



Alumni Spotlight

Melissa Frick
Class of 2006
Senior Project Leader
Bimbo Bakeries USA
Topeka, Kansas



Audra Geiger
Class of 2011
Plant Quality Enabler
Frito-Lay
Topeka, Kansas



from 84 to 120 units per minute, the cost per unit went from \$0.114 to \$0.088. But the most enduring benefit of the MAB was the people, “You get to know people within the industries and you stay in contact with them and get to know what they are doing.”

Six years ago Melissa became the Manufacturing Systems Superintendent in Montebello, a position that she held until the end of last year. She was also one of the plant’s Kaizen (which means “to change for the better” in Japanese) facilitator, coordinating efforts to solve specific problems such as how to reconfigure air and suction systems while de-panning buns so that the topping is not blown off.

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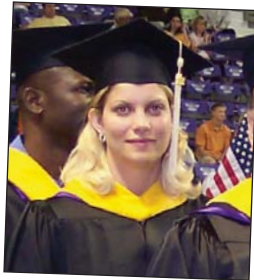
by Cristina Mansfield

The Alumni Spotlight focuses on MAB alumni and is written by Cristina Mansfield, a 2004 graduate.

Sisters share their industry and MAB experiences

Melissa’s Story:

As a child growing up in Larned, Kansas, Melissa Frick began making bread with her mother at a young age and she has been baking ever since. She studied Bakery Science and Management at K-State where each summer she did a different internship. She spent the first summer with Nickles Bakery in Lima, OH. The summer of her second year, she helped at the KSU Baking Lab assisting with a frozen dough research project. Her third summer, she worked with tortilla and bread classes at the AIB International in Manhattan, KS. Her last internship was with Best Food Baking Company in Montebello, CA, east of Los Angeles. Although she still had a year of school to complete, they offered her a full-time position. She accepted and after graduation in May 2000 she moved to California.



Bakery production lines are usually down two days a week. To get the freshest goods to market, however, the down days typically are split. People often buy baked goods on the weekend, so production lines cannot be down then. They are usually down Monday and Friday’s.

of George Weston, a Canadian food processing and distribution company.

Melissa’s first position was as a Manufacturing Specialist. A year after starting, they sent her back to AIB to complete the six-month resident program. Returning to Montebello, she was promoted to Cake Superintendent and managed three supervisors and 70 production employees on three lines.

In 2003, she was promoted to the Oracle Special Project Implementation Team as the Montebello plant piloted the transition to a standard transactional financial system. She oversaw the roll out in various plants, and today all BBU plants use Oracle. The benefit is that all reports are standardized and information about formulas and costs for any plant – even those in Mexico – can be accessed from any company location.

It was while she was working on the Oracle

project that Melissa enrolled in the MAB after learning about the program from a friend. The online component allowed her to study while keeping up a heavy travel schedule. The MAB helped her stay up-to-date on ag business issues. One of the concrete benefits was that the thesis requirement pushed her to document productivity savings that had been assigned to her and her team. “I would not have put it down on paper if I were not doing a thesis.” The project was a success: by changing the run speed

There have been considerable consolidations in the bakery industry since Melissa started at Best Food Baking. The Montebello plant has gone through several company buyouts, which two years ago acquired the remainder

Bimbo Bakeries USA (BBU) is a subsidiary of the Mexico-based Grupo Bimbo, the leading baking company in the Americas and one of the largest in the world. Product lines include bread and sweet baked goods, buns, cookies, fruit bars, pastries, packaged goods, tortillas, goat milk caramel (cajeta), salted snacks and candies. BBU is the largest baking company in the United States with 34 bakeries. BBU has recognized brands like Mrs. Baird’s and Thomas’ English Muffins and they are currently in the process of acquiring Sara Lee Baking (not meats or pies). BBU is currently expanding and running more efficient plants, with run speeds of up to 145/180 units per minute – almost double the output of some of its older factories. The company is also going green: factories have special lighting, skylights, no boilers, and uses heat from the ovens to heat the building. In Mexico, Grupo Bimbo has a wind farm that generates enough energy to replenish the amount of energy all of the plants use.

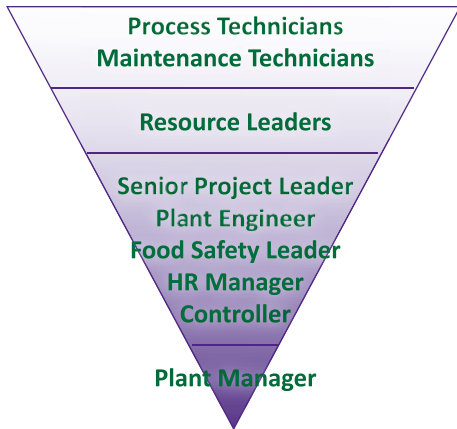


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Introducing High Performance Work System (HPWS)

Today, Melissa is a Senior Project Leader at BBU, which is similar to a traditional production manager. She is heading up a new facility in Topeka that will begin production of Oroweat products in June of this year. It is an exciting enterprise as she explains, “In the baking industry, and within Bimbo Bakeries, we are the first plant integrating a High Performance Work System. HPWS gives more responsibility to the associates and there is not a lot of top management. The technicians are all salary non-exempt workforce.”

The factory will start out with resource leaders instead of supervisors and reduce the number of resource leaders as production line associates learn those roles and take on greater decision-making. BBU’s “servant leader” approach to management can be represented by an inverse pyramid with the plant manager placed at the bottom and the production associates at the top.



Recruiting Highly Qualified Employees at the Kansas Work Center

Although the concept of HPWS has been around since the 1960s, according to a consultant hired by BBU to assist with the Topeka factory, only 15% of U.S. organizations attempt to use the full HPWS technology. One of the challenges to successful implementation of HPWS is recruitment. “The caliber of people that you hire makes your organization.”

Due to freshness concerns, baked goods cannot be produced very far from where they are consumed. For this reason they are not usually exported; expansion means building or acquiring a local production site.

Employees must have the potential to take on greater decision-making and work in self directed work teams. In Topeka, BBU required applicants to undergo stringent testing at the Kansas Work Center before being interviewed and sent 23 new recruits to two of its closest plants for two weeks of shadow training.

The company also guarantees new recruits 200 hours of training in the first year. All this represents significant investment, but the company expects the benefits of HPWS to outweigh the costs in the long-term.

Innovative Pay System

In Topeka, BBU will be introducing an innovative pay system that is currently being developed. In a typical facility, associates receive a standard pay raise representing a percentage of their salary. In Topeka, pay raises will be awarded according to a tiered system based on the employee’s contribution. This system will reward associates for their multi-skills, including the number of technical positions they take on, their leadership role and their business knowledge. The pay system process will include a certification/re-certification process. BBU plans to integrate HPWS in all new facilities.

Given the innovation that is taking place, it is no surprise that Melissa finds the bakery industry an interesting place to work. There are other benefits too: “The baking industry is in high demand. The hours are long, but it pays well.”

Audra’s Story:

Audra Geiger was also brought up in Larned, Kansas and followed in sister Melissa’s footsteps at K-State, getting a dual degree in Food



Science & Industry and Bakery Science & Management in 2006. She spent summers in Montgomery, Alabama, working as a production intern for Flowers Foods and in Albany, New York, working on production and quality for George Weston Baking Company.

Her first job was as a second-shift corn supervisor for Frito-Lay in Topeka. The Topeka site has 10 production lines, making it the third largest in the company. The site operates 24/7 although the individual lines are typically down for two days a week. Those days vary so that the maintenance and sanitation teams can work on the lines in rotation. Audra then spent one year on first shift as a potato chip supervisor, and for the

Audra on the MAB program:

“The thesis showed me that I could figure out pretty easily the return on investment on a piece of equipment or a project. But my favorite part was the networking and sharing of ideas between all the people that you meet from all over the United States and all over the world.”

past two years has been a Plant Quality Manager providing support to department managers. “It was a great experience and exposed me to many different areas of the company, dealing with HQ and distribution centers.” As part of her job, Audra has to make sure specifications are right for current

and new products.

Audra heard about the MAB program from her sister and decided that it would be a good program for someone with a science background who wanted to get business perspective. She was also attracted by the convenience of pursuing her studies while she worked. Learning to use financial tools and to write projects were particularly useful. “The thesis showed me that I could figure out pretty easily the return on investment on a piece of equipment or a project.” Like so many alumni, however, it was the networking aspect that stood out: “My favorite part was the networking and sharing of ideas between all the people that you meet from all over the

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United States and all over the world.”

It seems there are some benefits to having a sibling go through the program beforehand. “My sister gave me the best advice by suggesting I focus my papers on my thesis topic and that I stay on track with my thesis.” Another strategy was to keep in touch with other students: “We had two or three different people who talked on the phone every week and it seemed that everyone was good at a different task.”

Increase in Demand

Recent demand for Frito-Lay products has increased as people opt to eat in more. The company is using various strategies to attract consumers: the \$2 bag of Santitas chips is consistently popular. Over the last couple of years the company has put weight back in the bag to entice consumers,

a strategy that appears to be working. Frito-Lay is placing greater emphasis on multi grain and whole grain products.

Examples include the Tostitos multi grain chips and SunChips' six-grain medley (sold only at Target). There are also plans to reduce the sodium in (but not change the taste of!) potato chips.

Although they may be due to marketing or to health concerns, according to Audra it is difficult to understand changes in the popularity of brands. One season potato chips are popular; another time it is corn. What is clear is that there are always new seasonings coming out: Frito-Lay has brought back the Taco Doritos; Sun Chips are now available in new Jalapeno Jack; Ruffles has Molten Hot Wings Chips and Chili & Cheese Chips.

Work-Life Balance

“Your people are the most important asset,” says Audra and one of the ways that Frito-Lay is working to support their employees is by implementing what is called the Work-Life Balance approach, which aims to help employees find a meaningful balance between achievement



Sisters and MAB alumni, Audra Geiger ('11) & Melissa Frick ('06) at Geiger's May 2011 graduation.

and enjoyment through policies, training and support services. At Frito-Lay this means, for example, making sure that a person is able to get to a doctor's appointment when they need to. Frito-Lay already applies Work-Life Balance for managers and is now trying to extend it to hourly employees, although they are limited in what they can do by the unions.

Innovations in Technology

Frito-Lay is currently moving towards greater automation in packaging as technological developments allow managers to shift personnel to other positions within the plant. Additionally, vision technology that has been available for some years to sort smaller finished products (e.g. potato chips) is now being used to sort larger items (e.g. potatoes).



The company is working on a number of green improvements. Last year, the Topeka site installed a biomass boiler that uses wood chips and allows managers to shut down one of the natural gas boilers (at a huge savings). Topeka is also a “zero landfill facility” because it has minimal waste: less than 2% of its waste goes to landfill. Finished or product waste goes to cattle feeders or pig farms. They also sell potato starch and anything else that can be burned is sold as fuel. All paper and cardboard is recycled. The Topeka, KS, Frito-Lay facility is the state's first manufacturing site, and the nation's second food manufacturing site, to be awarded LEED® Existing Building (EB) Gold Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), as verified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI). LEED is the nation's preeminent program for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings.

Audra was only in 6th grade when older sister Melissa graduated from high school. Melissa went on to college and spent 11 years in California. For the first time in over a decade the two sisters are living in the same town again. As Audra put it, “It has been nice getting to know her again.”



What's All the Noise about SunChips?

Anyone who likes chips but wants to protect the planet can find satisfaction in Frito-Lay's SunChips and their biodegradable bag. The packaging uses plant-based materials and is a great idea. An unexpected side effect of the new packaging, however, is the noise. Apparently the biodegradable bags make too much noise. When a customer phones in a complaint, the factory of origin is identified by a code on the package. In this way all complaints received at Frito-Lay headquarters are relayed verbatim to the corresponding site. At one point Audra was receiving up to 30 complaints a week about the noisy packaging. Some consumers went as far as to complain that they could not sneak chips in the middle of the night because the packaging was so loud! The company has since worked on reducing the noise factor.