

ProcureCon INSIGHTS



RESILIENCE THROUGH CHANGE: EVOLVING YOUR PROCUREMENT PRACTICES FOR THE FUTURE

A ProcureCon Insights Post-Webinar eBook

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Procurement organizations face new challenges, where resilience requires balancing proactive risk management, stakeholder collaboration, and the adaptive use of technology. This report is based on a ProcureCon webinar that featured speakers from Avetta and Specialty Dental Brands. It explores how procurement teams can thrive by embedding change management into their DNA, redesigning risk frameworks, and fostering cultures of innovation.

Procurement's role is no longer transactional. It's strategic, requiring professionals to act as translators between raw data and actionable business insights.

SPEAKERS



Moderator:
Michael Dunlap
Portfolio Director
ProcureCon



Dr. Cindie Burkett, PMP
Vice President of Procurement
Specialty Dental Brands



Caldwell Hart, CPSM CPSP
Principal, Procurement & Supply Chain Management
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CHANGE MANAGEMENT AS THE CORE PROCUREMENT FUNCTION

In the procurement function, resilience begins with early stakeholder engagement in change initiatives and extends to designing supply chains that withstand compounding disruptions. The panelists of the webinar stressed the importance of viewing failures as opportunities for iterative improvement and leveraging technology as an enabler—not a replacement—for human expertise.

Procurement professionals serve dual roles within their organizations, requiring them to balance technical expertise with strong interpersonal and communication skills. Success in driving change depends heavily on early engagement of stakeholders across multiple organizational levels, making change initiatives collaborative rather than top-down mandates.

Mr. Hart emphasized that procurement's role also includes orchestrating transformation: "I think change management is actually most of the job. We need to have a balance between people, process and technology. But to make that all successful, you have to change the work people are doing—you can't focus on only one element, like technology."

Ms. Burkett reinforced this concept by highlighting the dual nature of modern procurement thinking: "I think the procurement professional of today has to think fast and slow. And so, you've always got to have a long game and a short game at the same time."

The speakers noted that resistance to change is natural and must be anticipated. "Nobody likes change happening to them—they like change happening with them. And as a procurement professional, it's really incumbent on us to set the course and show what the land could look like," Ms. Burkett said. This insight underscores the importance of inclusive change management strategies. Leaders must make stakeholders partners in transformation rather than passive recipients.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- 1 Establish early and continuous stakeholder engagement.** Begin every transformation initiative by bringing together stakeholders from multiple organizational levels to collaborate, define problems, and co-create solutions. Use techniques like dry erase board mapping sessions to capture pain points and prioritize improvement areas through multi-voting processes.
- 2 Develop dual-timeline strategic planning:** Implement planning frameworks that simultaneously address short-term operational needs and long-term strategic objectives. Create clear communication strategies that help stakeholders understand why certain initiatives may require slower approaches while others demand rapid execution.
- 3 Build change advocacy networks:** Transform stakeholders into change advocates by ensuring they understand not just what is changing, but why it's changing and how it benefits them personally. Make stakeholders active participants in the change process rather than passive recipients of new initiatives.

STRATEGIC BALANCE OF PEOPLE, PROCESS, AND TECHNOLOGY

Procurement transformation success depends on balancing three critical elements: the right people with the right skills and roles, effective processes, and enabling technologies. Each element amplifies the others—skilled professionals maximize process efficiency, well-designed processes enable technology to deliver value, and technology empowers people to focus on strategic activities.

The foundation lies in having the right people in the right roles—procurement professionals with both technical expertise and strategic thinking capabilities. Mr. Hart emphasized: "I think the key to digital transformation is with our people, our culture, and determining where we are with our processes. We need to know what our pain points are—not just the symptoms, but the root causes behind them."

Technology serves as an enabling tool that amplifies human capabilities and streamlines processes, but cannot compensate for skills gaps or poorly designed workflows. Organizations investing in sophisticated technology without ensuring their teams have necessary competencies and well-defined processes often struggle to achieve expected returns.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BALANCED TRANSFORMATION

- 1 Prioritize people development alongside technology investment.** Assess current team capabilities and invest in training programs that build both technical skills and strategic thinking abilities. Ensure procurement professionals understand how to leverage tools to drive better decision-making.
- 2 Establish robust processes as the foundation for technology success.** Map current processes, identify root causes of inefficiencies, and redesign workflows before introducing new technology. Well-defined processes enable technology to deliver maximum value.
- 3 Frame technology as a strategic enabler, not a solution.** Select technology solutions that enhance human capabilities and streamline proven processes rather than expecting technology to solve underlying organizational challenges. Establish clear governance frameworks.

TRANSFORMING DATA INTO ACTIONABLE INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS

Modern procurement requires moving beyond simply collecting and presenting raw data. Practitioners must provide a meaningful analysis and strategic recommendations to stakeholders. That means developing the analytical skills to convert data into insights that drive informed decision-making and having the interpersonal skills to clearly communicate risk assessments and strategic options.

The distinction between data and information was a critical concept throughout the discussion. "We have to know the difference between data and information," said Ms. Burkett. "Giving somebody a spreadsheet as an answer is not an answer, right? That's just a data dump and that doesn't help anybody."

Effective procurement professionals must serve as interpreters and advisors, not just data collectors. "You've got to tell them what they're looking at and help them understand. What's in store for me? What does this actually mean for me? What are my risks? What are the potential shocks? What does my contingency plan look like? What are my options?" Ms. Burkett explained.

Mr. Hart reinforced this theme by emphasizing the iterative nature of creating value from data: "Data is a bunch of numbers and colors on the wall. What's important is our ability to go through the iterative process of converting that data into insight—creating information that we can use to make informed decisions and strategies."

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

1

Develop analytical storytelling capabilities.

Train procurement teams to present data within narrative frameworks that clearly explain implications, risks, and recommended actions. Move beyond spreadsheet presentations to create compelling business cases that help stakeholders understand both current and future options.

2

Create stakeholder-specific communication strategies.

Tailor data presentations to different audience needs and decision-making requirements. Develop templates and frameworks that consistently address the "what does this mean for me" question that every stakeholder asks when reviewing procurement information.

3

Implement systematic risk communication protocols.

Establish standard processes for communicating potential supply chain shocks, contingency plans, and strategic options. Create decision trees and scenario planning tools that help stakeholders understand not just current risks but potential future impacts and response strategies.

EVOLUTION FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE RISK MANAGEMENT

Traditional risk management was focused on monitoring and reacting to individual risk events, but modern procurement teams understand that risks compound across multiple tiers and supply chains. Leading organizations are shifting from a dependence on reactive crisis management strategies to proactively designing resilience into their supply chains through scenario modeling and strategic supplier partnerships.

The speakers described transitioning from a reactive "hero culture" to proactive design thinking. Mr. Hart noted that many organizations still operate with "smoke jumpers" who act as rescuers when a crisis takes place. But while that may represent good crisis management, it's not the same as true resilience.

Now, organizations can design resilience into their supply chains rather than simply reacting to problems. "We link multiple types of data sets to different risk factors, scorecards, and performance metrics, then assimilate them to see trends and correlated information," Mr. Hart explained.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROACTIVE RISK MANAGEMENT

- 1 Implement multi-tier supply chain mapping and monitoring.** Develop visibility beyond tier-one suppliers to understand critical tier-two and tier-three dependencies. Use technology tools to correlate multiple risk data sets and identify potential compound risk scenarios before they materialize into crises.
- 2 Design resilience into supply chain architecture.** Move beyond crisis response planning to actively redesign supply chains with built-in redundancy and flexibility. Work with engineering and product design teams to reduce sole-source dependencies and create alternative sourcing options during the design phase.
- 3 Cultivate diverse supplier relationship portfolios.** Maintain active relationships with both large, stable suppliers and smaller, more agile suppliers. Develop supplier diversity strategies that provide operational flexibility during disruptions while supporting business growth objectives.

CURIOSITY AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING AS ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Procurement professionals must cultivate curiosity and actively seek learning opportunities beyond their immediate comfort zones to drive innovation and proactively solve problems. This includes engaging directly with suppliers, internal stakeholders, and peers from different industries. Doing so allows practitioners to gain fresh perspectives and identify opportunities for process improvement.

Mr. Hart stressed the fundamental importance of curiosity in procurement success: "I think that a 'curiosity gene' is key to anyone who's going to be in the procurement space." This curiosity must extend beyond the office environment to direct engagement with operations and suppliers.

The speakers advocated for hands-on learning programs that provide deep insights into supplier operations and capabilities. Mr. Hart encouraged procurement professionals to think beyond their immediate peer groups, "Because you'll often find innovative ideas in a completely different industry that you could bring back and adapt."

Meanwhile, Ms. Burkett discussed the importance of internal stakeholder engagement and learning from the perspectives of team members: "Gaining that kind of exposure helped me understand what the day-to-day looked and felt like for my customers."

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

- 1 Establish regular supplier site visits and operational engagement:** Schedule quarterly visits to key supplier operations, focusing not just on executive meetings but on shop floor interactions and operational observations. Create structured templates for capturing insights about supplier capabilities, culture, and innovation potential.
- 2 Develop cross-industry learning networks:** Actively participate in procurement conferences and networking events with professionals from diverse industries. Create formal learning partnerships with procurement professionals in different sectors to share best practices and new ideas.
- 3 Implement internal customer experience programs:** Spend time working directly with internal stakeholders to understand their operational challenges and day-to-day experiences. Create rotation programs that expose procurement team members to different functional areas within the organization to build empathy and understanding.

THE FUTURE OF PROCUREMENT RESILIENCE

The insights shared by Mr. Hart and Ms. Burkett paint a picture of procurement transformation that goes far beyond traditional cost reduction and supplier management. The future belongs to procurement organizations

that embrace their role as change agents, master the balance between people, processes, and technology, and develop the analytical capabilities to transform data into strategic insights.

"It's an exciting time to be in the procurement and supply chain space. I recently told one of my mentors that an idea we dreamed up in 1999, something that would have been impossible at that time, was now possible because of where technology is today."

— Caldwell Hart, CPSM CPSP, Principal of Procurement & Supply Chain Management, Professional Services, Risk & Advisory, Avetta



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Avetta provides a cloud-based supply chain risk management platform. Our global solution is uniquely designed to connect the world's leading organizations with qualified suppliers, driving sustainable growth. Our SaaS subscription software is used by 50,000 active customers in 100 countries. Over 300 of the world's biggest organizations depend on Avetta every day.

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