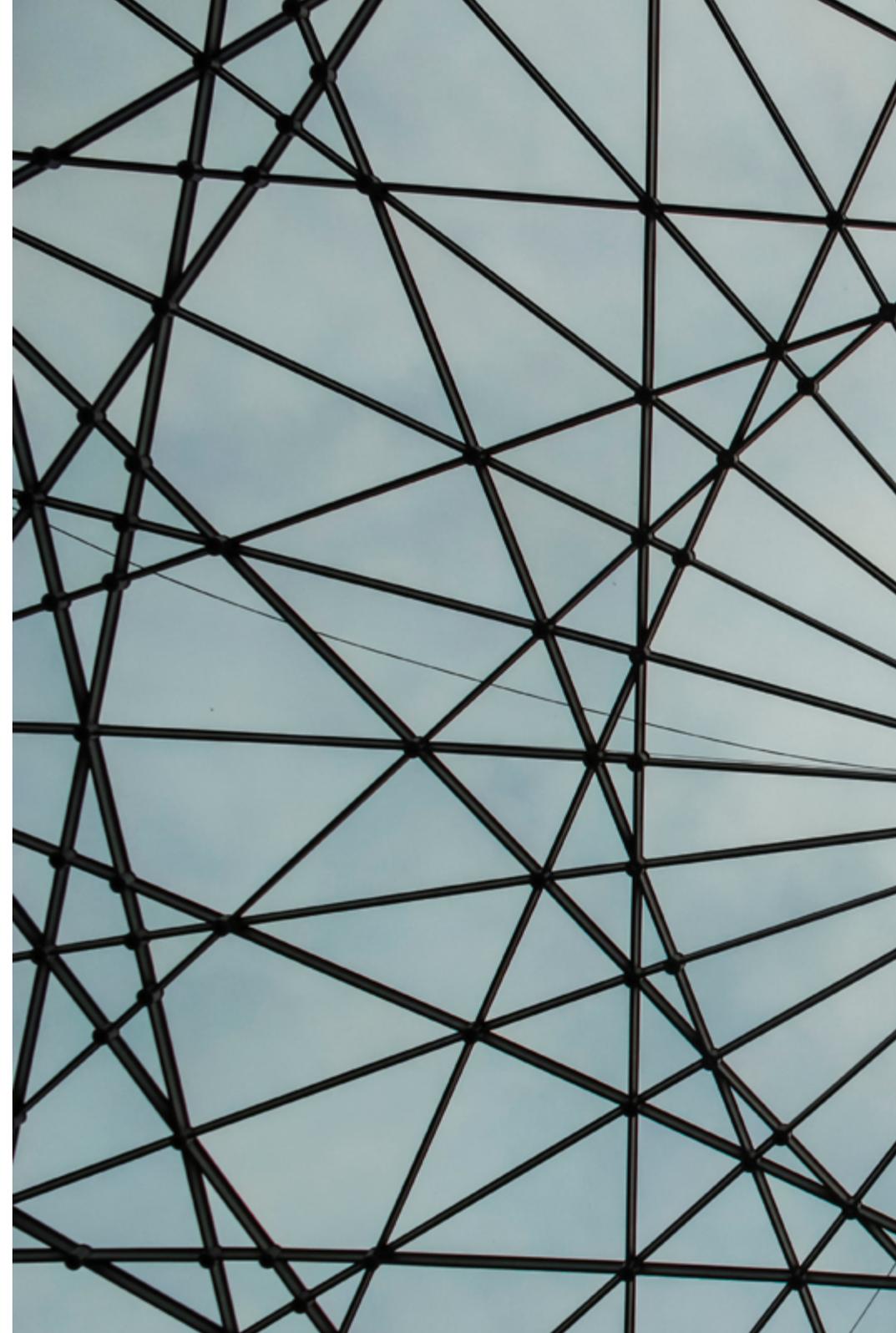


REMODELLING PROCUREMENT'S INTERNAL ALLIANCES

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HOW TO WIN ALLIES AND INFLUENCE THE BUSINESS



TOBY WEISS

Senior writer, Procurement Leaders

Historically, procurement has often been viewed internally as a purely transactional function, associated with bureaucracy and complicated processes. This can cause stakeholders to view the function as a barrier or, to quote one member, a “speed bump to progress”.

Conversations within the Procurement Leaders community have shown that perceptions are changing, with the function having gained increasing strategic importance in recent years, and evolving into a key business partner and strategic enabler that drives innovation, collaboration and growth.

But while many CPOs are eager to strengthen this position, many others are navigating the best path forward. If senior executives perceive procurement activity merely as a cost, it will be subject to control and reduction. Conversely, when procurement successfully demonstrates enterprise-wide impact, executive alignment and sponsorship are secured, ensuring support for further initiatives.

Much of this approach ultimately boils down to a repositioning of mandate and methods of communication, as Gary Mizhir, senior director and head

■ ■ We need to stop speaking procurement to the business... we need to speak business to the business

Gary Mizhir

Senior director and head of innovation and excellence, FIS

of innovation and excellence at FIS said during a Cohort Call: “We need to stop speaking procurement to the business... we need to speak business to the business.”

Effective procurement leaders must therefore rely on influence and ethical persuasion, rather than just positional authority, to secure cross-functional buy-in. The strategic initiative must elevate the function into a value creator.

Some of the following guidance may seem familiar to procurement professionals, but the focus here is more on optimisation than innovation. On that basis, this report provides a framework that outlines the steps procurement can take to strengthen its internal partnerships and build a collaborative ecosystem to enhance its strategic influence and business impact. ■

THREE STEPS TO REMODEL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

FIG 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR OPTIMISING INTERNAL ALLIANCES

	ACTIONS	BENEFITS	METRICS
1. BUILD THE FOUNDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish business partner roles to enable early influence and collaboration. ● Implement COEs to provide centralised expertise and manage standardised processes. ● Redefine category management to create capacity for strategic engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drive innovation, collaboration and growth. ● Unlock value and efficiency through capacity reinvestment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Operational efficiency. ● Capacity reinvestment.
2. SECURE THE MANDATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Embed procurement in governance. ● Secure C-Suite endorsement. ● Align procurement KPIs with core business objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced procurement credibility. ● Gain high-level support for enterprise-wide, value-focused initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revenue and growth contribution. ● Shared financial accountability.
3. DELIVER THROUGH EXECUTION AND INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Push for early involvement in decision-making. ● Provide training in soft skills, relationship management and business acumen to help elevate employees' mindsets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shift internal perception from barrier to trusted partner. ● Improve speed and reliability of operations through cross-team collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process efficiency improvements. ● Visibility/involvement in key business forums.

1 BUILD THE FOUNDATION



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF PROCUREMENT

For procurement to move away from being a transactional function to a strategic business partner, value creation must be CPOs' North Star.

Improving strategic alignment and securing the C-Suite sponsorship needed to embed procurement more deeply within the business requires the function to reposition itself internally. Senior leadership must see procurement can handle a strategic role.

Speaking during a June 2025 Procurement Leaders community call, a senior procurement director said functional leaders must be able to “change the narrative and demonstrate the value that procurement can provide, educate the business about why it’s important, and ensure procurement is involved early, especially in an innovative environment”.

Successfully repositioning procurement will drive a fundamental shift in how the function is perceived by the wider business (see *Table 1, right*).

Conversations within the procurement community highlighted three actions leaders can take to improve perceptions of the function:

- Developing dedicated business partner roles.
- Establishing centres of excellence to unlock efficiencies and create capacity.
- Evolving category management to focus on strategic relationship management. ➤

TABLE 1: SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF PROCUREMENT

TRADITIONAL VIEW	STRATEGIC VISION
A transactional, administrative function focused primarily on cost control.	A strategic partner and value creator that drives enterprise-wide objectives.
Often viewed as a barrier or a "speed bump" to progress, burdened by complex, paperwork heavy processes.	An enabler of business goals, acting as an internal consultant that accelerates innovation and growth.
A tactical executor involved late in the decision-making process, often after key supplier decisions have already been made.	An integrated partner involved at the earliest stages of strategy, shaping outcomes in key areas sustainability, risk management and revenue generation.
Perceived by suppliers and internal stakeholders as untrustworthy, simplistic and focused only on short-term gains.	A trusted adviser that builds resilient, long-term partnerships and enables a collaborative environment.

ESTABLISH BUSINESS PARTNER ROLES TO ENABLE ALIGNMENT

Specialist business partner roles are viewed by many Procurement Leaders members as a crucial means of enhancing procurement's strategic influence and collaboration potential, as well as enabling the function to get involved in projects at an earlier stage.

The head of procurement strategy at one pharmaceutical company said during a Procurement Leaders community call that their function company is developing a dedicated business partnering team within procurement, with one procurement employee joining the leadership team meetings of different business units.

This strategic placement allows the business partner to proactively champion the procurement agenda, particularly in areas such as innovation and demand management; ensure strategic alignment with leadership throughout the organisation; and share local market information with category teams.

To ensure the success of these business partner specialists, the pharmaceutical company's head of procurement strategy said the team had sought candidates with profiles that differ from typical procurement recruits. Many of the staff hired have experience in functions such as R&D, so they can talk the language of the stakeholders and influence stakeholders effectively (*see developing the skills to build strong stakeholder relationships, page 15, for more*).

Procurement Leaders' *Strategic Planning Guide 2025* found mature procurement functions are more likely to employ dedicated business partners roles; with teams responsible for more than 90% of spend under management allocating 7.5% of the staff to such roles, compared with 6.3% among lower-maturity teams.



Others have gone even further, with the CPO of one pharmaceutical company telling Procurement Leaders that approximately 10% of their team is dedicated to business partnering and business engagement, with these staff having a seat at the table with various business leadership teams.

While business partnering is “an art, not a science”, according to Bryn Wilkinson, associate director of agile and strategic projects at Kraft Heinz (*pictured above*), these specialist staff can help significantly improve C-suite interest in procurement. ➤

DISCOVER MORE

- *Case Study: How dedicated business partners build closer ties at Kraft Heinz*
- *Report: Strategic Planning Guide 2025*

CREATING CAPACITY THROUGH CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Providing centralised expertise and executing standardised processes to enable specialisation, efficiency and higher levels of strategic influence, centres of excellence (COEs) are a vital means of advancing procurement functions.

Most crucially, however, the primary strategic benefit COEs offer is capacity creation. Gary Mizhir, senior director and head of innovation and excellence at FIS, explains this allows the function to “take a lot of low-dollar transactional type of deals off of the plates of our category managers”. With this, category managers can devote more time to high-impact activities such as strategic engagement, innovation pipeline development and deeper business partnering.

Advances in automation have helped accelerate this shift, particularly in innovation management. In this capacity, COEs can support by maintaining a use case library, such as for developing in-house AI solutions or fostering strategic negotiations, which can also be used as a starting point for discussions with stakeholders and suppliers.

Speaking on a Partnerships and Innovation Cohort call, the director of SRM at a consumer goods company said their function had created a COE to develop such a library and, over the course of a year, it had delivered dozens of topics by category area; leveraging stakeholders, procurement people and market intelligence to build a proactive model. This segmentation provided the “most positive feedback” they received as it enabled the procurement team to gain visibility with suppliers and unlock supplier relationships in capacities they had not previously considered. ➤



REDEFINING CATEGORY MANAGEMENT

Shifting category managers' focus from routine sourcing and contracting to stakeholder engagement and strategic relationship management is critical for procurement to deliver holistic value.

Speaking on a CPO Connect Call, the CPO of one public sector organisation said the role had evolved to becoming about relationship-building, business partnering and requiring deep market knowledge. The challenge, they noted, was for category managers to "bring something to the table that the business users aren't even thinking about... they should be leading the strategy".

To achieve this strategic elevation, organisations are streamlining or automating administrative and tactical tasks, allowing category managers to focus on becoming internal consultants: developing deep business acumen and building robust stakeholder relationships. By understanding and influencing critical enterprise priorities, such as product roadmaps, long before purchasing decisions are formalised, category managers can focus on developing innovative solutions and helping to drive growth.

Deutsche Bank's procurement team provides an example of how impactful such a shift can be. Adam Greengrass, director of global sourcing, told members during a People and Performance Cohort call in April 2025 how the bank's function rebranded procurement as a "commercial advisory" team to overcome its reputation as a "necessary evil" and become a trusted partner. ■

 [Category managers should] bring something to the table that the business users aren't even thinking about... they should be leading the strategy

CPO

Public sector organisation

DISCOVER MORE

- *Process and Performance Cohort Highlights: From cutting costs to making money: Meet the teams generating millions in revenue*
- *Report: Strategic category management: From legacy to leading practices*

CASE STUDY / FIS'S JOURNEY TO BECOMING A STRATEGIC PARTNER

FIS, a business services organisation formed through numerous acquisitions, historically faced challenges establishing its supply chain function as central to the company's value proposition. It was often perceived as purely transactional, administrative and at worst, a "barrier or at least a speed bump to progress," as Gary Mizhir, head of innovation and excellence, put it.

To towards becoming a strategic partner, FIS established a clear cultural mandate and set a primary goal, encapsulated in the organisation's core statement, to become a trusted adviser to the business.

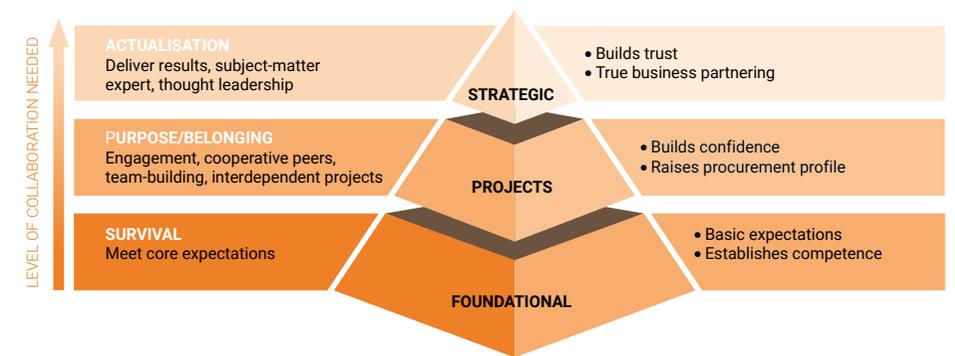
This shift required a fundamental change in mindset and operation, with Mizhir championing a stakeholder partnering mentality, consciously avoiding the term "customer" because it implies a subservient role.

The team was urged to stop using procurement language and instead speak "business to the business", ensuring buyers understood internal stakeholder goals to enable alignment and co-create value. To support this cultural shift, FIS redesigned its internal structure to free capacity for strategic engagement.

With many category managers facing time and capacity constraints, FIS established centres of excellence to consolidate and process transactional work, including low-value sourcing and contracting, more efficiently.

FIS redefined category management roles to focus primarily on business engagement, using the capacity generated by the COEs. To enable this shift, the team emphasised training in soft skills over technical expertise, reflecting the skills staff require in a business engagement role.

FIG 2: HIERARCHY OF STAKEHOLDER NEEDS



Category leaders, senior directors and VPs adopted dual roles, serving as both leaders of their respective category teams of spend and direct relationship managers to key internal stakeholders.

Ultimately, Mizhir notes, the project has succeeded in enabling procurement to progress on the strategic influence hierarchy as the function seeks to become a trusted strategic adviser capable of meeting stakeholders' greatest needs (see Figure 2, above). "We're making our way into higher-leverage, higher-value conversations by bringing different capabilities and different mindsets to the table." ■

2 SECURE THE MANDATE



POSITIONING PROCUREMENT TO POWER THE BUSINESS

Gaining strategic influence and getting involved in initiatives early is crucial, with conversations among Procurement Leaders members revealing many CPOs view shared goals and C-suite sponsorship as essential for the function to enhance its credibility and become a value creator.

Developing a shared definition of success is the bedrock of any successful business partnership. Without aligned objectives, procurement inevitably operates in a silo, with its efforts potentially disconnected from – or even conflicting with – broader business goals, undermining trust and limiting the function's impact.

As the director of global supply management at a technology company said during a People and Performance Cohort call: "We're not here to be a service to the business or to please the business. We're here to power the business."

To meet this challenge, several companies in the Procurement Leaders' community have successfully repositioned procurement from a transactional support function to a strategic value creator. ➤



TAKE ACTION / THREE WAYS TO REPOSITION PROCUREMENT

1. SHOW VALUE TO ENABLE EARLY INVOLVEMENT

The CPO of a food and beverage company told Procurement Leaders that their function had historically been excluded from capital investment decisions. To shift this narrative, procurement provided a full, end-to-end perspective to help inform make versus buy decisions, analysing returns on investment; capital investment viability; and supply chain risk mitigation efforts, such as backup sourcing, to help demonstrate its value. This comprehensive view justified procurement's involvement in decision-making, helping the function gain a seat at the table.

2. ALIGN GOALS AND LANGUAGE

A consumer goods company initiated a cross-functional programme to bolster the profitability of key brands. Recognised as a source of value, procurement was mandated by the C-suite to design and implement the programme as no other function had the end-to-end visibility and influencing power required to manage the brands' full P&L.

Over 12 weeks, the team leveraged its category expertise to drive engagement through workshops, generating radical ideas from all participants. The programme ultimately resulted in more than £110m in opportunities and double-digit margin gains. Critical to this was procurement speaking the language of the business – leveraging brand affinity and framing decisions in terms of margin improvement to win support internally.

This success helped further elevate procurement's role as a trusted business adviser and led to the programme being rolled out more widely.

3. SHARED FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Beyond early strategic involvement, shared financial accountability helps cement alignment. This involves embedding procurement savings targets directly into each executive member's budget. The leader is accountable for meeting the target's while procurement is responsible for the delivery and execution.

For example, the head of procurement strategy at a pharmaceutical company shared during one Procurement Leaders call that their team had embedded a procurement savings target of \$150m of hard savings into the budget of each executive member, including the head of legal and head of R&D. This structural change, which held functional leaders accountable for the target, was only achieved with a clear mandate from the CEO and CFO, they added. ■

CASE STUDY / HARNESSING EXPERTISE TO ENABLE EARLY INVOLVEMENT

The procurement team at one technology company recognised the challenge is not getting a seat at the table, but earning it through value creation. To enable the function's transformation from a cost-cutter to a value creator, it established a group of specialist technical translators to focus solely on complex technical and product-focused engagement.

These translators are positioned close to the company's product and R&D teams, helping ensure procurement is involved at an earlier phase in the product life cycle, enabling the function to bring a wealth of knowledge from supplier markets into predevelopment. With this in mind, the procurement team looks to hire candidates with a strong technical background to help translate between business language and procurement language.

Acting as a single point of contact for staff in other business units, the technical translators work with category managers and risk specialists, among others, to leverage the full scope of procurement knowledge. They manage a complex set of goals, balancing productivity while enhancing resilience, innovation and sustainability, measured by KPIs aligned with specific business unit needs.

The initiative has delivered a significant impact, solidifying procurement as a valued partner and enabling the function to influence product development from an earlier stage. ■

TABLE 2: SPECIALIST TECHNICAL TRANSLATOR ROLE AT A GLANCE

Placement	Situated within the business unit/segment, the specialist technical translators specialists ensure close alignment with business units.
Skills/background	A blend of technical and procurement expertise.
Mission	Manage costs strategically and enhance value by integrating procurement and key suppliers early in the product life cycle to optimise products for cost, resilience, innovation and competitiveness.

CASE STUDY / ASTRAZENECA BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS TO DRIVE GROWTH

AstraZeneca aims to deliver double-digit growth each year until 2030, which requires procurement to collaborate across the business, identifying stakeholder needs, determining what is possible and acting as the conduit between the business and the supply market. The pharmaceutical giant's procurement team has established a three-pronged approach to stakeholder engagement, partnering with:

- C-level executives to understand strategic priorities and align objectives;
- finance to identify targets and set expectations on resource allocation; and
- colleagues in business units to manage sourcing projects.

"I don't want procurement people to just talk procurement," CPO Nataša Vidmar (*pictured right*) said when sharing the initiative at the World Procurement Congress 2025. "I really want procurement to talk and think and deliver business outcomes because we would never be able to support innovation if the business is not going to trust that they can take some risks with us."

PUTTING PARTNERSHIPS INTO PRACTICE

To reach its growth goal, AstraZeneca will need to double the number of medicines it brings to market. A key part of that is its use of clinical trials, which help ensure medicines are safe and effective.

This is a highly regulated process and must be completed correctly. That includes the use of more than one million bespoke trial test kits, which are sent to trial participants' doctors and contain tools and containers for collecting samples. While these represented a significant portion of spend, they were provided primarily by a single core supplier, along with many small vendors, offering procurement an opportunity to deliver business outcomes.



By engaging the right stakeholders and empowering them with procurement expertise, the process led to new three vendors being selected, as well as:

- Anticipated savings of 27% compared to previously for this category.
- A 250-tonne reduction in CO2 emissions.
- A reduced cycle time of 24 weeks.

It has positioned procurement as a valuable business partner, fostering trust that will help the function to maximise its growth impact. As Vidmar said at WPC: "We need these transformative projects that we can orchestrate and they have a ripple effect. They impact the reputation of us as a function, but are also transforming the way we engage with the business. It's transforming the ways we are working [and] it's building the capabilities of procurement people." ■

DISCOVER MORE

- *Case study: Closer partnerships help AstraZeneca slash cycle times and power double-digit growth*

3 DELIVER VALUE THROUGH EXECUTION AND INFLUENCE



DEVELOPING THE SKILLS TO BUILD STRONG STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Once procurement has repositioned itself and secured executive endorsement, the function can focus on delivering value with stakeholders directly.

But as Gary Mizhir, senior director and head of innovation and excellence at FIS, points out, this can provide one of the function’s biggest challenges: getting that internal alignment and positioning procurement to be influential.

ADDRESSING THE INTERNAL SKILLS GAP

For this business-minded approach to stakeholder engagement to succeed, procurement must close a significant internal skills gap. Data from the *Procurement Salary Survey 2025* exposed a notable disconnect between CPOs’ and employees’ perception of the procurement professionals’ capabilities, particularly in communication and problem-solving.

This indicates that while leaders recognise the importance of soft skills, many procurement professionals are overrating their ability to deliver. The risk for CPOs is that any skills deficit in this area may undermine trust in their function. As Mizhir says: “It’s a different set of skills to build relationships and engage strategically than to transact.”

One member has suggested consensus-building is central to influencing stakeholders and building support internally. They said their organisation has

TABLE 3: DEVELOPING PROCUREMENT CAPABILITIES

SKILL	DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS
Business acumen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stop speaking procurement; staff must speak business to the business to earn credibility. ● Recruit personnel who are experts in business.
Essential soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heavily emphasise influencing and relationship building. ● Listening is critical to understanding concrete needs.
Strategic mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt an enterprise mindset and leader behaviours to ensure execution focuses on and aligns with the overall corporate strategic plan.

adopted the Japanese concept *nemawashi* – a term popularised by Toyota – in their engagement approach. This involves sharing ideas with stakeholders privately and informally before they are discussed in committees or other, more formal, settings. This ‘socialised’ approach to management can better influence stakeholders and reduce organisational resistance, as many high potentials, at heart, are highly influential. ➤

MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIONS

The CEO of a training and consultancy company specialising in the relationship between procurement and sales suggested during a February 2025 Partnerships and Innovation Cohort call that procurement has a relationship problem: research from their firm found that 59% of sales professionals use a word with a negative connotation when describing procurement.

To counteract this deficit and build trust internally, the CEO suggested procurement employ a low-friction approach: spending two hours each week to connect with colleagues in functions such as R&D, finance and legal, as well as sales, to learn their burning issues. This, the CEO added, can take place remotely and does not need management alignment.

THE TRANSLATOR ROLE AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

With the need to engage stakeholders across the organisation, some organisations have responded by developing specialist technical translator roles (see *Case study: Harnessing expertise to enable early involvement, page 12*).

Finally, effective stakeholder engagement requires continuous, proactive change management to eliminate internal silos and address resistance. Successful organisations, such as Kantar (see *Case study: Partnership delivers cash flow boost for Kantar, page 17*), have established rigorous cross-functional governance structures to manage difficult decisions between procurement, finance and technology. By leading change through continuous communication and demonstrating quick wins, procurement reinforces its positioning as a service-oriented organisation, driving value beyond the negotiating table.

These actions reinforce what is perhaps a familiar theme for the function – that procurement is fundamentally a people business heavily reliant on soft skills to build effective connections between stakeholders. As Matteo Perondi, CPO of luxury brand Bulgari (*pictured below*) told attendees at the World Procurement Congress 2025, the true value in the function comes from human connections: “It’s really a matter of people and how they can connect.” ■



CASE STUDY / PARTNERSHIP DELIVERS CASH FLOW BOOST FOR KANTAR

Marketing data and analytics business Kantar has been actively focused on working capital and cash optimisation as part of its end-to-end source-to-pay transformation. Cash flow management has been a constant part of the journey and served as a lever to secure support from finance.

Facing challenges common to many large, global organisations, procurement adopted a three-stage approach to improving cash flow by: standardising processes; aligning with accounts payable (AP) and other functions; and negotiating with suppliers (see *Table 4, right*).

Greater collaboration between the ‘holy trinity’ of procurement, finance and technology was key, global procurement director Jonathan Clarke said. To deliver the process redesign and change management needed to ensure the success of new technology, Kantar established ‘design authorities’ to enable decision-making involving leaders from finance, technology, procurement and operations.

During the alignment phase, Kantar discovered a cash flow optimisation opportunity by ensuring AP adhered to payment terms negotiated by procurement. This unlocked a one-off, seven-figure working capital benefit, demonstrating the value of the new procurement processes.

“It’s a challenge driving change but, if you can come up with some quick-win opportunities for finance, it helps to get senior sponsorship from leadership to push it down,” Clarke said. ■

DISCOVER MORE 

- Case study: Kantar’s ‘holy trinity’ partnership delivers multimillion cash flow boost

TABLE 4: KANTAR’S THREE-PHASE S2P TRANSFORMATION

PHASE ONE: STANDARDISATION	PHASE TWO: ALIGNMENT	PHASE THREE: IMPROVEMENT
<p>Teams: Accounts payable (AP), technology, master data management (MDM).</p>	<p>Teams: AP, technology, MDM.</p>	<p>Teams: Procurement, financial controllers.</p>
<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce and standardise payment term (PT) options. ● Introduce change control and exceptions approval process. 	<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Match underlying supplier records to contracted PTs. ● Reporting insights on payment terms compliance and net-working capital (NWC) opportunity. ● Tail-spend consolidation hub platforms. 	<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eliminate process inconsistencies in AP to reduce late payments. ● NWC downside from better payment performance offset by reduced late payment fees and improved contract terms, such as early payment discounts. ● Supplier contract negotiations, informed by industry-wide spend category benchmarks.
<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 174 legacy PT options reduced to five. ● 90% success rate challenging new exceptions via procurement. 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seven-figure one-off NWC benefit on top-70 suppliers. ● Reduction in supplier late payment queries. 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extra \$101m onto 60+ days PTs (12-month rolling spend). ● Uplift from 34% to 66% of total spend on standard PTs.

TAKE ACTION / BUILD STRONGER, DEEPER PARTNERSHIPS

Procurement's mandate is rapidly shifting from a purely transactional focus to one of a strategic value creator and essential business partner. This requires procurement executives to rely on influence and expertise, moving beyond positional authority to secure cross-functional buy-in.

While securing high-level internal alignment and shifting stakeholder perception is a challenge, the potential benefits are significant – including enhanced executive sponsorship, accelerated innovation, and improved speed and reliability of operations. Functions looking to optimise their internal partnerships and cement their role as a strategic enabler should undertake the following actions:

1. RE-ENGINEER THE FUNCTION FOR VALUE CREATION

Establish dedicated business partner roles embedded in business units and leverage centres of excellence for transactional efficiency. This structural shift helps reallocate resources to drive strategic influence and co-create enterprise-wide value.

2. ESTABLISH BUSINESS-FLUENT TRANSLATOR ROLES

Create hybrid roles, such as the specialist technical translators with a blend of technical expertise and commercial acumen. Position these roles close to business units to ensure strategic cost management and value integration from the start of the product life cycle.

3. MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

Embed procurement in cross-functional governance structures to collectively enforce

strategic trade-offs and enable change management. This helps eliminate internal silos and ensures leadership support.

4. ALIGN PROCUREMENT GOALS WITH ENTERPRISE STRATEGY

Secure C-suite sponsorship to establish a shared definition of success, ensuring procurement targets are aligned with core business objectives. This includes implementing shared financial accountability across executive leadership budgets.

5. CULTIVATE A HIGH-IMPACT BUSINESS MINDSET

Invest in developing staff business acumen and soft skills. Procurement should speak the language of the business – framing actions in terms that are important to stakeholders, such as margin improvements, brand value, etc – to earn trust and achieve early involvement in critical decision-making.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This report is based on community conversations involving informed CPOs and Procurement Leaders' Partnerships and Innovation and People and Performance Cohorts for forward-thinking procurement experts. These community activities include:

- **Partnerships and Innovation Cohort Call:** Building collaborative relationships with sales, legal and finance to drive productive SRM, February 2025
- **High maturity session:** Remodelling internal partnerships, June 2025
- **People and Performance Cohort Call:** Building a collaborative internal ecosystem to enhance procurement's strategic influence, August 2025

These insights have been supplemented by best practice examples from the Procurement Leaders network, expert interviews and desktop research.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Procurement Leaders' Partnerships and Innovation Cohort is a dedicated community for active and engaged strategy leaders who want to share insights and advance the function. Focusing on enabling excellence and delivering value from strategic sourcing processes, This community shares and discusses ways to maximise performance and execute on critical processes.

- **Discover more:** *Strategy cohorts / Procurement Leaders Networking Calendar*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



TOBY WEISS

Senior writer, Procurement Leaders

Drawing on a 12-year background of writing and editorial experience for businesses covering economics and political risk, finance and technology, Toby's areas of interest include geoeconomics, business partnering and artificial intelligence.

ADDITIONAL PROCUREMENT LEADERS RESOURCES

- *Case study: How dedicated procurement business partners build closer ties at Kraft Heinz*
- *Case study: Kantar's 'holy trinity' partnership delivers multimillion cash flow boost*
- *Case study: Closer partnerships help AstraZeneca slash cycle times and power double-digit growth*
- *Community insight: 8 things we learned about partnerships at WPC 2025*

FURTHER INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK

If you have enjoyed this report, would like some more information, or feel it has not met your expectations, please contact:

feedback@procurementleaders.com