



Procurement Engagement – Birds Without Wings Can't Fly to Success

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We are pleased to bring you another illuminating post from our regular contributor, Sigi Osagie, expert on effectiveness in Procurement & Supply Chain Management, helping organisations and individuals achieve enhanced performance

growth to accomplish their business and career goals, and author of "Procurement Mojo - Strengthening the Function and Raising its Profile." (contact www.sigiosagie.com)

Successful CPOs know that you can't achieve true Procurement success unless purchasing staff are engaged with the agenda. Employee engagement is intrinsic to a culture that augments organisational success. A key element of this is exposing people's capabilities and helping them grow wings for the flight of success.

Giving people opportunities to shine and grow isn't just an altruistic endeavour; it enhances Procurement's organisational capability through the positive sentiments generated, which boosts motivation, engenders progressive attitudes and nurtures the psychological contract between Procurement staff and the organisation.

These are vital conduits which also aid talent retention. **People who are really good at what they do seldom stick around in organisations that don't bring out the best in them.**

Expending effort to recruit or develop talent and then failing to take the right steps to retain and harness that talent is just plain stupid. Effective talent management always bolsters employee engagement. And **having a high proportion of staff whose hearts and minds are aligned to Procurement's agenda is a foundation to functional success.**

Fostering employee engagement is something many of us undervalue, yet we complain when staff have undesirable attitudes. I don't have a pre-defined list of "employee engagement tactics" to peddle. I've learnt from my studies at the Faculty of Hard Knocks at the University of Life that every situation is different, and

each individual is unique. But one thing I hold sacrosanct is to put 'people' and their engagement at the core of my change efforts.

I take great pains to understand how individuals view the world of 'work' and how that perspective impacts their attitudes, behaviours and operating styles; I expend time and energy providing clarity of purpose, guidance and support for people; I hold people to account for their performance and behaviours; I try to catch people doing the right things and give them lavish praise; I invest considerable effort helping them find the best within themselves, even if the journey is bumpy and painful – I try to help them ignite the fire in their bellies while staying true to The Golden Rule.

Perhaps I am too much of an optimist, but I don't believe most people go to work to do a bad job or to be a pain.

If your people aren't aboard the flight to success or [giving you their best at work](#), then you must dig beneath the obvious to understand why. **Spending quality one-to-one time with individuals, discussing their progress, growth, contribution and related challenges, must be a principal activity for the Procurement leader.**

When Procurement staff have job satisfaction and commitment, they will 'walk the walk' willingly and proudly. However, people sometimes need some 'calibration' so they don't become birds without wings but stay engaged and aligned.

In aligning Procurement staff to the function's ethos it is important to strike the right balance between task orientation and relationship focus. Procurement people who are technically competent and deliver tangible results at the cost of damaging stakeholder relationships harm Procurement effectiveness in the long run. And those who foster good relationships but fail to achieve their objectives do the same. The aim should always be to cultivate 'Procurement Ambassadors' – those who deliver hard, tangible results and maintain productive relationships inside and outside the function.

Communication is a critical aspect of aligning and engaging people, and helping them understand their contribution. And team meetings, in particular, are an effective way to engender *esprit de corps*.

As incredible as it may sound, some Procurement organisations don't have regular team meetings. Imagine the LA Lakers basketball team, Real Madrid football club or the South African Springboks rugby team not having regular team meetings to communicate and discuss issues which affect the very existence of the team, the morale of team members and the team's performance success. It's unthinkable. Yet some Procurement leaders expect their teams to gel and be successful without imbibing regular team meetings to their organisational existence.

Periodic communication, both formal and informal, not only serves to share information to support effective interactions and raise awareness, it also feeds a spirit of belonging amongst Procurement staff. These are essential ingredients for building employee engagement and ensuring everyone in Procurement is on the same flight path.

When you have such alignment and people can see how their work supports Procurement's goals and the enterprise strategic agenda, you create magic.

Procurement people will treat internal customers and other stakeholders in a way that reflects how they, themselves, are treated and how they feel about their work. Talented and engaged Procurement people who feel part of something special, something that feels magical, will always seek to recreate that magic in their interactions with others. Those emotions fan the flames of their personal mojos, enabling them to excel in so many ways and contribute to Procurement's enduring success.

