



AFLCA

AFLCA Profile: TerraFrog

by Zanne Cameron



It felt like they were jumping off a cliff, but when their husbands sat the two sisters down and told them to pursue TerraFrog, they decided to take the leap. No risk:No reward.

This is the story of two sisters, Cori and Bobbi Windsor, who used to live typical contemporary lives: wives, mothers, and also committed career women. It's the story of how they took a pet peeve and transformed it into a successful business. It's also the story of how when life presented them with challenges, it also provided them with a base of support.

In 2006, Cori and Bobbi took a year's leave of absence from their careers. Bobbi, had taken an education leave to study at the graduate level. Cori, seconded into senior management by Capital Health, had also taken an education leave from a demanding job in organ procurement. With full-time careers and young families, both sisters felt the pressure of trying to live up to the demands of work and home. During their leaves they decided to do something positive for themselves: take group exercise classes. After class, Cori and Bobbi found themselves having the same rant about their fitness clothing pet peeves.

"My tank top always rides up," Bobbi would say.

Cori would reply, "I know! And why do shelf-bra panels only go around the front half? That's not support."

Most sisters would continue scouring the department and fitness store clothing racks in search of fitness wear that didn't leave a girl hanging—but these two sisters were different. Their conversation shifted from "I can't find a good tank," to "I wonder what it would take to make tank tops that don't ride up." And that are not mass-produced. And that are made in Canada. And that are affordable. And that work for work-outs. And that are fun to wear.

And that was the beginning of TerraFrog, an expanding grassroots Canadian clothing manufacturer of distinctive, quality yoga and athletic wear.

Transferring Cori's expertise in tracking down organs to tracking down information,

the sisters started calling factories—everything from bag tag makers, to fabric mills and button suppliers. "At first it was really difficult to get people to talk, but we figured if we got just one nugget of information from each call before they hung up on us, it was worth it," recalls Cori.

"We kind of got obsessed," says Bobbi. "Every free minute we were researching." After six months of abrupt phone calls, door knocking (and door-slaming), the sisters' persistence began to pay off. The nuggets added up, and they had enough knowledge to begin drafting a solid business plan.

While they were making cold calls, Cori and Bobbi kept going to exercise class. Their peers at morning exercise class were not only super-supportive, but made an excellent ad hoc focus group. Their AFLCA leader, Liz Olsen, made the exercise classes a really positive experience for all of the participants.

"We wanted to be like Liz," says Cori. So, the sisters took their AFLCA certification.

As the time for Cori and Bobbi to make a decision to go back to work drew near Cori's seven-year-old daughter, Madeleine, began exhibiting symptoms of Tourette Syndrome. After receiving devastating multiple diagnoses of a combination of medical challenges, including a small growth on her pituitary gland, Tourette Syndrome and OCD, Cori knew that she couldn't return to work. Her Capital Health career demanded a grueling schedule; checking emails at 5:30 a.m., leaving the office at 7 p.m., and taking work home with her. She needed to be with her daughter. Even so, the TerraFrog business concept wouldn't go away. "I'd be lying in bed and ideas would come. It just wouldn't go away."

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They found an "amazing" pattern maker and designer in Vancouver, and officially launched TerraFrog in 2007. Their first line of clothing was offered in November of 2008. They

haven't looked back. "Now we get calls from factories, tag-makers and fabric mills," says Bobbi. And also retailers who want to sell their distinctive, made-in-Canada line.

Cori and Bobbi work from home, just as hard, but with more flexibility, they juggle commitments to family with suppliers, manufacturers, designers, clients and customers, and continuing to develop TerraFrog's line. They also continue to teach group exercise classes.

With the pressures of raising children with developmental challenges (Bobbi's son is also displaying similar symptoms to his cousin, Madeleine) and running a demanding business, both Cori and Bobbi find that the AFLCA provides them with too many benefits to let go, including being around people with a positive mindset, increased energy, stress relief, and an authentic connection to their market. "We made a choice to surround ourselves with positive people, and from there, positive things just happen," says Bobbi. "It all fits together."

Leaving the competitive, traditional business place behind, the sisters are committed to non-competitive business and positive lifestyle strategies. "In a weird way, our competitive edge is our non-competitive model," says Bobbi. Although they could manufacture in China for half the cost, TerraFrog manufactures only in Canada, and is one of very few retailers who choose to do so.

Sticking to their core business—manufacturing a limited line of fun, superior quality fitness clothing that works and looks great—and embedding core personal values into the company has worked for them. Cori and Bobbi, self-confessed "compost Nazis" at home, believe that it's important to also use ethical business practices. Made in Canada, sustainability and reduced environmental footprint, and quality are paramount strategies in their business model. TerraFrog measures its success based on repeat business, customer satisfaction, and long-term customer relationships.

Thoughtful, limited, expansion of the line ensures quality and sustainability. "Our

fitness-class participants give us lots of ideas after class," says Cori. "This is great, but they don't understand how long it takes to add a new design or even make a small change to an existing design." Changing a button has ramifications from the supply chain, through to design, manufacturing and labour cost. "It takes at least a year to develop a new product," mentions Bobbi.

TerraFrog is now distributed in 15 retail outlets across Canada and the U.S. To see their line of distinctive, one-of-a-kind athletic wear, go to: www.terrafrog.com .



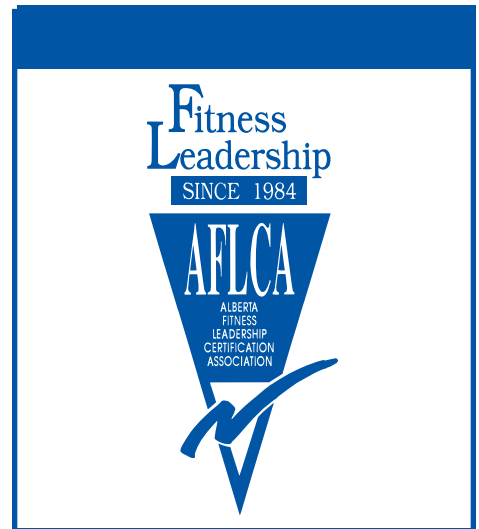
TERRAFROG MAKES A LIMITED EDITION TANK TOP (FULL WRAP-AROUND SHELF-BRA, LONGER THAN THE AVERAGE CUT). ONLY 1,000 OF ANY FROGALISCIOUS TANK IS MANUFACTURED EACH SEASON. THE PATTERN IS NEVER REPEATED.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

TERRA MEANS EARTH, AND FROGS ARE RECOGNIZED AS THE ENVIRONMENTAL "CANARY IN THE COAL MINE." WHEN THE ENVIRONMENT IS SUFFERING, THE FIRST POPULATION TO SHOW STRESS IS THE FROG.

TERRAFROG LIVES UP TO ITS NAME AND EMBEDS SUSTAINABILITY IN ALL ITS BUSINESS PRACTICES, SUCH AS USING WIND GENERATED POWER, RECYCLED PACKAGING, AND DONATIONS OF PROFITS TO THE PEMBINA INSTITUTE—AN ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL THINK-TANK.

TERRAFROG SOURCES THEIR PRODUCTS FROM CANADA WHENEVER POSSIBLE, AND PROVIDES INCENTIVES FOR GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN SHIPPING, TO REDUCE THE USE OF FOSSIL FUELS, AND USES HIGH-PERFORMANCE BAMBOO-ENRICHED FABRIC IN THEIR LINE. THEY ARE COMMITTED TO ADDING NEW SUSTAINABLE FABRICS, SUCH AS ORGANIC COTTON, RECYCLED POLYESTER AND EVEN COCONUT!



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