

Robert Cels – “It’s been a hugely worthwhile experience”

Robert Cels is currently a master planner for Humes Pipeline Systems, but a diploma in logistics and transport has whetted his appetite for more study. This is his story.



Robert Cels is looking forward to making a difference to Fletcher Building’s supply chain activities

While employed at Winstone Wallboards as national demand manager, I signalled to my manager that although I was happy with my current situation, I had a desire to keep my career moving towards a senior supply chain position. At the time I already had a marketing diploma and my manager (who is also a CILT Professional Diploma in Logistics & Transport graduate) suggested I undertake the same CILT study to enhance my supply chain skillset. Knowing the commitment required that comes with full-time study, I was impressed with the self-paced learning format of the CILT diploma as it allowed me to fit the study in with my lifestyle which, like most professionals, can be quite hectic.

After two years of blood, sweat and tears I successfully completed my study and I was delighted to receive an ‘A’ distinction. While the road was challenging and required commitment, I can truly say the learnings, advice and sense of personal achievement along the way have made it a hugely worthwhile experience and helped set me up for my future.

Career moves

Midway through my study, Winstone Wallboards recognised my increasing skillset and expanded my responsibilities to include managing their Penrose distribution centre. This was a great opportunity to marry the theory I was learning with practical hands-on experience.

Winstone Wallboards forms part of the Fletcher Building group of business units, and the next part

of my career started in early 2014 when Humes Pipeline Systems (Humes) – another Fletcher Building business unit – reached out and offered me the position of master planner.

As their master planner I am responsible for Humes’ concrete product supply chain activities. A few months prior to me starting with Humes, the concrete products supply chain team had been through some personnel changes, and the supply chain function had been left in limbo and was in need of fresh eyes. Work experience and knowledge gained through my study enabled me to address technical supply chain issues and successfully implement a number of key initiatives within Humes.

Supply chain challenges

Humes faces some interesting supply chain challenges given the concrete product delivery strategies employed. A third is made to stock, a third manufactured to order, and a third engineered to order. These delivery strategies impact production lead times, inventory levels and human resources.

Along with these delivery strategies, demand is seasonal with the majority of sales transacted in the drier summer months. This

creates a bottleneck on all supply resources such as moulds, people, operational work areas, transport and finished goods yard space. To plan supply vs demand efficiently these delivery strategies and resources need to be carefully managed to get the best results for our customers and for Humes.

A master’s degree beckons

Having completed the professional diploma, I’ve been enjoying more free time with family and friends, so it came as a complete shock to me when I realised that I wanted to undertake further supply chain studies. Based upon the successful completion of the CILT Professional Diploma in Logistics & Transport I have been accepted into Massey University’s Master of Supply Chain Management (MCSM) programme.

Massey’s MCSM is research based and involves the completion of a research thesis. Fletcher Building is evolving into a business made up of areas of functional excellence, with best practice being centrally facilitated. Along with safety, finance, manufacturing, sales and marketing, supply chain is an important functional pillar. To assist with my further study, Fletcher Building’s group supply

chain manager has agreed to look into providing potential topics for my thesis. This will not only provide me with the subject matter I need, but will also provide exposure to the wider business and hopefully the opportunity to make some difference to Fletcher Building’s supply chain activities.

Where to from here?

I thoroughly enjoy working in the supply chain, logistics and transport fields. I enjoy the vast array of people I get to interact with daily, be it my fellow employees, our suppliers, or our customers. I appreciate the challenge of solving complex problems that enable enhanced customer satisfaction and/or improved internal processes.

I am hopeful that through my work experience and academic achievement I will be able to reach my full career potential and be able to set strategy, and influence and implement best practice.

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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