

## NPTC TOP GRAD

# A happy accident

## A CAREER IS BORN OUT OF A NEED TO PAY FOR EDUCATION

**E**ric Kim never considered a career in the field of transportation; all he wanted was a part-time job that would fit around his class schedule and help him pay for his education. It didn't take long, though, before Kim found himself itching to take on the many different and often complex challenges dotting the transportation landscape these days.

"I joined Kraft Foods as an office/clerical employee while still attending Cal State Fullerton," he says. "I didn't study [transportation] in school—I majored in finance—and I didn't intend to pursue a career in the field. It was just something that fit with my schedule."

But much to his surprise, Kim discovered he loved this almost "accidental" line of work he found himself in. "Over time, with increased opportunities and meeting the appropriate people, I was given a variety of assignments that helped cultivate a strong logistical skill set and helped me in a number of job assignments," he says.

After graduating in 2004, he committed full time to a transportation career. "I've held a number of supervisory positions in operations and logistics, been a general manager at a distribution facility, and now serve as a regional fleet manager for Kraft in the West," Kim notes. "I've loved every minute of it."

Yet Kim also knew he needed to deepen his understanding of transportation as a whole, so he started delving into a variety of resources, including those provided by the National Private Truck Council (NPTC). By extension, he got involved with the NPTC Institute and its Certi-

fied Transportation Professional (CTP) course, not realizing at all what he was getting himself into.

"I decided to take the CTP exam towards the end of 2009, but really didn't know at the time what I was signing up for," Kim said. "I didn't realize its prestige and completely underestimated its intensity... That totally caught me off guard."

On top of that, he found out that the leadership at Kraft Foods really valued the

CTP designation. While Kim says he didn't set out to take the exam with any specific goal or purpose in mind, he realized it would prove a valuable stepping stone for him.

But first, he'd have to pass it—and that proved to be far harder than he originally thought.

"I hadn't attended any CTP classes in preparation for the examination, but I did review the materials provided by NPTC prior to the test," Kim notes. "There was definitely a ton of material to cover, to say the least—everything from technical jargon to statutes, regulations, policies, laws, equipment parts and components."

After many jugs of coffee, lots of deep breaths, and mental time-outs, Kim said he worked his way through all the CTP material, focusing in particular on the equipment and maintenance plus compliance portions. "They were the most challenging and arduous topics since they were the ones I had the least experience in," he explains.

In the end, all that work paid off as Kim received the CTP's top score among the 53 candidates taking the test. Only 43 passed.

"I had absolutely no idea how I had done. The only thing I felt was a severely cramped hand from furiously writing so much," he says. "But I felt comfortable that I had tried my best and, fortunately, it turned out pretty well."

Kim adds that in preparing for the exam, he made a conscious effort to develop a broader understanding of the many issues of transportation versus merely just memorizing various statutes, regulations and equipment components. He thinks that approach will serve him well as his career progresses.

"Rather than be stubbornly operational or overly customer service-oriented, I've invested in learning about finance, procurement, network optimization, etc. That's helped me keep an open mind as to what I'll potentially do in the future."

—SEAN KILCARR

