

Procurement 360° Digital, Sustainable, Resilient

TechSci Research Analysts in Conversation
with:

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Can you briefly walk us through your journey in the procurement and supply chain space? What inspired you to pursue this career?

Over 20 years ago, my career began in procurement and supply chain management, and it has certainly been an enjoyable journey of learning, responsibility, and international experiences. My initial positions were in administration and procurement related roles, and I slowly, but surely came to understand how critical procurement and supply chain management is to allow organizations to run smoothly; especially around cost management, on time delivery, and maintaining relationships with vendors.

What has been most exciting for me about supply chain has also come from this realization; about how good supply chain planning and management can have a positive impact on not only a business's bottom line (which can be substantial!) but also on the lives of people in these environments; especially with regard to my experience with public health and development.

I have enjoyed the opportunities to work with teams all over the globe, I have managed suppliers in 45 countries; I have successfully implemented systems and processes that improved visibility in decision making, improved compliance, and reduced costs.

This sector, supply chain, is in constant motion, with fluctuations in approaches, technology, global challenges/aspects, and surprises; and it is because of this uncertainty that I can maintain my interests and level of confidence.

As an Affiliated Member of CIPS, how has this affiliation shaped your professional development and industry perspective?

Being an affiliate member of CIPS has been very valuable to my professional development. Through this organization I was able to follow global best practices and standards in procurement. CIPS provides learning resources, webinars, and knowledge sharing and information on industry development that has helped me sharpen my awareness of contemporary supply chain and procurement trends.

I think being an affiliate member has given me a more industry than organizational view - particularly in ensuring that organizations are taking an ethical sourcing, risk management, sustainable procurement, and broader corporate social responsibility perspective. This view has helped me reflect on procurement as a long-term contributor to organizational success rather than an operational guide to daily activities.

The connections developed through the CIPS network, as well have been invaluable, and the ability to connect with other people in professional relationships through professional events and forums has helped share overall knowledge, challenges, and experience while discussing the impacts and nature of the industry developments both in India and globally.

Overall CIPS has made me a better informed and future ready procurement professional.

What are some of the biggest trends you're currently observing in global procurement?

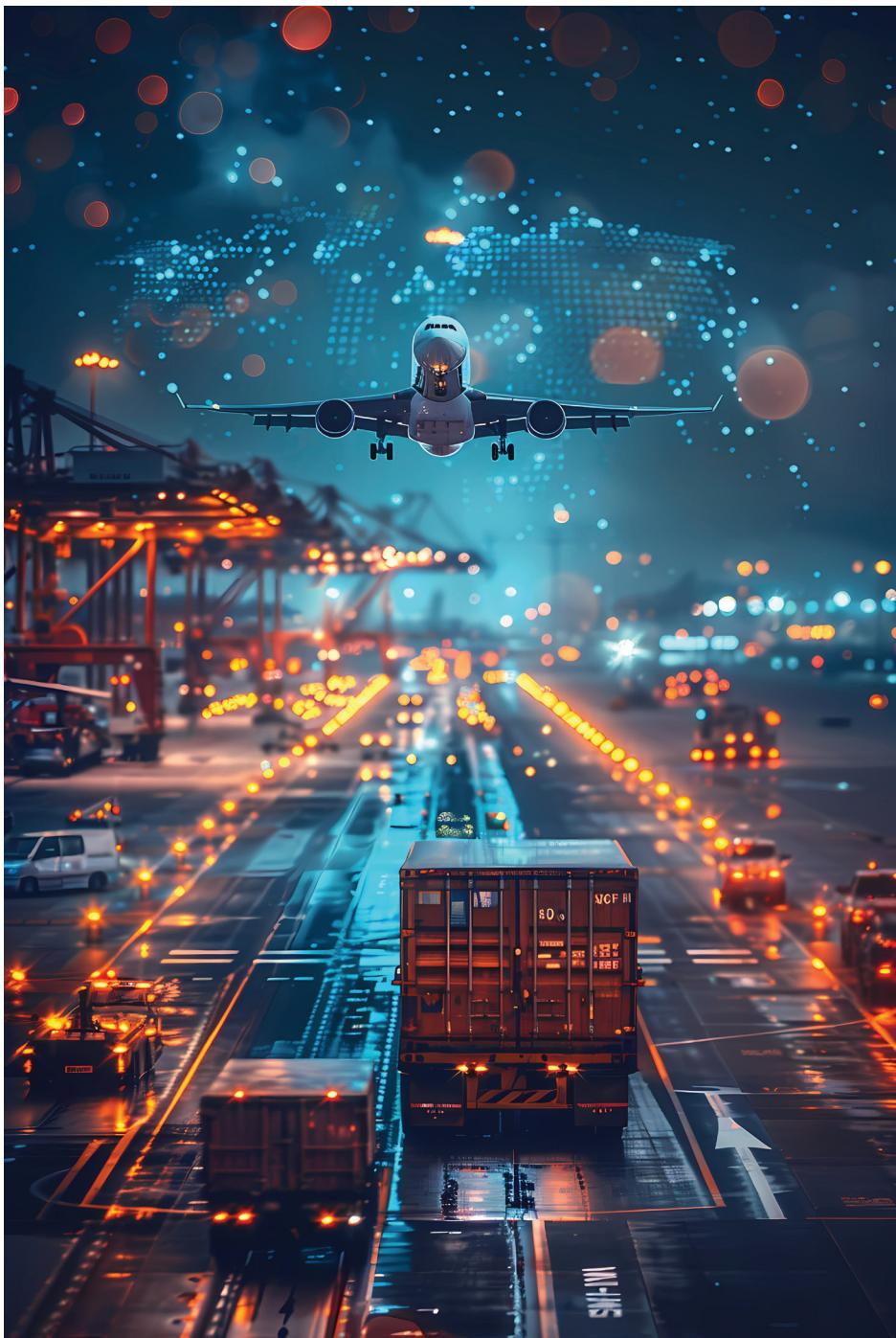
A major trend I see in the world of procurement is the increasing trend of organizations embracing digital transformation. More organizations are leveraging tools such as AI, data analytics, and automation to inform their decision making, allow for better supplier tracking, as well as shortening the procurement life-cycle. Technology is helping us get away from manual processes and begin to make more data-driven decisions.

A second notable trend is the emphasis on sustainability and responsible sourcing. Companies and organizations are now expected to do business with suppliers that abide by ethical and environmental standards; therefore, it is imperative for procurement teams to dig deeper through their supply chains to ensure compliance and long-lasting sustainability.

Additionally, organizations are putting more focus on supply chain resilience. Due to recent large-scale disruptions to the global economy, namely the pandemic and geopolitical conditions, organizations are putting in more effort to mitigate risk, diversify suppliers, and develop backup plans.

Finally, collaboration is becoming an important part of procurement—this function is less and less about cost. It is more about developing strong relationships and partnerships for value creation.





How is digital transformation changing procurement processes today? Can you share an example of a successful implementation?

Digital transformation is accelerating, driving procurement smarter and more efficient. In the past, procurement activities were done manually—price checking, vendor lists, and purchase orders. Now, with digital technologies like e-procurement platforms, automation, and analytics, organizations are capable of automating these activities and enhancing their decisions.

For example, automation helps drive repeat tasks such as invoice processing, approvals, and supplier communication. Leveraging data analytics, procurement teams can evaluate prior purchases and market patterns and choose superior suppliers and better negotiate prices. Digital dashboards help track spending and contract performance in real-time, which was previously difficult to do.

One such successful instance that I have been involved in was when an e-procurement system was introduced in a healthcare organization. Before the system, purchase requests and approvals were done through emails and paper, and it led to delays and inaccuracies. After the move online, all the departments started making requests online, approvals were quicker, and suppliers received their purchase orders without delay. It also enabled us to track deliveries, improve compliance, and cut wasteful expenditure. This not only saved time but also encouraged higher transparency and faith towards our suppliers.

In short, digital transformation is less about adopting new technology—and more about how to improve how procurement adds value to the whole enterprise.

What role does sustainability and ESG play in modern procurement strategies?

Sustainability and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations have become inherent parts of modern procurement strategies. Organizations are now expected not only to deliver cost savings and operational effectiveness but also to play a role in lasting social and environmental goals.

Sustainability in procurement means choosing suppliers and products that are less detrimental to the environment. This includes energy use, waste disposal, packaging, and carbon footprint along the supply chain. ESG takes it a step further by ensuring that suppliers also employ ethical labor practices, uphold human rights, and practice good governance such as transparency and anti-corruption policies.

Procurement departments are now leading the way in helping their organizations meet ESG objectives by:



- Incorporating ESG factors into supplier selection and assessment.
- Collaboration with suppliers for enhancing their sustainability practices.
- Evading possible risks by keeping away from suppliers who can tarnish the organization's reputation.
- Promoting environmentally friendly and socially responsible products or services that innovate.

In brief, ESG and sustainability are not an action to take, but a requirement to attain a good procurement strategy. They allow organizations to manage risks more effectively, meet global standards, and create value not just for the business but also for society and the environment.

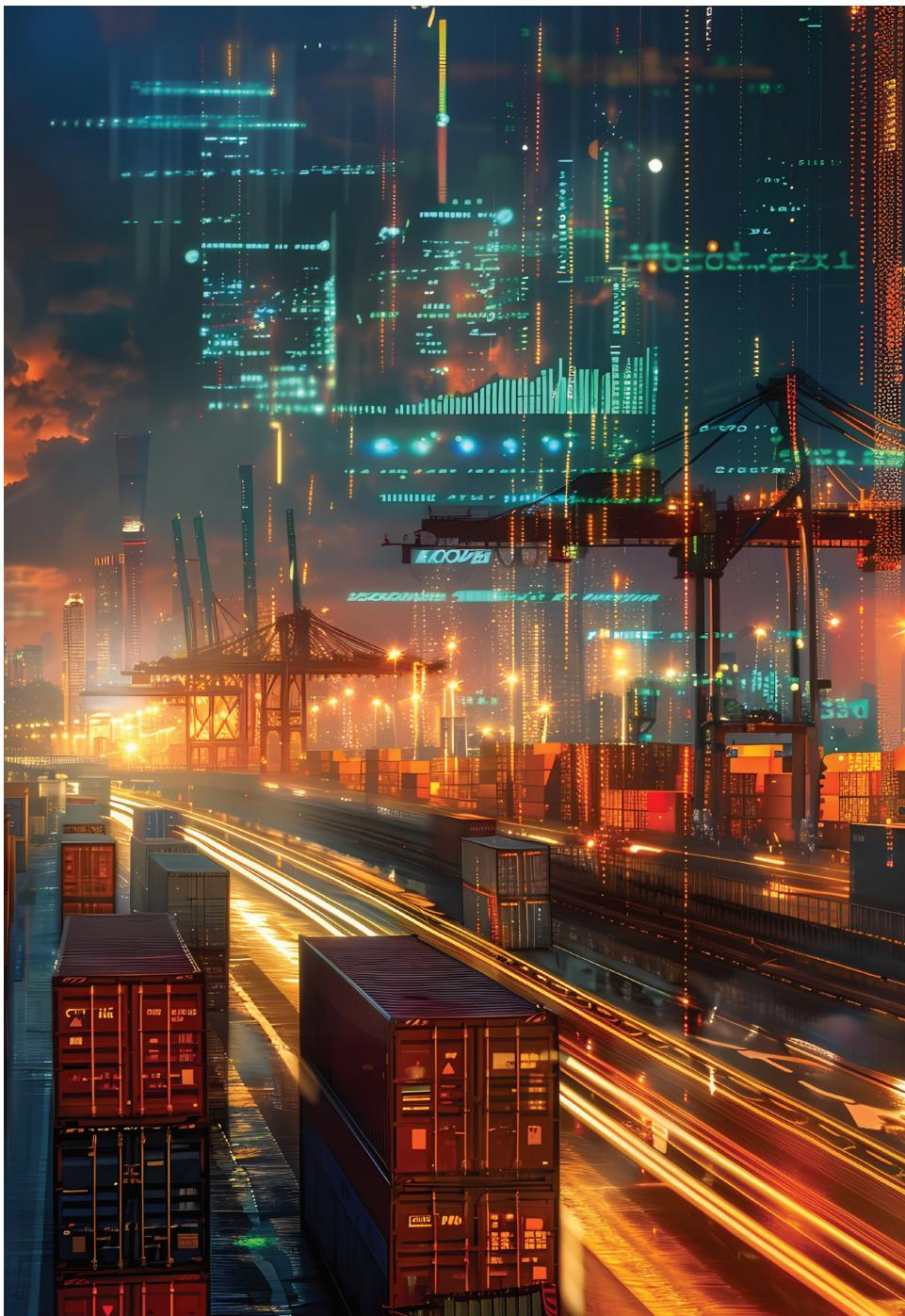
The global supply chain has been under immense pressure in recent years — how have procurement strategies evolved in response to these disruptions?

In the last couple of years, the global supply chain has experienced numerous significant disruptions, including the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, raw material shortages, and transportation delays. These have compelled procurement teams across numerous industries to revise working strategies and abandon conventional, cost-driven methods.

Procurement strategies are more flexible, risk-aware, and technology-driven. The main developments are:

Move from Just-in-Time to Just-in-Case: Earlier, a majority of firms followed a just-in-time strategy to reduce inventory costs. Yet, recent shutdowns showed that keeping minimal inventory is risky. Most companies today are carrying safety stock or developing alternate suppliers to avert complete closure.

Supplier Diversification: Instead of depending solely on a sole supplier or a geographical region (e.g., China), purchasing teams are now more often using multiple suppliers from different locations. This strategy reduces the possible impact if one supplier faces problems or if issues happen in a specific country.



Better Supplier Relations: Procurement has put more emphasis on collaboration. Companies are developing closer relationships with key suppliers, sharing forecasts and issues, and even jointly developing solutions to build resilience.

Risk Management Focus: Risk analysis is becoming an inherent part of procurement planning. Organizations are charting high-risk providers, monitoring political and economic trends, and developing contingency plans.

Use of Digital Tools: Technology has been a major driver of this transformation. Procurement teams are using digital platforms for supplier tracking, real-time insights, demand planning, and contract management, allowing them to respond faster to disruptions.

Nearshoring and Local Sourcing: To avoid use of ocean transportation, organizations are progressively turning to local or regional sourcing, even at a marginally higher expense, to move toward greater reliability and shorter lead times. In total, today's procurement approaches are now more proactive and better prepared. The goal is no longer simply cost savings, but to ensure supply continuity, reduce risk, and generate long-term value to the company.

What are some best practices for managing procurement risk in volatile global markets?

Effectively managing procurement risk in disruptive global markets takes planning, agility, and good partnerships. Following are some best practices that have been effective:

- Diversify Suppliers**

Reliance on one supplier or one nation is risky. To reduce the impact of disruptions, it is wise to procure from multiple suppliers located in different parts of the world. That way, in case one source is disrupted, others can continue to supply.

- Build Strong Supplier Relationships**

Having good relationships and trust with key suppliers is beneficial in times of crisis. If suppliers feel the sense of partnership, there are more likely chances of their openness and collaboration in times of disruption.

- **Utilize Contracts Effectively**

Properly drafted contracts with clear terms on delivery timetables, penalty clauses, and risk-sharing arrangements can protect both sides. The contracts should also include mechanisms for dealing with unexpected situations like natural disasters or political unrest.

- **Monitor Market Trends Regularly**

Monitoring fluctuations in currency exchange rates, fuel prices, trade policies, and geopolitical issues assists in decision-making in a timely manner. Utilizing simple tools or dashboards to keep track of this information could enhance response time.

- **Carry Safety Stock Where Necessary**

For vital products, maintaining a buffer stock at vital points can provide business continuity even in the event of supply disruption. However, this must be weighed against inventory cost.

- **Develop a Risk Management Plan**

It is essential for each organization to have a well-thought-out strategy that outlines the proper reactions to supply delays, price hikes, or supplier collapse. The strategy should include specified roles, responsibilities, and accelerated action procedures.



- **Invest in Supplier Risk Assessment Tools**

The use of basic supplier scorecards or electronic platforms to assess supplier financial health, compliance, and performance helps in the identification of risks early. Regular audits or reviews also help.

- **Train Your Team**

The teams involved in procurement must be trained in purchasing, as well as risk sensitization. The team will be able to act faster and smarter if they know what to watch out for.

- **Embrace Technology for Enhanced Visibility**

Basic digital solutions with real-time capabilities to monitor orders, deliveries, and supplier productivity can greatly impact operations. This kind of transparency makes the management of delays or shortages a lot easier.

- **Sustainability and Ethics**

Trading with suppliers that practice ethical and sustainable methods ensures that there is no risk of legal complications or loss of reputation, particularly in international markets where laws and regulations can be worlds apart.

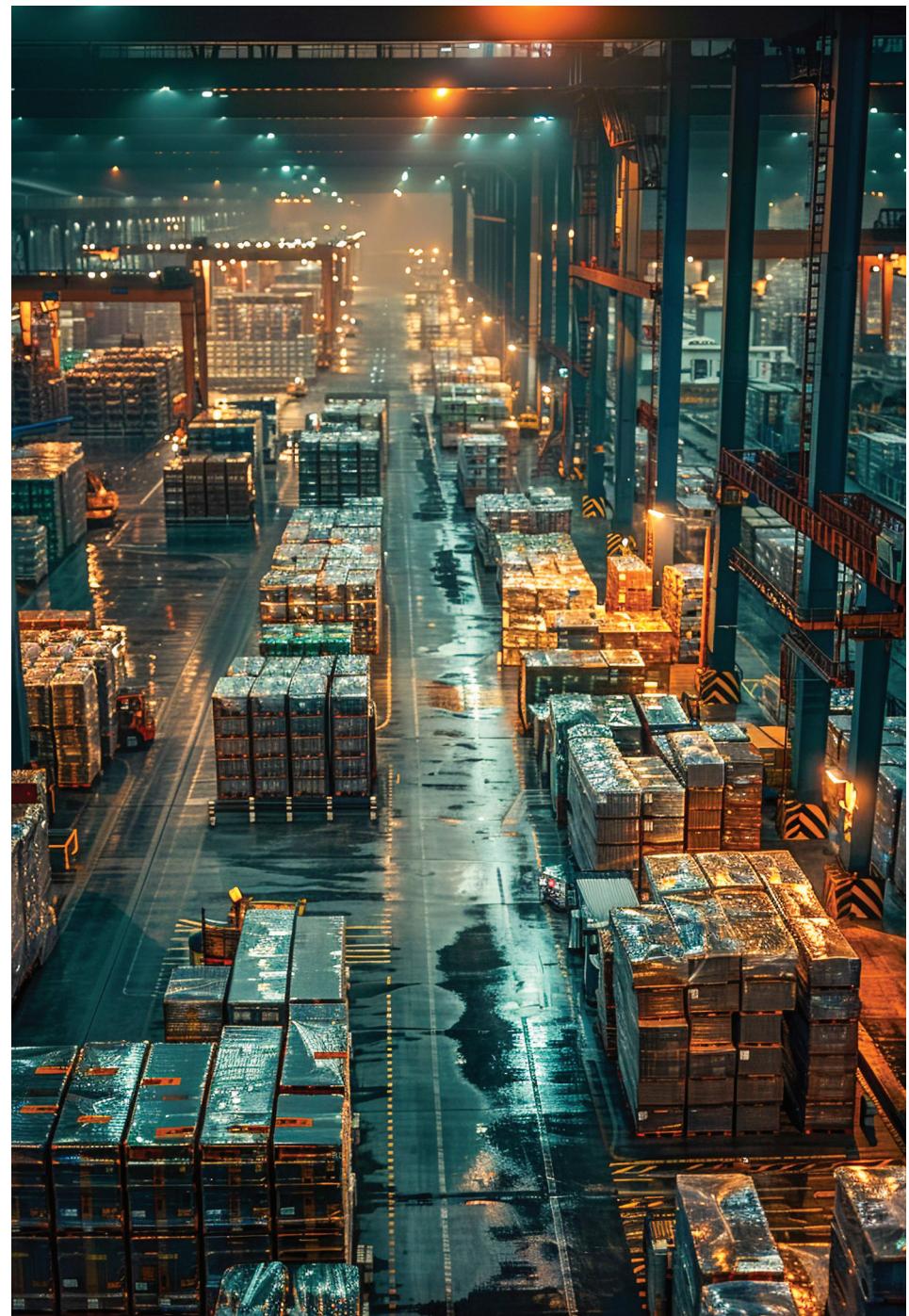
To conclude, effective procurement risk management in unstable global markets demands readiness, agility, and the ability to make well-informed decisions. Having the proper procedures and coordination in place, disruption can be controlled without significantly affecting operations.

How are technologies like AI, blockchain, and data analytics redefining procurement?

Innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, and data analytics are transforming the procurement process by making it efficient, intelligent, and secure. The following illustrates the role of each of these tools:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Artificial intelligence enables better decision-making for procurement teams by analyzing large data sets at high speed. It has the ability to suggest the best suppliers, predict price changes, and even identify potential risks before they happen. In addition, AI tools, like chatbots, handle simple tasks such as answering supplier queries or processing purchase orders, thus helping save time.





- **Blockchain**

It improves trust and transparency throughout the supply chain. It creates a record of every transaction in a secure and immutable way. It enables tracking of where products originate from, checking if the suppliers followed through, and fraud prevention. It is especially useful in industries where authenticity or compliance of products is important.

- **Data Analytics**

Data analytics tells organizations how much they spent, how well their suppliers performed, and what supply chain trends are. Examining this information enables procurement teams to find ways to save, streamline delivery time, and detect problems early. It also allows for better planning through the visualization of trends in past purchases.

Overall Impact:

These technologies are helping procurement shift from a reactive to a more strategic function. Instead of just buying what's needed, procurement now enables business goals like cost savings, risk reduction, and sustainability. With better tools, teams can act faster, make fewer mistakes, and build more robust supplier relationships.

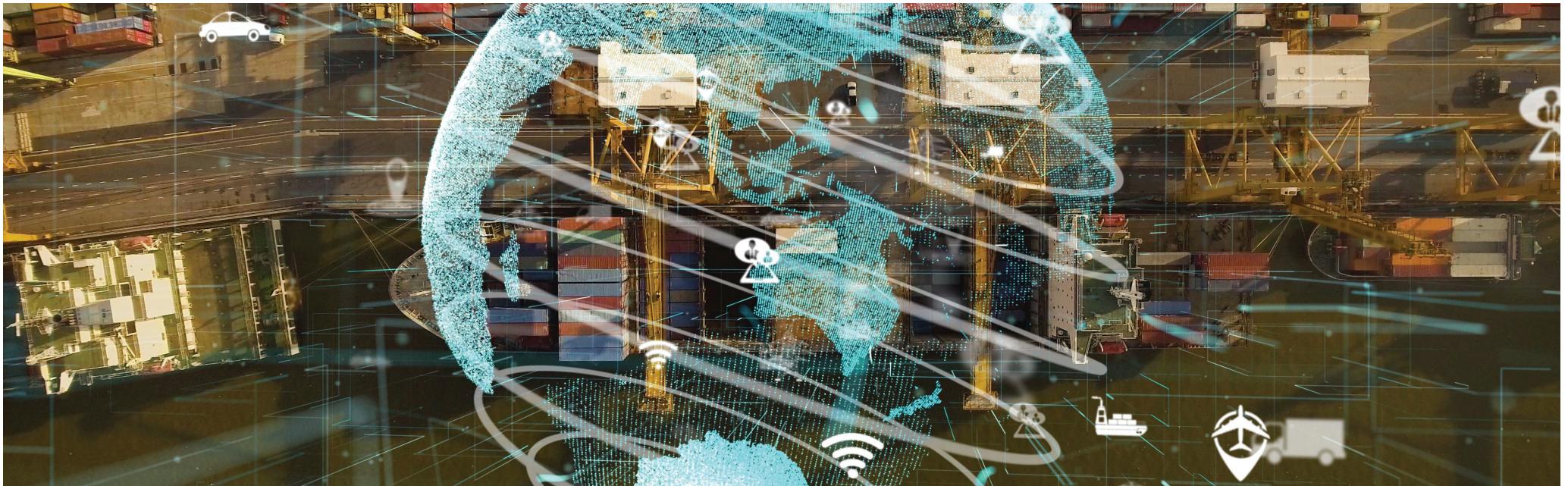
Briefly, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, and data analytics are not merely bringing new tools but are revolutionizing the entire procurement process from start to finish.



In your view, what are the key tools or platforms that every procurement professional should be familiar with today?

With the fast-changing environment of modern business, procurement professionals need to have an expertise in leveraging digital tools that help in accelerated workflows, reduced risks, and improved decision-making. Based on current practices and business demands, it is my opinion that the following tools and platforms are essential:

- **e-Procurement Systems** – Software like SAP Ariba, Coupa, or Jaggaer handle the whole procurement process, from placing purchase requests to paying suppliers. These systems bring everything to a single place, making it easy to track spending and stay compliant with policy.
- **Spend Analysis Tools** – Spend Cube or Power BI tools, when combined with procurement information, enable simpler comprehension of spending trends. This capability enables the identification of areas of potential savings and tracking of suppliers' performance.
- **Contract Management Systems** – Software such as Icertis or DocuSign CLM facilitate the administration of supplier contracts, monitor renewal dates, and guarantee adherence to agreed-upon terms. This minimizes legal exposures and allows for more effective negotiation processes.
- **Supplier Management Platforms** – These tools allow you to create and sustain a good supplier pool. A few examples include SAP Ariba Supplier Lifecycle and Performance or Gatekeeper. They keep supplier data, rate their performance, and allow risk management.
- **Market Intelligence Tools** – It is critical to understand market dynamics, pricing forecasts, and supplier weaknesses. Tools like Beroe, The Smart Cube, and websites like LinkedIn and Google Alerts help procurement professionals stay informed.
- **ERP Systems** – Experience with enterprise systems like SAP, Oracle, or Microsoft Dynamics is required. These systems tend to be the hub of company activities and combine finance, procurement, and supply chain activities.



- **e-Auction Tools** – Reverse auctions through tools such as Zycus or SAP Ariba can facilitate competitive pricing among suppliers for large or recurrent purchases.
- **Collaboration Tools** – Software like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and SharePoint have emerged as the cornerstone of remote coordination, sharing of documents, and internal approvals.

In short, procurement professionals of today must combine old competencies with new digital technology. Familiarity with such websites not only increases personal productivity but also enriches the organization by facilitating better decision-making, cost reduction, and good supplier relationships.

How important is cross-functional collaboration in procurement, and how can teams foster better alignment?

Cross-functional teams are extremely important in the purchasing function because procurement decisions have a tendency to affect many aspects of a business—not just the purchasing department. For example, procurement is closely linked with functions like finance, operations, legal, quality assurance, and even marketing or information technology. Unless all these groups work together, they can end up making poor decisions, creating delays, incurring added costs, or experiencing compliance issues.

Effective coordination between procurement teams and other stakeholders enable them to:

- **Clearly understand real needs** – Involving several departments enables procurement to obtain improved specifications, ultimately resulting in improved supplier selection.
- **Manage costs more effectively** – Finance and procurement together can keep a better eye on budgets and savings.

- **Prevent risks** – Legal and compliance groups can assist in making supplier contracts and sourcing practices regulatory compliant.
- **Enhance timelines** – Operations and supply chain staff can facilitate better delivery schedule planning, leading to fewer delays.

To achieve greater alignment, businesses can take the following steps:

- **Set common goals** – All departments involved should agree on what success looks like for a project. This avoids conflicts later.
- **Bring stakeholders in early** – Procurement needs to bring in key departments from the beginning of the contracting or sourcing process, not at the end.
- **Regular communication** – Having weekly or monthly cross-functional meetings allows teams to stay updated and resolve problems early.
- **Leveraging open procedures and tools** – Employing common workflows and availing the benefits of electronic platforms (i.e., Enterprise Resource Planning systems or collaboration tools) enables consistency for all stakeholders.
- **Establish relationships** – Teams work better when they trust each other. A culture of teamwork and respect is just as important as the software used.

Could you share some insights on how to build and maintain strong supplier relationships?

Strong supplier relationships is key to long-term success in procurement. It can improve supplier performance in pricing, provide priority during shortages, aid in better quality, and enhanced support during issues. Maintaining good ties help in risks management and trust on both sides.

Strategies to improve supplier relations includes:

- **Establish clear communication**

From the beginning, be clear about your expectations, timelines, and quality standards. At the same time, listen to what the supplier needs from you. Two-way communication builds trust.





- **Fair and transparent relationships**

Always deal with suppliers in a fair and honest way. Share information that helps them plan better. Avoid last-minute surprises or unclear instructions.

- **Efficient payment system**

Paying suppliers on time shows respect and professionalism. It keeps the relationship healthy and encourages them to prioritize your orders.

- **Engage and involve suppliers beyond the procurement phase**

Involve key suppliers in product development or planning discussions. Ask for their input. This makes them feel valued and motivates them to support your business better.

- **Monitor performance and give feedback**

Use regular reviews to discuss quality, delivery, and service. Give feedback in a respectful way and ask them for suggestions too. This helps both sides improve.

- **Support them during tough times**

If a supplier is facing a temporary issue, such as a delay due to raw material shortage, try to work with them instead of reacting harshly. This builds long-term loyalty.

- **Use long-term contracts where appropriate**

When possible, offer long-term partnerships or volume commitments. This gives suppliers confidence to invest in better service or production capacity for you.

- **Celebrate successes together**

When a project goes well or a cost-saving idea works, give credit to the supplier. Small gestures like appreciation emails, certificates, or even recognition events can go a long way.

In summary, strong supplier relationships are built on trust, respect, and open communication. Treating suppliers as strategic partners rather than just cost centers can lead to better business outcomes for both sides.

What advice can you give to companies looking to digitize their procurement processes but don't know where to start?

For businesses aiming to digitally transform their procurement processes, starting small and building gradually is the most effective approach. You don't have to change everything at once. Allow me to provide an experience-based strategy, starting with:

- **Analyze the existing process**

Prior to investing in any tool, focus on mapping all procurement steps from the request generation to supplier payment. Look for steps or processes which are prone to delays, mistakes, or excessive paperwork. This step enables you to appreciate digitization from a value perspective.

- **Define objectives**

Inquire: what do you want to accomplish with digitization? Quicker approvals? Better tracking? Reduced manual labor? Defined objectives make tool selection easier and mitigate unnecessary expenditures.

- **Try basic solutions first**

Purchasing a large system is not necessary. Starting small with digital forms for purchase requests, Excel trackers with macros, or forms-based workflows (ex. Google forms, Microsoft forms, and Zoho Creator) is more practical. These tools are simple, cheaper, and user-friendly.

- **Select platforms that allow for growth**

At the time of making an investment, seek out systems that can expand in scope and complexity. For example, SAP Ariba, Coupa and Zoho Procurement are tools that can manage various functions all in one place including sourcing, contracts, suppliers and payments.

- **Bring your staff into the process**

Access and implementation of all digital tools will be futile without utilization. Involve your procurement staff, finance team, and even suppliers while planning the change. Give them training and make sure they understand the benefits.



- **Clean your data**

Before going digital, check that your supplier data, item codes, and pricing are up to date. Poor data will create problems in any system, no matter how advanced.

- **Don't rush—go step by step**

Digitization is a journey. Start with one process—like automating purchase orders or approvals—then expand to sourcing, contract management, or supplier portals.

- **Measure and improve**

After going digital, track how things improve. Are you saving time? Is data more accurate? Use these insights to keep improving the process.





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