

MARY-CATHRYN KOLB

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, BRRR°

Mary-Cathryn Kolb wants to make "cool" cool. In November 2014, she cofounded Atlanta-based Brrr°, which licenses a high-performance synthetic-blend fabric specially designed to beat the heat. That means more than wicking away moisture. The fabric's mineral compound, weaving patterns and fiber structure combine to create a cooling sensation against the wearer's skin. Kolb's goal is to get it made into stylish garments, bedding and other products. To that end, several global brands are expected to release Brrr°-based products in 2018. Before launching Brrr°, Kolb worked for two of the coolest modern clothing companies: Toms Shoes and Spanx. By GENE REBECK

SKY: Why did you launch Brrro?

KOLB: I knew I wanted to continue in the consumer goods market. But I also knew that I wanted to find some sort of technology and grow into it. Because in surveys we conducted for performance technology, we knew there was a crowded market in sports and outdoor, but there hasn't been any real movement in that way for everyday wear.

I wanted to introduce performance textiles into everyday wear. I wanted to make what was out there applicable to the retail con-

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sumer market. And Brrr° was able to take the cooling technology that already existed and make it better—adding new processes, adding new technology. I wanted to use cooling as a platform because the world is getting hotter every day. I wanted to create a technology that keeps people cooler year-round.

What products will be available?

We'll be launching in spring 2018 with globally recognized brands in bedding, outdoor and ready-towear; that will include men's dress shirts and women's work attire. We're licensing our technology to globally recognized brands.

Might there be a Brrr° brand one day?

The reason why we're doing a licensing model is when we first launched our own company, we did make our own Brrr° label of clothing. We sold it in Neiman Marcus, Dillard's, OVC USA and OVC Italy. We did that because we wanted to understand how the products performed and see whether consumers really cared. And the answer was a booming ves.

But as we were in the stores working with sales associates and putting clothing on customers, we realized that we had a very superior technology, but we could not be best in class in every product category. So we decided to license to best-in-class [companies] in a range of product categories.

As we continue to develop new technologies in specific niche markets, there may be a reason to have a Brrr° label. But right now, we're being recognized by billion-dollar brands. And that feels very cool!

What makes Atlanta a good base for the company?

Atlanta provides a really great incubator for technology companies. And it has Launchpad2X, a great local program for women entrepreneurs.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Back in 2010, our cover subject, Sheryl Sandberg, gave a TED talk that eventually led to her book *Lean In*. From there, she sparked a movement dedicated to female empowerment and gender pay equity. Is it really needed? Yes. On average, women in the United States are paid 20 percent less than men, according to the American Association of University Women. That gap is even bigger for women of color: Black women earn 37 percent less than white men, on average, and Latinas earn 46 percent less. Hope and determination persist, however, and Sandberg continues to lead the charge in advocating for equality.