



Logistics Association of Australia Ltd

LESSONS LEARNT

This is the 5th article in a series of articles from Peter Bainbridge, 2003 Logistics Development Award winner – <Peter.Bainbridge@nike.com> The Logistics Development Award is sponsored by CHEP Australia.

Over the last 12 months, winning the 2003 Logistics Development Award and a career change in June this year have given me the perfect opportunity to reflect on my years in the industry, which has undergone huge change, most of it positive, with the growing awareness of logistics within business and by the general public.

I have recently moved to the position of Product Delivery Manager with Nike Australia and the change has been extremely positive. One of the more unusual things I've done in the last 12 months was go to my old university RMIT and talk to a class of undergraduates about the Award. Whilst my time at RMIT was highly relevant, seeing all the young students got me thinking about what I've learned along the way that "they didn't teach me at uni", or rather, "couldn't teach me" because I had to learn it for myself.

THE VALUE OF YOUR NETWORK

Without a doubt, the most important thing I have learned is the value of a network. The logistics industry in Australia is not large. The people you know in the industry, the people you study with, the people you work with now are worth staying in touch with. Make a list, ring them every month, every six months, however often you deem appropriate. You never know what it is people know that may have an impact on the company you work for and supply chain in the near future.

As you travel along through your work life, you know the people who are switched on, the ones who know the industry and the latest developments within it. Talk to them, get to know them, and stay in touch with them. You never know what turn your career will take and when the list of people you have kept in touch with will come in handy.

RESEARCH

Use the web, use the excellent reading material provided by the LAA, read the publications provided to you as part of your subscription. Show the desire to read and learn what is going on in the industry and what the latest

developments are. Learn what makes the industry tick and the important people within it. Learn how the supply chain works in different parts of the world and what the specific challenges faced by the different regions of the world are.

Just because a supply chain solution works in Australia does not mean it will translate to other areas of the world. The intense population of central Europe and the relatively small area to be covered present a vastly different challenge to Australia where a product may have to travel from Melbourne to Broome and still have the same retail and wholesale price.

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

I honestly believe that there is no substitute for a positive attitude. Logistics is a service; we are in a service industry. Not only do we have the many external customers that cross our path every day, often we will have multiple interactions with the internal customers within a company. If you can maintain a positive attitude in your work, people will be more willing to deal with you and to come to you for problem resolution.

SHOW ENTHUSIASM FOR WHAT YOU DO

When you have been somewhere for a long time it is hard to maintain enthusiasm and the attitude can rub off on those around you. If I see someone performing their job with vigour it reminds me to always show enthusiasm for what I am doing. It's infectious, and makes for a quicker, more enjoyable day.

THE POLITICS

Learn how the politics within your organisation work. You need to watch people around you, learn how they operate and what is important to them. We spend a lot of time with the people we work with, more time than we spend with our friends and often more than we spend with our families. It is crucial that you familiarise yourself with the people around you and the way they like to work and what they expect from you.

OBSERVE

Have your eyes open at all times, watch and absorb what is going on around you. If you see something you like in the way other people perform, make a note of it and even work it in to your own style. The way we work and operate as employees or managers should be fluid and open to accommodate the positive things you see around you.

COMMUNICATION

Don't keep things close to your chest. Communicate what you are doing to those around you and even if you don't have an answer, communicate what your progress is. As a customer I would rather hear that my issue is being worked on, than not being informed at all. I have learned that open and honest communication will get you further than trying to protect your own patch.

RESPECT AND LEARN

If you are lucky enough to have any form of mentor, be a sponge. At Nike one of the maxims that people work under is “be a sponge”. Show a thirst for knowledge and respect the people in the industry who have been in it longer than you and have learned along the way. They have made the mistakes that you will almost certainly make unless you learn from those around you.

I have had one mentor in my time and been lucky enough to learn a great deal from him. Whilst I didn't always agree with his methods, I learned more from him professionally than anyone I have come across.

ATTEND SUPPLY CHAIN EVENTS

Get out there and get amongst it. Attend supply chain functions and meet people. Go to LAA site tours and events. Do what you can to make it to the SMART conference, or if you are in the United States, do whatever is humanly possible to get to the CLM conference. There is no better way of extending your network.

For a lot of people these things come as second nature; to many of the younger members of the LAA, particularly the student members, I hope some of these observations can help you along the way.