



Looking toward a bright future.

Fast Forward

So, what will the next generation of the business look like? It's a question Coborn's leaders have been asking since Chester C. and Duke took over the first store in 1929. It takes passion, visionary leaders and an ability to lead in a change-driven industry.

"You have to live and breathe it," said Bob Thueringer, who may not hold the Coborn name, but is seen as a family member just the same. "Competition has become more intense over the years but the challenges that come with it have made us better operators. Our industry will continue to evolve and our leadership will be challenged to be visionary and focused as we position the company for the future."

Coborn's has already beaten the odds. Only one-third of family businesses survive into the second generation and a mere 12 percent are still viable into the third generation. As fourth generation leaders of the Coborn's business, Chris and Mark Coborn (who retired as executive vice president in 2012) represent a mere three percent. Fifth generation leadership is almost unheard of, but a feat Coborn's could achieve.

Chris' daughter, Emily, returned to the business a few years after college. She represents the fifth generation and has been looked to as a next potential leader.

"I am so impressed by Emily," Chris said. "She is really interested in learning the business and has been actively involved in the industry. She wants to be with me at the association meetings so she can see where the industry is headed and connect with others."

Emily never felt pressured to be a part of the family business.

*"It takes passion,
visionary
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to lead."*

*"You have to live
and breathe it."*

2000

2010

2020

1995

2005

2015



Becky & Chris Coborn with daughter, Emily

Chris, and his wife Becky, encouraged their children to choose their own passions and paths in life.

“My parents always encouraged me and my brothers to try something else, but I think deep down I always knew I would end up here,” Emily said.

A Fifth Generation

Emily first joined the family business as a cashier in high school. She took her first job in the Sauk Rapids store, the place where her great-great grandfather first established the company's roots. She moved to the store's floral shop in college and worked for a manager who once babysat her dad.

Emily, a competitive gymnast who's still passionate about the sport, graduated from the College of Saint Benedict, her mother's alma mater and the sister school of her father and grandfather's alma mater. She worked in communications for SUPERVALU and Cub Foods before returning to Coborn's in 2011 as communications manager. She was promoted to director of Topco program management in 2013, and to district manager in 2014 after completing her Master's in Business Administration.

“I never saw myself coming back to the family business as soon as I did,” she said. “I was about to accept a new communications role at SUPERVALU and the same position became available at Coborn's. In thinking it through, returning to work at Coborn's just felt right.”



Emily Coborn - 5th Generation



*Front Photo: 2013
Dan Coborn - 3rd Generation
Chris Coborn - 4th Generation
Emily Coborn - 5th Generation*

Recognizing how lucky she is to have her father also be her professional mentor, she has followed him across the country to learn the business, network with others in the industry and witness firsthand what it means to be a visionary. It's a quality she admires in her father.

"She's taking advantage of the opportunities she's been given and she doesn't take them for granted," Dan said.

Although dinner table conversations rarely center on the family business, Emily has seen the sacrifices her family has made to ensure the vitality and sustainability of Coborn's for four generations. She's felt it and now, as an employee herself, sees that commitment extends beyond her family.

"I do not want her to feel like she has to take over the company," Chris said. "It's not expected. It will be her choice when that time comes and I will support her in whatever she decides. I'm just glad she's here now and we get to work together."

Still in her twenties, Emily does not know what the future holds. She's just at the start of her career. But she definitely possesses the passion for the business. "I am driven to be here and can't imagine myself doing anything else for a career."

Accelerated Change

No matter who leads the next generation of the company, it is changing fast. The company's most recent store in Minot, North Dakota brings Coborn's grocery operations to well over 120 retail stores in six states.

In the last five years alone, Coborn's has added a dozen grocery stores and an e-commerce division propelling the company past \$1 billion in sales. The store count will grow by at least another nine by the end of 2014, with the grand openings of the other North Dakota stores and the acquisition of four Captain Jack's liquor stores in Bismarck and Mandan, North Dakota, which occurred in the fall of 2013.

Each store serves as an economic engine in its area. Each grand opening represents more jobs and more opportunities to give back to the communities Coborn's serves. Whether it's a newly built Coborn's store in St. Joseph, Pipestone or Jamestown or a Cash Wise store in Watford City or Minot the company drives local commerce and job creation. Coborn's now supports nearly 8,000 employees throughout the upper Midwest.

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BUSINESS



TECH TALK
ANDREW FRASER
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entries at www.stcloudtimes.com/andrew

2-step login offers security

Online account security remains one of the biggest issues with daily Web use.

The volume of services and data now in the cloud means users doing basically anything online will have at least a handful of username and password combinations to keep track of.

Although users can drastically reduce the chance of compromising their online accounts by using strong passwords and following good password practices, another option — two-factor authentication — is simple to use and increases account security immensely.

Interested in further securing your accounts? Here's what to know about two-factor authentication, as well as popular services offering it.

2-factor authentication

Using a username/ password combination to access a service is called single-factor authentication. Access relies solely on the user knowing some amount of data. This method doesn't attempt to verify who the user is; it lets anyone with the required data in.

Two-factor authentication takes what the user knows, like his or her username and password, and adds another layer of security. The extra authentication often entails verifying something only the correct user would own, such as their personal mobile phone.

The site will ask a user to tie their account to a phone number. Upon requesting access to the site and entering a correct username/password combination, the service will send a text message to the linked phone number with a unique code or PIN. The user then checks text messages for the access code and enters it on the service to gain entry.

The idea is that someone wanting to access an account with two-factor authentication enabled would need both the password and physical possession of the linked device. A user whose password becomes compromised would still

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Emily Coborn on July 24 at the Coborn's on Cooper Avenue. TIMES PHOTOS BY JACOB WACHTER, JWACHTER@STCLOUDTIMES.COM

Building skills, fueling passion

Emily Coborn talks about her career, the future of Coborn's

By Kevin Allenspach
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Emily Coborn gets the thrill of going to work every day at a company where her name is on the missive. While Coborn's Inc. is employee-owned, the influence of the family that started it many years ago is still evident.

Emily, 27, is the oldest of CEO Chris Coborn's three adult children with his wife, Becky. She was just promoted from manager of communications for the company to director of Topco management.

She got there after graduating from St. Cloud Cathedral High School and majoring in communications and Spanish at the College of St. Benedict. She worked for Eden Prairie-based Supervalue before joining Coborn's. Coborn talked of her career path, the grocery industry and her ambitions recently over a Dunn Bros. iced coffee at one of the company's stores.

After several years as manager of communications, you have been promoted to director of Topco management for Coborn's. What does that mean?

"Topco is basically a co-op that represents grocers, retailers, distributors and wholesalers from across the nation. In total, it has about \$11 billion in buying power, so it's big. Coborn's is a member-owner through that we're able to procure products, items that are for sale on our shelves. Another facet of the organization is called Top-

VIDEO ONLINE
To see a video interview with Emily Coborn, visit www.stcloudtimes.com/videos.

Source, where we can procure professional services — floor cleaning is one that comes to mind, or snow removal — as well as things that aren't for resale, like the garbage bags we use. It runs the gamut. I'm going to oversee all of that participating to oversee all of that opportunity. We want to bring more focus to it because we see huge opportunity there. It allows us to be more competitive. We can get better pricing."

You graduated cum laude from the College of St. Benedict. Have you always been academically inclined?

"I always worked hard at getting good grades and academics were important, but I think I set it more as a goal to really excel when I went to college. I pursued the honors program and two degrees — communications and Spanish. When I put more emphasis on my education, I performed even better."

Did you intend on going into communications to start your career?

"It seemed like a natural segue, to graduate with that degree and move into the field, but I graduated at a poor time in the economy. A lot of graduates were struggling to find a role that fit what they were trained for. I was fortunate because I had interned with SuperValu in Eden Prairie after my junior year. I was in their communications department

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"I want to work my way up in the company and hold a leadership role. I have a goal for working at Coborn's. I can't see myself working elsewhere."

2013 St. Cloud Times article featuring interview with Emily Coborn

Beth Oswald, Employee since 2007

Pay it Forward, You often hear that saying but rarely see it happen. It was a busy Saturday at our Elk River store. I was cashiering on lane 4 checking out my customer's items while talking about the weather and what she was going to make for dinner that night. She asked if she could purchase a Coborn's gift card, I said yes and added it to her order. After paying for her groceries, she wrote something on the gift card envelope. Before she left she handed it to the little old lady in line behind her and said, "Have a nice day." The little old lady and I both looked at her, shocked by her kindness, as she walked away. Not asking anything in return. I asked her what it said, and as she turned it over it read: "Pay it forward" with a smiley face.

"They have been successful in a time when most grocers couldn't be or shouldn't be," said Greg Kurr, president and chief executive officer of Kemps.

Chris encourages his team to be nimble, strategic and deliberate. He continually speaks about the importance of taking care of today's customer so the company has the means to fund tomorrow's growth. He never takes today's business for granted or sets his eyes too far ahead.

His deep involvement with industry associations and best practice business groups, including the National Grocers Association, Food Marketing Institute, Coca Cola Research Committee and others, gives the company exposure to new resources and partnerships with other industry leaders across the nation. Those connections have proven valuable again and again for implementing innovative programs and disciplines.

The company's strategic plan combined with its passionate people set it on the course for the future. "In this business, there are a lot of moving parts and if they are not all moving in the same direction, this place won't work," Chris said. "That's why it's so important that we empower our people to take pride in what they do and how they run their store. We communicate our goals to them and do our best to explain how their success feeds into the greater engine."

"Chris always believes there is something new to learn that he can adopt in his organization," said Kurr, long-time friend and business associate of Chris. "As a leader, he feels it's his job to look for those new opportunities."

What's Next?

Each generation has faced its own challenges in the business. For Chester A., it was war, rations and recovery. For his great grandson, Chris, it's been the rise of technology,



an exponential growth in information and a demand to diversify like never before. But, it's always been about "being the best" and that won't change.

The future of Coborn's will not be defined by one leader, but rather a group of employee-owners who are committed to carrying on a tradition of hard work, generosity and ingenuity.

The future for Coborn's is a blank slate. Leaders admit they cannot even begin to imagine what the next 20 years in the grocery retailing business will bring. The industry continues to evolve with online retailers and new store formats emerging all the time.

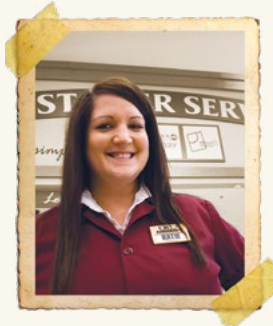
"We have to be innovative and take calculated risks if we're going to thrive," Emily said.

For many, the Coborn's legacy may be about leading change, driving growth and giving back. But for many members of the Coborn's family, it's more basic than that.

"I hope that people remember Coborn's as a company that is good to its people," Emily said.



"I hope that people remember Coborn's as a company that is good to its people." - Emily Coborn, 5th Generation



Working at Coborn's in Princeton was my very first job back when I was in high school. I've continued to work for the company for the past 11 years. I enjoy working at the service counter & doing my best to make the customers' shopping experience the best it can be. I love working for Coborn's because they've always been supportive and encouraging of me pursuing my dreams, flexible with my schedule - making it possible for me to attend college & achieve my goals. I love that Coborn's is an employee-owned company, making it truly the best place to work. I'm proud to say I'm a Coborn's Lifer!

Katie Jones
Employee Since 2001
Customer Service - Coborn's Princeton, MN

What I LOVE about Coborn's... working for



Being a Coborn's employee for more than 15 years has taught me a lot about responsibility, hard work, and dedication. I enjoy coming to work every single day and seeing my co-workers and customers. My family is grateful for having Coborn's in our community. Coborn's is FAMILY to us and we love that they are always there for us. For that, THANK YOU, COBORN'S!!!

Brian Gerads
Employee Since 1995
Assistant Store Manager - Coborn's Sauk Rapids, MN



I have worked for Coborn's in Princeton for over 16 years as the Meat Manager. I have been able to raise my family, work in the same town and stay close to home. I enjoy working for an employee-owned company that gives back to our community. I not only work here but shop Coborn's because we sell quality products at a fair price.

Dave Halverson
Employee Since 1996
Meat Department Manager - Coborn's Princeton, MN



Coborn's is my second family. As crazy-busy as things can get, I always love coming to work! Our customers are "top notch" & the relationships I have with them mean so much; sharing meal ideas & recipes, "catching up" with the regulars, or welcoming new customers to our beautiful store. Coborn's has been an amazing part of my family's life. Three of my four sons have worked here. I started as a part-time deli clerk and nearly ten years ago, took on the position of Frozen Foods Manager. I live in Princeton, work in Princeton, and love to shop locally - especially at my Princeton Coborn's!!

Judy Ludwig
Employee Since 2003
Frozen Department Manager - Coborn's Princeton, MN



I have been working in grocery for 11 years & for Coborn's for three years after my store was changed to a Cash Wise store. I was deployed overseas at that time. Coborn's assured me that I would have a job when I came home. My family and I have since found a home in Sartell, MN and I work at the Coborn's in Clearwater, MN. I love that Coborn's works with their deployed military.

John Aschenbrenner
Employee Since 2009
Inventory Control Manager - Coborn's Clearwater, MN