



Logistics Association of Australia Ltd

1992 COUNCIL OF LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE REVIEW

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The 1992 US Council of Logistics Management Annual Conference was held in one of the southern-most cities in the USA – San Antonio, Texas, between October 11 and 14. San Antonio is 150 miles from Mexico, being separated only by the Rio Grande River, and is home to the famous Mission San Antonio de Valero – better known as “the Alamo”, where 189 Texans died on March 6, 1836, while under siege from the Mexican army General Santa Anna. Despite expecting to be in a dry and dusty city, San Antonio is, in fact, a ‘little Venice’ with a below street level river system lined by old trees and riverside restaurants and cafes.

The theme of the Conference for 1992 was Logistics – Making a World of Difference, and this theme was repeated throughout the many sessions conducted at the Conference.

By living and working in a global marketplace as we do, everyone is affected in some way by not only what is happening in our own backyard, but also by events that may be occurring halfway around the world.

Multinational companies compete with an awareness of a global scene, and companies that see themselves as only competing on a domestic market are often “invaded” by competitors from foreign shores.

We are all in an international business environment and can’t afford to suffer from global myopia. With this thought in mind, the Conference proceeded to expand further on this ‘global logistics’ concept through:

- 32 subject tracks
- 200 sessions
- over 300 speakers
- 22 table topics
- logistics books and related materials display
- training videos relating to logistics subjects
- tours of 6 logistics facilities.

The Conference attracted over 3,500 people – a record attendance – with almost 10 percent being from overseas, as well as 19 overseas speakers.

Despite this vast amount of information made available, it was only possible to attend 8 sessions during the Conference.

This was, however, supplemented by the audio recording of many of the sessions which were made available for purchase after the sessions. In this way, it was possible to attend a session that was not recorded and purchase the cassette tape of the session that was recorded, where two session times conflicted.

To complement the busy schedule of talks and presentations – which commenced with breakfast at 6.30am each morning – a number of entertainment activities were scheduled for the evenings and included:

- Sunday evening Welcoming Reception and Rodeo held indoors at the San Antonio Convention Centre Arena. Besides the centre arena entertainment of cowboys and cowgirls roping and hog-tieing, food and sidestalls were available – the highlight of which for some Australian logisticians was armadillo racing!
- Monday night concluded with a Champagne and Dessert Reception, held after dinner between 9.00 and 11.00 pm.
- Tuesday night – the last night of the Conference – was the highlight of the evenings of entertainment with a one-man computerised electronic orchestra in the form of the Michael Iceberg Machine. The performance concluded with a standing ovation for this brilliant entertainer.

In addition to this programme, a specially prepared three day Spouses' Programme had been prepared which included accompanied tours of San Antonio's sights and sounds, including a six-storey high movie screen, the Alamo and other Texan missions, the marketplace, the Governor's Palace (built in 1749) and a variety of shops and restaurants.

Of keen interest during the conference were the logistics facilities tours which included:

- Air Force Logistics Centre: This tour covered the portion of the USAF Logistics Centre that distributes small packages to Air Force facilities throughout the world. The features of this warehouse were automated guidance systems and computer-controlled selection vehicles used to automatically move operators to multi-level picking locations.
- Bausch & Lomb, Ray-Ban Sunglass Assembly and Distribution Centre: The largest sunglass assembly plant in the world, this facility, involving a continuous flow manufacturing process, distributes Ray-ban and other sunglass products utilising high-rise racking and power conveyors with a Kingway flow rack system to process a large number of small parcels. The shipping and

manifesting system is on-line to the host computer, and transactions are conducted in real-time by means of scanning barcoded picking lists.

- Fleming Companies Distribution Centre: This 382,000 sq ft warehouse has a conveyerised batch-pick system for high volume case shipping throughout the South and Central Texas area. Both computerised and manual handling technologies are integrated in this DC.
- H E Butt Grocery Company Perishable Distribution Centre: This DC combines storage and handling of dairy products, fresh meats, and other controlled-temperature goods for distribution to retail stores. Mechanised and conventional warehouse systems are used.
- Labatt Food Service: From this 150,000 sq ft facility, food and related products are distributed to food service operators in the "food-away-from-home" market, i.e. restaurants, hotels, hospitals, schools. Over 7000 items are handled ranging from canned goods, frozen foods, fresh meat, dairy products and fresh produce. Over 2000 accounts are service within 150 miles of San Antonio. Warehouse operators are remunerated based on accuracy of order picking and quality of performance.
- Pearl Brewing Company: One of the most popular tours (!) was to this regional brewery. The tour included reviewing the monitoring of the quality of the brewing process (a fact attested to by many of those on this tour), as well as the management of stock rotation and packaging of a large number of different brands in the one plant.

Based on attendance at the Conference, it was evident that the central theme – Global Logistics – permeated throughout the majority of the 32 track subjects offered. Empirically, the four key issues raised at the Conference and deemed to be the most critical for logisticians present were:

1. Globalisation

This subject was included in one form or another in 20 of the 32 track subjects.

2. Partnering

Also known as Strategic Alliance, featured in over one-third of all track subjects.

3. Customer Service and Quality

These joint issues appeared in almost as many sessions as Partnering, with the key focus being placed on the ISO 9000 series of Quality Standards.

4. The Environment

Referred to everywhere as the 'Green Revolution', the impact on logistics will continue to escalate alarmingly.

During the many presentations on Global Logistics, the changes underway in the EC were of particular interest and were the subject of much discussion – as is evidenced by the following sample of titles:

- EEC 1992: An In-Process Perspective
- Reconfiguration of European Logistics Systems
- Opportunities and Challenges for Contract Logistics in Europe
- Implementing ISO 9000 in Europe
- European Transport Strategies – What's Hot ... and What's Not!
- Integrating a European Supply Chain for Efficiency and Customer Service
- Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eastern Europe Food Logistics Challenges.

The prediction was made that by the year 2000, there would be three (possibly four) trading blocks in the world consisting of:

1. EC – the largest single market in the world
2. NAFTA Treaty countries of USA, Canada and Mexico
3. Pacific Rim.

The possibility of a fourth global trading block may emerge from discussions underway between South American countries.

It was evident from the session presentations as well as keynote speakers that competing globally in this world scenario is fundamental to success.

Overall, the Conference, by comparison to others that I have attended (including previous US logistics conferences), was excellent. The range and scope of subjects covered catered for all interests. The luncheon and keynote speakers were of the highest standard – both in terms of the material presented, and the presentation itself. The final luncheon speaker received, and deserved, a standing ovation. Organisationally, the whole four days were extremely well co-ordinated. Conference facilities at the Marriott Rivercentre Hotel and the San Antonio Convention Centre left nothing wanting. The audio-visual and book displays were relevant, pertinent to current issues and extremely interesting. In every respect, this Conference was superb and is an annual event that should not be missed for those aiming for sustained 'world best' in logistics.