



Patrick Baker, maintenance manager for Fonterra's Pahiatua and Longburn sites: "I wanted to understand why we picked up milk the way we did"

Patrick Baker – "I wanted something to challenge me"

Hailing from a truck-driving family, Patrick Baker's career might have followed similar lines, but today he's responsible for 29 staff and a budget of over \$5 million at Fonterra's Pahiatua and Longburn sites. This is his story.

When I was young, all I wanted to do was drive trucks. My father drove trucks and my brother drove trucks, but my parents wanted me to do a trade – something I could fall back on. My father drove for Dominion Breweries for 25 years and was a massive inspiration for me. He had been a butcher and always talked about going back to his trade, so I could understand his enthusiasm for me to have a trade.

At the time I was openly despondent about this idea, but I pushed on and was lucky enough to gain an apprenticeship at Tony Jury Motorcycles in Pahiatua. I worked there for nearly 10 years, taking off just one summer to drive tractors for a local contractor.

As part of my time at the motorcycle shop I was required to get my class 4 for driving our farm service truck, so seized the opportunity and got my class 5 at the same time. I had seen an advert looking for temporary tanker operators based at Fonterra's Pahiatua depot

and thought I would try my luck. Thankfully for me, they gave me a four-month contract and I never looked back.

From driver to dispatcher

Fonterra is a great company to work for and provides a lot of training for its staff. I drove tankers for three years before successfully securing a role in the office as a dispatcher. The dispatchers were based at Pahiatua, but covered the Longburn fleet as well.

I was responsible for over 40 tankers working a three-by-three roster consisting of three days, three nights and three days off. To this day it would still be one of the most fast-paced and enjoyable jobs of my career. There was always so much going on with not only milk from our many suppliers, but product loads to many of our customers. I loved the work and the job.

I was a dispatcher for just over two years when the roles were centralised to Hamilton. There

was a restructure in the business and a team manager's position became available. I applied and was successfully appointed, with 43 direct reports split over the two sites. The job was a challenging one, but I loved working with the people and the dynamics of the business, but knew I wanted to do something else – something to challenge me.

My former depot manager, Ross McIntyre, had completed the CILT UK Diploma in Logistics and Transport and highly recommended it. I spoke to my manager and he thought it was a great idea, and so I began the Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport with the Logistics Training Group (LTG).

Challenging the status quo

For me, the motivation to do the diploma was about gaining a better understanding of the transport industry in a logistical sense, as well as growing as a manager with regards to interacting with my staff. I wanted to understand why we picked up milk the way we did, and to have the knowledge and a qualification to be able to challenge the status quo.

The diploma was great for this and the 'core management' module forced me to take on a whole new approach to how I recruited and dealt with staff. Right from the outset when employing new staff, it made me aware that this was their first impression of the business as a whole, and that the interactions they had with me would set their views on the company for the rest of their careers. It wasn't long before a planner's role was advertised onsite in the maintenance department. It was a step sideways, but I saw it as a move back to what I knew, and it also gave me an opportunity to plan and develop as I finished my diploma.

For one of my elective papers I chose inventory as it played a big part in my role. We rolled out a new programme at work where we looked at all the slow-moving stock items. Completing the assignments while rolling out the new programme couldn't have been better timed. It gave me a great understanding and helped ensure Pahiatua was one of the first sites completed.

Credibility

During this time, my wife and I had our three children, Caitlin, Hannah and George. It wasn't easy fitting everything in and allowing time for study, but I am so pleased to have completed the diploma. I am now the maintenance manager for Fonterra's Pahiatua and Longburn sites, responsible for 29 staff and a budget of over \$5 million.

For me, the diploma opened doors: people wanted to talk with me; they believed what I said because I could back it up, and they wanted to interview me.

Walter and Tessa Glass from LTG were great support, and the support network I gained during the diploma was of great help. I can highly recommend this diploma – it is very rewarding.

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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