



Council of Supply Chain
Management Professionals

Educating and Connecting the World's Supply Chain Professionals.™

MEET A MEMBER



Gerone Blomgren

Education:

University of Phoenix, MS Information Systems

Company/Title:

Lion Raisins and Diamond Logistics, LP/General Manager and Vice President, respectively

When and why did you join CSCMP?

I joined CSCMP in the fall of 2017. I have always sought out resources and information on supply chain and logistics trends and technology that will better inform my thinking and decision making as an executive and CSCMP has that in spades.

What advice do you have for new CSCMP members on how they can maximize their membership value?

All Supply Chain and Logistics professionals have some understanding as earned through their own experiences. However, it's a big world and our field is constantly evolving. Filling in the gaps in your knowledge with CSCMP's Definitive Guide Bundle coupled with the extremely valuable texts for each category in the bundle has a tremendous resource for me to which I can refer in perpetuity.

How did you get into supply chain management/logistics?

I got into supply chain management and logistics quite by accident. I took a role as an exports clerk. Within a year, I was leading the exports team, a year later, managing all logistics and a year following, all operations. At each step, I was fascinated by the challenge of getting what is needed, where it's needed, when it's needed, at the right cost.

I perceived early on, the critical role that technology would play in our field and while still a student, I immediately changed my major to information technology. Once my undergrad work was done, I earned a graduate degree in information systems. Equipped with this knowledge, I used the process efficiencies we had gained at Lion Raisins to form a new company under the same ownership we called Diamond Logistics. This national freight brokerage leverages our own web-based technology to coordinate the efforts of our teams from anywhere in the country, including TMS, CRM, transactional activity, and accounting.

Describe your job in a tweet (i.e. 140 characters or less)

I lead all operations at Lion Raisins, the world's largest ingredient supplier of CA raisins while also leading Diamond Logistics, a national brokerage.

What are your top three job responsibilities?

Job number one is to lead teams of amazing people, giving them the development, guidance, and resources to perform at their best and grow to their fullest potential. As an executive, ensuring this responsibility is maintained throughout the organization is the highest priority.

Strategy is another of my key responsibilities, starting with an integrated demand forecast, built on a platform of interdepartmental collaboration, we work out a full marketing, production, and operation plan based on our interval goals.

The third of my top three responsibilities is the tactical answer to the strategic plan. I direct my managers' efforts based upon performance metrics, in continually seeking improvements to our efficiency and consistency.

What is the biggest challenge you face on the job, and how are you managing it?

Like many executives, I have struggled with finding and retaining talent to fill the growth gap. It's the proverbial 'problem you love to have': your company is growing so fast that you continually need new talent to meet the escalating requirements.

The first step in managing this is keeping the amazing people you have. Losing great people only deepens the recruitment dilemma. The simplest solutions we have implemented are found in fairness, individual and team appreciation, personal value, career path transparency, tailored training and development opportunities, and personal accountability.

The recruiting side is often solved by widening your perspective a bit. If, for example, we want to hire a manager to lead our domestic shipping operation, the traditional approach is to find someone that has a few years' experience doing exactly what we need, including software, process, and industry familiarity. But the most challenging task for a leader, the responsibility that requires more training, experience, and competency than anything else, is leadership. The technical matters can be learned relatively easy. Too many candidates never make it beyond initial screening even though they have what it takes to thrive in the role because they don't meet technical criteria.

What technology, trends or disruptive forces do you see having the biggest impact on supply chains?

Relationships between suppliers, manufacturers, service providers, and consumers are becoming more and more open every day, whether through transparency of transactional and procedural data, the proliferation of blockchain technologies, or simply the overwhelming presence of social media. The most effective players in the world of supply chain and logistics are not resisting this trend, that are pioneering ways to make it work for themselves and the global community.

If you were to start a company from scratch, what values would you build it on?

When I first dreamt up a freight services provider the idea was to do so leveraging web-based technology to align methodology across geographies and share transactional data in such a way that processes were continually accelerated, errors, reduced, and risks mitigated. I recall thinking, I don't really want to go through everything it was going to take to start this new business without ensuring the culture was right from the very beginning.

In one particular meeting while developing the business plan at early morning Starbucks huddles with the people that would end up becoming Diamond's first managers, I told them of my concerns. I said, "I don't want to earn one penny of profit if doing so means we have to violate our core principles. I'd rather see the whole thing burn to the ground." Dramatic perhaps; but over a decade later, any one of our awesome employees can recite that we don't lie, we don't cheat, we don't steal and they can tell you exactly what that means and why that is sadly unique in freight brokerages. Bound only by these inviolate parameters, entrepreneurial thinking and empowerment flourishes at every level.

What are you proudest of?

People, always. Don't get me wrong, I have moments, achievements, and successes I am proud of. But I can't think of any that have not required the love, talent, encouragement, brilliance, or hard work or someone else.

Family that has lifted me, leaders that have inspired me, co-workers that have stood by me, employees that have amazed me; all are essential to any successes I could boast of and will be just as critical to the many successes yet to come for me.

If you could interview anyone, who would it be and why?

Jeff Silver, co-founder of Coyote Logistics. It may not meet the dream criteria that qualifies most 'who-would-you-interview' names, but Jeff built a freight brokerage from a startup into a billion dollar performer in around a decade. Keep in mind, in 2006, when he and his co-founders started Coyote, freight brokerage was one of the fastest growing categories, with people flocking to it as a home-based business with the vast majority failing. Add to that the 2008 economic hit that put a big hurt on new businesses, the growth curve for Coyote is staggering. You can't accomplish this without some creative thinking and a lot of great stories.

Write your own question and answer! What have we not asked that would be interesting for other CSCMP members to learn about you?

What is something people might not know about you?

I am a polymath. Perhaps an unusual thing to say; but it has been my secret weapon. I have studied everything from music performance and composition to physics, advanced mathematics to studio art, computer programming to psychology and I have excelled in all areas. While I was developing marketing strategies for a new product line, I was guest speaking on career development. While I was building my expertise in global distribution networks, I had my first novel published. While I was turning around a struggling logistics business, I was playing lead trumpet in a concert ensemble and jazz band.

I release the pressure of work by reading, drawing, painting, writing, playing music, taking apart electronics, building furniture, or working on cars. In a world of ever-narrowing specialization, I like to think I'm one of the few that has turned multi-specialization into a hobby. The human mind is absolutely amazing and believing there's only so much capacity to learn deeply and fully in more than one discipline is an unnecessary roadblock to true innovation.