

Bruce Wooller – “I suspect my next career change is not far away”

Bruce Wooller describes his varied logistics career in and out of the defence forces and in several countries around the world as a life of continuous change, lived at a fast pace, with no boredom and being inspired. This is his story.

In mid-1998, I was looking at my fourth change of career and I was only in my mid-thirties. Prior to this I had been a 15-year-old apprentice, a master tradesperson in the engineering trade, an electro-mechanical technician for a telco, a QA practitioner/programmer in the manufacturing sector, and had worked in a management role in the complex and fast-moving high-voltage contracts industry. Like a few of the early adult students who did the CILT UK Diploma in Logistics, I had already spent ten years plus in advanced manufacturing in many industries, with companies that included Ford (Australia) and General Motors.

I had extensive experience in a whole bunch of acronyms: ‘just in time’ (JIT) manufacturing, customer relationship management (CRM), inventory control management (ICM), human machine interfaces (HMI) and warehouse robotics. Many of these terms had yet to be even recognised by their acronyms.

I even understood how to design a new automated warehouse with a computerised warehouse management system (WMS). When I left the manufacturing and industry sector, I thought all large manufacturing industries handled their logistics with these computerised capabilities, even if driven by older mainframes.

Becoming qualified

What I didn’t have aligned with this practical work experience though was a logistics tertiary qualification. After finding that few New Zealand universities in 1998 had worthy internationally recognised logistics tertiary education, I enrolled with the Logistics Training Group (LTG) and completed the CILT UK Diploma in Logistics, with a specialisation in inventory management (IM).

LTG’s Walter Glass inspired me to continue my studies to gain a degree in leadership and administration at the University of New England in Australia, followed by



Bruce Wooller at Fort DeRussy, the US Army Museum in Hawaii: “Industry input will continue to increase and touch upon many areas of the NZDF logistics process”

the Post Graduate Diploma and Masters of Applied Science in Logistics and Supply Chain Management programme at Massey University in Palmerston North (2003).

I left an emergency service agency in 1999 to be employed by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) as a civilian, initially for the New Zealand Army as a fleet manager in logistics. Having previously worked for a large uniformed organisation, transitioning to the NZDF was an easy move. The Army had just implemented SAP in a big way, large logistics reform was underway, and it was building up to deploy to Timor Leste which would be its largest deployed force overseas since Vietnam.

Long supply route

One of my first tasks was to lead the logistics development of a field surgical hospital with limited logistics capability to being fully capable prior to its deployment later that year. Post deployment, my team sustained the tented hospital via a long supply route, initially from Wellington (the consolidation point) to Whenuapai, then Darwin and then onward to Timor Leste for the next two years. The supply chain not only included complex equipment, but an extended supply chain of ‘time and temperature’ controlled vaccines and a range of medication required for a field surgical

hospital. This included moving 28 pints of fresh blood from the New Zealand Blood Service every month over a three-day journey. In 2001, my role in the NZDF transitioned as world-class logistics opportunities arose, with multi-faceted logistics supply chains to Iraq, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands and Tonga, and many humanitarian aid missions in the Asia Pacific region. These supply chains included every item the NZDF required to operate, from torch batteries to large military vehicles in a benign environment.

Strategic management

In 2008 I was promoted into a senior logistics policy role to enhance how HQ NZDF managed its logistics, not only tactically and operationally, but also strategically with other like-minded nations. I have been privileged to develop government-to-government, treaty-level and non-treaty arrangements and agreements with many countries, including the United Kingdom, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, China, USA, France and Fiji. This work is very focused on not only what the NZDF can do well for other parties, but how other nations can work alongside the NZDF. Added to this engagement is building strong relationships with other agencies in the ‘all of government’ approach. From 2007 to 2014 I worked with New Zealand’s defence industry

and was the NZDF lead for selecting and interviewing short-listed high-performance defence contractors for the Minister of Defence’s Awards of Excellence. During that period I met many outstanding New Zealand owned and international companies.

Industry input

In the next two to ten years, the defence industry will be a key enabler for the NZDF. Industry input will continue to increase and touch upon many areas of the NZDF logistics process – from field catering to future ERP software upgrades – linking integrated logistics tracking systems throughout New Zealand and globally.

My study with the Logistics Training Group has provided me with not only the formal qualification, but access to a network of like-minded logisticians who are making a difference in many organisations – from blue-chip private companies to NGOs and the public sector – and some are now in business themselves. Where to next for me? I suspect my next journey and career change is not far away!

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