

Dan Harbeke

BY LAURA LUGER

Raiding his father's closet at the age of five, Dan Harbeke neither cinched a solid knot in the tie, nor entirely filled the dress shoes he borrowed. But now, at age 22, it seems his early business acumen led him to properly don his own dress attire and filling some big shoes.

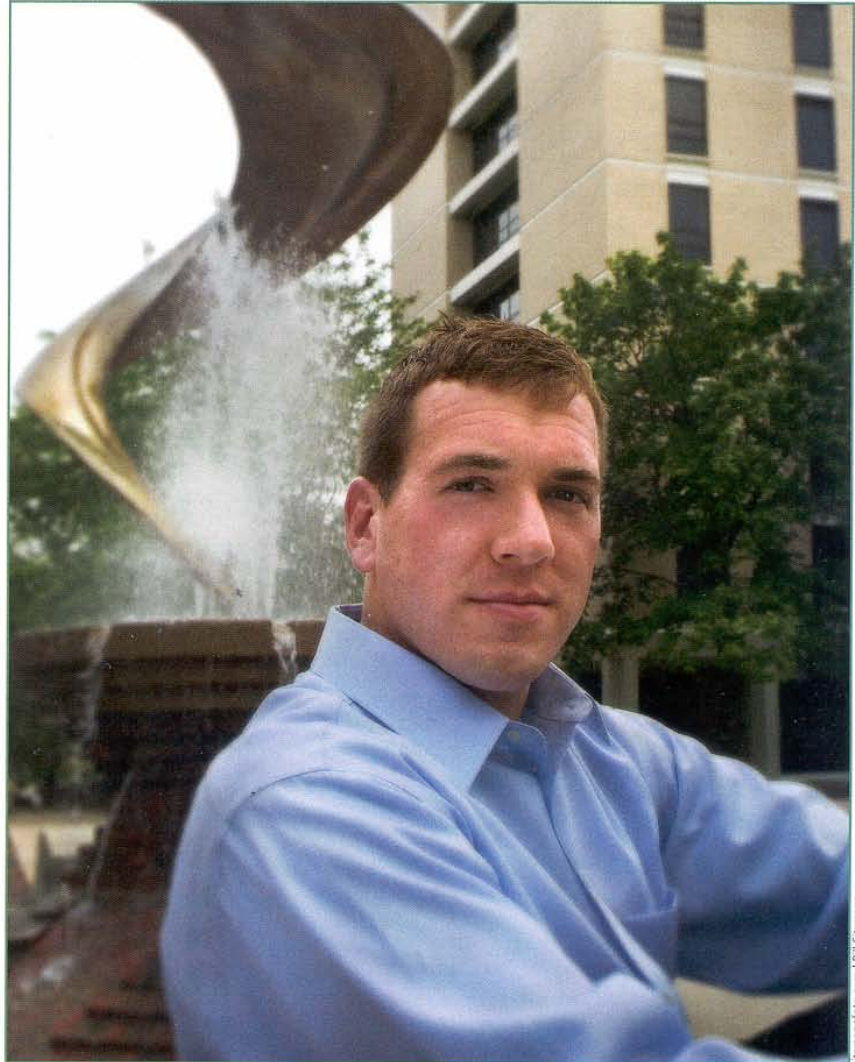
As a recent college graduate, the author of a new book and a new Union Pacific Railroad employee, it is evident Harbeke's entrepreneurial spirit is in overdrive.

He says his influences and an intrinsic proactive attitude put him on his path of success. "I try to do the most with what I have where I'm at."

Harbeke was born in Wheaton, Minn., but the family moved to West Fargo, N.D. when he was in seventh grade and the Creighton University graduate considers North Dakota his home. He gained an interest in business from his father and a philanthropic attitude from his mother. Harbeke's vivid childhood memories include seeing his dad's company corner office and the respect he garnered from fellow employees. It left a huge impression.

Age has never been a roadblock in Harbeke's drive to succeed. As a seventh-grader, he organized a basketball tournament in his neighborhood and later earned money by mowing lawns and shoveling snow. But it was working with the Fargo Moorhead Chamber of Commerce as a sophomore in high school that provided him with opportunities to learn the techniques and importance of networking.

While attending Creighton to earn his bachelor's undergraduate degree, Harbeke worked at the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce where he met with local businessmen to find out how well the chamber



Dan Harbeke couldn't wait to get his foot in the door of the business world. He published his first book in 2003 – before he even graduated from college.

was serving Omaha companies.

Harbeke supplemented his business and networking experience by reading several business books by authors such as Harvey McKay, Jeffrey J. Fox and Lee Iacocca.

His decision to write his own book, "Get In! How to Market Yourself and Become Successful at a Young Age," came to him after numerous conversations with his peers. There are a lot of business books out there, he says, but not for

younger people. "No one is putting it out there for them."

Published in 2003, Harbeke's book is available at local bookstores and on some popular Internet book sites, such as Amazon. "They're available everywhere, it's pretty cool." He says he has sold "a couple hundred books" but says he didn't really do it for the money. "If I can sell one book and help one person, it's great."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

next generation

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

So, after publishing a book and obtaining college degrees, what's next for Harbeke?

He auditioned for Donald Trump's hit reality show "The Apprentice 2" when the casting call came to Omaha this spring, but he hasn't received a call back. Still, he says, "you never know." He officially entered the Omaha workforce in June, landing an account representative position with Union Pacific Railroad. Harbeke's plans include earning his MBA in the next five years, someday becoming the CEO of a company and eventually entering politics and earning the job of governor of North Dakota. He admits, on the long drives home, he even envisions his future political debates and brainstorms his responses to his future opponent's comments.

Harbeke's goals also involve giving back. He would like to become a business and civic leader who helps small businesses grow. As a successful Creighton alum

and former rowing team member, he'd love to eventually donate a boat to the college rowing team. For Harbeke, the goal isn't chasing the dollar or the title. "It's not so much the title, but what you can do with the title," he says.

He is quick to credit his success to the support of his family, friends and multiple mentors, and believes everyone can do what he has done.

He suggests high school and college students actively seek out mentors and business advice from company executives. "When you're a young age, they want to help you. They want to talk. You can leverage that because you're a clean slate," Harbeke says. "They enjoy that. It's kind of living vicariously through your future potential success."

At one point, Harbeke actually wrote letters to the leaders of several Fortune 500 companies including the CEOs of Starbucks Coffee, The North Face, Gap and Virgin Records. Although he received

replies from only a handful of the nearly 30 letters he sent, Harbeke was thrilled. "Imagine what comes across their desks in a day," he says.

Harbeke aimed high with his letters, but suggests students begin their networking with family and friends who are in a business in which they may be interested. If family members and friends don't have jobs the students are looking for, they should ask them to provide names of people they know who do. Harbeke says sometimes young people "fail to realize what they have around them as resources."

Harbeke's main advice to his peers? "Go where others don't go, and do what others don't do. You'll stick out," he says. "Go out and make your own story."

For a preview of Dan Harbeke's book, "Get In! How to Market Yourself and Become Successful at a Young Age," access his Web site at www.danharbeke.com. ■