

Women in Logs Article 3 for March 2009.

1. How did you come to get into a career in logistics?

Hmmmm....when I was younger, I wanted to be in hospitality industry, I even went for an interview with one of the international trainings institutions in hospitality in Nairobi but they wouldn't let me.... it was painful! It turned out to be a blessing in disguise; I don't think I would have made a good one anyway. With that out of my grasp, I did business administration diploma and enrolled myself in an employment bureau. I got my first job as an administrator with a private computer firm. I learned my computer skills and I later got a job with ICRC at their Logistics Center in 1994 during the Rwanda genocide.

2. What made you choose a career in logistics?

My 8 years experience at ICRC proved to be a phenomenal training ground in logistics systems that included import/export, reporting, procurement, stores management and multi modal (sea, air, road & rail) transport. In 1997, I took up a more senior role that included procuring commercial transport services and managing the movement of hundreds of tonnes of food & non-food items to East & Central Africa from Mombasa and Nairobi hubs. I loved what I was doing and I knew then that Logistics was the way to go. I therefore, decided to go back to school and get academic qualifications in Supply Chain Management.

3. What challenges have you faced in your role(s)?

To get a good certification is expensive, one has to enroll to international university to get a qualification that was recognized both locally and internationally. Just 2 years ago, the local universities in Nairobi started providing higher degrees in Procurement and Logistics. It has taken me a while to do my Masters in Logistics and the reason was that I couldn't afford it at the time.

As a single mother, juggling my job, motherhood and education has not been easy. It was never easy when I had to travel for days on end without my son, I had to find my son alternative care for him. It got easier as he grew up.

Logistics has matured globally. The function has perhaps lost some of its simplicity and clarity. For example, when procurement started, its purpose was to simply purchase, but now it's more complex and diverse. Unfortunately the organizations are not keeping with the pace. Logistics profile is still low compared to other functions. It takes time and effort to raise the profile to corporate level as evidenced by job grading structure. There is this 'prove-yourself-worthy-kind-of-attitude' that reminds me of *Suspicious Minds* by Elvis Presley.

4. What do you believe are the attributes necessary to succeed in logistics?

Analytical, thinking outside the box, paying attention to detail, have the necessary qualifications for the job, ethical, team player, personal organization and good communicator.

5. What would you say to other women considering a career in logistics?

Girlfriends.... you can do it! I once had a woman mechanic for my vehicle and she inspired me a lot. However, success don't come on a silver plate so put your best foot forward and let's roll up our sleeves and get to work... I would also like you to visit Women's Institute of Supply Chain excellence website www.wise.uk.net. It is a non-

profit organization dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of those affected by war and natural disasters globally by broadening the scope of logistics and supply-chain expertise for women and thus a diverse perspective to work in the humanitarian field. It is an initiative from a woman loggie Mrs Pamela Steel who was the Deputy Head of Logistics for Oxfam GB. I like what Barbara says 'women leadership will make a huge difference to post disaster rehabilitation and empowerment of women's lives and livelihood'. Let's be that change!