

## Greg Cookson – “If you are not measuring it, you are not managing it”

Greg Cookson’s management career has taken several twists and turns across the public and private sectors, with the decision to specialise in supply chain management finally reaping the job fulfilment he sought. Now responsible for a global supply chain, this is his story.

Entering university, I was very undecided on what I wanted to do for a career. Four years later I was still no clearer, but I did graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Business. After university, I applied for a number of positions and ultimately took a role within the New Zealand Police, where I remained for around two years before deciding I wanted a career change.

I accepted a graduate management position with Zuelig Pharma, a healthcare organisation with a number of different services, including pharmaceutical distribution. The role was to learn all aspects of the business, starting with warehouse management. This was my first real introduction to warehousing and was phase one of my management trainee programme. As time passed I never really moved out of this phase and continued to stay in the warehouse, working on distribution and fulfilment of healthcare and pharmaceutical products.

### Supply chain qualification

As I continued working in the warehouse I really began to enjoy the variety of different operational challenges and complexities of ensuring service levels were achieved within the business parameters that included safety, budgets and labour plans. It was during this time that I was approached by senior management to look at options of further education and qualifications in the supply chain and logistics field. This is where I discovered the Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport, at the time run by Walter Glass through Massey University, and now offered through the Logistics Training Group. After extensive research I could see that this course was well suited to my existing role within the distribution centre, and would also enhance my knowledge base within the supply chain and logistics area.



**Greg Cookson, group general manager supply chain at The Just Group: “Technology and automation continue to evolve and allow for greater efficiencies, ultimately driving a better business and customer outcome”**

I found the two-year course to be really enjoyable and extremely beneficial. Walter was an excellent lecturer with a wealth of knowledge in all things supply chain and logistics, and was supportive and always available for any help when required. I found the onsite classroom sessions, where all students were able to participate in discussions, project assignments and case modules from a variety of different industries, to be extremely informative and invaluable.

If I was going to call out one aspect of the course that really changed my approach to managing any form of small or large-scale supply chain operation, it was the Managing Resources module. In short, ‘if you are not measuring it, you are not managing it’. It’s a term well known now, but for me at the time it was a new concept which really changed the way I was operating, and it ultimately shaped my management style.

### Crossing the Tasman

Since graduating in 2004 and

within an 18-month period, I took up a new position with an Australian-owned international retailer as their NZ distribution centre manager. I have been working for the group ever since, and relocated to Australia to take on the role of Australian distribution centre manager, responsible for three distribution centres in Sydney and Melbourne.

The company has a portfolio of several retail brands which are well represented on both sides of the Tasman and around the world. We operate over a thousand retail outlets across Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK and employ more than 6000 people.

In 2015 I accepted the role of group general manager and now manage the entire supply chain and logistics function across all markets. I’m ultimately responsible for managing the end-to-end movement of stock, both domestically and internationally, in line with business strategies and requirements. During my time with the group,

I have seen how technology and automation have continued to evolve and allow for greater efficiencies, ultimately driving a better business and customer outcome.

Supporting so many stores across seven countries across the world, from origin to last-mile delivery, is an ever-changing environment and presents many challenges. In addition, the rapid growth of ecommerce has continued to force changes which we are constantly adapting to.

The diploma certainly helped me to continue to move forward with my career, and I still use the practical and relevant skills I obtained from the course to this day.

*The Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport is offered in New Zealand by the Logistics Training Group; for further information, visit [www.ltg.co.nz](http://www.ltg.co.nz)*