

A surprising win

Volleyball prepared Amy Daley well for CTP examination

One wouldn't think volleyball would provide much aid in navigating the ultra-grueling Certified Transportation Professional (CTP) course conducted by the National Private Truck Council (NPTC) every year, but that's one of the things Amy M. Daley credits for helping her put up the top score on the four-and-a-half-hour-long CTP exam for the class of 2009.

We should note, though, that we're not talking about your typical game of beach volleyball here—played with friends more for entertainment than anything else. Oh no. We're talking about the hard-hitting, ultra-competitive sport that Daley, mobile product manager for J.J. Keller & Associates, played during her college days as a member of the Jacksonville State University Gamecocks team.

"I brought various disciplines into my preparation for the CTP, but I especially drew on my volleyball experience," she recalled. "I really hate to lose, so I did all I could so I would not fail [the CTP]—practicing, reading, studying. I was going up against peers who had 20 to 30 years of experience in the business so I wanted to be ready—relying on the same processes I always used in volleyball to prepare for a game."

It's also interesting to note that Daley never planned a career in transportation—she ended up in the field almost by accident. Originally, she majored in exercise science and wellness, with a minor in business at Jacksonville State in Florida, hoping for a career on the administrative side of women's sports. But Daley discovered she couldn't make a living at it, so she returned to JSU and earned a master's degree in business administration.

After getting married, she and her husband relocated to California,

where Daley worked in human resources at a survey company. Then her husband, a native of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, got a job offer from utility company Michels Power in Wisconsin, so they moved back to the colder climes of his youth. As she started looking for a job, Daley noticed that J.J. Keller had an opening for a business analyst. "I got the job despite knowing nothing about transportation," she said.

After holding several different po-

study," she said. "A lot of the information came from real-life experience. The teachers were folks who had been on the front lines, in the trenches. Every day we got all of this different expertise; I just staggered away with information."

Daley said she came back to her office with a binder three or four inches thick to read, and this was just the starting point. That's when her volleyball mind-set took over.

To start digesting all of this material, Daley worked at it slowly, reading pages every night and making note cards. She studied for three solid weeks, with much of her time spent on late nights at the office. She said the operations and financial parts of the material concerned her most. Subsequently, she worked hardest on that, until she gradually became very comfortable with the information.

Daley felt she also learned some valuable tips along the way. "Make notes, especially about anything you're uncomfortable with, whittle [the CTP study material] down into manageable pieces," Daley said. "Remember, too, it's not enough to know the information, you must be able to apply it during the exam. It's also important to understand the terminology thoroughly."

Daley also feels she gained a lot from the CTP course and exam. "First and foremost, it's allowed me to relate better with customers," she said. "It'll also help me develop our mobile products so the customer gets the maximum cost efficiencies and savings. Finally, it put me in the customer's shoes, to understand their issues and problems so I can better address them. That also helps me establish credibility with the customer."

—SEAN KILCARR



Gary Petty, Amy Daley and Gary Strausbaugh

sitions within the company, Keller asked Daley in March 2008 to step into the mobile products side of the business. That's when she realized she needed to deepen her understanding of the transportation industry in order to succeed in this division. "I felt that to really understand the customer, to help them become more efficient by using this technology, taking the CTP program would be perfect," Daley explained. "It would give me the knowledge I needed to be a more effective resource for customers to rely upon."

In January, Daley attended the NPTC's Fleet Management Institute to get started on her CTP coursework. Almost immediately, she and her fellow classmates felt like they were deer caught in the headlights. "A lot of information got thrown at us in five days and not all of it book