

A New Collaborative Platform for Cooperative Grocer Network

BY ELLEN MICHEL

As we go to press, Cooperative Grocer Network is about to launch a new iteration of its website. Let's take a look at its main features.

We have a fresh new design and include a bold description of the stakeholders in our national movement: "We are hundreds of thousands of people using the cooperative business model to provide nourishing food for ourselves, our families, our communities, and the next generation." Yes, that's all of us.

When you go to the new site for the first time, a Tour will pop up, and you will see some familiar components: Featured Articles from our award-winning *Cooperative Grocer* magazine, including Endcaps—the content we generate between issues of the magazine.

We've added a Featured Co-op in our header and a new section called Food Co-ops in the News that brings up articles gleaned from around the world about our grocery sector.

The Directory includes more than 300 food co-ops, from startups working with Food Co-op Initiative to mid-sized grocery stores to large operations with multiple locations. Logged-in CGN users can view a co-op's roster of users and their profiles.

Our Jobs section has become the go-to source for advertising and finding jobs in food co-ops.

The Market section lists companies who support CGN with their marketing dollars. A new Classifieds section is for listing things you want to sell or buy.

As always, our Library houses member-contributed documents, videos, and recipes.

A search engine covers the whole site, including articles, Discussions and content within documents. You can search and filter for strings of words that define the type of content you're seeking.

Spaces: discussion places

After being retooled, our group collaboration platform now offers Spaces. These closely resemble our previous Groups, which only CGN member-users can join. Spaces include these categories: General, Governance, Grocery, Human Resources, IT, Membership and Marketing, Operations, Wellness, Prepared

Foods, and Startups—with more to come. Each Space offers a view of its members with links to individual profiles, so you can connect either directly or through Discussions.

Some groups may still restrict their membership. In general, Space discussions will be accessible to all CGN users to search and view, unless the Space members choose to restrict access. Only members of a Space can create or comment on its Space discussions.

We'd like each Space to have a manager or champion of sorts who will help spark discussions and be a resource for the group. If the Space decides to be selective with its membership, this person will serve as its gatekeeper.



Photo: Gretchen Phillips

Here's an example of who you'll find on CGN—Gretchen Phillips of Ashland Food Co-op, who wrote this profile for our Facebook page: "I love food, being creative, and working with people—so outreach is the perfect job for me. I have the pleasure of digging deep behind the scenes to make events and classes happen. I love my co-op family, and am grateful to be in a position of service for our community. Spinning plates and putting out fires is an everyday occurrence—luckily we sell high quality chocolate!"

List your job opening in Cooperative Grocer

Listings are \$75 for 175 words, and can include your logo.

Extend your reach with a display ad on cooperativegrocer.coop:
225 x 225 pixel ads are \$50/month plus a \$25 setup fee.

To advertise, email dan@cooperativegrocer.coop



All but restricted Space discussions can be seen on the site in recent and topic view. You will be able to start and respond to discussions on the site, or by email. This more open access frees users from having to belong to every Space, even while they can benefit from content that is often “intergalactic” in interest.

Take a Tour and explore the new platform

The first time you visit the new site, you'll see a pop-up box inviting you to take a Tour. Once you click on this box, it will point you to the About & Join button, where you'll find more information about how your co-op or organization can join and use CGN. The basics include: how to join, how to contact us, how to market your products or organization on the site (or in the magazine), how to find help using the site, and a list of additional Tours.

Last but not least, there is a thank you to our sponsors: CDS Consulting Co-op, National Co+op Grocers, and National Cooperative Bank.

In today's rapidly evolving tech environment, website development can be very challenging. There are more tools, and more ways to connect, than ever before. We own our CGN site and will continue to develop and change as our community uses it and provides us with feedback. We'll make more connections via social media, too, with a new CGN Facebook page and an @coGrocer Twitter feed.

I'm thrilled to be able to carry on the vision of CGN as a collaborative platform specific to food co-ops, where we make friends, give supportive advice, share resources, and talk through our thorniest problems. Let's get into Spaces and make it a place where we have fun, too. □

CALLING ALL ACCOUNT MANAGERS

If your co-op has been active on CGN, you know that we rely on Account Managers as the gatekeepers and CGN connectors at their stores. Account Managers serve as the primary administrative CGN point of contact: they may be the general manager or someone else charged with an administrative role. A co-op can designate more than one person to share admin duties.

The Account Manager introduces your co-op staff and board to CGN and maintains your organization's user roster. When board members and staff come on board or leave the co-op, the account manager updates this information for CGN.

If you are the Account Manager for your co-op or affiliate organization, it's time to log into the new site and review your information. Take the opportunity to update your own profile picture and the roster of users from your store. Look for Account Manager communications via email, too—these will help you in your role as the CGN liaison at your store.