



# Meet Josh Start

***Focus* talks to Josh Start, head of Colnbrook Logistics Centre (CLC), one year on from winning the Young Manager award at the CILT Annual Awards for Excellence.**

**What does your daily role as Head of CLC entail?**

We provide and integrate all the logistics activities that support construction at Heathrow, as well as running the engineering stores delivery operation that supports the whole airport's facilities. I am responsible for the operational, financial and strategic elements of this operation, which is characterised by complex and conflicting stakeholder relationships, changing requirements and high activity levels. I make sure we meet all our KPIs while ensuring we work within budget. Perhaps most enjoyably, I work to identify areas for continuous improvement in everything that we do, so this becomes the norm rather than the exception.

**You have had quite an interesting career path. Was it planned that way?**

I have always been the sort of person that likes to have a plan. While studying for my GCSEs I decided that I wanted to join the Army, but also that I wanted to follow a technical route while doing so. I chose my degree subject on that basis, attending the Royal Military College of Science to study Management & Logistics before going to Sandhurst with the desire to join the Royal Logistic Corps. After nine very rewarding years in the Army, I decided it was time for a new challenge in the civilian sector, but I wanted to remain within logistics. Joining Wilson James has allowed me to do just that.

**How did you go about the transition from an Army job to civilian work, and what advice would you give to others considering this?**

Many servicemen and women are concerned that the transition to the civilian world will be a difficult one and, on reflection, I was no different. The reality, however, is that they have a great deal to offer the civilian job market and there are now an ever growing number of organisations that work to connect ex-forces personnel with companies that understand and value this. I found it important to network as much as possible, because there is undoubtedly the right opportunity out there. Organisations such as the Career Transition Partnership, Royal Logistic Corps Foundation and BuildForce are vital and provide great advice and assistance with the transition.

**As we move into a new era of operations management, how important is it to teach the benefits of IT to future supply chain professionals?**

Technology is increasingly important to today's organisations and logistics is certainly not exempt. Many companies have realised the benefits, and it is now commonplace for IT systems to play an integral part in the most effective logistic solutions. It is therefore critical that we demonstrate to future supply chain professionals how such systems can complement the traditional principles of logistics when managing an operation. While it is increasingly evident that, when deployed effectively, IT systems can increase accuracy, save money and improve performance, we should not assume that exhibiting this to future leaders can be left to chance.

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**What has been your input in developing new software for Wilson James' operation?**

Information management (IM) systems can provide immense value in the development of construction logistics. It is important we challenge the status quo in an effort to find more effective ways of doing business and technology offers a great opportunity to do this, as an IM system can often ensure greater control and effective implementation of processes. This may allow streamlining of resource or even the ability to collect useful data that facilitate more informed decision-making.

**You have had a very successful year with awards, first CILT and more recently with the ELA. How has this been of benefit?**

I consider myself to have been very lucky in receiving two prestigious awards such as these in the last 12 months, and they both came as a huge surprise. While it is always an honour to get recognition like this, both awards were very much the result of a team effort and the hard work of the many people I work with. They are a reflection of their accomplishments, too.

**Do you think that logistics suffers from an image problem amongst graduates and young professionals? If so, what can be done to change it?**

The reality is that research does suggest that logistics suffers from an unfavourable image amongst graduates and young professionals. Many still associate the sector with trucks and warehousing, failing to recognise that logistics companies form the spine of modern global business. Some perceive that a career in logistics does not offer the same intellectual challenge or potential to develop and succeed as other sectors might. However, it is important to realise that this view can be altered with some focus of effort, in order to attract and retain the very best talent. Perhaps most importantly, the sector needs to educate this demographic in the complexity and level of sophistication that it offers in order to generate an increased level of excitement around this career field.

**What was it about construction logistics that made you consider it as a viable career?**

I knew that when I left the Army I wanted to stay in logistics, but I was less certain about what this might look like. After some research and networking, it seemed that the construction industry was well suited to ex-forces personnel, with projects managed in a way that is familiar to those in the military. Construction logistics was therefore a logical choice.

**How has CILT benefited your career and what would you say to young professionals to encourage them to become members of the Institute?**

CILT offers many advantages to professionals involved with logistics and transport and I have been very fortunate to benefit as a result. The Institute provides the opportunity to connect with other professionals across multiple sectors and industries, facilitates sharing of good practices and knowledge and assists with professional development. I would wholeheartedly encourage young professionals to become members of the Institute to take advantage of being professionally recognised by being part of our global, professional body, in addition to the networking opportunities it offers. CILT has numerous channels of communication to keep members informed, and it makes sense to be a part of this as early as possible in your career. ☺