



Careers in Transportation and Logistics Management Webcast Q&A Section

Sponsored by American Public University

*Answers provided by Irvin Varkonyi, Adjunct Professor of T&LM at American Public University
and Phil Ratcliff, VP of Strategic Resources at Panther Expedited Services*

Are there any APU graduates working in the rail industry? Or in SCM?

Irvin Varkonyi: I know of at least one student who is currently working Norfolk Southern Railway. There may be others. SCM (Supply Chain Management) encompasses multiple functions such as transportation, logistics, acquisition, distribution and more. Any of us in these and related fields work in SCM. I am not aware if we have graduates who have reached senior positions such as VP Supply Chain.

What type of skill sets are being recruited in operations?

Irvin: Operations professionals require skills and knowledge in multiple facets of operations including manufacturing, warehouse management, procurement, product assembly along with logistics and transportations. Check out APICS, the Association for Operations Management who provides extensive information on skill sets including lean management, Six Sigma, Certified Production and Inventory Management (CPIM) and more.

What type of positions are available at a 3PL?

Irvin: A 3PL (Third Party Logistics) organization becomes responsible for various functions previously handled by an organization for whom these functions are not their core competency. Thus a 3PL may handle warehousing, inventory management, transportation, order fulfillment and more. There are a variety of positions available within each of these functions.

I am currently in the Coast Guard and live in Norfolk, VA – I am seeing empty containers just sitting around... is that a reflection of the economy or lack of US manufacturing?

Irvin: Containers require two way traffic flows to enable an organization to keep transportation costs down. The US has an imbalance of imports dominating exports. The containers you see are waiting for outbound loads. When the shortage of containers becomes acute in exporting nations (i.e. China) someone will have to bite the bullet and literally ship empty containers (the ones sitting in Norfolk) to China.

Is that not part of the TWIC investigation – getting people that can be trusted by doing the background check?

Irvin: TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Card) has been mandated by the Transportation Security Agency to ensure that the workforce associated with the maritime trade (seaport workers, truckers, etc) have been checked out and to prevent identity theft to insure that non-approved personnel do not come in contact with maritime cargo.

How does security management dovetail with the transportation industry?

Irvin: Our preconceptions about the separation of security and transportation, before 9/11 has changed drastically. The influence of disruptive events such as natural disasters have also impacted the needed for security professionals to gain knowledge about how transportation works, and for transportation professionals to insure that transportation systems are secure as well as efficient.

A friend of mine in his 50's just got his CDL. How is the market for older workers in T&LM?

Irvin: The demographics in transportation, including trucking have found an aging workforce, thus raising concern about finding professionals with CDL's (Commercial Driver's License). Being in your 50's is no handicap whatsoever to secure work in trucking or related T&LM industries.

I am interested in a career as a freight forwarder/broker. How can a degree from APUS assist me on that career path?

Irvin: The freight forwarding industry has changed much due to globalization and technology. Job levels, from entry positions to senior management, require more knowledge about the complex relationships of intermodal collaboration, government security compliance and more. Forwarders' customers expect much more from their forwarder than moving stuff from point a to point b. A degree from APUS provides a multi-disciplinary approach which teaches all the important elements to succeed in forwarding.

How is the outlook on jobs in the industry in the future?

Phil Ratcliff: The jobs outlook in the immediate future is good within certain sectors. For instance, a slight shortage of capacity due to the recession has led to a recent spike in the number of driving and operations opportunities for trucking companies. In the long term, transportation, despite the industry's continual drive for efficiency, will continue to expand along with the demand for goods and services in the global economy.

Does Panther offer any job fairs that APUS students can participate in?

Phil: To date, Panther has participated in job fairs hosted by other parties, like local employment agencies or universities. We do not currently host job fairs onsite at Panther. However, if we do (and we may) APU will be invited to participate.

What is the hiring process at Panther? Is there an office in Norfolk that I could visit and see what is going on?

Phil: We post open positions on our website at www.pantherexpedite.com on the careers tab. If you see a position(s) you are interested in, you should apply there. A Panther recruiter screens your application and drives the process from there. We conduct Wonderlic testing as well as drug screen and background check applicants at the appropriate stage of the process.

Of the 118 new hires at Panther, were they just drivers in the operations department?

Phil: Our drivers are all independent contractors so all 118 of the hires in Operations were for dispatching/customer service/ logistics specialist or operations management positions that are office jobs in our call center.

Is Panther hiring on the West Coast as well as in Ohio?

Phil: Yes. We currently have positions posted in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento and Portland.

How does Panther see the implementation of CSA 2010 affecting the industry of expedited freight?

Phil: Panther voluntarily maintains strict safety standards for our fleet. We do not anticipate that we will experience a loss of drivers from our fleet due to the new standards. However, the standards may reduce the available driver pool in the market in the short term and make recruiting and growing a fleet more of a challenge. I anticipate that most larger expedite companies which already have established safety departments and programs will experience fewer problems than smaller expedite companies.