

Debbie Grant – “I’ve always been interested in trains, cranes, trucks and ships”

Ever since her childhood spent growing up with only elder brothers, Debbie Grant has had a special interest in trains, cranes, trucks and ships. And that’s where her career has taken her too. This is her story.

School was a boring necessary aspect of my life and I couldn’t wait to leave at the grand age of 14. Eventually, I gained employment on the factory floor at New Zealand Light Leathers (NZLL), our local tannery. Originally selling lamb skins, NZLL switched to deer hides when the company performed a restructure with new owners Argent.

At 40 years old, I wondered how long I would be able to handle the manual aspect of the tasks. It was time to think of what I wanted for the future. Having no school qualifications, it was pretty easy to know where to start – at the bottom.

I had a full-time job, and being a solo mother the only way I could get any education was through correspondence. I sat and passed the equivalent of School Certificate maths and English.

Finding a niche

Next was the National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing. During this time NZLL was going through more changes and I had my hand up for any job where I could use my new-learned skills. I got my break and became the store assistant in the supply department.

The supply manager had many years’ experience in supply chain and was as willing to teach as I was to learn. Some 50% of the job involved keeping the factory, workshop and engineers stocked. The other 50%, and the most challenging, was the procurement of chemicals.

All the chemicals were sourced



Debbie Grant, operations assistant at Chevron Corporation: “All those years of study and hard work have finally paid off”

through New Zealand agents. Bulk chemicals were transported in full container loads (FCL). The challenges were many, but the reward at seeing the FCL unpacked and stored ready for use was immense.

Transport and logistics was what I enjoyed. I had found my niche.

Back to basics

The next step was more training through correspondence. I embarked on a National Certificate in Distribution with the Tranzqual ITO. Chris Campbell was a fabulous tutor and I thoroughly enjoyed the course.

At that time there wasn’t a lot of supply chain and distribution courses available in New Zealand, so I checked out supply chain management and in particular inventory control. Google introduced me to the American Production and Inventory Control Society (APICS) which in turn led me to the New Zealand partner, NZPICS.

I started at the beginning with the basics of supply chain. I had to really dig deep to finish the training and pass the exam. I succeeded and went searching for the next challenge.

This time my search led me to the Palmerston North based Logistics Training Group (LTG). Being self-paced and acquired through distance learning, the CILT UK Certificate in Logistics and Transport was exactly what I was looking for. Tessa and Walter Glass were always available via email, phone and text, and I really enjoyed the block courses in Palmerston North.

At the time I was still employed at NZLL and they were generously paying all my course fees and travel expenses. My continuing learning would not have been possible without their support.

New challenges and opportunities

I applied for and was successful in obtaining a scholarship grant from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. The grant went a long way towards repaying the monetary outlay NZLL had invested in me.

A promotion took me in a new direction and created a whole new set of challenges and opportunities. I was now completing the company’s business process map, covering the entire supply chain. By this stage, thanks to my study,

I had a very good understanding of the supply chain, but when it came to finance I was totally unprepared. Another massive learning curve was on the horizon. The company needed the process mapped for the transition to a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012.

Implementing AX was a mammoth task. The experience was a mixture of learning, teaching, exhaustion, enthusiasm and frustration.

Back on track

One year after the ‘go live’ I found myself deep into IT and moving further away from my chosen path of transport and logistics. I needed to steer my career back on track. I had gained my logistics and transport certificate and now wanted to put it to use. With a heavy heart I accepted that after 19 years’ employment, I could not fulfil my chosen career while at NZLL.

I found a vacancy with Chevron Corporation, one of the five big oil companies in the world. The job was working in the fuel storage terminal at the Timaru port. It was perfect.

As an operations assistant, I oversee the discharging of fuel from a marine tanker into storage tanks, and the uplift by truck tankers and transportation to farms and sites. Chevron’s emphasis is on safety first and always. It is a fantastic company to work for. All those years of study and hard work have finally paid off.

I love working on the Timaru port – and once again I’m surrounded by trains, cranes, trucks and ships!

The CILT UK Certificate 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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