

All in the family

By MADELEINE MILLER-HOLODNICKI, Senior Editor / CSCMP Manager of Communications | From the [Quarter 3 2009](#) issue

The son of a son of a warehouseman, Tim Richards is helping to guide CSCMP's Young Professionals Committee into the future.

"Going into the family business" doesn't usually conjure thoughts of supply chain management. Yet, that's exactly the career path that third-generation SCM professional Tim Richards is traveling.

As chair of CSCMP's Young Professionals Committee, Richards is also following in the footsteps of his grandfather, father, and aunt as a leader within the organization. The Young Professionals Committee is a team created to address one of CSCMP's most important initiatives: finding new, creative ways to meet the professional needs of the "under 29" demographic. Richards recently talked about his career at family-owned States Logistics, his ideas on reaching out to young professionals, and how CSCMP can best serve the next generation of supply chain leaders.



You are truly a supply chain legacy. What was it like growing up in an SCM family?

I really didn't understand what my dad or my grandpa did until my high school years. All I knew was they did something with warehouses. During college, I began to understand and appreciate the industry they were in and discovered that I really liked it. My dad didn't push me into a career in supply chain management—I chose it on my own. Having role models like my father and my grandfather certainly didn't hurt, however.

I see that you went to college at Graceland University. Is that the same school that Elvis went to?

I get asked that question a lot. No, "The King" did not attend Graceland University. The school is actually in southern Iowa, far from Memphis and "the other Graceland." It's a great school, and I received an outstanding education there.

When did you become a member of CSCMP? Did you join first as a student and become a regular member when you graduated from college?

I joined CSCMP when I was in graduate school at Iowa State University. I also helped out on the Arrangements Committee at the 2001 annual conference in Kansas City, which gave me my first glimpse of what the conference was like.

Name: Tim Richards

Title: Operations Manager

Organization: States Logistics Services, Inc.

- Bachelor of arts degree in business administration and marketing, Graceland University
- Master of business administration degree in supply chain management, Iowa State University
- President, CSCMP's Arizona Roundtable
- Chair, CSCMP's Young Professionals Committee

Tell me about States Logistics Services and what you do for the company.

States Logistics Services started in 1958 as a warehousing and trucking company handling business coming out of the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach. Since then, we have evolved into a fully integrated provider of supply chain solutions offering warehousing, distribution, transportation, and packaging services to over 200 customers.

I am the operations manager for our Arizona region, which entails overseeing the daily operations of our three distribution centers in the Phoenix area. Specifically, I work closely with all our warehouses to ensure we are operating as efficiently as possible. I work in both a sales and an operational capacity, which really go more hand in hand than a lot of people think. It's tough to sell a product when you don't know firsthand what it will take to be operationally successful.

How has your family's SCM background influenced your career?

Considerably. My grandpa started in the industry during World War II and worked hard to build a successful career. Likewise, my dad has put forth a tremendous amount of effort over the past 30 years establishing his career and making a name for himself. As I begin my own career, I realize that the bar has been set extremely high. But this only drives me to carry on my family's legacy.

How is the supply chain landscape different for you than it was for your father or your grandfather?

The three major differences that come to mind are technology, the speed of change, and the fact that we have truly become a global village. There are technological tools now available that allow us to manage supply chains much differently today than in the past. These tools have enabled us to gather more data than ever before imagined and have helped us to become leaner, faster, and more accurate. The speed at which supply chains now move is much faster than when my grandfather first started; technology makes this a reality. The other difference is the globalization of the marketplace and the economy. Companies today source material and ship products to customers all over the globe. To be successful, you must think on a global level and understand what's going on throughout the world.

What is it like to manage warehouse space in Katmandu versus Kalamazoo?

I believe that basic warehousing principles transcend borders; however, the challenges you face in Katmandu will be completely different than what you will face in Kalamazoo. Laws vary from country to country, which can make a

huge difference in the way you handle a product. Employees, customers, and consignees will all have different needs and methods of operating that have to be adapted to. The bottom line is that warehousing principles may remain the same, but it is critical to adapt and understand the environment in which you operate.

How has the recent downturn in the economy affected business for you and your company?

As a third-party logistics (3PL) provider, our situation is a little different than it is for a manufacturer, say, in that, as our customers' businesses goes, so goes ours. We handle a lot of food products, which tend to be fairly recession-proof, and as a result, these customers have not suffered as much as other industries. During tough economic times, 3PLs actually see more activity as manufacturers look for ways to cut costs and streamline business processes. This is good news for us, as it gives us a chance to earn more business and show customers the value that we bring to the table.

What best practices are you employing to overcome economic challenges that may not have been in place when you first started working at States Logistics?

We always place a great deal of emphasis on best practices and efficient operations. With or without the recent economic challenges, we realize that the only product we have to sell is service. It is absolutely imperative that we are firing on all cylinders 100 percent of the time so that we continue building on our reputation as a provider of the highest quality service.

You're part of the generation of supply chain managers who grew up with computers. How is your SCM methodology different than that of the older generation?

The basic principles of SCM remain the same, but the tools we have today to execute them capture more detail, report more quickly and comprehensively, and are more agile.

How do social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook fit into your business?

These recent tools have had a huge impact on all businesses. As I fulfill my sales duties for States Logistics, social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook make it so much easier for me to identify companies and individuals who may be in need of our services. As I mentioned before, we have become a global village, and nowhere is this better illustrated than a site like LinkedIn. I am constantly amazed when I'm looking for potential customers how many times I will have a connection within my network who is connected exactly to the person I want to talk to! This makes introductions so much easier and also significantly increases the chances that I will talk to the "right" person the first time. These tools have revolutionized networking.

What interested you in becoming chair of CSCMP's Young Professionals Committee, and what does the committee hope to accomplish?

I had a bit of an advantage in that I knew what CSCMP was and the value that the organization provides from an earlier age than most. I want to make sure that this value is communicated effectively to today's young professionals so they can experience that same benefits that I have.

Our committee is working to identify what today's young supply chain managers are looking for in a professional organization so that we will be their number one association choice in the industry. We are also developing a strategy to market what CSCMP already offers them so that they better understand the benefits of membership and being actively involved in the organization.

How can CSCMP most effectively reach out to students considering an SCM career and to those who have not yet chosen a career?

In my opinion, the best way is to utilize the power of CSCMP's roundtables. Through the roundtables, we can work with nearby universities to develop programs that will give students the opportunity to see what SCM is all about. From speaking in the classrooms to hosting career and job-shadow days, we can provide students with the hands-on experience they need to help them make a decision to pursue an SCM career. Students jump at the opportunity to get these kinds of experiences and appreciate them enormously. It also shows them what a great group of people is working in the profession and further underscores the value that CSCMP can provide throughout their careers.

What benefits can a professional organization like CSCMP offer to young people starting out in the SCM profession?

There are several benefits that professional organizations can offer to young people. The most valuable one is that you're immediately "plugged into" thousands of fellow SCM practitioners around the globe. This is probably more important at the beginning of one's career than at any other time, as this is when an individual begins building his or her professional network.

What communications vehicles can be used to target young professionals that may not be as effective for those over 30?

Social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are going to be key for us in communicating with young managers. In general, our generation is much more comfortable with getting our information in formats such as these that may be deemed "less formal."

We have already established a CSCMP Young Professionals Facebook page, which will give all young professionals a chance to interact with one another. The beauty of something like Facebook is that the direction the discussions and topics takes is directly driven by our target market. Nothing is being pushed on them—instead they are leading their own discussion of issues that matter to them. This is something that was nearly impossible to do in the past,

especially at the speed at which it happens now. If something becomes a hot topic today, you can talk about it immediately through these communication vehicles.

How can CSCMP best position itself as the best SCM organization for young professionals?

By showing an interest in young professionals, CSCMP will have a huge advantage over other SCM organizations. Young people are the future of the industry. With CSCMP delivering value to them today, we are ensuring a successful organization in the future as young professionals begin advancing in their careers and assuming leadership roles within CSCMP.

What message can CSCMP impart to CEOs that will persuade them of the advantage of having their young SCM professionals join the organization?

Young professionals are the future leaders of their companies. The amount of investment that an organization makes in these future leaders will directly correspond to the future success of these companies. CSCMP offers the critical programs, resources, and tools that young professionals need, creating the opportunities necessary for them to develop into outstanding supply chain managers.