



Erich Wachendorf
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Bio:

Erich Wachendorf has been with Macy's since 2014 starting as Group Vice President for Direct to Consumer. In 2018 he was assigned additional responsibilities for logistics support to Macy's Backstage and the Logistic Network Maintenance & Engineering group. In 2019 he was promoted to Senior Vice President and assumed leadership responsibility for 23 distributions centers nationally that support Macy's and Bloomingdale's store logistics, furniture and bedding home delivery, direct to consumer fulfillment and off-price store logistics.

Intro:

In this episode of the Supply Chain Careers Podcast, Erich Wachendorf shares his career journey from the leadership lessons he learned while being a supply officer in the Marines to his first civilian supply chain position in operations at Target, to working on facility startups at Lowe's, to regional distribution operations for McKesson, to his current position as Sr Vice President of Supply Chain at Macy's. Erich talks with us about leadership, mentoring, how he sees supply chain careers changing, and his advice for professionals in the industry.

Mike Ogle: [00:01:20] Eric, we're happy to have you with us today. Welcome.

Erich Wachendorf: [00:01:25] Thanks Mike. Glad to be here.

Mike Ogle: [00:01:27] How did you get started on your supply chain career journey? What were some of your greatest influences that got you started and helped you along the way?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:01:35] I wish I could tell you it was intentional and I planned

every bit of it, but nothing could be further from the truth. My supply chain actually started in my transition out of the military.

So, I was a military officer. In the Marine Corps. I made the decision that I wasn't going to make the Marine Corps a career and I was going to transition to the civilian world, which I knew absolutely nothing about. Had been in the military at that point for about eight years. And made the decision that I needed to do something else, but I had no idea what to do.

I didn't know anything about it. And so, I figure what would be the easiest way to market, what do I have to sell to companies? And it's very hard for military people transitioning the military sometimes to understand how to equate their experience in the military to a commercial environment.

And I was one of those. Figured, well logistics. I was a combat arms infantry officer and then a supply officer in the Marine Corps. And I figured I could use that logistics experience and that would translate well to a commercial environment. So that's the route I went.

And I was fortunate to find a head Hunter that specialized in transitioning military. And I was very fortunate and able to find my first job as a frontline supervisor with Target out on the West coast. And that was my introduction into logistics. And that started my process from there.

Rodney Apple: [00:03:13] What experience did you pull from the Marine Corps to help you be successful? Obviously, you've moved up the ranks with every stage of your career. Did you repurpose that experience, did it help you from a leadership perspective?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:03:26] Absolutely. So, as I look back along my career path and the things that I've done, there's been a couple of things that have really been foundational to the different jobs I've had and what I've done. And one is leadership and what the Marine Corps is known for and is best at is teaching leaders.

And leadership can be taught. The challenge I see when I look at a commercial environment or a civilian environment, and they attempted to teach leadership is they teach the same foundational skill sets that the military does specifically in the Marine Corps, what's missing is the day-to-day reinforcement of what you're being taught. So not only in the Marine Corps, are you taught how to be a leader, and define what a leader does, but every day you are surrounded by exceptional leaders in a work environment, both from what we call enlisted, senior staff and COs that have been 20, 25 years in the Marine Corps that are helping you understand how to interact with people. What are you doing wrong and kick you in the rear end when you're not doing it right. To officers that are teaching you what a leader needs to be and helping teach you strategy and at a different level. So, you get it from both ends and it's day-to-day reinforcement. The very first unit that I was a part of in the Marine Corps, I was an officer, so I was the most junior rank, a 2nd Lieutenant. And the next level of manager in the Marine Corps is basically a captain and there are four of them that are in an infantry battalion unit, primarily four, basically four or five. And the Marine Corps is very small compared to the other services.

So, to obtain a senior rank in the Marine Corps, it's much harder because it's a lot smaller and they have less of that, less of those jobs. So, to become a general officer in the Marine Corps, the odds of that happening is much greater against you in the Marine Corps than it is everywhere else. But the four captains that I worked around, three of them became general officers in the Marine Corps. Unbelievable odds. Of those three, two of them became four-star generals, which is just unbelievable, the odds against that. One of them was the commandant of the Marine Corps and chairman of the joint chiefs. And for the odds stacked up against that as just unbelievable. Those were the leaders that surrounded me for the first three years of my development as a leader. So, I would have to be blind not to come out of that with the foundation of what the Marine Corps trained you in that day to day reinforcement was such exceptional leaders, not just average leaders, but clearly exceptional leaders. So that was the foundation that really, I believe helped me.

The second thing the Marine Corps does, and I would suggest any service does, I think the Marine Corps does it better, obviously, but that is self-discipline so it teaches you self-discipline and what that takes and being able to sacrifice and to control your own destiny and to take ownership of that. And those two are very foundational to my entire career and to what success I've had in my career.

Rodney Apple: [00:07:09] Great. Do you still keep in touch with those folks?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:07:11] You make friends for life so you can make, a true friend is someone that you can call out that you haven't talked to in six years and say, I need help. They don't ask or complain there and that's the kind of relationships you build. And any military service, frankly, because, misery loves company. You're being shipped around a lot. You're being transferred a lot. You come into new situations, and so you build that comradery. And frankly, the Marine Corps probably is known to be a little bit arrogant about their camaraderie. It's a very special unique fraternity, so to speak.

Mike Ogle: [00:07:56] With that transition, as you were coming out of the Marine Corps and heading into a series of industry positions and working your way up, can you tell us a little bit about some of those positions, how different their supply chains were and some of the supply chain careers lessons you learned as you transitioned between those positions?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:08:16] Sure, absolutely. So, my first job coming out of the military, as I indicated before, I really didn't know what I was doing. I was looking for logistics. And I was extraordinarily fortunate. My first job was with Target and a premier company, marquee in its industry and industry leader at the time. But what they were really known for back then was how they treated their employees or colleagues or associates. Back in the day, they called it fast, fun and friendly. I don't know if they still use that term, but they were very employee centric and coming out of the military, it was absolutely essential for me to understand that transition. They would assign a peer, a sponsor to help you. And one day he came up to me, he says, I need to talk to you. I go, okay, what's the problem. And he goes, I want you to go out and I want you to buy the most foo dress watch you can and get rid of that military one you wear upside down on your wrist.

I'm looking at it and thinking I had a G shock watch. It was waterproof. I had it all my life and so I never thought of it. I said, okay, why? He goes, look, you already stand up straighter than everybody else. You have a presence about you that intimidates people. But he said, you've got to soften your approach. I don't know if I ever fully learned that, but I went out and bought the most fufu dress watch I could find, wore it correctly on the right wrist. And I really appreciated that feedback. So that was the kind of environment that they tried to create.

And it really helped me understand how to deal with people in a different environment where you're not dealing necessarily from authority, you're dealing from influence, you're coaching. It was an incredible company to do a transition with. I don't think I could have picked a better one.

The second thing it taught me was. One of my first managers was a former career Sergeant major. A great guy and very experienced supply chain guy. He taught me the mechanics of how to operate in a commercial environment. He taught me how slotting works in the building. He taught me the behind the scenes of the warehouse management system and kind of the technical side of that. And that really got me excited about the potential of a career. So that was outstanding.

So, this was on the West coast. I had aging parents and I needed to get back East, and there was no opportunity for me to go with Target to the East. So, I started looking and I found a company at the time, Lowe's. And again, marquee company. I wish again, it was intentional. For me, it was a job close to where I needed to be. What I didn't know was that they were on the verge of creating their distribution network. They were intentionally going out, looking for the people with big box retail background. Because they wanted to grow their distribution network. Their stores were growing at the time so fast. They couldn't build a store big enough at the time. And they're growing very rapidly. They had distribution. Their primary competitor at the time, Home Depot, did not have a distribution network and they recognize it as a strategic advantage, but they also knew that they knew nothing about it and what they had, wasn't going to work.

So, they brought about five of us in, I was one of the five. And they basically gave us a blank check, not reality, but almost, and said, build us a network. Design us a building. How often do you get that opportunity? And I worked with some incredible industrial engineers. I had never done this before. I was an operator.

I knew people. I knew how to make things happen. They taught me how a building gets designed. We had our own warehouse management system and then they had to modify that. And I learned about warehouse management systems and working with IT people, I was an applied math major in school. And so, I knew how to talk engineering so I could learn things fast. And I knew math. I could talk and keep programmers honest, because I knew logic. And so, I could translate what I wanted the system to do into the logic, how to get there and understand whether it was in the realm of, could we really do it or couldn't we, how much effort.

That put me in a unique position. So, I actually was at the ground level. I started as an operations manager there. I became what was called a planning manager. I was the first one and it was a job that grew out of anything that was screwed up in the building,

they gave it to me. And I built my own position. And fortunately, I was able to get whatever was wrong, fixed, and that just gave them more opportunity to give me something else that was broken. And so that's how I built that position. And as we expanded the network it gave me an opportunity to start a first building startup of a big multi-million square foot facility. We did it with only two of us from the company. And it taught me the challenge of creating a culture. When you started a building up, I got involved in site selection. I'd never done that before. So that was fascinating. And it allowed me to experience community relations because we tended to initially build our buildings in very remote areas for obvious economic reasons. We were the biggest game in town and we had a responsibility with that in the community. They expected us to be a good neighbor and building those relationships was incredibly important. I was promoted to lead that building. And I had the opportunity to influence the design of, startup and run two more buildings for Lowe's. And if you're ever involved in being what we call a founder, the first group that opens a building anywhere is the hardest thing you will ever do, but is absolutely the most rewarding. Nobody can take that away from you. The culture you create, you own, you did it. It's not something you inherited or it's not anybody else's, it's all yours. And to this day, I can drive by the Lowe's building in Texas, the Lowe's building in Pottsville, Pennsylvania and Findlay, Ohio, and say, that's my building with great pride. And that it's still performing and it's still running. I did that for 10 years. You build a reputation and you work with a lot of people. And it's really important for everybody to understand that because, you will build a professional reputation, both with suppliers you work with the people that work for you that work around you, that move on to other companies. And that can be a great asset for you. I was called up by a former boss that said, Hey, I'm working for this company and I need your help. I'm trying to do something new. And I need an outsider's view of what I'm trying to do. McKesson is another marquis Fortune 50 company or oldest in the fortune 500, by the way. I don't make the drugs, but get them from the people that do and give them to the people who need them at the pharmacies. And it was a unique business. I said, I don't know anything about drugs. And he goes, you don't need to. And he said, logistics, people, systems, I need your help. And it was the first time that allowed me to have multiple location responsibility. So instead of just running a location, I now was responsible for a set of locations. And again, I was assigned as a vice president of distribution operations for a region. It was the most successful region and I had absolutely incredible people that I worked with. And again, it's helping shape me and it taught me as a first time I ever experienced face to face with our customers. And actually got into customer negotiation. In the wholesale business, one of the things that we sell as logistics, so I got involved in that discussion and that sales cycle. I've never been involved in sales cycles before. It was fascinating to be able to have that kind of contact directly with the customer. In the past, all my customers had been stores. And internal customers. I never had a face-to-face with an external customer, and that was exciting to me. And it was an each business. Most of my experience had been in case logistics, what you did in those distribution centers at the time was case in case out. This was primarily each with just a little bit of case.

Different environment. The business was also different in that the customer put their order in by 9:00 PM and they get it by 6:00 AM. And the value of the inventory was incredible. So, the economics of that business was upside down different. The economics was all about the inventory. Labor expense and productivity was important, but what drove the business was inventory. It was all about the employee.

I did that for five years and then I had the opportunity to leverage what I learned at Lowe's. We were trying to expand, replace some buildings and do some consolidation, some network stuff. Because of my experience at Lowe's, I was tagged to help do that at a national level. So, I became responsible for their distribution, US pharma, distribution capital plans, organizing them, executing them, warehouse design, and was able to bring in automation I think that they're still using today and the platforms are still using today. So again, I was able to draw from experience. I was a little nervous because I knew nothing about the drug business. I gotta remember the region I came in was the highest performing region. Career-wise don't ever do that, always go lower performing because it's easier to show improvement.

But I was successful there because I listen. When you walk into a new job, I think there's pressure. Everybody thinks I got to change something right away. I don't do that. When I approach a new job, I'll go into it and I want to observe, I want to listen and I want to learn, and that shows respect for the people that you work with and around, and appreciate that you've taken the time to understand something before you suggest to change. And to me that helps that change be adopted. You can build credibility because you've taken the time to understand it. And that's, what's been successful for me.

So, I did that for 10 years. Again, you build a reputation. I get a phone call and it's from a fellow supervisor that I worked with at Target some 15 years ago. And he calls up and says, Hey, do you remember me? And I said, yeah, I remember who you are. We weren't best of friends. We knew each other. We would work together. I said, you know your name's in my book. And I go, what does that mean? In my book, I've written names of people that I've worked with and I followed their careers and I want them to work on my team. I've been following your career. I'd like you to come work for me. And I said where are you working now? And he said, Macy's. Ah, back to retail. I said, what do you want me to do? And he said, this direct to consumer business.

I didn't know anything about direct consumer and here we go. It's McKesson all over again and going, Oh, what am I getting into? But I knew the individual. I trusted the individual. He said, look, you've got the skillset. You can help us. And you'd be good at. And I said at the time, nah. No, thank you. So, over a two-year period, I finally said yes and went to Macy's. And again, I wish I could tell you, I planned this way, but I didn't. And six years later, I'm now a senior vice president for the supply chain responsible for all the domestic operations in the company.

But again, it was not planned. But part of it is your reputation you build. And so, one of the things I would say to listeners is always keep that in mind, everything you do, you're going to carry a reputation with you on how you did it, how well you do it, how fast you learn, what is your professionalism. Is he or she a nice guy to work with? And do I enjoy working with that person? And so, you carry that when you realize it or not carry that

reputation and those relationships you build, not just internal to your company, but external to suppliers and to vendors who are extremely important.

Rodney Apple: [00:22:07] That's a fascinating story, Eric. I love those kinds of stories, too. Just hearing how you take something and then you take some risk and you leverage the network that you build the relationships. I think so many people get into this and they don't understand the importance of it until later on in life or when they need a job. They start turning on the networking. You made a good point throughout your story that it's important to build and maintain those relationships and your reputation throughout every chapter of your career. So, kudos to you for that.

It's important to drive things on an internal basis. But when you look externally, you rely on a lot of external partners and suppliers. When you walk into a meeting you're vetting new suppliers, what kind of characteristics do you look for? That kind of signal that they're going to be a good fit for your organization.

Erich Wachendorf: [00:22:55] For me personally, we try to pick partners that #1 had the same type of values that your organization has your company organization has. You want it to be a good value fit. The things that you believe in, how you treat people, how are your ethics, you want to try to find a partner that has those same type of values. The other thing I would suggest, and I deal a lot with consultants and consulting organizations on the supply chain side. And I can tell you that while there are consulting companies. The team that you get is probably as important or more important than the company itself, because there's a personality you want to try to find a team that has a personality that is compatible with your teams. So, the second thing I look for is how well does this partner mesh with the people that they're going to be working with, are we are going to be able to have an excellent communication. Are we going to be able to treat each other, like we would expect to be treated.

And then the third thing is it's important to always create a win-win relationship. So, you could be a top negotiator, you can try to negotiate pricing down or services or whatever you're negotiating to the point where they're not making any money on it, but that's a short-term relationship. And in logistics, particularly long-term relationships, there's a lot of value to understanding the nuances of businesses on both sides. It can be taken advantage of, and we've got to be careful of that, but you want a business partner that is going to be with you for the long run. And that means that both parties make a fair profit out of it. It means there needs to be a reason for both parties to be in that relationship. And you need to look at it from more of a long-term than a short term. So that's how I do business. The sales cycle is so long and it's very expensive for companies. You spend this spend a lot of time, energy and money in a sales cycle. And I'm pretty honest and pretty blunt with consultants very early on. If I don't feel that it's a good match or we aren't serious, I don't like just fishing for an idea. We approach with a very specific need. If we don't select somebody, I also try to be very specific with them or why we didn't select them for feedback. They may disagree with it and that's okay. But at least they heard it and hopefully it may help them be better next time for someone else.

Rodney Apple: [00:25:41] And on a related topic, everybody wants a high performing team. When you're recruiting and looking for top talent, what are the things you look for

and how do you vet and assess candidates, looking at both the hard and soft skills?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:25:54] When you look at a resume, your first introduction to an individual is what's on paper. Everybody has their different techniques. But what I'm looking at, there's two things I look at for a resume. One, I'm looking at a progression of responsibility. What I'm looking for is, okay, what did that other job from an experience perspective, give that individual, how did it make that individual a stronger candidate or stronger person. It's not a title, it's responsibility. What did they do? And how did that progress? The second thing I'm looking at is differentiators. So what differentiates this piece of paper from that piece of paper, easier to do when you're dealing with more senior level individuals they're usually more experienced, so you can differentiate experience. Much harder to do when you're recruiting for a more entry level position. So again, I'm looking for differentiators, both on paper and in person. One of the reasons why I majored in math was because not only did it give me some training and the ability to think logically and understand not to panic when you don't know the answer, but it's also a differentiator. There are two differentiators on my initial resume. I was an officer of Marines and I had an applied mathematics degree. There aren't that many resumes out there that have those. It differentiated me from probably the other 300 that pieces of paper that they were looking at.

For the young listeners who are coming out of school, it could be experiences in school. I was a coach. Operations is all about people. We can teach technical stuff. We make it harder than it really is. We make it more complex. It's really about getting people to work for you and motivating people. Coaches are great at that. You find a young leader that has a lot of coaching experience and loves that kind of competitiveness. And that type of environment. Great person for operations. So you learn about those kinds of differentiators. Don't think the differentiation needs to be all professional. It can be related experiences.

Rodney Apple: [00:28:08] Have you used mentors throughout your career? Are you serving as a mentor these days?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:28:14] I would answer it informally. So, I've never been in a formal mentor program relationship. But there are people that I consider my mentors that I have taken the initiative to approach. So, one of the things that I look for in people is the ability to be observant. To open your eyes, open your ears and take advantage of every situation you're in and learn something from it. So, I'm sitting on in a, an, a meeting, a large meeting, and I may be more of a spectator that I am a active participant. What I do is I watch what occurs in that meeting and who the leaders are. So, if the CEO's in the meeting and he or she makes a point about something, I ask myself, okay, what's behind that. Where are they going? What triggered that? What are the positions in the different organizations being represented? So that's how I learn is by watching and absorbing others. And I've been told I'm a very quick learner and I think that's because it helps me think about what's next. So, from a mentor perspective, my best mentors that I've watched have exhibited a characteristic that I think can help me. And I approached them first informally. And then I approached them with business problems and my approach to ask their opinion. So, I've been the initiator of those

relationships and had been very strong. But that's what I have found very successful for myself.

As far as doing it for others. I try to take that approach. I believe very strongly that my success or how I rate my success is one of the ways I do it is based upon the success of the people that work for me. I am very proud of the fact that I've got six people that have reported to me that are frontline managers and are now running their own buildings. And one's actually a retired director level. So, watching people progress through their career that I believe have talent. I take a lot of pride in. And I try very hard to reach out to those individuals and make myself available. But as an individual, you have to take advantage of those opportunities. And you gotta recognize them and you can't be afraid to reach out when you see someone that you think can be helpful.

Rodney Apple: [00:30:53] That's a great point and I'm a big believer too in mentorship, but I'm the same way it's been informal. I've got people I can reach out to when I need help. And it's always been that way. So, to our audience, you don't need to have a fancy sit down with a framework type mentorship. You just need to lean on the experts and people that can help and are willing to help and be willing to pass the buck when it's your turn.

Erich Wachendorf: [00:31:17] And I think most people appreciate that. Even the busiest of people. I think they appreciate being asked and I've never had anybody turn me down or be negative. It just takes a little guts to ask sometimes. I think the difficulty in some of those formal programs is it's hard to match people. I do it the informal way. I think the informal approach for me personally has worked better than a formal program.

Mike Ogle: [00:31:44] If you got to go back and talk to your younger self as an undergraduate, maybe in the beginning, or even close to graduation, or maybe a little bit of each, what would you wish you had known as an undergraduate student?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:31:57] I think there's two lessons. One is you got to love what you do. And I know that's a canned phrase and sometimes overused, but understand that the decisions you're making is you're not going to be your ultimate end. As an undergrad, you're planning it out. I thought I was going to be a lawyer. I went to a liberal arts school in Kentucky. I said that I was going to be an economics and management major and I was going to go to law school. So, I turned out to be an economics management major, but also an applied math major. I became an officer in the marines, and I was the farthest thing from a law school I've ever been at.

Understand that the decision that, what your view of where you're going to be is going to change. It's going to be dynamic. Understand that it's probably going to change. It's important that you find things that interest you, that you're passionate about, that you enjoy doing. Understand that really your major, is going to teach you how to think. It's going to expose you to ideas with the exception of maybe physicians and some scientists, a lot of your major is not going to be directly relevant. It's going to give you a soft skill set. It's going to teach you logic. It's going to teach you things like that. So I think that's the first one.

The second thing is relationships. The power of relationships. How important relationships and the people that you associate with, the people that you build

relationships with, and your network. It is so important. You're building a reputation from day one. And it's important to always keep that in the back of your mind and really ask yourself what kind of reputation are you building for yourself? And that could be through your actions, to the people that you associate with and the decisions you make. And sometimes when early on and you're young, you don't realize really how important that is. And I think that's a component I would stress greatly for the kids coming out of school.

Rodney Apple: [00:34:03] A lot of innovation going on in and logistics and supply chain. It's hard to keep track of these days. But from your lens what are you seeing in the years ahead as you look at how supply chain careers are going to change in the next several years.

Erich Wachendorf: [00:34:18] Sure. So, I think it's always been there. It's been automation and the introduction of IT into what we do. So, you always needed to be aware of systems but even more so now with artificial intelligence and software, that's coming online. To be a logistics professional, you need to be almost an IT professional because you are so intertwined with systems and understanding how systems work, what their capabilities are, what their weaknesses and strengths are is becoming so much more critical than what I was coming through.

The other thing that I'm seeing in the industry, are things that allow you to do more with less, utilize systems and software to be more efficient and more effective. You have so much more information than what you used to have. And you've got detailed information to the point where it's now information overload. And so, what you're starting to see are systems that help organize and present that information in a manner that allows you to make decisions. But it's not automatic. It takes people to understand how to organize that information. And you need to have a base understanding of how you can organize it, to be able to say what you want to see. And so that I think is the trend that you're seeing artificial intelligence is the ability to learn from real world action. And trying to make decision processes faster. And more efficient. The automation you're seeing in the industry is a direct result of trying to address the workforce shortage that is facing us. And I think you're going to see it not just within the four walls of the warehouse. You're seeing it from a transportation perspective.

I would argue that we are not that far off from seeing self-driving trucks. And we have driver shortages, we have challenges and so everywhere you see it, you're going to start seeing automation being introduced, which requires an understanding of it, a knowledge of it, how to apply it when to apply it.

And how to do it smartly that's a totally different type of leader. Because at the same time you're still dealing with people and in operations, it's all about people, regardless of the automation. Usually you find people that are good at leadership or good at the technical side. The demands are finding someone who's good at both. And those that can make that marriage are the ones that are going to be truly successful in logistics. And I think that's what you're starting to see. You're even seeing colleges approach it differently because they understand the interdependence.

And the last trend is it's now an international economy. So, in the past, when I came up

in the supply chain, the knowledge of what happens overseas and your contact with what happens overseas outside of your country was minimal. You have professionals that specialized in that, but now it's a world economy. You have to have a world perspective. The Marine Corps gave me an exposure to different countries. The school I went to, Centre College, a liberal arts school, now requires for graduation, every student to spend a semester overseas. And that program is set up in different countries. You can pick your country, but they believe that a true liberal arts education requires international exposure. That's how far we've come in the 20 years, 25 years since I've been in school. I think it's absolutely spot on that we're now dealing with the global economy. Global logistics and that knowledge of logistics is much broader than it ever has been.

Mike Ogle: [00:38:14] Supply chain careers definitely need continuous improvement. How do you keep up with changes and advise others to keep improving?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:38:21] First thing is you got to own it. Okay. Don't expect to be spoonfed the information. So, don't sit there and say, it's up to the company I work for to train me, or they give me that exposure. You need to own and be aggressive and learning how to do that.

I think the industry pre-COVID there's lots of opportunities either from physical industry events. Educational events, every free show, any trade show always has as part of that show, classes that you can sign up for and to see things, to understand equipment you may have never seen before. Ask questions of the experts that are there. These types of shows concentrate experts in one spot, and it gives you an opportunity to take advantage of those experts and ask questions and those kinds of things.

Online, I think most trade organizations have opportunities. It seems like certifications have proliferated. So, there's plenty of formal educational opportunities. Now, most of the universities that you talked about do offer logistics some types of undergrad and graduate logistics programs now. And particularly for the graduate ones, most of them offer an online version of it, because they realize that they're dealing with logistics executives that are within five or six years in their career.

So, I think there's plenty of opportunity. You just have to be aggressive in doing it. And I think you also need to schedule it. You need to talk to your manager, your supervisor. You may need to invest your own personal time, but it's valuable to understand what's going on because you need to keep up with the changes to understand how to apply it.

Rodney Apple: [00:40:08] Eric, last question, if you could think back in your career, what's some of the best advice you've received that really helped move your career forward. And then do you have a couple of your own nuggets of wisdom to share with our audience?

Erich Wachendorf: [00:40:21] Again, you got to enjoy what you do. You need to be passionate about it, find something you're passionate in and go after it. And you gotta be genuine. You gotta be yourself. Everybody has a different style of personality style leadership style. And what I have found from my career is you don't try to be something you're not. Not everything about you is going to be a positive. There might be something that you need to be conscious of, that turns people off. But. You can control it. You

could recognize the triggers that trigger it, but it's going to be very difficult to change it. If you try to change it, you may come across not being genuine. I try to be very honest and very genuine with the people that I work around with the people I worked with, that I work for, the people I work with and the people that work for me. It's a cliché. I try to treat people the way that I want to be treated. I can be honest, sometimes brutally honest, but it's important. I always tell them, one of the first things I tell a new boss, is don't ask me a question you don't want any answer to. I think that, because I tell the people that work for me, when I ask you a question, I want your real opinion. There's a reason I'm asking you. So, you need to be very genuine in your approach and you need to understand how your approach can help and how it can hurt and try to control the situations.

I think the second piece of advice that I would give. And it was given to me at one point is how you react to bad news is critical in your career because that's going to determine whether you're going to be given that news again. So, if you want transparency, you want the ability to have your team to be able to be successful, you have to be able to take bad news without blowing up. Things in logistics are not always going to go right every day. And they're going to go wrong. You don't want to make the same mistake a lot of times, but how you react to bad news is really gonna determine how successful and how transparent your team's going to be. And I think people forget that particularly for my generation. And I've seen horrific examples of that in my career and it just sticks to me every time. Because I think there's sometimes a perception that if you don't react that way, you're accepting the performance and that's not the case at all.

So that would be my two pieces of advice.

Mike Ogle: [00:43:13] And how about the, Oh, wait, that wasn't my fault!

Erich Wachendorf: [00:43:16] Yeah. Yeah. When you own that. I think one of the things, again, back in my Marine Corps days they teach you to take responsibility for your actions, right? It's easier to take responsibility for something when you have a boss that is going to not blow up at you and you screw it up because you're going to screw it up. Okay. We all make mistakes. Gosh. But it helps when you're in an environment that not necessarily accepts a mistake, but understands you're going to make it. And then, what have we learned from this? So what are we going to do to help mitigate the impact of it, and that type of approach.

Mike Ogle: [00:43:54] Eric. Thank you for a great conversation and insights about supply chain careers.

Erich Wachendorf: [00:43:58] Thanks, Mike, I really enjoyed it.

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