



Facilitated Feedback Summary

An Initiative of:



Introduction

In Spring 2007, the Logistics Institute embarked on a country-wide journey to launch “Women in Logistics”. *The Women in Logistics initiative creates processes and programs which attract, support, and retain women in the supply chain logistics sector and assists women to further develop their professional careers.*

The national launch events attracted over 600 people in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Halifax. The participants came together to network, to enjoy a motivational speaker and to participate in facilitated discussion groups. At the launch events, the participants were asked to share their experiences in order to provide the foundations upon which the Women in Logistics (WIL) mission can be built.

Members of the WIL Task Force devised a series of questions which formed the basis of the facilitated community dialogue. This information gathering exercise was designed to get opinions on what women in logistics think are the most prevalent issues facing current or future logistics practitioners.

Feedback and ideas were encouraged and collected by asking a series of questions. The answers to these questions are summarized in the following report. There were a broad range of different words and expressions captured in the written responses due to the fact that open answers were encouraged. These responses were grouped into more general categories encompassing the various concepts and terminology used by each individual.

Summary Question

The summary question asked of all respondents was: What kinds of skills, knowledge, or competencies do you need to do your job and what kind of information and Professional Development programs would you find most useful to achieve your career goals?

Objectives of WIL:

- To assist women to develop a career vs. merely having a job
- To prepare women for industry leadership
- Work with employers in order to create an awareness of women as an underdeveloped talent pool and as part of a larger human resources strategy
- To develop programs which will foster a network of professional support and showcase women already in the industry, which will attract and retain women in this sector
- To develop a Community of Interest among supply chain logistics companies and related organizations and associations
- To bring more women into the P. Log program

The most frequent responses provided were:

- Leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Organizational skills
- Business skills
- Change Management skills
- P.Log.
- Team Work
- Project Management
- Multi-tasking
- Experience

In looking at this list, it appears that the majority of respondents found ‘soft skills’ to be of great importance for today’s logistics environment. This is most likely due to the increasing complexity in the workplace, rapidly increasing pace of work, diversity of cultures as operations go more global, and in general the expressed desire for building additional knowledge, skills and competencies for managing people. Over the next year, the WIL team will endeavour to address this issue and communicate information and professional development and educational programs that may help women meet their goals in the field of logistics.

Question #1

The next series of questions were asked, alternating between respondents. Questions #1 asked: What initially attracted you to your job and what keeps you there? The most common responses were:

- Challenge
- Change
- Diversity
- Future Career Opportunities

Some of the responses to the Summary Question were:

“More leadership development...leadership in our current economy is more self-taught than ever”

“Personal development skills and how to deal with all the different types of personalities that I deal with are helpful”

“Professional Accreditation to move from facilitating to being part of the planning ground up”

“A course to improve presentation skills”

“Supervisory/ Management training would be useful along with specialized training for the logistics industry”

- Customer Service
- Problem Solving
- Excitement
- Interaction with People/Team work
- Fulfillment of Job/Making a Difference
- Continual Learning

Overall, the responses showed that the main attraction to a career in logistics is the fulfillment that one receives by advancing their career and helping organizations streamline their processes. Logistics is an attractive career choice because of the constant change, challenge and diversity experienced in day-to-day operations; contributing to an exciting career. The daily interaction with people was also a key element that kept respondents drawn towards this field.

Question #2

Question #2 asked: What are the issues related to your career or current job that motivate you and/or keep you up at night?

Motivators:

- Challenge
- Change
- Customer Service
- Team Work
- Career Opportunities

Many respondents were motivated by personal, organizational and team successes. Personal success is experienced through fulfillment, developing knowledge and career advancement. Organizational success is identified through improving processes and adding value to businesses by executing tasks efficiently and on-time. Team success is achieved through gaining trust among team members and clients; working in a cohesive environment

Some of the responses to Question #1 were:

“I love working with suppliers and making things happen”

“Never boring and repetitive”

“Supply Chain Management & Logistics are key areas of the organization that require special attention to make the company profitable and competitive”

“Opportunities to serve overseas”

“Working with a large corporation presents many opportunities for career development”

“Daily challenge of working in a culturally diverse market”

promoting personal and business success. These elements kept participants motivated to succeed in logistics.

However, this was only part of the story. While there was much to motivate respondents in their exciting logistics careers, there appeared to be some significant issues that also worried them or kept them up at night.

- Work Load
- Staff Concerns/Organizational Change
- Career Advancement
- Resources
- Mistakes

A large amount of workplace stress appears to be caused by the fact that there is too much work to complete, and not enough time to do it. This matter is magnified by familial obligations, which can be difficult to balance with a busy, fast-paced career in the logistics industry. Workplace political issues were also at the forefront of concerns because of the large role that gender plays in career advancement and working relationships. Gender was often an issue because women tried to fit into an environment typically perceived to be a “man’s world”.

Question #3

Question 3 asked: Have you experienced any significant barriers/enablers in your career?

Barriers

- Gender
- Work/Life Balance
- Poor Managers
- Resistance to Change
- Little Room for Advancement

Some of the responses to Question #2 were:

“The thrill of trying to meet a customer’s deadline and the sense of accomplishment once the shipment arrives at the final destination on time”

“Fear of not having time to do everything—letting down the customers, staff, company...”

“Females are passed over for management positions”

“Too many things to do, not enough time to do them”

“How will I motivate and train my staff and peers?”

“Trying different and creative ways to move freight”

The largest barrier highlighted by many respondents was gender and how it affects the work environment as well as career advancement. Some women felt a degree of competition among other women possibly because of the limited number of opportunities that exist in the industry. In the organizational culture, aspects such as resistance to change, poor management, and lack of support were often raised. However, these barriers also appeared to circle around the common issue of gender. As a result of discrimination, women talked about feeling unsupported by their colleagues. In addition to barriers, women also reported aspects that enabled their career success.

Enablers

- Mentors
- Support for Ideas
- Colleagues/Team
- Determination
- Education

In discussing enablers it seemed that there were three distinct sets. The first and most common enabler to career success was the presence of mentors and support of peers or colleagues. Respondents talked about the importance of their work environment and positive relationships with colleagues for enabling their success. The second set of enablers is related to the importance of the organizational system and processes in place that enable employees to advance, encouraging both men and women to achieve personal and organizational goals. The third set of enablers were related to oneself through confidence, determination, a positive attitude, the desire to learn, and family support.

Reflection

As can be seen by the responses, the logistics industry has attracted and retained its practitioners due to the daily challenges, the constant change and the overall excitement of improving business processes while working with others. What currently hinders the advancement of women in logistics is the lack of support from colleagues and organizations in terms of the

Some of the responses to Question #3 were:

“Boss who recognizes your talent, encourages and guides you and helps to develop you”

“Balancing work & familial duties while striving to stay in the same game as the men”

“Myself and my confidence in my skills”

“Working for a dynamic organization with a young, entrepreneurial spirit”

“Being a mom and having a career”

“Having to do more to be considered at the same level as colleagues”

“Lack of female role models”

commitment to the advancement of women.

Future Directions

This was the first step of the WIL team to increase awareness of the issues and the presence and successes of women in the world of logistics. The main issues that were highlighted dealt with sources of sexism, organizational cultures lacking support and resources for women and just simply too much work with too little time to complete it. Contrarily, positive responses were observed when there were adequate mentors and support from colleagues as well as personal drive, determination and education.

By communicating and addressing these issues to logistics practitioners in the industry, women in logistics are yet one step closer to overcoming the gender barriers that exist in this industry. The WIL team plans to actively address these issues through future events and initiatives.

We would like to thank you for your participation in our launch events and for helping us to understand what your issues are through the information gathering exercise. We will keep you informed of our plans and look forward to meeting you again at our future WIL events.

We welcome your feedback/suggestions to our report at: kmilne@womeninlogistics.com