

Craig Mills – “Empower people through knowledge to benefit your business”

A previous career in the defence forces equipped Craig Mills with the necessary experience in logistics for his current role, but the need for a formal qualification that recognised these skills drove him back to education. This is his story.

The largest portion of my logistics career (from 1997 to 2011) has been with the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force. Upon leaving the defence forces, I became the procurement and inventory manager for Fruehauf NZ, a company that is renowned for its innovative road transport equipment, especially truck and trailer bodies. Although I received excellent logistics training in both the New Zealand and Australian defence forces, I felt that I needed an advanced education programme, not only to keep up with the ever-changing environment of logistics, but also to gain a broader supply chain expertise overall. After consideration of the options available, I chose the self-paced CILT UK Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport that could be studied online through the Logistics Training Group (LTG) in Palmerston North and their partner in the UK, the Logistics Learning Alliance (LLA).

Taking up the challenge

There were a few reasons I took up the challenge of studying whilst also working 50-plus hours a week. It became apparent with many employers that although I had a vast experience of supply chain management, I did not have the piece of ‘paper’ with which to prove my worth. After working in my current role for the first couple of years, I thought it beneficial to complete further studies to not only empower myself, but to ensure that I obtained the best ‘tool box’ possible to enable me to advise my peers of best practices, build stronger relationships with key



Craig Mills, procurement and inventory manager for Fruehauf NZ: “Not only are you empowering others with your new-found knowledge, but you develop stronger relationships with your customers”

suppliers (empowering them also) and that, while utilising the theory I would learn with the LLA and LTG, I could trust that this theory would be coming from a reputable source. When studying for the diploma, the online study, case studies, Excel spreadsheets and other information are set out in a way that is easy to follow, and the tasks ‘flow’ smoothly into each other. The online learning experience is simply outstanding and the people that designed the site are of exceptional calibre. Both Walter and Tessa Glass were there with me right through the course and always only a text, email or phone call away. Once I had a feeling of what was expected in the learning environment, breaking that umbilical cord felt very natural. Knowing that Tessa and Walter were there for me and only a text message away was all that was needed a lot of the time.

Knowledge is power

There were many things that Walter warned me about during my studies that I didn’t get at the beginning. I was told that as my

studies progressed, I would begin to see that everything in the supply chain is not as it appears. The old adage that ‘knowledge is power’ never fell short of the truth during my time studying my chosen subjects of supply chain management, core management, procurement and inventory management. As each assignment was completed and my knowledge grew, so did my insight and the realisation that not only was it an invaluable course, but everything learned in it was transferable into the real world and all work areas of my career. Self-discipline became paramount though to ensure I did not become infatuated with trying to change everything in my supply role due to learning so much through the course. It became very difficult to not get dragged down trying to change everything immediately because of the overall excitement and the knowledge gained throughout the duration of the two-plus years of study.

Empowering others

Upon completing the diploma, I

realised that it was not only me that had gained from the qualification, but also my employer, their staff and all the other people with which I had daily contact in the supply chain. Customers, key suppliers and our transport divisions all benefitted from the broadened tool box of learning and knowledge. Through liaising with all these people, I found that not only can your company do business better, but so can your customers. Through education, not only are you empowering others with your new-found knowledge, but you develop stronger relationships with your customers, potentially saving money for your employer and those you do business with. It’s a win-win situation for everyone.

One of the biggest hurdles I have come across since completing my qualification is the sad truth that so many industries in New Zealand are not running or maintaining efficient supply chains. There are a number of companies I deal with that are losing money through inefficiencies, not keeping up with demand, have untrained staff or the wrong people in key positions, and a simple ignorance of the ever-changing environment. Education is key and I only hope that New Zealand companies as a whole will invest more in their supply chain staff to empower them through knowledge and benefit their businesses. The return on this investment is substantial.

I greatly encourage anyone in the supply chain that is serious about developing their career to enrol in the CILT UK Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport. You will not regret it – I certainly haven’t.

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

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