

Myth vs. Reality: The AI Strategies Every Procurement Leader Needs to Know

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Executive Summary

Procurement leaders face multiple challenges in their efforts to implement and generate value from AI technology. Data silos, internal skepticism, and the inability to identify specific use cases are some of the most common barriers to adoption.

This eBook contains insights from a recent discussion between leaders from Asana and Coupa about practical AI applications in procurement. Here, readers will gain actionable insights into how they can implement AI to improve specific segments of the procurement function and scale their projects to create additional value.

About the Contributors



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AI in Procurement Trends in 2025

AI adoption is currently widespread in procurement. According to a survey of 100 procurement leaders in North America by ProcureCon Insights and Coupa, 96% of teams are already using AI in some capacity in their procurement functions.

AI adoption in procurement is in its early stages.

96%

of organizations currently use AI in their procurement function. However...

Only
30%

are 'very satisfied' with their current AI solutions.

70%

of those using AI in procurement have only been doing so for 6 – 12 months.

However, only 30% are very satisfied with their current AI solutions, indicating room for improvement. Additionally, 70% of those using AI in procurement have only been doing so for 6-12 months, suggesting that many organizations are still in the early stages of adoption.

AI use cases are expanding.

Current AI use cases in procurement include:



77%

Market intelligence gathering and analysis



74%

Data entry and processing



57%

Predictive analytics



53%

Inventory and supply chain logistics optimization



52%

Supplier risk management

Procurement teams are leveraging AI across key functions, focusing on automating processes and managing risk. Specific use cases include market intelligence gathering and analysis, data entry and processing, predictive analytics in inventory and supply chain logistics optimization, and supplier risk management.

These applications demonstrate that procurement leaders see a wide range of opportunities for AI within their operations.

Despite the potential benefits, procurement leaders face challenges in implementing AI technologies. For example, research by ProcureCon Insights revealed that 57% of procurement leaders find prioritizing use cases for AI a very significant challenge. The research also revealed that 49% find data privacy a significant challenge and 53% find their lack of internal AI expertise a somewhat significant challenge. These obstacles highlight the need for careful planning and resource allocation when adopting AI in procurement.

Procurement leaders will expand their formal use of AI.

Existing benefits include:



Now, **95%** plan to increase their investments in AI over the next three years.

Nonetheless, procurement leaders see significant potential in AI and plan to expand its use. Most organizations have already observed benefits such as increased transparency and visibility in procurement processes, improved supplier relationship management, and cost savings.

Procurement leaders expect more benefits and improvements.

Respondents believe AI will help in key areas:

62%

Supplier interactions and relationships

58%

Deeper insights and better decision-making

56%

Proactive risk management and compliance

52%

Driving efficiency

Furthermore, 95% of procurement leaders plan to increase their AI investments over the next three years, with key growth areas including supplier selection and negotiation, insights and decision-making capabilities, and a more proactive risk management and compliance.

Key Suggestions



- Leverage AI for confirmed use cases like intelligence gathering, data processing, and predictive analytics.
- Ensure high-quality, domain-specific data is the foundation of your AI strategy, and set guidelines for data security, data privacy, and change management.



This data reflects many of the trends we're observing at Coupa while working with organizations on AI adoption. While there is still some hesitation around AI, we've seen many great strategies and successful adoption stories emerge. Many organizations are using AI to increase efficiency and make smarter business decisions. It's also empowering procurement leaders to collaborate more effectively with their finance and supply chain peers and their network of suppliers."



Denise Laforgia
Director of
Product Marketing
Coupa

Myths vs. Realities: Practical AI in Procurement

There are several myths associated with AI and how it can be used in procurement, and some team members may have hesitations about relying on it.

One common myth is that adoption requires extensive resources. In reality, many organizations are successfully implementing AI incrementally, starting with small, low-risk use cases that yield meaningful benefits. This allows procurement teams to build trust in AI capabilities gradually while demonstrating tangible ROI early in the process.

Disconnected systems and manual processes impact operational efficiency and financial health



A frequent misstep is when business units embark on siloed AI projects that rely on disconnected systems that don't share data. Rather than improving efficiency, this can amplify existing organizational challenges like lack of agility, operational inefficiencies, and high risk. Data synchronization and the adoption of AI across functions can significantly reduce silos and deliver wider business benefits.

Successful AI implementation often involves embedding it into existing day-to-day processes, activities, and strategies. The speakers recommended companies engage in “purpose-built” AI projects, as these can break down silos and aid in productivity.

Purpose-built AI breaks down silos, fuels productivity, and boosts margins



Some of the key areas where AI can be adopted include workflow automation for supplier management and invoicing, fraud and non-compliance detection, and automated contract analysis to make faster and more informed decisions. These applications aim to improve decision-making, back-office efficiencies, and innovation while freeing team members to focus on more strategic work.

AI is also being effectively used for intelligence gathering, data entry, inventory optimization, and even supplier communication. For example, procurement leaders can use generative AI to create intelligence briefs that can be leveraged during supplier negotiations. In another example, stakeholders can use AI to quickly analyze contracts in search of cost-saving opportunities or potential risks.

Key Suggestions



- Prioritize embedding AI into day-to-day processes that are manual or time-consuming, as this can help you achieve early successes and demonstrate ROI.
- Use purpose-built AI initiatives to break down silos between functions and improve adoption rates.

Asana is at the forefront of using AI in everyday tasks, ensuring scalable applications across various departments like engineering, finance, legal, and marketing. We are regularly exploring new ways to leverage AI to improve procurement workflows and boost efficiency in our daily work.”



Alex Goffey
Head of Procure to Pay & Sourcing
Asana

The Asana AI Story

Asana began its AI journey by focusing on optimizing specific pain points. Then, the company gradually implemented AI in various areas, including automating request triage, providing concise summaries of purchase requests, and identifying prior contracts with specific vendors.

These implementations significantly reduced manual effort, improved response times, and enhanced the overall user experience for requesters and reviewers. Furthermore, Coupa's AI solution allowed Asana to automate and streamline invoicing, reducing the risk of delays and errors. Coupa's AI-powered fraud detection solution, Spend Guard, even enabled Asana to automatically detect errors and potential instances of fraud before they could impact the business.

Alex Goffey noted that **AI helped reduce Asana's triage time from up to 12 hours to nearly instantaneous**, demonstrating the efficiency gains achieved.

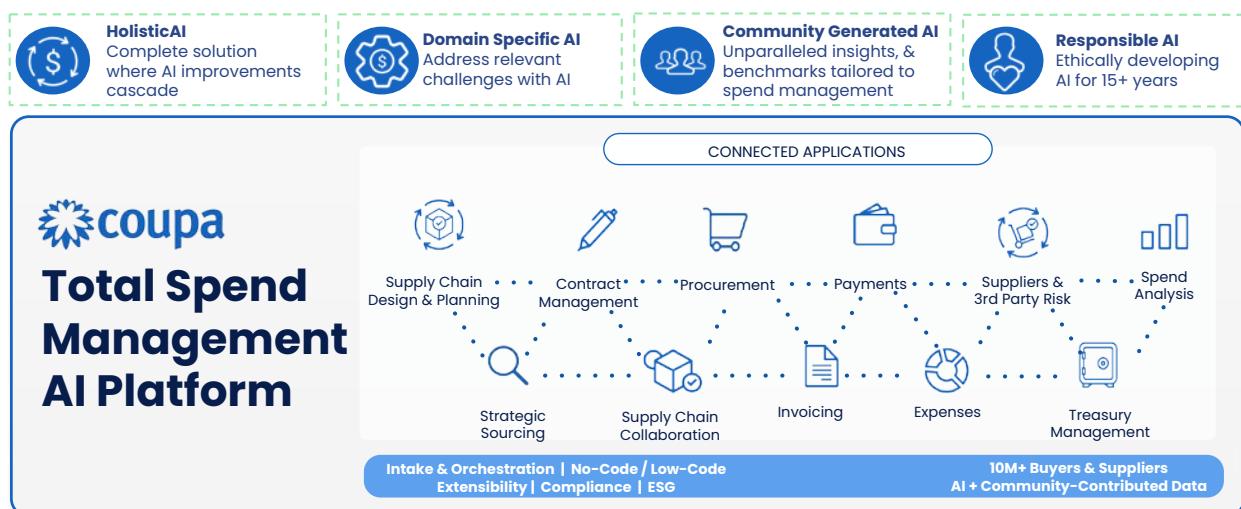
The company focused on improving data quality to maximize the effectiveness of AI implementations. It implemented a model where dedicated teams input data into Coupa before specific approvals, ensuring clean data flow through the system. This helped reduce manual effort downstream and improved the user experience by eliminating confusion around accounting codes for purchases.

An incremental approach to AI can drive long-term benefits



Goffey advised fellow procurement leaders to overcome skepticism by starting with small, low-risk AI initiatives and gradually expanding to more complex applications. It's also critical to obtain organizational support for AI projects and have a willingness to experiment with AI workflows.

Evolve from reactive spend management to AI-driven: powered by expertise, collaboration, and data



Developing trust in AI processes can take time, but procurement leaders can do so through successful small-scale implementations before attempting larger-scale applications. Using solutions like Coupa's, procurement teams can even tap into data-driven insights generated by the wider procurement community.

"We call this community-generated AI, which uses over \$7 trillion in transactional data from our network," said LaForgia.

"This data provides valuable insights, benchmarks, and tailored spend management guidance. It ensures a holistic approach across processes like sourcing, supply chain, procurement, invoicing, and payment.

In this way, procurement can evolve from reactive spend management to AI-driven spend management supported by collaboration, data, and efficient processes. This helps teams address many of the most common challenges facing the function, but it also allows them to experiment, innovate, and discover new applications that drive results.

Key Suggestions

- Create dedicated teams and procedures to input clean data into your AI solutions and achieve accurate results.
- Obtain organizational support for your AI initiatives and encourage users to experiment with AI workflows.



I was a skeptic at first, but I've felt very supported in my AI-forward environment at Asana, where we're encouraged to experiment. Depending on your organization's risk tolerance, I'd suggest exploring AI by identifying manual or time-consuming processes and testing how AI could help. Starting small worked well for our team—it built trust in both AI and the processes we developed."



Alex Goffey
Head of Procure to Pay & Sourcing
Asana

About the Authors

ProcureCon Insights

ProcureCon Insights, the industry research and digital publishing arm of ProcureCon, delivers cutting-edge data and analysis on trends, challenges, and opportunities in the procurement and supply chain management sectors. Through comprehensive research reports, webinars, and thought leadership initiatives, we empower senior-level procurement leaders to make informed strategic decisions and stay ahead in the rapidly evolving procurement landscape.

Our deep industry intelligence not only informs procurement leaders but also connects innovative solution providers with key decision-makers, fostering a dynamic ecosystem that drives the future of procurement and sourcing in the business world.

For more information, please visit wbrinsights.com.



Coupa® makes margins multiply through its community-generated AI and industry-leading total spend management platform for businesses large and small. Coupa AI is informed by trillions of dollars of direct and indirect spend data across a global network of 10M+ buyers and suppliers. We empower you with the ability to predict, prescribe, and automate smarter, more profitable business decisions to improve operating margins. Coupa is the margin multiplier company™.

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