to show off their skills. "We had over 100 operators here in October for our last event," he says. "There were events for the whole family and pony rides for the kids. It was a good promotion. In fact, we even sold some equipment right there on the spot."