



Procurement PR Isn't About Selling Snake Oil

NANCY CLINTON - October 7, 2015 4:30 AM |

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Sigi Osagie shares more of his expertise on effectiveness in Procurement & Supply Chain Management. He is also author of "Procurement Mojo: Strengthening the Function and Raising Its Profile" see our review here - and for more information visit

www.procurementmojo.com)

Like it or not, perception can sometimes be more important than reality. That's why successful consumer brands invest significant resources in creating positive perceptions of their brands. Purchasing folks can learn a lot from this to raise the profile of Procurement. People outside the function are more likely to be open to your ideas, buy into your agenda or become champions of your cause if they hold positive perceptions of you and your Procurement function.

Positive perceptions don't occur by accident or luck, but by dedicated effort. Rather than getting into squabbles with stakeholders who hold misconceptions of Procurement, it's far more effective to direct more effort at managing their perceptions and fostering progressive relationships. **The more stakeholders feel that Procurement is meaningful to their needs and challenges, the better Procurement's brand reputation.**

Building an effective team of Procurement Ambassadors, incorporating [customer-centricity](#) to Procurement's ethos and ['connecting' with stakeholders](#) to build rapport through [persuasive communication](#) are critical for a credible Procurement brand. So too is publicising Procurement's successes – it's a shrewd tactic that forms part of effective PR to maintain consistent visibility for your Procurement function.

Think of Procurement PR as a sustained endeavour to protect the function's brand reputation by:

1. Boosting awareness and understanding of Procurement

2. Influencing stakeholders' opinions, feelings and attitudes
3. Maintaining goodwill for Procurement across the enterprise

This notion must be imbibed into how Procurement pursues its goals, and all routine activities and stakeholder interactions.

As a purchasing person, everything you do and say, and what stakeholders think, feel and say about you, impacts Procurement's brand reputation. That reputation is imperative to Procurement's success, because **Procurement's influence is determined more by stakeholders' perceptions** than most people realise.

PR is about shaping perceptions and reputation management. Your Procurement PR should be centred on positioning Procurement in stakeholders' consciousness such that their awareness and emotions about the function are favourable.

Focus your efforts on propagating a structured flow of targeted information, exploiting different avenues such as:

- Features and news items on the corporate intranet
- A Procurement intranet website
- Stakeholder testimonials and interviews with Procurement personnel in the company magazine or similar publications
- A dedicated Procurement newsletter
- Periodic presentations or update briefings with the executive team
- Publicity slots at corporate events
- Supplier days (This is an excellent medium for positioning the Procurement agenda with this specific group of external stakeholders. But it can also be a good opportunity for internal stakeholders to hear more of the Procurement message if you invite targeted individuals, such as senior executives and key personnel from other functions.)

It's sensible to use a combination of different media as appropriate to the particular context. So think about the nature of your communications message, the timing, the organisational norms, and so on.

Procurement PR isn't about becoming a snake oil salesman. **Selling a Procurement brand proposition** that doesn't match the delivery capability is like selling a sports car to a punter only for him to discover it's been built with a scooter engine.

Your brand building efforts must be backed up with solid functional capability and delivering results, otherwise you create dissonance between your brand promise and the reality. This is one of the major causes of stakeholder dissatisfaction and damages Procurement's reputation. You can avoid such disappointment with these tips:

- Successful positioning demands good self-awareness. Undertake a candid appraisal of your Procurement function – ask yourself, your team members and some internal customers and peer-group functions. Combine the findings with benchmarking intelligence, and use the insights gleaned in crafting your Procurement message.
- Tailor the style, content and timings of your communications to your status on your journey to your Procurement mojo. Ensure continuous alignment between internal capability and the value proposition propagated – deliver on your commitments.
- Focus on high-value activities, with less human capital expended on mundane stuff. And publicise Procurement’s achievements on issues of strategic importance to the enterprise, highlighting the related impacts and benefits.
- Be honest with stakeholders. You’re better off telling a stakeholder you’re unable to reveal specific details than relaying misleading information. Honesty and sincerity are the bedrock of your personal integrity and the credibility of your Procurement brand promise.

Procurement PR is vital because in today’s organisational landscape it’s no longer adequate to be doing a good job -- you must also be perceived as such. As John D. Rockefeller, the famous American tycoon, stressed, “Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing.”

They say a picture paints a thousands words. But a few words can paint a million pictures, especially when those words are well-crafted and targeted. So leverage effective PR to paint beautiful pictures that portray your Procurement function superbly.

