

MEMBERSHIP Matters

Finding the Best Tools for Career Success



Harold Robbins,
CPIM, CIRM
Physical Distribution
Team Leader
Siemens VDO Automotive

Harold Robbins, CPIM, CIRM, has always been good with tools. Whether he's at his workplace using operations management "tools of the trade" or in his workshop crafting handmade furniture, Robbins knows how to build a quality product.

"We moved into our family home in Newport News, Virginia, in 1995, and there just happened to be a room that the previous owner used for his workshop," Robbins says. "So, after several thousands of dollars spent on tools, I have actually turned out some pieces I am proud of. I made my grandson's baby crib, a toy box for my granddaughter, and a quilt rack for my wife."

Robbins most enjoys sketching out his ideas and then creating the finished products, principally using red oak. In addition, he is learning how to make spindles, bowls, and bushels of chips with a lathe that his wife recently gave him for his birthday. "There is a new quilt rack on the drawing board for my wife," he adds, "so she will get some of her money back."

Sharing knowledge

When he's not filling quilt rack orders for his wife, Robbins is responsible for receiving, shipping, and warehouse operations at Siemens VDO Automotive. Based in Newport News, the company is a leading tier 1 and tier 2 supplier of fuel system components, low pressure fuel injectors, fuel rail assemblies, and fuel pressure regulators and dampers. During his 16 years at Siemens, Robbins gained

far-reaching operations management experience, holding titles including materials analyst, scheduling team leader, sales administration manager, enterprise resources planning (ERP) system implementation manager, and receiving supervisor. Today, as physical distribution team leader, Robbins leads project efforts involving general materials management, 5S, kanban, and lean.

An active chapter member and officer, Robbins recently coordinated and hosted a plant tour at Siemens for his colleagues in the Hampton Roads APICS chapter. The tour focused on some of the company's recent performance-improvement initiatives. "We have been developing and implementing several projects—a consolidated, narrow-aisle warehouse; a facility delivery train; and an SAP kanban pull system," Robbins says.

Specifically, the company consolidated two internal productive goods warehouses and eliminated an external warehouse. In addition, shipping and receiving operations were merged, and a facilitywide delivery train system was implemented. The result was an annual savings of \$260,000.

Reaching full potential

Robbins joined the APICS Richmond, Virginia, Chapter in 1986 when he was employed at General Electric. At that time, company policy required materials management employees to have APICS certification in order for them to be considered for promotion. Although Robbins says he first joined the chapter "strictly out of self interest," as he got more involved, it was clear to him that he could learn a great deal from his colleagues. "APICS became the source of information required to do my job," he says.

In addition, APICS chapter networking has been especially beneficial to Robbins's career advancement. "My first position here at Siemens as a materials analyst ... was the result of a networking effort. The Hampton Roads Chapter president called the Richmond, Virginia, Chapter president to ask if there was anyone he could recommend who had experience implementing an ERP system," he says. "Since then, I always check with the local APICS chapter's board of directors members for potential job candidates."

Unlimited knowledge

In addition to his chapter involvement, Robbins says he uses the APICS body of knowledge at his job every day, whether helping one of his supervisors resolve an inventory count problem or aiding an accounting professional with an accounts payable issue.

Robbins also sees considerable value in the many educational opportunities APICS offers at the regional and national levels. He says his experiences at APICS conferences and Region 11 meetings have been particularly rewarding. Most of all, he is impressed by the professionalism of the people attending, as well as their willingness to share personal experiences. "I definitely recommend joining APICS for

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the professional contacts, who become lifelong friends; access to the body of knowledge; and certifications [that] are valuable in one's career," he says. "APICS supports a valuable profession that I am passionate about." ■