Of course it was no surprise that Taylor Kopf ’11 had thoughts of opening his own bike shop because he had been working with bikes since he was 15 years old. “The name Cognition just came to me,” said Kopf. “A cog is a bike part, and the “nition” part is from the word “recognition” so I kind of put the two together. My brother is a graphic designer and he helped me with branding.”

Taylor met his business partner, Eric Cheah at the bike shop where both of them worked before Cognition. “Picking our location was so much easier than it would seem. We were lucky enough to come across our Mountain View location by accident,” said Taylor. “What we learned is that before it was vacant, it actually housed a bike shop. So not only was the location exactly what we were looking for, the layout was already 90% built around what we would require. It was a perfect match.”

“We sell all kinds of bikes, but primarily the type of bike we sell is for commuters. We get lots of people from Google, Facebook, and other Silicon Valley businesses coming to us for a bike they can ride to work and back. Business is great,” he said. Kopf started out with two employees and now, three years later, he has 12. He says that finding employees who are the right fit is the most difficult aspect of the business.

“I took a lot of different marketing courses at Menlo. The more I thought about actually starting my own business, the more those classes quickly became relevant to exactly what I was doing every day,” said Taylor. “That was a huge help for me. The experience that I gained from Menlo helped push me to actually take the risk in starting my own business.” Taylor started his business during his junior year at Menlo.

“I cannot begin to explain how much Menlo has prepared me for the real world. The environment and structure of the classes, and the individual attention that was available to me, helped immensely with actually learning and retaining material,” said Taylor.

“We have had a blast with Cognition, so much so that just recently we have begun work on a second location. We have been open for just over three years now, and we feel like it’s a great time for us to expand to another location in the Bay Area. So hopefully within the next year or so we will have another shop up and running,” added Taylor.

“I would advise other Menlo graduates who are looking to open a business to just go with their gut. Running a retail business can have lots of rewarding experiences. At the same time, it also comes with its fair share of challenges and very long days. Looking back, I think I might have underestimated just how many hours I would be working for the first few years we were here. Bottom line, if you are passionate about starting your own business, I am sure you will find it every bit as rewarding as I have.”

Taylor Kopf ’11 is a second-generation Menlo alumni. His dad is Ben Kopf ’79.