

Voices of our future

MEET JOSH START



Josh Start, Head of Colnbrook Logistics Centre (CLC), Wilson James, speaks to *Focus* about winning this year's CILT Young Manager award and the pressures that come with being a manager.

Congratulations on winning CILT Young Manager at this year's Annual Awards for Excellence. What does this mean to you?

Thank you very much. I was delighted to win this award and, although I knew I had been nominated by my company, it came as a huge surprise. I very much view the award as one for my whole team, as I simply couldn't achieve anything without their efforts. I am very lucky to work with some great people, and this award is very much a reflection of their accomplishments, too. I also receive a great deal of support from the wider Wilson James team and our key client, Heathrow airport, for which I am very grateful.

What does your day-to-day job require?

At CLC, 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 entire airport's facilities. I am responsible for the operational, financial and strategic elements. It is an operation 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.

What work did you do to ensure Wilson James was awarded the contract for the Heathrow Logistics Integrator (HLI)?

I was appointed to lead the bid team for the HLI contract. After putting together the right team and defining their roles, it was vital to create a project plan that would ensure we could deliver a first class tender response according to the specific timeline. This ensured that no element of the complex documentation was missed and that the very large tender response

was coherent across all its sections. I had to ensure we could express our solution effectively on paper and in presentations. It was an extremely enjoyable task, particularly as we also set about designing a new IT solution for one particular aspect of the contract.

How will the recent decision regarding airport capacity affect your role?

It is an incredibly exciting time at Heathrow. The expansion will involve a huge amount of planning that I am sure my role can contribute to. The HLI has a great deal of experience in construction logistics at the airport, and I hope to be involved with this as much as possible when it comes to building the third runway. I fully believe that Heathrow expansion is the right choice for the UK, and to be a part of that will be extremely interesting as the role of the HLI evolves. There will be many opportunities for Wilson James to add value in key areas, including sustainability, implementing innovative logistic solutions and utilising our relationships within the industry and at the airport to make the project a success.

You are just 33. How do you cope with the pressure and responsibility that comes with being a manager?

I try to view any pressure that comes with being a manager as a positive experience, and use it to my benefit. I enjoy being in a position of responsibility, but I try to keep things in perspective while also breaking tasks down to make them as simple as possible. I have found it useful not to think too far ahead, and ensure I switch off from work when I am enjoying time with my family. For its charity of the year Wilson James has chosen Mind, which works to promote better mental health. This partnership has helped develop my understanding of what we can do to improve our approach to mental health in the workplace. This has also made it easier



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to talk to those around me at times when perhaps there is more pressure than normal, which is particularly important.

Described as 'an expert in Wilson James' specialised construction logistics information management (IM) system, Fulcrum@', how important are IM systems to the development of construction logistics?

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. 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.

How would you describe your style of management, and what advice would you give to aspiring young managers?

Whenever possible, I use my experiences gained within the army when developing my own leadership style. I always try to be approachable and set the example as to the standards I am looking for from my team. I also aim to allow my team to develop the solution to problems themselves, which hopefully gives them the confidence to succeed both in that instance and the future. I am also the type of person who enjoys detail, but that probably makes me quite odd. I like to know the evidence and data behind the reasoning for doing something in a certain way. My advice for other young managers would be to know your strengths and weaknesses and to then use these accordingly. At Wilson James we have utilised the Insights Discovery programme, which I have found extremely effective. It identifies your personality profile and allows you to develop your own effective strategy for interaction with others, as well

highlighting those areas you might want to develop. It is even useful to share with colleagues so they can further understand how to work effectively with you.

How did your time in the British Army influence your career?

My time in the Royal Logistic Corps included operational tours in Iraq and twice in Afghanistan, with my final tour training the Afghan Army in logistics. As an officer in the army and after receiving thorough training, you are given command of people and equipment at a very young age. You have no choice but to learn quickly, although I particularly enjoyed the responsibility and challenge that came with this. I developed a wide range of skills that I have found to be extremely transferable to my new civilian career, be they related to logistics or leadership. It has also given me some perspective that I think allows me to deal in a calm and considered matter with fast-paced and complex environments such as Heathrow.

Kaizen and 6S were mentioned a lot in your award entry. Can you explain more about these?

Kaizen, meaning improvement, seeks to eliminate waste. 5S is a methodology that seeks to provide the framework for organising a workplace more efficiently and effectively. We have added safety as a sixth tenet, as it underpins everything we do at Heathrow. I have found kaizen and 6S to be extremely useful tools in identifying and implementing better ways of working. While they originate from lean manufacturing, they are equally applicable in a logistics environment, where there are so many individual elements to different processes that can be refined. You don't have to be a particular expert to use them and, critically, they are most effective when involving the wider members of the workforce.

You partially designed your role yourself. Why did you feel the need for this role and how has it benefited the company?

When putting together our tender response to Heathrow, it became clear we needed a slightly different approach from the one that had served Wilson James and Heathrow so successfully in the past. With an ever-changing environment, and more complex contract to manage, it was agreed that we needed a role that would combine the management and control of all our services, from an operational and strategic viewpoint. As a result, the HLI has benefited from a number of efficiencies and process enhancements identified within our programme of continuous improvement. We have then shared this experience with the wider company using a number of forums to ensure that our lessons learned can be used effectively elsewhere across other contracts.



Above: Josh Start received the CILT Young Manager of the Year Award at the CILT Awards



If you are a young professional and interested in writing for Focus, email: ypf@ciltuk.org.uk