Procurement Team Talent Management

The following Knowledge output has been generated by Chris Emberton, Procurement Director at Clifford Chance and Chair of the professional services SKG.

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Introduction

The success of a Procurement function is intrinsically linked to the capability and engagement of its team members. Procurement leaders need to invest appropriate time and effort in recruiting and retaining the right calibre of resources, to deliver in an increasingly competitive job market.

Procurement leaders will need to:

- Architect and promote an attractive employee proposition.
- Constantly review the skill set within their existing teams.
- Undertake skills gap analysis and structured development plans.
- Invest in training and development - upskilling or recruiting as required.

Within this knowledge document Chris Emberton highlights the steps he has taken to build a leading procurement team at Clifford Chance; one focussed on becoming the leading legal procurement team, through maximising the value the firm delivers from its suppliers.

At any given time each individual within a procurement team will be at various stages of their career development, they may also be at differing stages of their employment lifecycle.

The lifecycle stages of an employee can be defined as follows:

- **Attract** – Recruitment and selection stage, sourcing from the talent pool.
- **Development** – Learning, training and improvement plans.
- **Utilisation** – Utilising skills to support the procurement strategy.
- **Maintain** – Offering scope for development and career management.
- **Release** – Supporting employee exit into new career opportunities both intra organisation and externally.
Attract

High performing Procurement professionals are becoming increasingly aware of the limited talent pool in which they operate, as such they have an increased awareness of their value to an organisation.

Clifford Chance is committed to delivering a world-class service – providing the highest quality support, as efficiently and effectively as possible every time. To support the firm in delivering this goal requires a forward thinking, agile and market leading Procurement function. Increasingly companies must look beyond financial compensation as a sole means to attract talent.

Prospective applicants will often research the organisation and these searches need to highlight the culture of the organisation, the Procurement department and the many benefits to them in working for that company.

The best candidates will often see a new role as an opportunity to progress their longer-term career and it needs to be clear to them how the organisation will support their career journey and development.

At Clifford Chance this has been undertaken through:

- Team members presenting at conferences and events on subjects that reflect the culture of the Procurement department
- Contributing to articles and thought pieces
- Developing a recruitment and new starter pack that highlights the opportunities of working for the organisation
- Promoting positive role models within the department and team success
- Submitting entries for Procurement awards as a way of evidencing success
Develop

Before seeking to develop new and existing procurement team members it is important to initially identify the existing skill set within a team. At Clifford Chance, Procurement team members complete an annual self-assessment based on a pre-defined skills set.

It is not expected that each team member carries ‘all’ skills, but profiling offers the assessment of areas of strength within the team and areas that the individual or team may require support with, through additional training and development.

An example of a step by step development process that could be undertaken with the Procurement team is outlined below:
Self Assessment Template
Each Procurement team member at Clifford Chance is provided with a self assessment form to populate and asked to identify where they feel that their core skills sit, and then to identify areas for development
An example scoring profile is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical skills</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procurement policy and process</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement templates and tools</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDPR</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility and Modern Slavery</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply Chain Risk</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Procurement projects</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier relationship management</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category management and strategy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Contracts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analytics and reporting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement systems</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation and leading meeting skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line management and coaching</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior stakeholder engagement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravitas and influencing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and adapting your style</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the completion of this self-assessment, each team member undertakes a 1:1 appraisal with their line manager to validate the results and to further reflect on areas of additional training; this should build on their identified areas for development and map to their career aspirations.

Once signed off, the self-assessment tool is agreed between the individual and their line manager, the line manager is then able to generate a profile for each procurement team member, which offers an instant visual of core competencies and areas for future development and support:
**Team Mapping**

To allow senior management to visually review the skill set within the whole Procurement team, the individual profiles can be overlaid, this should instantly support team training and areas of focus. Any potential areas of risk exposure within the procurement function can be identified.
Building a Training Plan

Once each area of technical and soft skill development is assessed, line managers and directors can assess the training opportunities that are available.

There are many opportunities available to support the team members with skill development which may include a mix of:

- Internal team led training for the wider Procurement function.
- Partnering two members of staff on a project where one has a particular core strength.
- External training courses.
- Internal firm wide training on areas such as negotiation, presentation and management skills.
- CIPS or degree equivalents.
- Mentoring.

Some skills can only be developed through external training, this also provides networking opportunities and supports study programmes. Best practice can also be leveraged external senior level mentors who may be able to support one of your team members for 6-12 months.
Skill development

A standard training framework mapped to the self-assessment skills allows for easy creation of a structured development plan for each team member, with timelines for delivery. To support development of a leading procurement team, training should be factored into each team members schedule and investment should be made in regular offsite events.

Example Training schedule
Utilisation

Identified areas of strength within the team can be leveraged to support tasks that will ultimately allow you to achieve the overall procurement strategy.

Training should be designed to achieve the following goals:

- Allow individuals to become subject matter experts that mirror their strengths
- Ensure appropriate skill coverage across the team and minimise any single points of failure

Within your procurement team there will be individuals that have areas of strength; assigning these individuals to a specific task will give them a sense of ownership to deliver against the overall team objectives. Enabling team members to use their core skills should improve engagement and increase job satisfaction.

Enabling a team member who is less skilled in the technical area to partner up with a more experienced team member enables cross training and should increase an element of skill stretch and development.

Communication around the direction and clarity of key objectives and how these will meet the procurement strategy should remain a discussion point and focus for the team at all times.

Regularly celebrating the success of the team will increase not only morale but also improve stakeholder awareness of the value being generated by the procurement function.

Maintain

To retain and develop your procurement team, ongoing emphasis could be placed on individuals career progression. Having an open conversation with them about their career aspirations both before joining the organisation and during their time working there should maximise their engagement. Aligning the individuals aspirations and needs with the companies is the key to ensuring that their technical and soft skills develop and grow which will be to the benefit of both the organisation and the individual themselves.

Release

As Procurement continues to develop and evolve there may come a point where a team member is no longer a good fit for your department or who's career aspirations cannot be met within your organisation. This presents an interesting challenge for proactive discussion between line managers and individual team members. If the individual is capable but in the wrong role then there is a potential opportunity to support the transition of that team member to more suited opportunities within the organisation where they can excel. It is incumbent on the line manager and department head to be honest about available
opportunities rather than to retain talent at all costs to the detriment of the individual. This
short-term approach may undermine the goodwill and engagement of the wider department.

High performing individuals may progress at a pace faster than a function is able to
accommodate, there are after all only so many roles and opportunities available within one
organisation or department. It may therefore be that the next career opportunity for a team
member sits outside of the organisation.

Again, it is better to be honest and open with the individual regarding their options; if they are
ready to take a step up and this can't be accommodated then support them in finding the right
role elsewhere. This is a much easier conversation if this open approach has been embedded
at the earlier stages of the process. It is preferable to have a team member deliver excellent
performance for two years and leave for a new role elsewhere than have a team member
perform poorly and stay for several years.

Ultimately it is preferable that departing team members leave with a positive experience of
working within the organisation; we never know what future opportunities may present
themselves should the individual wish to return later in their career.

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Templates available

- Procurement Maturity review Template
- Procurement Self Assessment Template
a) Pitch. Look inside your organisation and define a scope you're confident will support your organisational needs.

b) Good chemistry between Marketing and the Agencies, and the people who will be handling the account, not just the senior members participating in the pitch process. Ask who will be handling your account and push to meet face to face, as part of the pitching team maybe? Ask the question 'Can I form a collaborative relationship with this individual to discuss business on a regular basis?'

c) Don't set agencies up to fail, a successful marketing pitch should clearly define and communicate SMART objectives. Seek understanding and input from agencies involved, utilise their core skills and specialist knowledge. Your expectations and ideas of success may be different to theirs, so work to align KPI measurements with a contract, ensuring ways of working and review process are all clearly defined.

The author is a well-known evangelist and thought leader on blockchain, and particularly its adoption in insurance and legal sectors. He provides bespoke education and consultancy through his own practice. https://www.linkedin.com/in/garynuttall/