DAY IN THE LIFE
CATEGORY MANAGER

GILLIAN SHINE - CATEGORY MANAGER - ELEVATE EAST LONDON

Describe the main responsibilities of your role.

I lead and manage EU and non-EU procurement processes within Adult and Children’s Social Care, Housing and Environment, IT and General Goods and Services.

How does your average day start?

A typical day is arriving at the office and first checking my diary commitments for the day so I can then aim to plan my day ahead. This usually starts by looking through my emails and responding to urgent ones, then picking up my procurement projects in order of priority.

What is your favourite part of your job?

I didn’t envisage that I would end up doing procurement as a career and I fell into it after working as a Senior Support Officer in a procurement team, but I do enjoy it. I have found no two procurements are the same and I find it interesting to learn about different services and what other areas/departments do. Since working in procurement, I also enjoy feeling that I am on a continuous learning curve.

What is the most fulfilling part of your role?

Following completion of awarding a contract, knowing that I have contributed to achieving value for money for the organisation/company I am currently working for.

What is the most difficult part of your job?

The most difficult part of my job is managing stakeholders’ commitment to timescales on procurement projects, but I am happy to say this doesn’t happen all the time.
What do you feel are the key skills needed to be successful in your role?

Good communication, project management, tender/specification writing and negotiation skills. Some auditing skills may also prove to be useful.

I personally found my previous auditing experience to be a key skill that I am able to utilise when introducing key performance indicators that test and measure the quality assurance (QA) principles of a contract. These measures are introduced within tender specifications for all procurements that I am responsible for, through to embedment within the agreed terms and condition of the contract.

How and why did you get started in the profession?

During my working career I was a PA for more than 10 years and decided that I wanted a career change, but I didn't know what exactly I wanted to do.

Two years later, I ended up as a Senior Support Officer in a procurement team where I was offered the opportunity to study in Supply Chain Management via the NVQ route. Then, through progression of roles and support of team members and management in the same team, I qualified for my MCIPS. I must admit I was initially daunted by the idea of studying late in life, but I now realise the studying paid off and I am glad I did it.

Are you a CIPS member and if so and how has CIPS helped you in your career?

As said above, I am a CIPS member and I have previously utilised the tools available on the CIPS website. This helped me in gaining my qualification and has provided useful background information when undertaking a procurement project.

Most employers look for procurement professionals who are MCIPS qualified, so having MCIPS on your CV also helps you stand out along with your experience.

What advice would you give someone who wants to progress to your position?

I would suggest they consider studying for MCIPS or a procurement qualification (if they have not already) and ask their team and manager/management for support to help them expand on their procurement knowledge and experience.

What do you think the next step in your career will be?

I see myself continuing my career in procurement and would like to aim for a more senior procurement role in the future.