

meet Larry Berglund



Director, Supply Management, UBC and green procurement champion

ON OCTOBER 1, 2007, Larry Berglund, C.P.P., MBA, became the director of Supply Management at the University of British Columbia (UBC). He also teaches operations management (undergraduate program) at Kwantlen University.

Supply Management, which works under the UBC Business Operations group, is responsible for the procurement of goods and services, campus mail services, corporate travel program, logistics, and the p-card program. The staffing component is 33 FTEs and its annual spend is ~\$200M per year. Supply Management provides services to the administration at the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses, as well as the faculty and the research communities. It liaises with the Sustainability Group and other major departments at UBC, which is co-hosting a forum with the Sauder School of Business that is open to public sector procurement professionals.

In 1974, while at the City of Vancouver, Larry got involved in purchasing by ordering supplies for the engineering services department. Liking the work, he started in the CPP program, which he completed in 1982.

He then joined BC Forest Products and later International Forest Products. Following the years in the forest industry, he joined the South Fraser Health Region, where he spent 12 years before returning to the City of Vancouver (2002-2007).

While attaining his CPP designation, he got involved with the local Purchasing Management Association of Canada (PMAC), filling many of the executive chairs. Eventually he became the Vancouver branch president.

Larry has been taking or teaching courses every year since 1974. He began teaching purchasing courses at BCIT and other community colleges and, concurrently, developed a 1-day seminar on the basics of negotiations, which, using “vacation time,” took him to many private companies across Canada and the US. In 2000 the basic seminar morphed into a 2-day PMAC-accredited seminar.

In 2001, Larry attended Athabasca University to attain an MBA so he would be qualified to teach in university or college degree programs. He completed his MBA in December 2003 after what he describes as “a wonderful journey studying business theory and practices in a very dynamic environment.” Within 6 months, Kwantlen University contracted him to teach part time and says the “students keep me on my toes.”

To develop his teaching skills, he completed an instructional skills workshop (Kwantlen) and a co-op teaching course (Simon Fraser University).

Larry began teaching other seminars for PMAC and writing articles for a variety of local and national publications in Canada and the US. This led to speaking engagements in both countries that he says “[opened] doors that I otherwise would not have had

access to. The first few speaking engagements were nerve racking, but I persevered and do many speaking engagements [now].”

A highlight of the business writing was the “City of Granston” case, based on Larry’s experience in buying mineral aggregates. Along with a friend and colleague, Collin Ashton, Larry wrote the case and tested it with some co-workers and students. To their delight, Professor Michael Leenders, from the University of Western Ontario, provided feedback on the draft and, with permission, included it in his text, *Purchasing and Supply Management (13th edition)*. Since then McMaster University has published Larry’s papers on the price index model (see *Summit* magazine, October 2006) he developed and on his current research subject, sustainability.

Larry is involved with PMAC’s new strategic program (2007), facilitating the “Leadership and Professionalism” workshop.

Larry and his wife Nancy became grandparents to Layton in June 2007 – according to Larry an “amazing experience. It’s hard to describe the feelings of being a grandpa.”

The Berglunds are “empty nesters” enjoying the freedom to travel. Larry takes time to play the guitar and savour a glass of wine, but spends much of his spare time researching for lectures, making teaching notes, reading business publications and editing and coaching other CPPs trying to get articles published. He says, “At UBC we formed the Writers’ Runes, an informal group aimed at developing the writing skills of our CPP staff.” Their first article was published within a month.

For Larry, the challenges ahead lie in the areas of “sustainability practices, technology, and increasing productivity in supply management. The utilization of technology across the supply chain is still inefficient and often very costly – the next wave (my opinion) is going to be professional networks modeled after social network sites like Facebook® for sharing and accessing business information. Increasing productivity is an obligation of one generation of managers to prepare the next by way of coaching, mentoring, training, and challenging them to raise their individual performance for the benefit of the whole.”

Larry hopes to semi-retire and share his thoughts (part time) for several years after that but, right now, enjoys his work-life and role as a grandpa.

Based on his experience, Larry suggests that becoming an effective public speaker helps you sell your ideas throughout your career, improves your communications and helps to build relationships with people both inside and outside your organization and industry. Attending other business events regularly; gathering information from business publications, pod casts, social and business networks can help you be, in his words, “a life-long learner and... If you really want to learn something – go out and teach it.”