

Chris Barbour – “Never simply accept something at face value”

Chris Barbour is typical of many in the freight forwarding industry, having worked his way up through the ranks to his current role of operations manager. Juggling study with work enabled him to continue working while gaining a valuable qualification. This is his story.

Like many high school graduates, I was unsure which direction to head in professionally, and happened to start my first job in the freight forwarding industry. I began my career in 2004 as a general warehouse hand for SB Global Logistics, a privately owned company in Christchurch. I quickly gained experience in many facets of the company's operations, including import airfreight, seafreight, and domestic warehousing and distribution. While many of my peers had already started university study, I didn't want to be left behind, but I also wanted to continue my on-the-job development. Being able to continue part-time work and fast-track the UK Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport was a great choice.

The diploma was offered in New Zealand through the Logistics Training Group who provided ample support and guidance. The 'real world' course material meant it was easy to transfer ideas to my current role while also making it easier to grasp the concepts covered by the diploma.

The business case study was the final task of the core management module and included a section which identified the profitability of handling the storage and distribution for a particular client. I then expanded this case study to include all current warehousing clients, and the data, results and conclusions were presented to Steve Bateman (business owner) and the board of directors. The



presentation was well received and contributed to future decision-making, including possible expansion, pricing and resourcing for this part of the business.

Invaluable confidence

Shortly after completing the diploma, an opportunity presented itself to relocate to Melbourne to work for SDV Logistics, a French-owned multinational. Soon after settling into the new job, I was advised that I had been chosen from amongst all the diploma graduates for the 'top student of the year' award.

This was a real highlight, and gave me an invaluable level of confidence as I continued my career in a much larger company. The knowledge I gained in people management from completing the diploma helped me adapt to the new culture and work environment.

After a period of time handling import airfreight shipments, I was asked to assist with a large project which involved the importation and local delivery of new train carriages from Italy. These arrived via break-bulk seafreight, and I was soon working without supervision and instructing wharfies and truck drivers on what needed to be done as the carriages were crane lifted from the vessel, transferred to oversized trailers/prime movers, and moved to the final delivery site. As I was only 25 at the time, this was somewhat daunting, but I regularly drew on the knowledge and confidence that I gained from completing the diploma, and the 12-month project was completed without incident.

Making an impression

I was soon promoted to the role of operations manager for the Melbourne branch of SDV. In this

new role, I contributed to a 100% increase in monthly gross margin within a 12-month period, grew and stabilised the operations team, all while maintaining/improving all operational KPIs. The understanding of general business management and operational KPIs that I gained from the diploma were highly valuable to ensure success within this role. Early in 2014, Magellan Logistics was searching for a skilled operations manager and I was ready for a change of scenery and the chance to make an impression on a new organisation. Magellan is a privately owned freight forwarding business, with the head office located in Melbourne, and a strong presence in the retail/fashion sector. It prides itself on providing exceptional levels of service and tailored solutions for Australian importers.

The focus is mainly on the Asia to Australia trade lane, but the services offered include worldwide import/export as well as 3PL and customs brokerage services. Now eight months into the new role with Magellan, and a newborn son at home, I am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead, both professionally and personally.

It has always been my ambition to never simply accept something at face value, but rather investigate and fully understand the reasoning and forces at play. I believe, more than anything else, that this desire to understand has facilitated my career development thus far, and the diploma has had a huge impact on my knowledge and understanding of freight forwarding and supply chain management.

The CILT-UK Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport is offered in New Zealand by the Logistics Training Group; for further information, visit www.ltg.co.nz

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