



PROJECT 24

Executive Interview Series

Fall 2015

Spotlighting: Home Improvement Industry Executive

Ryan Coble

Employer: Home Depot Corporation



Position: Information Technology Manager

The Home Depot® is the world's largest home improvement specialty retailer, with more than 2,200 retail stores in the United States (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), Canada, and Mexico. It operates big-box format stores across the United States (including all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands and Guam), all ten provinces of Canada, as well as Mexico. The company is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia and consistently ranks as one of *Fortune* magazine's Most Admired Companies.

Founded in 1978 by Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank, The Home Depot changed consumers' perspectives about how they could care for and improve their homes. According to founders Marcus and Blank, the customer has a bill of rights at The Home Depot, and this entitles the customer to the right assortment, quantities and price, along with trained associates on the sales floor who want to take care of customers. Their philosophy of customer service – “whatever it takes” – means cultivating a relationship rather than merely completing a transaction.

Coble received his undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering from The University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Prior to his tenure with The Home Depot, Coble spent eight years at Walmart where he served as an Information Technology Manager. Coble currently serves as Information Technology Manager of Home Services at a Home Depot regional office in Irving, Texas.



Father of four, husband, busy executive, and new resident to Dallas, TX, Ryan Coble is not

joking when he says his 'hands are full.' Married to wife Laura and father of four children, including a set of rambunctious twins, the Cobles have learned that 'survival' depends on working together to juggle competing demands of careers, calendars, and commitments. The Cobles recently accepted a job transfer to Texas to be closer to Laura's parents and Laura's brother-in-law, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor and is undergoing promising treatment. To the Cobles, family is what it's all about.

13 Years Married

4 Children

Favorite Family Vacation Spot?

Disney World
Orlando, Florida

“It is our job as parents to prepare our children for the road, not to prepare the road for our children.”



Coble with wife Laura, sons Taylor and Preston, daughters Emma Grace and Addison

Q: What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing demands at the office and home?

A: As a father of four growing children, all under the age of 12, Coble has learned that half of the parenting game is a mental one. “My biggest challenge is realizing that I can’t do it all — I can’t be everything to everyone. Once I understand and accept that concept, I am able to prioritize who or what is the most important at the moment and tackle that first.”

Q: With so many different demands for your time in both your personal and professional life, how do you prioritize everything? Are there tips, techniques or habits you’ve developed to manage how you spend your time?

A: Coble has made it a daily — if not hourly — practice of focusing on what truly matters at the moment. “One of the most effective ways I deal with the competing priorities in my life is to stop and ask myself, ‘What is the most important thing I can be doing right now? Not the easiest, not the most exciting, not the noisiest, but the most important.’ This helps me choose the task that will generate the most impact for those around me. This often means I must put the email down and instead choose to invest in a vulnerable moment in my children’s lives. But sometimes it also means making a choice to focus on work to ensure the family is fed or we have disposable income to finance the next adventure.”

Q: How would you define your mission as a parent?

A: “I’ll borrow this one from Chuck Swindoll because he says it so much better than I can: ‘It is our job as parents to prepare our children for the road, not to prepare the road for our children.’”

“My biggest challenge is realizing I can’t do it all — I can’t be everything to everyone.”

- Ryan Coble



Did You Know ...?

- The average Home Depot store is 105,500 square feet.
- The largest Home Depot store is 225,000 square feet and is located in Union, New Jersey.
- The domain homedepot.com attracts more than 120 million visits per year.
- The Home Depot founders created a Customer Bill of Rights which entitles customers to the right assortment, quantities and price, along with trained associates on the sales floor who want to take care of customers.

Q: What secrets can you share that have helped you both protect and grow your marriage while balancing career demands?

A: “Hands down, the most valuable relationship builder in our marriage is one-on-one time. It’s easy to lose sight of the importance of time with Laura as we juggle the kids, soccer practice, piano lessons, technology conferences, family vacations, etc. While those are all good things that benefit our children, they can’t come at the expense of my relationship with my wife. We’ve found that couples who don’t protect their one-on-one time struggle to communicate and inevitably grow apart. And then, when all the ‘busy’ is in college, they are stuck in a house with a person they no longer know.”

Q: What is the greatest challenge in parenting today's youth?

A: “I’ll first say that I believe raising children today is not any more difficult than it was 100 years ago. We are raising our children in a scary world — but so did our parents, and their parents, and their parents’ parents. I think there are two keys to parenting:

1. You have to instill solid morals and values in your children. Teach them right from wrong and build a solid base.
2. Never presume ‘my child wouldn’t do that.’ Children push boundaries. That is what they do! As soon as you think your child would ‘never do that,’ he is probably the ring-leader at school and you are about to get a phone call from the principal. If you give your children a solid foundation and then coach, lead, and support them through the poor choices, they will almost always come back to the foundation you set in the beginning.”

Q: If there's one "life lesson" you can choose to pass on to your children, what would it be and why?

A: “Living in the affluent suburbs of north Atlanta (and now Dallas) is like living in a bubble, shielded from many of the hardships the majority of people face in this world. While ‘the bubble’ is very nice, it requires a lot of hard work and effort to stay in that bubble. I don’t know why God chose to bless us with the ability to work hard and succeed in the business world, but he has. So it is important to always remember it is a blessing, not a right, and to thank Him for it every day. Share your greatest blessings with those who are less fortunate. Never take these blessings for granted because they can leave as quickly as they appear.”

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