

YOUR INSTITUTE

Voices of our future



Meet John Raper

John manages the movement of material deliveries at Heathrow

John Raper talks to *Focus* about his role at Wilson James, the impact of technology on construction logistics and creating a more diverse workforce across the profession.

What is your day-to-day role at Wilson James?

Wilson James Ltd operates the Colnbrook Logistics Centre (CLC) at Heathrow. As Delivery Integration Manager, I play a key part in managing the movements of material deliveries. This includes a large amount of project and programme management of what is, of course, a major infrastructure and development space. The practical aspects of my role are multifaceted. I lead meetings with Heathrow principal contractors, Heathrow departments and within the CLC operational management to ensure we meet requirements to deliver materials within service levels. In my time, I have helped to develop logistical forecasts and delivery metrics to enhance our team's overall capabilities, as well as driving opportunities for change and value-add exercises. I represent the airport at networking events, conferences, consultation events and exhibitions. I also lead the corporate sustainability agenda in line, including the company's corporate social responsibility commitments around wellbeing and mental health.



What encouraged you to start a career in logistics?

I discovered logistics as an option when attending Sandhurst at the start of my military career. I soon learned that I had a strong interest not just in leading teams, but also in being involved in constantly moving and adapting operations. This led me to joining the Royal Logistic Corps, where I spent five years, learning and experiencing logistics operations in hostile and demanding environments. I enjoyed the day-to-day change and pace and the planning cycles involved in running logistics operations. Logistics allows you to be involved in practical detail, while at the same time being involved in broad strategic planning. The skills I developed in the military world have just as much if not more practical application in the civilian.

What impact do you believe technology will have on construction logistics and how is Wilson James using technological advancements to help benefit its services?

It is 2019; technology is no longer a buzzword, even for very traditional industries. Whether it has to do with very





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basic data management or involves the most sophisticated platform and model development, technology is key to ensuring you are at the forefront of your industry. Clients are more conscious than ever of the benefits that the right technology for their needs can deliver, and they know to expect it. Forward and innovative companies and clients are hungry for good data, but they also want intelligent analysis. They are looking for solutions to the real challenges they face in their operations, not generic products and rote answers to their questions. This is where specialists like Wilson James can provide the tools and options that enable long-term strategic decision-making.

What advice would you give to young professionals interested in starting a career in logistics?

My advice is simple: go for it. The world needs more bright, innovative thinkers from diverse backgrounds with wide-ranging perspectives. Do not be put off by the fact that it seems such a large field. It may be a long road, but it is especially rewarding when you see the effects of your work.

You are a member of CILT. Why did you join the Institute and how has it impacted on your career?

I joined CILT because it provided guidance and provided a space and network to share and broaden my own perspective. Networking is key to understanding where we are all experiencing success and what our common challenges are.

Do you believe the profession is taking the right steps to ensure that logistics and transport is a diverse and inclusive sector in which to work?

The profession has made great strides in many ways, and is far more diverse now than it has ever been. However, it still has some way to go to attract the bright young minds who expect more from their employees and the industry, but who will drive the profession forward. I also think more action could be taken to ensure elements such as sustainability are playing the right role, which is all about ensuring logistics and transport is building a sector and a world for tomorrow. As a group, we could be leading on this more than we do.



More than 5,000 employees work for Wilson James

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