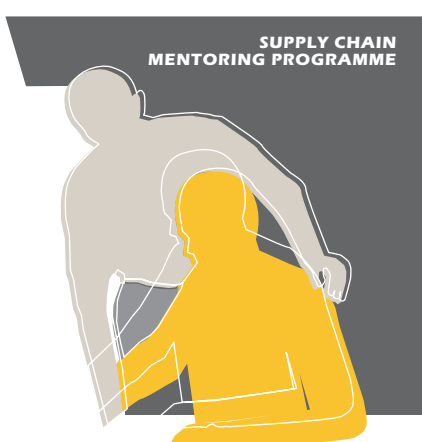


SUPPLY CHAIN MENTORING PROGRAMME



Are our next generation of supply chain managers ready?

The Australasian Production and Inventory Control Society (APICS) and the Logistics Association of Australia (LAA) have joined forces to ensure that the next generation of supply chain managers and logisticians is ready to step forward to support and lead the supply management industry in the demanding economic, social and environmental climate of the 21st century.

Two key challenges for the logistics industry are the ability to attract and retain talented people and an ageing workforce. It has been shown that mentoring programmes are instrumental in addressing these challenges by helping to reduce staff turnover and ensuring the transfer of knowledge from an ageing and retiring workforce. While professionals such as engineers, accountants and lawyers all have access to focused, professional mentoring, until recently the supply chain industry has been lacking in similar support.

Now, through the generous sponsorship of Dexion, which has taken a leadership position in helping to address the skills shortage in the industry, APICS and the LAA are offering a Supply Chain Mentoring Programme free of charge to their members.

On the launch of the programme, Andrew Angus, Executive Marketing Manager for Dexion expressed his delight at being able to support this programme. "Our company is asked to sponsor many different initiatives and it is impossible to say 'yes' to them all," he said. "But, when the programme's coordinator, Luke Holmick, approached me about this Mentoring Programme I immediately recognised that it is a really worthwhile initiative and one that fits well with our company. In fact, I think that it epitomises our company slogan 'smarter thinking' and all of us at Dexion applaud the initiative taken by APICS and the LAA."

Another important supporter of the programme is the Transport and Logistics Centre (TALC). The Centre's Director, Daryl Hull expressed his views on the need for mentoring within the supply chain industry. "Skills shortages and an ageing demographic provide some significant challenges for capable workforces," he said. "One initiative that produces immediate gains is the establishment and operation of effective mentoring relationships. TALC is committed to providing seed funding to promote the establishment and operation of mentoring programmes in transport and logistics. Practical research demonstrates the value of positive mentoring relationships and the need for more and better mentoring in all areas of endeavour". The aim of the Supply Chain Mentoring Programme is to foster the development of supply chain professionals through facilitating knowledge sharing. In this context, mentoring performs a special role, promoting the transfer of tacit knowledge from industry professionals to those with less experience.

The programme entails matching a less experienced supply chain practitioner with a seasoned, experienced and professional manager to offer guidance and discuss supply chain related issues and challenges. This one-to-one relationship emerges as an important vehicle for growth and development for mentees.

This programme gives mentees the opportunity to discuss supply chain related matters, including their own career development, with an experienced supply chain professional. There is the further opportunity to be involved in group meetings with other mentors and mentees where a particular supply chain topic will be discussed.

The benefits of being a mentee are numerous. At the end of the 12 month programme, mentees can expect that their knowledge and development within the supply chain industry is likely to have been accelerated by up to 2-3 years. While effective mentoring is a relationship that focuses on the needs of the mentees, it is also a satisfying and beneficial experience for those taking on the mentoring role. Likewise, employers benefit through the accelerated development of their staff.

Mentors undergo two half-day training sessions that is highly applicable to their workplace. Delivered by a specialist corporate mentor/coach and valued at over \$6000, the training includes two follow-up sessions to further refine skills. Mentoring is a great opportunity to develop interpersonal and leadership skills and to enjoy excellent networking opportunities. All endeavours will be made to ensure that mentors will not be matched with mentees from a competing organization while matching mentors with mentees who are most likely to benefit from their specific experience.

Mentors do not need to have all the answers to complicated supply chain problems but it is expected that they would have a good experience base. Both mentors and mentees sign a code of conduct and confidentiality agreement. Mentoring sessions will be structured with mentees filling out a pre-session focus form that will include topics for discussion, goals, objectives and progress. This allows mentors time to prepare. The mentor's primary role is to act as a sounding board for the mentee's ideas, to assist in monitoring progress and to provide feedback.

Mentees also undergo an induction session so they are fully aware of their obligations as a mentee. This will take place on 18th October at Rydges at Parramatta. Training sessions for mentors will take place on the 18th and 25th October at Rydges in Parramatta. Following this, mentors and mentees make their own arrangements to meet not less than once per month.

The programme formally lasts for 12 months and represents a rare development opportunity. Places are limited and it is expected that selected participants will be committed for the duration of the programme and to the attainment of their goals. At the end of this time there will be a presentation and awards ceremony for successful participants with full acknowledgement of mentors' input.

Summing up the aims of the programme, APICS President, John Ballantyne said: "Mentoring is a great vehicle for more experienced supply chain professionals to pass on their knowledge to the next generation. We have taken a lot of care to ensure that this programme has structure so that both mentors and mentees receive the maximum benefit. We are proud to be able to offer this programme to our members." With a national presence, APICS and the LAA are well-suited to facilitate the national delivery of the programme. As an industry-based initiative, this programme provides benefit from a wider focus than one conducted by a single corporation. It is independent from the need for a return on investment and provides extended opportunities for networking outside of the company as well as access to mentors with a wider range of experience.

While this valuable programme is free of charge to members of APICS and the LAA, there is a small administration of \$100 for mentees. For further information or to register your interest in participating please contact the Programme Coordinator Luke Holmick on <mentor@laa.asn.au>

The Logistics Association of Australia (LAA) represents the interests of professionals in logistics and the supply chain and acts as a conduit between logistics professionals and industry, government, education bodies and other relevant forums. For more information about the LAA visit www.laas.asn.au

APICS is a world-wide not-for-profit organisation dedicated to education and training in supply chain management. In Australia APICS prepares students for the Diploma of Business and Operations Management and conducts monthly seminars and an annual conference. All chapters are supported by industry and administered by unpaid professionals in supply chain management. For more information about APICS visit www.apics.org.au