

Meet Inc. Innovator: Carmen Fosick

Carmen Fosick all about efficiency at Elmstar Electric in Kaukauna

BY LARRY AVILA • POST-CRESCENT BUSINESS EDITOR • DECEMBER 21, 2009



Carmen Fosick is co-owner and vice president of Elmstar Electric Corp. in Kaukauna. (Photo for The P-C by Wm. Glasheen)

Who: Carmen Fosick

Title: Vice president of Elmstar Electric Corp., Kaukauna

Fosick's background: Age 33; resides in Suamico; has a bachelor's of arts degree in mathematics from St. Norbert College; joined family business in 1998 as general manager; today is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the company, which is celebrating 30 years in business this year.

Web site: www.elmstar.com

Employees: 35-40

There was a time in Carmen Fosick's life when getting involved with her family's business wasn't a priority. Today, managing the daily operations of Elmstar Electric Corp. in Kaukauna is all Fosick thinks about.

"I really enjoy all aspects of the business," Fosick said.

Q Did you work someplace else before joining the family business?

A I've been involved with the family business my whole life. I grew up around it more or less.

Q How did you initially get involved?

A My dad (Gus Fosick) never really had a master plan or transition for the business. After I graduated from college, I wanted to get into actuarial science (a field that applies mathematical and statistical methods to assess risk in the insurance and finance industries). That was late 1997 and by 1998 I ended up joining the company

and was given the title of general manager. Initially, my job was to oversee the business operations and make sure everything was running as efficiently as possible.

Q Did you have any obstacles initially joining your family's business?

A Not really. Everyone already knew me because I had been involved in some capacity for about six years prior to be formally joining the business. I had spent my summers working for the company, so it just seemed natural for me to jump in. Most of the employees here have been here at least 20 years or more, so they knew who I was. There were some obstacles, some old ways of doing things that I had to fend with.

Q What would you say are your biggest accomplishments so far with the company?

A Initially when I came on board, I just tried to fit in and do what always had been done. But I did bring a fresh set of eyes to the business and had different ideas. I had to make sure simple things like making sure the bills got out on time were done and following up on customer satisfaction.

When the economy took a dip after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, at that time I had to make some things happen. I looked at our estimating process, our accounting process and ultimately streamlined the shop itself. Unfortunately, streamlining and software implementation meant jobs had to be cut. I had to make some tough decisions. I let go of about half of the office staff we had at the time, but we did what we had to do to keep our head above water.