

Carla Coyle

B.Sc. Wood Products Processing (2000)

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Job Title: Purchasing Manager

Company: A & K Millwork LP

Size: 100 employees

Location: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Years in Occupation: 3

Education: Bachelor of Science in Wood Products Processing (University of British Columbia)

High School: Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive High School (Winnipeg, MB)

Carla might not have known what she wanted to do when she graduated from high school, but she certainly knew what she *didn't* want to do: become a doctor or a lawyer. As a teenager, Carla's summers were spent working in the family-owned business, A & K Millwork LP. Carla worked as a Production Helper, sanding and offloading equipment, covering the reception desk, and creating product catalogs. When she graduated from high school, Carla decided to enroll in the Engineering program at the University of Manitoba. After completing first year and doing some research, she decided that the UBC Wood Products Processing program was a better fit for her.

Carla did not immediately return to work for the family business once she had graduated with her B.Sc. Instead, she accepted an offer of employment with one of her former co-op employers. Four years later, her father finally asked her if it wasn't about time that she worked for the family business. And that is how Carla ended up in her present-day position in the Purchasing department of A & K Millwork LP.

Key Responsibilities: Working in Purchasing involves liaising between various departments within the company, as well as with the suppliers. Carla's job is to ensure that the right product is bought at the right price, and that it will arrive at the site at the right time. Part of her job also involves finding new vendors for required materials. Carla begins her work day by going over material requirement reports. Based on these reports, she draws up a list of materials needed by the various departments. The materials may include screws, handles, door slides, edge tape, paint, and laminate or veneer sheet goods. If the company has the materials on hand, Carla will allocate them to where they are needed. However, if the materials need to be ordered, Carla will talk to suppliers, request quotes, and eventually award the order to the supplier with the best offer.

Skills Required: People skills are an integral part of this job, as you are constantly encountering different types of people. An important aspect of the job is building a good working relationship with the suppliers. It also helps to be flexible as your days can be varied. Carla is always busy, which means that

her job is in no way boring! This job requires good verbal and written communication skills, excellent negotiation skills, good organizational skills, and an aptitude for problem solving.

Why She Loves Her Job: For Carla, the best part of the job is interacting with people. She also enjoys the project management aspect of her work. She is able to begin a project, figure out exactly what is required, make sure those materials are acquired, and then see everything's put into place.

Co-op Work Terms: Carla's first four-month work term was in the Engineering department of Kitchen Craft Cabinetry. Carla carried out time studies related to quality control, performed yield analyses, and worked on plant layout. For her next work term, Carla secured a position with Palliser Furniture, working in their Quality Control department. Her responsibilities included quality evaluations of equipment purchasing, as well as process analyzing. For her last eight-month work term, Carla returned to Kitchen Craft.

Previous Employment: After graduating from the program in 2000, Carla accepted a position as Production Analyst at Palliser Furniture. Her job involved working on the plant layout, reducing volatile organic compounds (VOC), and outlining work procedures. Later, as a Production Manager at A & K Millwork LP, Carla worked to ensure that items were made to specification and delivered on time. Her management duties also included hiring/firing decisions and plant scheduling.

What She Valued Most About the Program: Carla loves the way the co-op program is set up so that students can alternate academic terms with work terms. The work terms allow students to apply what they have been learning in the classroom, which in turn makes them more motivated to learn once they return to school at the end of the term.

Future Prospects: Carla's original intention was to pursue the Professional Engineer designation. However, she has found that there is so much demand for someone with her schooling that there has been no immediate need to go back to school. There are plenty of opportunities to move around within the company, as long as one has the drive and skills required. In fact, Carla has just been recently promoted to a new position; she will now be working in Millwork Sales.

Advice for Prospective Students: Carla would encourage students to put aside their misconceptions and learn about what the program has to offer. Working in this industry does not mean that you have to work as a machine operator or cabinet-maker. There are so many job opportunities aside from the traditional occupations that immediately come to mind. Student can pursue careers in the primary, secondary, or tertiary sectors, as well as in research, education or consulting.

Lots of people come into the industry with different backgrounds, so don't think you have to have certain experiences or certifications. You can definitely learn on the job.

Advice for Current Students: Carla recommends the co-op program to everyone in the Wood Products Processing program. It is a chance to work for different companies and try out different positions, so that you can figure out what you want to do after graduation.

Advice for Females: While this sector is traditionally male-dominated, there are more and more women entering each year. You can find women working in a whole range of roles, from cabinet-makers to managers. Carla's advice: There may not be a lot of women in this field, but that does not mean that you're not suited for it. If it captures your interest, go for it!