

Society of Female Transportation Professionals



Leslie Phillips

Dunavant Logistics Group, LLC
Director of Business Development

*Northwest MS Community College
Associates for Applied Arts in Accounting*

Q How did you select your college major?

A My junior year in high school, I chose to take on more classes instead of study hall or leaving early. I had enough needed credits, but I quickly realized I could learn for free while I was still in high school. Why not add classes that I was curious about? So, I took Accounting and fell in love with the bookkeeping, organizing, and over all money flow.

Q What was the biggest influence in your selection of major/career?

A My high school Accounting teacher, Cynthia Heinze of Olive Branch, MS. I enjoyed her class so much, that I wanted to work ahead for the additional practice and then run through it with the class a second time. It was her encouragement (and sometimes forewarning me not to work ahead on certain lessons) and her confidence that she showed in me, that enabled me to dive deep into that field of study. The only thing that held me back on schooling was the financial cost. I was blessed enough to be offered a job at a nearby warehouse that allowed me to pay for my expenses through school. I began at 18 years old, loading and unloading trucks. I was eager to learn all roles in the business and it has helped to make me more rounded in my profession and open for future opportunities.

Q If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

A I would have focused more on the offered business centered courses, looked into joining DECA, participated more in the BETA Club, and taken more Spanish and French classes. Having a bilingual qualification opens an indefinite amount of doors for all industries. Speaking a client's given language truly allows for deeper stronger. Having that connection allows you to be more personable, rather than relying on an interpreter to bridge that social gap.

Q What attracted you to the transportation industry?

A I was told years ago that transportation is more of a “black hole industry” that many people sort of fall into and “get stuck in.” I actually wish I had purposefully chosen transportation and started my career earlier. At 18 years old, I was given the freedom for decision-making that benefited my team. Later, at 20 years old, I watched the decisions that I made daily directly influence and grow our branch by 10’s of thousands of dollars and I was hooked. I wanted more of those results, more of that freedom, and more success under my belt. I loved overcoming the challenges that I faced and the opportunity to learn every day. No matter how long I’ve been in the industry, I still learn new things daily.

Q What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A Meeting and connecting with new people. I absolutely love brainstorming together and devising action plans to make things work more efficiently and cost effectively. There are so many opportunities to make a difference, if 1) you are bold enough to speak up, 2) passionate enough to attract supporters, and 3) supported by your employers or staff members. It only takes one person to make a difference, but the support behind that one person can multiply those results.

Q How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A Dunavant attends, supports, participates, and leads many events & organizations to fully understand the customer base that we service. We keep a good pulse on the market place to proactively provide cost-efficient solutions to our business partners. Dunavant’s very own Don Lake is also the 2014 President of the Memphis World Trade Club. This group consists of shippers, brokers, bankers and lawyers that are all affiliated with distribution and logistics industries that meet together monthly and discuss current topics in the industry. Each of us plays a role to the Memphis market and the entire economy as a whole.

Q



Q What's the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your professional career?

A I was offered a relocation & promotion at the young age of 24, to manage the #4 account for the Nation's largest truckload carrier. I had never left home for more than a week, and that was for church camp with adult chaperones. To say that I was intimidated would be an understatement. Taking that chance and stepping out of my comfort zone was the best decision I've made in my whole career. I ended up moving back home. Yes, home is where the heart is. But Memphis is also considered to be the heart of the transportation industry in our Great United States of America.

Q What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A I get to connect with the world in an industry that directly affects the entire population. Most people don't understand that the solutions we provide to work more efficiently, save on cost, build up the companies that we service, embracing innovation as the key to a better tomorrow, directly affects the cost of goods that we each consume. It directly affects the speed of goods moving to the stores and to the consumers' homes. The decisions we make in my industry on a daily, load to load basis, collectively- these are the things I have access and capability to do, that can and will change the world. The Grand Canyon wasn't created in a day and not by a single drop of rain.

Q What advice would you share with K-12 students that are considering your profession?

A Dive into it with excitement. See the many privileges that this industry has to offer. This industry is ever-changing. You will learn something new almost every single day.

Stay out of your comfort zone. Challenge yourself daily. You will be a part of an industry that transitions many roles into greater opportunities.

Work hard. Nothing is given to you. You must earn it. Effort doesn't always equal efficient. Be efficient. If one way doesn't work for a situation, find a way that does. Do not be silenced when you feel as though you have an idea, solution or feel like you can make a difference. Be bold, think innovation, think big picture and go for it! Don't hold back your enthusiasm because your passion for making a difference is sometimes the very thing that gets others on board, the very thing that sells your idea and makes the wheels turn for execution.

Develop lasting relationships everywhere you go. You never know where someone will be in the next year-20 years. The person you show respect and a sense of urgency to one day, may be the very person that you report to, the very person that recommends you for the promotion, the very person that gives you their business the very next day- regardless of the name of the company or the title/rank of that person.

Life is full of opportunities. Be willing to uncover them. Start here, with transportation.