

Logistics masters and master logistics from Saxony-Anhalt

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With a new Master's degree in Logistics Management, the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Bernburg is raising its profile for educating logistics experts. Just in time for the summer semester, which has just started, 16 students decided to continue studying for a Bachelor's degree after successfully completing their school-leaving qualifications. Indeed, some of them even rejected enticing offers from a renowned sports car manufacturer in Germany.

Professor Dr Frank Himpel, who has lectured in Logistics and Production Management at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences since October 2010, thinks that the university students and the affiliated Institute for Logistics are taking a leap of faith. "We attach a great deal of importance to the fact that students work closely with companies during their degree. Without the practical relevance of research, the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships would not be sufficient in highly complex logistics and production management processes," explains Himpel.

In this way, German and Russian students at the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences have critically questioned freight train operator DB Schenker with regard to car parts being transported from Germany to Kaluga, 170 kilometres south-west of Moscow, and to Shenyang in China. They may not have 30 years of train-related experience, but they do have a fresh eye and are highly motivated when it comes to thinking systematically.

Himpel is certain that the best possible way of combining content from both theory and practice and thus optimising the European freight transport industry is by having companies and aspiring specialists working together like this. He goes on to explain that this kind of cooperation is a matter close to the heart of the logistics institute he founded. Here, students come into contact with practice and companies get to know potential future employees, who are able to manage and improve logistical processes, by working together with them on current research topics.

Logistics is a growth industry. Companies are increasingly recognising and valuing just how important optimum logistics and company management when it comes to staying competitive on the international scene. "There's never one right solution in logistics, but then, there's never an incorrect one, either. There are always several ways," the professor adds. To find a good way, he continues, logistics experts have to be coordinators who bring all of the individual parts of a process together.

In this way, during the "2013 Logistics Summer School" – an additional module course during the lecture-free period which students spent at DHL in Leipzig and at Frankfurt Airport, to name but a few places – Himpel's students were able to learn that a long logistical chain can only be maintained if even the forklift drivers in the warehouses and the workers in the cold warehouses have the freedom they need to complete their tasks. After all, as Himpel says, logistics is always something done with and for people. Meanwhile, his students demonstrated that they ask the right questions at the airport hub. "I am proud of my students", says the professor, who has recorded a considerable increase in demand for collaboration over the last six months. Also, companies were increasingly offering topics for student internships and dissertations.

Himpel sees this as being milestone towards long-term partnerships. "Let's just say that our university doesn't have an endowment capital of €10 million. But here, I have freedom and opportunities, where elsewhere there would be thumbscrews," says Himpel, drawing a comparison. A native of Hesse, Professor Himpel was involved in projects in Europe and the US even during his Business Administration degree. Teaching posts in Logistics and Production Management took him to the Warsaw School of Economics and to China.

After completing his PhD, Prof. Himpel qualified as a professor with a dissertation on "Competition for cooperation in air transport alliances". He completely re-established this field of research, which examines possibilities of cooperation between competitors.

The professor considers graduates that can hold their ground on the market as being the best publicity for the logistics degree. And the has market caught on: Himpel estimates that whilst actually doing their degree one third, or maybe even half, of his students receive specialised offers for student-based and subsequent cooperation.

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