



VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1, 2010

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LQ's Women in Supply Chain Management Edition

PLUS: LQ's Executive Interview Series with Leaders in Logistics and Supply Chain Management

A Conversation with Michelle & Rachel Arseneau P.Log., Michelle, *President* – Rachel, *Vice President* GX Transport



Michelle Arseneau



Rachel Arseneau

LQ: What are the three most important traits of a leader in today's challenging business market?

Michelle Arseneau: Accessibility, creativity and flexibility. Leaders need to be accessible to their people, employees and clients. They need to put themselves out there and demonstrate their confidence. Creativity is also an absolute must. Without it, you're just "another player" in an all too competitive game. You need to find ways to bring value to your clients and ensure that these value offerings are presented well to the marketplace. Finally, no leader can be successful without flexibility. The only constant in our industry is that it changes in a millisecond, so if you're not flexible, you'll be left behind.

LQ: What skills have you developed and relied upon to succeed in a male-dominated industry?

Michelle Arseneau: I'm constantly improving every aspect of my life — personal and professional — because the two are intertwined. We promote our team to do the same and have several programs in place to encourage these actions. Aside from obtaining the traditional business skill sets throughout the years, I developed my golf game in order to mesh with my male counterparts. So much business is conducted on the course, so I committed myself to bringing my game to a respectable level.

LQ: How does it feel sometimes to be the only women in the room?

Michelle Arseneau: I hardly notice these situations anymore, but would still see it as an opportunity to stand out and be

remembered. The potential downfall however, is that you are somewhat "magnified" and therefore must always present a professional image and be well versed on the agenda at hand.

LQ: How did you choose logistics as your profession? Would you encourage other women to seek their careers in this industry and what's your advice for them?

Rachel Arseneau: My profession as a logistician began unsuspectingly at age 16, and now, over 25 years later as a shareholder at GX, I continue to enjoy my ever-evolving and challenging career choice. I remember my very first day in trucking; the fast-paced loading docks with hot-tempered truck drivers and forklift drivers racing around moving freight of all kinds with surprising skill. The work environment was beyond the comfort level of a typical teen but I was thrilled by the energy and challenge. I continued working in transportation after my education was complete, working in various management positions in all areas of the business. I eventually tendered my resignation in order to pursue my dream of business ownership and have spent the last 10-plus years growing GX Transport alongside my business partners. I would strongly encourage other women who enjoy a challenge to push beyond the traditional female roles, learn the business, get the experience and the knowledge, and you can have a very rewarding career.

LQ: How have you dealt with the onslaught of information that commands your attention every day?

Michelle Arseneau: Like most people, I'm inundated with emails, texts and phone calls, so I try to compartmentalize my tasks and goals in order of priority and schedule my time — including my "free" time — for a good balance of work and life. I'm a self-professed addict when it comes to my BlackBerry but it does help to stay on top of things, particularly when you're running an operation that's 24/7.

LQ: Are succession plans in place for all key positions?

Rachel Arseneau: Our senior management team spent 18 months on a creative role exchange program to ensure there will always be someone to drive the company forward. We've done similar cross-training with all departments and most of our staff is experienced in at least two positions. As a result, our team is always able to perform at 110 percent, even when key people are absent. In addition to consistent performance, employees excel at their positions with a better understanding of the bigger picture.