



Olivia Beck, 29
Branded Fuel Specialist
 Company:
Beck Suppliers Inc. (FriendShip Food Stores)
 Headquarters:
Fremont, Ohio
 Number of Stores: **27**
 Years with the Company: **2.5**

As part of the fourth generation of the Beck family, Olivia Beck wanted to join the family company with as much experience as possible. She worked for four years post-college in the marketing departments at Mead, LexisNexis and Speedway.

At that point, a position opened at Beck Suppliers Inc., and her father, the late Doug Beck, company president, was diagnosed with cancer. "It was a no-brainer for me to join the family business," she said.

Beck now helps the company navigate an increasingly competitive landscape, with competition from stores such as Circle K, Casey's and Dollar General. She has a page-worth of initiatives in mind for 2019, including opening a third FriendShip Kitchen store, incorporating remote employees, reducing turnover, building employee engagement and commitment to brand strategy, integrating technology into retail locations and updating the store management incentive program.

As a young executive, Beck believes young leaders face unique challenges, with the biggest being developing leadership skills.

"Leaders are accountable and focus on vision," Beck said, "So, I continually ask myself questions such as: How can I personally grow and develop the family business now, and in the coming years?"

Queens, Huddle House eateries and several liquor stores.

In fact, one of the challenges he faces is balancing the need to build an in-depth knowledge in his current role as chief financial officer for the Morgantown, WVa.-based company, with a desire to gain experience in many more company areas.

"I try to continually evaluate the breadth and depth of my role to provide personal growth and continual learning while also providing value to the company and my co-workers," said Bishop.

Along with his professional growth, BFS is poised to continue expanding. With success, however, comes a few challenges. Although low unemployment signals positive economic conditions, it creates a competitive market for in-demand skills. According to Bishop, the region suffers a shortage of commercial licensed drivers.

However, he is encouraged about other business changes taking place.

"[I'm excited about] the increasing amount of technology being utilized throughout the industry," said Bishop.

Cover Story / 40 Under 40



Julia Miller, 31
Director, Business Growth, Development

Company:
Blueox Corp.
 Headquarters:
Oxford, N.Y.
 Number of Stores: **10**
 Years with the Company: **8**

Serving a rural region presents unique obstacles for Blueox, according to Julia Miller, who has been involved with the family business since she was 14-years-old.

Miller originally worked in the energy business component of Blueox, but has since transitioned to its convenience store arm. There, she has contributed to the company's long-term strategic efforts, including a rebrand of the Blueox Neighborhood Market chain, which began this past year.

However, nothing in convenience comes without challenges.

"The most challenging piece is figuring out how to be all things to all people. We live in a rural area that isn't as technologically motivated as other parts of the state or country," she said. "We know we need the technology to survive and cut costs, but it's hard to drive tools and experiences that aren't always relevant to our customers."

Miller said while some of Blueox's long-time customers still don't use email, Millennial-aged customers only shop because Blueox has an app, which means ensuring that their marketing strategy is broad enough to capture various demographics.

Other tasks include in-depth training required for new hires and dealing with local minimum wage mandates.

"It's hard for a small company to adapt and change strategic direction to absorb the expense, while still growing the business," Miller said.



Daniel Moran, 33
Category Manager

Company:
Robinson Oil Corp. dba Rotten Robbie
Headquarters:
Santa Clara, Calif.
Number of Stores: 34
Years with the Company: 1.5

As category manager, Daniel Moran knows the importance of location in his marketing and merchandising initiatives.

"Being in Silicon Valley, we're at the forefront of retail disruption. Electric cars, autonomous vehicles, frictionless retail... this is ground zero," Moran said. "We face these shifts in tech and distribution before anyone else. My challenge is to stay up to date with new innovation and give feedback to my executive team."

A South California native, Moran was contacted by an executive recruiter from Rotten Robbie, a fourth-generation family-operated chain in the Silicon Valley region. A few phone interviews and an in-person trip later, he realized it was the perfect opportunity to get involved with the marketing and merchandising initiatives of a local chain.

One category that has been working particularly well for Rotten Robbie is craft beer. The chain is a few hours from wine country in northern California, so Moran plans to expand its wine portfolio while attracting a similar customer to its craft beer offering.

On a personal level, Moran is trying to develop his own skills to become a great leader.

"Luckily, there are some amazing leaders in the convenience industry that we can learn from," he added.



Bryan Zeiger, 36
Director of Merchandising

Company:
The Spinx Co.
Headquarters:
Greenville, S.C.
Number of Stores: 80
Years with the Company: 12

As director of merchandising at the Spinx Co., Bryan Zeiger has taken the lead in the charge to differentiate the Spinx brand from convenience competitors and provide new ways to attract customers to its store locations.

"For example, we recently rolled out a car wash loyalty program where you can wash at any of our sites using a RFID tag," he said. Spinx is also known for its diesel, E-85 and biodiesel fuel offerings and growing foodservice program.

In his previous career as an in-game promotions specialist in the athletic department at a local university, Bryan Zeiger met Steve Spinx, Spinx CEO and a big soccer supporter. When Spinx was filling a vacancy in the company's marketing department, he suggested that Zeiger apply.

Considering the constant challenges that the Carolina marketplace presents, Zeiger noted that staffing remains a consistent issue.

"Finding the right people and keeping them is one of our biggest challenges right now," Zeiger said.

Zeiger is never complacent when it comes to the battles that local chains like Spinx face. More and more, those battles are becoming intense.

"Channel blurring is a reality and there is more competition than ever before," Zeiger said. "We have to change the mindset of our industry on what and how we can offer customers products they want."



Chelsea Carvalho, 25
Special Projects Manager

Company:
Beck Suppliers Inc. (FriendShip
Food Stores)

Headquarters:
Fremont, Ohio

Number of Stores: 26
Years with the Company: 1

As a child, Chelsea Carvalho always knew she wanted to work for the family business, founded in 1950 by her great-grandfather, Virgil Beck.

Carvalho recalls listening to her father, Brian Beck, sharing his work projects, such as new products or strategic changes in the company, which includes the FriendShip convenience chain. She also recalled going to FriendShip events, hearing how happy the employees were at the family business and working in the stores during summer break.

"I remember how passionate my father was talking about the business and thinking that I would like that to be me someday," she added.

Carvalho's dream has come true and she's now the fourth generation of the Beck family in the business. She's currently busy with food projects, including expanding the menu and updating older equipment.

Carvalho said she's faced a learning curve in gaining experience and knowledge to be able to contribute at the level she wants to, but has been fortunate to be working alongside veteran members of the industry. The biggest challenge the company faces is staffing.

"FriendShip launched the 'Great Place to Work Program' this year to address this obstacle," Carvalho said, adding that attitude and passion are two important qualities of a FriendShip team member.