IN SEARCH OF

INFLUENCE

A STUDY INTO THE CURRENT STATE OF INFLUENCING SKILLS IN PROCUREMENT, AND IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF INFLUENCING SKILLS.

Author: Gordon Donovan MSc FCIPS
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Abstract

Many academic and non-academic papers have identified the need for an improved approach to soft skills within procurement, with most papers identifying that procurement leaders indicate that the current levels of these skill sets are not adequate. One of the main soft skills required are Influencing skills, which are relevant both to the individual and the overall function and have consistently been identified as a key requirement for procurement professionals.

The literature review identifies several areas that procurement can look to in helping to develop an approach to improving these skills, both in terms of what to improve as well as how to improve them. This was in the large part corroborated by the primary research which was conducted via a series of interviews with leading procurement professionals drawn from a range of industries with differing geographical and procurement backgrounds. The primary research also identified a way to develop these skills that was not identified by literature review, namely networking.

Finally the paper concludes with some suggested approaches to develop these skills that all procurement professionals could utilize and proposes that further study with a wider study size could be utilized to further confirm these conclusions.
Introduction & Background

Procurement is on a journey. Its worldwide evolution from a back office function towards a business integrated “C Level” reporting function (Pinkerton, 2001, Dobler et al, 2003, Moorhouse, 2006 Tassabehji, et al 2008, Schweiger, 2015, Musseau, 2015), is ongoing. As procurement matures and evolves, the skill sets required to deliver the objectives of a C Level reporting function change. Over the last 5 years, the skills themselves have changed as the table below (CIPS 2015) indicates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>2010 Rank</th>
<th>2014 Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team working</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply Market Analysis</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost of Ownership</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Strategy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Knowledge</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Management</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 CIPS list of skills (2015)

Procurement leaders are well-aware of both the existing “war for talent” (Supply Management, 2013) (Ariba, 2015) (Chick et al 2015), and the need for agile and adaptable procurement professionals (CIPS, 2015), in a region (Australia) where the profession is seen as “less well developed” than in other markets. The Australian market has a number
of unique procurement characteristics as a result of its distance from import and export markets, the currency volatility and dependence on primary extraction industries, small population across vast distances, and, largely resulting, limited supply options.

Previous research papers (Donovan et al 2015, Giunipero et al. 2006, Tassabehji et al 2008, Schweiger 2015, Musseau 2015) have identified the need for influencing skills within Procurement, and as the table from CIPS (2015) shows, its importance has increased over the last 5 years from 12th most important to 4th. Plenty has been written about the need for all functions (and therefore people) to be considered influential, and this will be discussed in the literature review. However little has been written to specifically align this to procurement, and also how to develop these skills. In Identifying influence as the most suitable skills for this research study, the author considered investigating the other three skills cited that were ranked higher in the report from CIPS, i.e. Strategic thinking, teamwork and supply market analysis.

Influencing was selected as the author felt that as this skill was both useful in an individual skill set (the ability to influence) but also a functional objective (increasing sphere of influence) which gives it a greater degree of importance in the authors’ opinion.

Aims & Objectives

This paper seeks to understand the common traits of influential people in procurement, and how to increase these influencing skills. Influencing could be defined as the ability to get people to do what you want (Mullins 1996) or changing people’s behaviour to act in your favour through the use of persuasion (Manning et al 2003), or wielding effective tactics of persuasion (Goleman 1998)

In order to achieve the aims this paper will answer four research questions;

- What does influence mean within a procurement context?
- What is the current state of influence within procurement in Australia?
• Identify what the common traits of influential people are.

• How best to develop and train these skills.

As a qualitative study, this paper will begin with an in-depth literature review which will review the evolving nature of procurement and the goals for its success, identify the key themes for understanding influence, how these requirements may manifest themselves for procurement and also how to develop these skills.
Literature Review

Procurement evolution & the increasing need for influence

Evolution or Revolution

Procurement across the world is evolving from a tactical operation, a person who receives selects, purchases and delivers (Babbage 1832) to a strategic enabler of value (Pinkerton, 2001, Moorhouse 2006, KPMG 2011). This means that, the professional skill sets required by procurement professionals must change. The profession must operate with a dual purpose as both a deliverer and an enabler, as a cost-reducer and a deliverer of tangible value (Moorhouse 2006, CIPS 2012, Schweiger 2015, Musseau 2015).

This evolution has gained pace largely since the early 1980’s as the awareness that procurement can deliver an enhanced strategic awareness, can give greater flexibility, and can develop stronger entrepreneurial thinking in the supply area which can improve the supply security and lower the input costs of any industrial company (Kraljic 1983).

Following Kraljics paper, more academic papers have been written on the value of procurement which coincided with the rise of outsourcing, which is where non-core services traditionally performed by the organization is transferred to outside providers, which has been a growing trend over the past 20 years (Barrar et al 2006). This rise in outsourcing has required an increase in the maturity of procurement in order to deliver these new complex contracts.

Modern businesses are faced with new sets of challenges, such as globalization, increased risk, financial turmoil, uncertain resources and government intervention. Faced with these challenges many organizations now look to procurement for additional value (Chick et al 2015).
As supply markets become more evolved, suppliers become more concentrated. This impacts the procurement maturity model and forces the procurement function to progress from an initial position of transactional through to strategic sourcing with its traditional levers of supply base consolidation and more adversarial negotiations. The next steps include a move toward category management and its more holistic strategy approach to value chain management. The changing approaches of the procurement department impact the skills needed by its professionals (CIPS, 2015).

Procurement must continue to evolve. There are differing views over where procurement is headed from increased innovation, total cost management and value creation from supplier relationships (ESM Business School 2013), to where many of the current activities that do not get redistributed internally, will be outsourced over the next decades (CIPS 2012) to incremental rather than drastic and seems to have been absorbed with very little impact on them (Tassabehji et al 2007). Ultimately these changes will be driven both by the needs of the respective organizations, the maturity of the organizations, the markets in which they operate, and the people who populate both the organizations and procurement functions. It is interesting to note that 2 of the largest companies in the world, Rio Tinto & Apple, now have former procurement leaders as their CEO in Sam Walsh (Rio Tinto) and Tim Cook (Apple).
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A recent study (Tassabehji et al 2007) identified that many procurement leaders felt that procurement in their organisations was still perceived as an administrative function, and even where they were perceived to be strategic many still struggle to communicate the value of their role throughout their organization.

A 2015 survey (AT Kearny 2015) conducted using the ROSMA benchmarking tool, indicated that Australian procurement still lags North America and Europe in terms of its maturity and capability.

Substantial benefits are being achieved in combination with relatively low procurement costs; Good spend under management and speed to market (velocity), which could lead to a view that sourcing specialists are cherry picking easy-to-source categories with potentially high yields. This could also lead to the view that sourcing is not getting access to the more complex categories which will improve outcomes to the business and increase additional benefits.

Tackling more complex categories may initially lead to diminishing returns on supply management assets invested, but according to the report, organisations will enjoy an increase in absolute dollars saved.

A 2013 report (CEB 2013) identified the differing roles that procurement can take. It tracks the potential evolution of the function and offers some ideas for its development. (See figure below)
As procurement functions mature, they move up the hierarchy of needs of this model, and concentrate on the greater value adding activities, however the report cautions that the activities below where procurement sits still need to be delivered, but procurement must be able to influence the business itself and create a cost conscious culture (The Faculty 2014) to enable the business to carry out the activities as part of its standard ways of working. This is being delivered through technology to enable the business to self-deliver on the tactical execution of strategy; however procurement still needs to influence the business to undertake the activities that previously were seen as the role of procurement.

**Procurements functional Influence**

Procurement generally influences less than 60% of spend across direct and indirect categories (Dobler et al 2002, KPMG 2012). Several sources (Hackett Group 2014, Ardent Partners 2015), state that one of the highest-ranked issues facing procurement is the
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expansion of the scope of procurement’s spend influence including not only spend that is actively sourced, but also purchases made elsewhere in the business, to ensure that a best-practices-driven sourcing process is used.

Generating savings are still one of the key drivers of all procurement departments (Ardent partners 2015). Companies will make more savings if procurement professionals learn to be more influential with business partners (CEB 2015)

For Procurement to achieve its goals, more work needs to be done to align with key stakeholders and understand the business operations to become a true strategic partner. This means moving up the value chain to ensure that the function is involved much earlier in the decision-making processes and clearly demonstrating how active involvement adds tangible value to both the bottom and the top lines. (KPMG 2012, Schweiger 2015, Musseau 2015).

Approximately 8% of savings promised by global sourcing initiatives can be lost because business partners don’t want to participate in spend agreements or because they believe those agreements are not in their best interest, and another 6% of savings promised can be lost because business partners refuse to comply with supplier contracts that have been put in place (CEB 2015).

A more influential procurement team will achieve as much as 4.4 times greater savings than those with less influence (CEB 2015). These savings come from three main areas: more collaborative business partners will tend to make procurement aware of more savings opportunities; business partners that are more compliant with policies mean more savings are made once agreements are signed; and when procurement teams are included earlier in the sourcing process than they would have been, they can achieve better savings rates than if business partners are left to negotiate by themselves.
The goals of raising procurement’s spend influence and reducing costs are tightly linked (Hackett 2014). It is likely that many procurement organizations, having reached the end of cost reductions possible in categories that are sourced today using traditional sourcing methods, are interested in taking on new spend categories in an effort to unearth additional savings.

Leading organizations are not treating sourcing as an ad-hoc event, but rather as part of a whole of category life approach to category management. Doing so requires working with a wide range of stakeholders to influence their spending behavior. It also calls for skills that are outside procurement’s traditional areas of expertise. The output of this will be a drive to deliver more innovation into our organizations, and the greatest repository of this innovation is the supply base. (Hackett group 2014)

In order to tap into this knowledge then the “old” price negotiation focus will change to have a greater emphasis on building relationships with key suppliers and rapidly extracting innovation and other sources of value from them (Ariba 2012)

As Procurement is the main function working with suppliers, influencing those supplier relationships is now recognized as one of the main functions of the profession (Chick 2015). If procurement is to achieve the Supplier innovation (CEB 2013) revenue enablement goal then these relationships need to be developed.

In their analysis of a range of Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) programs, the international consultancy, State of Flux (2014) reports that there are 6 main drivers of these SRM programs. Of these 6 the main areas for this report are:

Business drivers and value: The 2014 report stated that there was still a disconnect between the business drivers and objectives of a SRM program, although many reported additional benefits post contract;
Stakeholder Engagement: the 2014 report indicated that none of the three main groups of stakeholders are fully engaged;

Governance and Process: a traditional strength for procurement as a function, this is mirrored by the findings in the 2014 report identifying 60% of respondents have appropriate process in place;

People and Skills: the 2014 report indicates that the biggest gaps for relationship management skills such as communication, influencing and strategic thinking;

Relationship Development & Culture: The report suggests that truly innovative relationships are rare and organizations rarely utilize 360 degree feedback tools and trust appears to be limited.

This could indicate an over reliance on policy and process at the expense of aligning programs such as supplier relationship management, or category management, with business needs and not building internal and external relationships.

The way that procurement is perceived both internally and externally is now hugely important, driving a different type of skill set required for the procurement practitioner (Tassabehji et al 2007). In a recent interview, David Noble CEO of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply stated that “The value of these soft skills is still being overlooked in the profession and in business, and yet they are such a crucial part of what makes a true professional” (Supply Management 2015).

This drive for what many writers (Tassabehji 2007, Chick 2015, Donovan et al, 2015) call soft or people skills is now what drives many development plans and programs.
People & Skills

Industry reports indicate that up to eighty percent of people possess the skills required to perform their jobs now, however this is reducing over the next few years. Industry expectations reveal a seven percent drop over a four year period (ACCI, 2011) which whilst not statistically concerning directly, the trend of reducing skills is concerning.

Within Procurement, industry reports indicate that the current level of skills required to deliver the strategies required by procurement is declining. In 2014, 57% of Chief Procurement Officers (CPO) indicated that their teams did not have the skills required. In 2016 that number is now 62% (Faculty 2014, Deloitte 2016).

Given that 3rd party purchased goods and services normally covers at a minimum two-thirds of company revenue, and the strong correlation between a company’s procurement capabilities, culture and success and financial performance, organisations which do not have such procurement capabilities would miss out on significant value (McKinsey&Company, 2013).

Procurement then will need to recruit and develop talent that more closely mirrors the people in the organizations they serve as internal stakeholders. (KPMG 2013) in order to look for these new skill sets.

Competency

Understanding which competencies make a difference is crucial to driving value. Those organisations that are best able to build strong capabilities in those competencies when identified can have the most positive impact in terms of their organisational performance in their market sector (McKinsey&Company, 2014).

High level procurement traits might be classified into the following three simple groups: capable; influential; and innovative (IBM, 2013).
Capable

A definition of cable is “effective delivery of traditional procurement capabilities” (Donovan et al 2015).

Whilst these functional competencies, which used to be the key focus of competency reviews, are still required (Melnyk et al, 2006), they are simply seen as mandatory requirements: “procurement excellence” alone is not enough, organisations need people with commercial and leadership competencies, and who can work within a cohesive team (Fawcett, 2009).

This is the challenge for organisations and requires a shift from “merely procurement” to relationship building. In addition, and in a similar vein, sector specific competencies are becoming less important and are also considered as foundations (McKinsey&Company, 2014). The majority of the research consistently showed competencies in this “capable” trait as the foundation, which married with the authors experience as both a procurement professional and procurement trainer.

Innovation

A definition of innovation is; “The identification of new and ground-breaking ideas from a diverse range of options”. (Donovan et al 2015)

Innovation generally refers to changing or creating more effective processes, products and ideas, and can increase the likelihood of a business succeeding. Businesses that innovate create more efficient work processes and have better productivity and performance. The Supplier Relationship Management report (State of flux 2013) identified that truly innovative relationships are rare and trust appears to be limited. So does this mean that in order for innovation to happen and for suppliers to innovate for us that we need to build trust.

There are 3 levels of trust between a buyer and seller (Sako 1997). Contractual trust rests on a shared view of honesty and promise keeping. Competence trust requires a shared
understanding of ways of working and technical requirements. Goodwill trust means that you put yourself in a position where the other party could exploit you (by working closely together and revealing information potentially damaging to your organization) but trust that the other party chooses not to do so. When reviewed in this light, Sako suggests that there seems to be a hierarchy of trust, with fulfilling a minimum set of obligations constituting contractual trust, and keeping to a broader set constituting goodwill trust.

A move from contractual trust to goodwill trust involves a gradual expansion in the jointly held beliefs about acceptable behavior. This also suggests that to move toward goodwill trust has a relationship with time.

**Influential**

A definition of influential is; Having influence within the organization over not just procurement but also strategic decisions which may, or may not, be influenced by procurement; and having influence over external relationships that contribute to the organizations success (McKinsey&Company, 2013).

A 2008 study identified that one of the new core values for procurement practitioners should be influencing skills so as to gain buy in internally, (Tassabehji 2008)

In 2015 the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS) launched the first global standard for practitioners. This was based on extensive research with over 5000 procurement professionals. The standards have two aims; Enhancing organisational performance & improving personal performance. The 11 competencies are

Position & influence, External environment, technology, spend management, contracting, sourcing, delivering outcomes, metrics and measurement, developing teams, developing self, ethics.

Of these eleven, five could be identified as soft skills, with the remaining competencies traditional harder “procurement’ skills.
Of particular note for this study is competency one, the “position & influence” competency. Within this area of competence CIPS identifies the inputs into being influential. These include:

- Superior communication skills, which includes developing and delivering formal presentations.
- Identifying and segmenting stakeholders.
- Developing a communications plan that aligns with stakeholders interests.
- Ensuring that the procurement strategy aligns with the business strategy.
- Develop supplier relationship plans that correlate to the importance to the business and its customers.
Continuing this shift of soft skills into the main competency area, other procurement organizations have also sought to update and clarify their skill sets for the modern procurement professional. Optimum procurement group (Chick 2015) has suggested that skills fall into three main areas:

- Fundamentals - How you apply your skills,
- Competencies - How you solve problems
- Personality - How you approach change

The traditional skills are contained in the fundamentals (or knowledge section) the softer skills are contained in competencies and the personality traits are contained in the last area. This shift toward recognition that analytical skills are now the base entry point and the softer skills are now more of the new technical competency means that procurement needs to understand how it develops these skills.
Learning Development options

Each person prefers different learning styles and techniques. Learning styles group common ways that people learn. Everyone has a mix of learning styles. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances.

Differing writers have identified a series of differing learning styles. Gardner (1983) suggested that the learning styles are:

- Visual (spatial): A preference for using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural (auditory-musical): A preference for using sound and music.
- Verbal (linguistic): A preference for using words, both in speech and writing.
- Physical (kinesthetic): A preference for using your body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical (mathematical): A preference for using logic, reasoning and systems.
- Social (interpersonal): A preference to learn in groups or with other people.
- Solitary (intrapersonal): A preference to work alone and use self-study

Kolb Learning Cycle

A slightly different perspective on learning also points to the importance of using a variety of learning styles. Kolb (1985) suggest that effective learning proceeds around a cycle, as shown below.
- Experiencing – Doing something;
- Reviewing – thinking about what's happened;
- Concluding – drawing some conclusions,
- Planning, deciding what to do next

Honey & Mumford

Based on Kolb's work four distinct learning styles were developed: Activist, Theorist; Pragmatist and Reflector (Honey and Mumford 1986). They stated that these are the learning approaches that individuals naturally prefer and they recommend that in order to maximise one's own personal learning each learner ought to understand both their learning style and seek out opportunities to learn using that style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning style</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activist</td>
<td>Activists are those people who learn by doing. Activists need to get their hands dirty, to dive in with both feet first. Have an open-minded approach to learning, involving themselves fully and without bias in new experiences.</td>
<td>□ brainstorming □ problem solving □ group discussion □ puzzles □ competitions □ role-play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning style</td>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatist</strong></td>
<td>These people need to be able to see how to put the learning into practice in the real world. Abstract concepts and games are of limited use unless they can see a way to put the ideas into action in their lives. Experimenters, trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work.</td>
<td>☐ time to think about how to apply learning in reality</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>☐ case studies</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>☐ problem solving</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ discussion</td>
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<td><strong>Reflector</strong></td>
<td>These people learn by observing and thinking about what happened. They may avoid leaping in and prefer to watch from the sidelines. Prefer to stand back and view experiences from a number of different perspectives, collecting data and taking the time to work towards an appropriate conclusion.</td>
<td>☐ paired discussions</td>
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<td>☐ self analysis questionnaires</td>
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<td>☐ personality questionnaires</td>
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<td>☐ observing activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>☐ feedback from others</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ coaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theorist</strong></td>
<td>These learners like to understand the theory behind the actions. They need models, concepts and facts in order to engage in the learning process. Prefer to analyse and synthesise, drawing new information into a systematic and logical 'theory'.</td>
<td>☐ Models</td>
</tr>
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<td>☐ statistics</td>
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<td>☐ stories</td>
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<td>☐ background information</td>
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<td>☐ applying theories</td>
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**Table 2 Honey & Mumford learning styles (University of Leicester)**

Honey and Mumford then draw the link between the learning cycle and the learning styles
Other approaches

There has been much written about the application of 70/20/10 methods. Tough (1979) argues that the majority of adult learning (about 70%) takes place outside institutional frameworks, while 20% is supported by those who are not professional helpers, such as supervisors, colleagues, parents and friends. Professional helpers, such as teachers, trainers and counsellors, account for only 10%.

This has been interpreted by Kajewski and Masden (2012) to mean:

- 70%—informal, on the job, experience based, stretch projects and practice
- 20%—coaching, mentoring, developing through others
- 10%—formal learning interventions and structured courses.

The application of this into development platforms has gained momentum in recent years and this has impacted how people develop formal programs. For example according to Kajewski and Masden (2012) an unnamed Australian firm has 70% of learning is experience on the job to integrate, practice and master new skills, knowledge or changes in behavior. 20% of learning is from exposure to others such as learning through the observation of others (mentors, coaches) and reflection on the impact of this behavior on one’s own practice.
10% of learning is from formal programs designed for the acquisition of knowledge or skills through carefully programmed instruction. Whereas an Australian public sectors program is more simplistic in that 70% of learning is experiential, 20% of learning is relationship based and 10% of learning is formal.

What is clear is that despite the differences in application the methodology allows multiple ways for practitioners to develop their skills as opposed to formal training alone.

**Reflection v Reflexion**

Within the learning community there has been discussion, (Hibbert et al 2014) about the differences between reflection and reflexion as ways of learning and retaining knowledge.

Whereas traditional (passive) learning draws on reading textbooks, attending lectures and taking exams, Reflection, or self-reflection as defined by Kolb (1985), Honey and Mumford (1986) and others, relates to individuals who examine their actions, gains feedback and seeks to improve the outcome. During the reflection process, we may not consider others' thoughts or ideas, rather we consider our original ideas and identify ways to improve or do differently the same ideas.

Reflexive inquiry is focused more on the thoughts or actions of others, observing their impact on the wider environment and then understanding how it impacts the individual.

We therefore may claim that reflection is meant for a single individual, whereas reflexive is for, or includes, many individuals (Collins 2012).
Influence

The literature review thus far has identified that Procurement as a function needs to expand its influence (internally on spend and understanding and aligning with internal business people and requirements and externally on driving innovation and supplier relationships) and that procurement practitioners need to expand their own personal influence (along with other soft skills). Therefore in order to meet its aims the report now needs to identify what is meant by influencing and identify what these common traits may be.

Key Traits

The ability to influence is one of the essential skills for leaders across all functions. It involves more soft skills than analytics and it can be tough to explain exactly what it is (Forbes 2011). It is clear however, that influence matters, and as procurement and indeed the wider business continues to evolve at ever increasing speeds into an interconnected, interdependent, increasingly global environment, and it will matter more.

To be considered an effective influencer many writers (Goleman 1998, Sako 1997) suggest that one of the observable outputs of an influential person is seeing that trust is being built over a period of time with their customers, colleagues, and direct reports.

According to Forbes (2011) influencers must be self-aware. An individual’s influence depends on their own dominant style. The style chosen could depend on the situation and person that is being influenced. The style could be any of the following (Discovery Learning 2009);

- Asserting: This is where you insist on your ideas being heard, and you challenge the ideas of others
- Convincing: This is where you put forward ideas and offer logical reasoning, which convinces others of your point of view
Negotiating: This is where you look for compromises and make concessions, in order that you can reach an outcome that satisfies your greater interest.

Bridging: This is where you build relationships and connect with others, using listening and understanding to build coalitions.

Inspiring: This is where you advocate a position and then encourages others to come round to the idea by sharing a sense of purpose.

When choosing an influencing style, which includes the use of appropriate influencing tactics, the influencer must take note of which the critical stakeholders are that you need to convince in order to achieve your objective. According to Forbes (2015) a person who is more logical and uses facts and data would be best suited to using a convincing approach, which is based in logic, data and expertise.

As influencing is a leadership skill then a leader needs a vision, and influencing requires that this vision is communicated effectively. According to Keller and Price, (2011) there are four levers of influence. These are:

- A compelling story: this helps people to understand what is being asked of them.
- Reinforcement mechanisms: these are systems and structures that support any changes that are put in place.
- Skills: Ensuring that everyone has the skills required to behave in a new way.
- Role Modelling: people should be able to see leaders and colleagues behaving differently, which will encourage them to follow suit.

Carnegie (1937) wrote, that in order to become effective influencers then we need to aim this at an individual level and that the steps for effective influencing are;

If you want to make a good first impression, smile.
If you want others to like you, don’t criticize them.

If you want others to gladly do you favours, show your appreciation frequently

If you want to be interesting yourself, be interested in others.

Show your appreciation for others by talking about what’s important to them

We like people who show their appreciation and remember things about us, like our names.

Avoid all arguments – they cannot be won

Never tell others they are wrong; they will only resent you.

Whenever you are wrong, admit it immediately and clearly.

To be convincing, get others to say “yes” as often as possible.

Steele (2009) suggests that this could mean that influencers need to show warmth in dealing with the person you wish to influence.

**Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is the capacity of people’s ability to recognize their own and to understand and recognized others emotions and use that information to guide behavior and therefore influence. Many leadership programs now concentrate on leaders emotional quotient score, and this is also beginning to guide recruitment.

Reynolds (2003) built the persuasion tools model based on linking persuasion skills to emotional intelligence. Goleman (1998) argues that just having one persuasion skill alone, and deploying just one may not be good enough to gain influence. He argues that being influential is having the ability to sense what other kinds of appeals will persuade key decision makers. Critically, Goleman argues, it is noticing when one tactic isn’t working and when to switch to a different one which adds impact to an individual.
In echoing Carnegie (1937) Goleman suggests that it is crucial to gain rapport with the person wishing to be influenced. This is done by reading emotional cues and having empathy for the other person’s situation. This follows Carnegie stating that in order to be interesting, you need to be interested. That is to try and understand what is important to others.

Communication

In looking for how to build rapport and gain understanding of the other party’s situation, we need to understand methods of communication. Communication planning is an essential part of influencing and the lack of a basic communication plan will fail to deliver the messages intending to be conveyed.

When planning communication, Donovan (2015) suggests that a simple communication plan should cover;

- Who do you want to communicate with? Is it a person or department;
- What’s the purpose/objective; What does success look like?
- What is the key message? – i.e. what do you want them to remember?;
- How will this be delivered? - We get most of our clues of the emotional intent behind people’s words from non-verbal sources. And when the two are in conflict, we believe the non-verbal every time (Mehrabian 1981);
- Who will deliver it? – It’s important to realise that we may not be the best person to deliver the message.
- How often will this be delivered?;
- What will the actual words be that are being used
Goleman (1998) suggests that the art of communication is about listening openly and sending convincing messages. Ferrari (2012) suggests that listening is the active and disciplined activity of probing and challenging the information garnered from others to improve its quality and quantity and that the best listeners demonstrate three consistent behaviors:

- Show respect
- Keep quiet
- Challenge assumptions

Rackham (1988) agrees that listeners often are the best negotiators and the best negotiators say the least and ask the most amounts of good questions. In developing the SPIN selling technique, Rackham (1988) identified four types of questions:

- Situation; finding out the facts. This links well to the reason, facts or logic tactics as described below, and promotes the use of open questions to gain understanding.
- Problem; uncovering the difficulties, problems and dissatisfactions. Further use of open questions and now bringing in more emotion to the questioning.
- Implication; investigating the effects, consequences and overall implications of the problem. This now starts to use more closed and leading type questions, and also plays on the emotions of the individual.
- Need Pay-Off; enquiring about the usefulness of a potential solution, the value it could present and how important it is. This links to bargaining or exchange tactics and lends itself to more of a closed question.
Manningham and Robertson (2003) in two volumes of work in influence and negotiation suggest that influence is about using persuasion to influence people to move from original positions. 6 influencing strategies emerged from their research

- Reason – the use of logic or facts to justify a request
- Assertion – making a direct request and using emotion to underline our need
- Exchange – The trading of one thing for another
- Courting favour – being friendly or positive with them (see Carnegie)
- Coercion - The implication of negative outcomes on not agreeing
- Partnership – gaining the support of people both within and outside the organisation.

In developing the research on persuasion tools, Reynolds (2003) developed the Persuasion Tools Model (see figure 1 below) based on work by the psychologist Kenneth Berrien. It links negotiation and persuasion style to emotional intelligence (EI) and echoes the work of Manning and Robertson.
In this model, the horizontal axis represents influencing, which Reynolds (2003) states is a measure of your overall persuasion capability. The vertical axis represents the level of intuition required.

**Emotion**
Using emotion effectively in negotiation involves understanding the emotions and feelings of the people that are being negotiating with to project influence and deciding on how to make them feel. Steele (2009) suggests that key words include disappointed, and excited both to convey the feeling of the influencer and an attempt to get others to share in these feelings.

**Logic**
With logic, facts and data are the key ways to make your case. Logic can be used if the individual has low intuition, but a high influencing capability. The use of data and facts help here, Steele (2009) suggests that giving too many facts at once is dangerous and can be counterproductive as it could confuse rather than convince.
**Bargaining**
Bargaining is one of the easiest and most popular methods of negotiation. It involves the effective trading of 2 or more variables. This then means that the influencer needs to understand the value of the variable when trading to both parties (Steele 2009). Therefore whilst easier (and potentially more palatable) the amount of preparation and research required is more extensive.

**Compromise**
Compromise is considered the least powerful of all the negotiating styles, and it may be all that's available to less-skilled negotiators. Compromise differs from bargaining as it involves a single variable and generally leads to people meeting in the middle of each other's starting point (Steele 2009). This therefore means that if you start more extreme it leads to a better outcome.

Cole (2011) suggests that influencing tactics include;

- **Rational Persuasion** – use of explanations, logic and facts to show that a request is feasible; this aligns to Logic or Reason above
- **Pressure** – persistent reminding of what is required, this could be deemed a form of coercion which is a subset of emotion
- **Legitimating** – Established authority by using rules or policies (i.e. it’s not me it’s the rules) this aligns to coercion again
- **Apprising** – What’s in it for you, this is a form of bargaining
- **Consultation** – Getting others to “own” the strategy, this aligns with the partnership strategy
- **Ingratiation** – use of praise and expressions of confidence in the others ability to deliver the outcome, this aligns to emotion
- **Personal Appeal** – Use of a personal favour, this aligns to emotion
- **Exchange** – the offer of one thing for another, this aligns to bargaining
**Power and influence**

Kelly (2009) writes that a leader’s effectiveness is affected by their power level and influencing skills. As stated a key trait of a successful leader is about influencing the behaviour of others (Cole 2011). Power is the ability to influence others to get them to do things. So we can assume that power is a source of influence. Power can be perceived by others positively or negatively, yet we must understand the origins of power and its usefulness in terms of deployment as an effective tool to influence.

There are five bases of power (French and Raven 1959) coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert. A 6th base informational power was later identified (Raven 1965).

**Legitimate Power**
Legitimate Power is formal authority delegated to the holder of the position. This is the most obvious and also the most important kind of power. This type of hierarchical power is often used in management positions in order to achieve the goals for the holder of this power.

**Referent Power**
Referent Power means the power or ability of individuals to attract others and build loyalty. It’s based on the charisma and interpersonal skills of the power holder and is the second least obvious power, but the most effective.

**Expert Power**
Expert Power is an individual's power deriving from the skills or expertise of the person and the organization's needs for those skills and expertise. This could be industry experts who make and publish opinions; it could also be the actions of their competitors so that they are keeping up with technological developments.
Information Power
Power does not have a strict need to 'look the part of a professional', but they must keep up to date with research, and be persuasive. This could be people who have been in the organization and know who the key people are, it could also be the subject matter experts within the departments as well as the suppliers.

Reward Power
Reward Power depends upon the ability of the power wielder to confer valued rewards, such as benefits, time off, promotions or increases in pay or bonus.

Coercive Power
Coercive Power means the application of negative influences onto employees. It might refer to the ability to demote or to withhold other rewards. Coercive Power tends to be the most obvious but least effective form of power as it builds resentment and resistance within the targets of Coercive Power. Research has demonstrated (Cousins et al.2006, Tassabehji et al 2008), that internal status and role integration act as important enablers to achieving internal influence.

Influencing Styles
In looking at the application of these influencing tactics, Manningham and Robertson (2003) suggest that these will impacted by two dimensions of influence.

Strategist - Optimist
The extent to which individuals grasp opportunities when they arise, as opposed to those who work systematically toward a plan. Strategists tend to favour the use of reason, partnership and assertion for their tactics, whereas Optimists use courting favour and exchange.

Collaborator – Battler
The extent to which individuals assert and defend their own position. Collaborators use partnership, reason, courting favour and exchange to influence, whereas Battlers favour coercion and assertion.
Manningham and Robertson (2003) assert that each style is independent of the other and therefore it can be represented as per the figure below.

![Manning & Robertson Model](Picture 7)

Whilst many of these influencing traits have been described as one-on-one situations, they can also be used to influence large organizations. Team-building exercises within an organization can bring employees closer together so that they work as one – a key element in successful procurement. If large teams can be relied upon to work strategically, then a leader need only focus on influencing a layer of management in order to influence change.
Conclusions

In reviewing all of the available literature, we can conclude that there is significant advocacy for the understanding and use of multiple tactics tailored to the specific situation. Most tactics can be aligned back to the main 4 tactics as defined by Reynolds (2003), these being Emotion, Logic, Bargaining and Compromise with the others identified by Cole (2011) and Manningham (2003) being subsets of these 4.

It is Goleman (1988) that suggests that deploying one is not enough, and Carnegie (1937), who understands that influencing, when it happens, happens with one person at a time.

Procurement itself is seeing a change in the traditional competencies from the harder analytical skills to the perceived soft skills according to the reports from Hackett (2014), KPMG (2011, 13), Mckinsey (2014).

There is also a range of ways that individuals can learn and process this learning.

Missing from the literature reviews are the practical applications for procurement in Australia, how procurement practitioners in Australia feel their levels of influence are currently standing, what the key traits of an Australian procurement professional are how these can be best developed

The author will now conduct primary research with leaders in procurement and those who manage or heavily interact with procurement professionals to find out more about how these concepts have been deployed or could be deployed in practice by procurement.
The Methodological Underpinnings of the study

The Methods – The Design of the Study

Following the literature review several questions emerged that the author wanted to investigate further in order to meet the objective of the study, to see how procurement professionals in Australia could increase their influence both personally and as a broader function.

Therefore the author wants to further understand the following areas of the literature review, and compare and contrast the literature review findings and the real experiences of the interviewees.

- What does influence mean within procurement?
- What is the current state of influence within procurement in Australia?
- What are the common traits of influential people in procurement?
- How best to develop and train these skills?

The interviewees

Using the contacts built up over a 26 year career in procurement (the last 10 of which has been in Australia) the author decided that experienced procurement leaders would be needed to take part in the research. This is because of the experience within procurement, experience in operating in business and the leaders that they would have worked with which would have given them insights into differing methods of influencing.

In addition in order to give deeper understanding and context on the ability for procurement to raise its influence as a function then the external view of procurement would need to be considered and included both from someone who managed them as a function and from someone who dealt with procurement professionals on a daily basis. Therefore the interview list is as below
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Chief Procurement Officer</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Petroleum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Research</td>
<td>Procurement Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM Property &amp; Procurement</td>
<td>Facilities Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Procurement Officer</td>
<td>State Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>State Government Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former GM Procurement</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Procurement Officer</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM – Manufacturing</td>
<td>Automotive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>Industry Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM – Sales</td>
<td>Telecoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Industry Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Procurement</td>
<td>Public sector procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Procurement</td>
<td>Building &amp; Construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 The Interview List
In compiling the list of interviewees the author ensured that there would be a diversity of coverage and therefore there is a mix of: gender 14 male 5 female; nationality, 8 Australian, 11 UK; cultural background, (UK, Australian and African); history in procurement, 16 mostly procurement, 3 non procurement background now involved with procurement; and market sectors, 4 public 15 private.

**Interview Preparation**

As part of the invitation process, examples of the structured questions were issued to the participants (Saunders et al 2012), along with an overall summary of what the research projects aim and objectives were. The ethics rules were outlined (described in the section below) and a pre interview discussion was offered to clarify what was required. Several of the interviewees took up this option.

All face to face interviews will take place in the interviewees work environment, the skype and phone interviews have been arranged for timings to suit the interviewee, some of which have been daytime, some of which were evening. The international interviews have been arranged for local timing to the interviewee. Before agreeing the timings, interviewees were asked to name their own preferences and the author has fitted in with their time availability. Due to some timing issues, the author also received written answers to questions in place of interviews. These were also included in the primary research findings and in fact added much needed clarity on specific issues.

In preparation for the interviews, the author has written down existing knowledge that he has of the interviewees, and has carried out additional research on the organisations that the interviewees know work for to ascertain if there has been any recent news affecting them that may be relevant in the discussions (Saunders et al 2012). Potential follow up questions to the initial questions issued to the interviewees have been prepared to ensure they are open type questions.
The author has drafted a prepared opening statement which thanks the interviewee for their time, re-emphasizes the ethical guidelines, and confirms the approximate timing, nature and purpose of the interview.

Access & Ethics

Due to the nature and location of some of the interviewees, the author obtained hybrid access to the interviewees. Consent was gained via email from the participants and cognitive trust had been built between the interviewee and interviewer due to previous interactions between them. Interviews would take place across a variety of formats, web chat (skype), email exchanges, telephone conversations and face to face interviews.

In preparing for the research paper, the author referenced several texts on ethics for research. The University of South Wales ethical standards also refers the reader to the relevant professional body, in the author’s case CIPS. Finally as the overall subject is management, the author reviewed the Academy of Management’s code of ethics. When read together these suggest a clear set of guidelines to follow when conducting research such as

- All participants to be aware of the rules;
- treat people fairly;
- respect the autonomy of individuals;
- act with integrity;
- seek the best results and;
- never engage in conduct, either professional or personal, which would bring the profession into disrepute.
In preparing for the interviews, the author, in taking a deontological view on ethics, agreed the following rules with the interview panel at request stage so as to receive informed consent to conduct the interviews, follow ups, and write up of the interviews;

- the scope and purpose of the research were made aware to the interviewees;
- the comments made would be anonymous and be synthesised at a group level;
- and the findings of the research would be made available to them (Saunders et al, 2012).

Of the interviewees who were asked, 1 declined to participate and there was no response from three others. Particular care was given to ensure that intrusive interventions did not happen by scheduling the interviews at a time to best suit the interviewees.

In order to transcribe and identify the data, the author will keep extensive notes during the interviews and summarise the key findings from each question with the interviewee as they are being transcribed. The 30 minute follow up conversation (where used) will then be used to further validate by discussion, to ensure that they are aligned with the participant’s recollections. Each file when written up will be saved as a separate word file prior to analysis. This will allow comparison of the same questions and also be easier to identify emergent themes.

**Structure of the interview**

Each interview will initially last no more than 90 minutes, with a 30 minute follow up later for further clarification if required.

Although a semi structured interview format, the overall questions that the author wants to understand include;

- What does the person being interviewed define as being influential from a functional (ie procurement) perspective?
This question is designed to pull out the key areas of functional influencing, i.e. what does a procurement function need to deliver to ensure that it is seen as influential as well as actually being influential.

- What would the interviewee consider to be the traits of an influential person?

Similar to the question 1, this question is designed to drill down to key areas that the interviewee would identify. It will also be interesting to note the differences between function and people. This will also allow a follow up question into how these have been observed.

- Specifically what did the interviewee do to develop their influencing skills?

This question is designed to start identifying the skills development activities that the interviewees have undertaken to allow them to achieve their current status.

- Looking back, what would they do differently in the development of these skills?

This question is designed to allow the interviewees to reflect on their career and identify what things they would do more of, less of, start earlier or stop sooner.

Overall these questions are designed to stimulate thought and discussion, test whether the literature review research papers are correct in their assumptions, and also to identify ways to help improve these skills. The expectation is that these questions will stimulate and lead to other questions to further understand the interviewees’ thoughts and experiences in influence.

**Data Analysis**

In line with the authors view on research philosophy and the nature of the research study, the author will be using an inductive approach (Saunders et al 2012) which will allow the author to collect the data and then explore the common themes and issues that may arise. The author will also examine the themes as they occur in order to overcome the hurdles identified by (Yin 2009 and others) of my relative inexperience as a researcher.
The author will identify relationships that emerge between the data as collected and propose conclusions which may later be tested via further research. The data to be analysed will be the summarised transcripts of the interviews, as stated earlier, the preparation notes of the interviewees background and organisational context that may be present, and a research notebook, where progress summaries and emergent theories which may be later tested with some interviewees (either in the initial or in the follow ups if needed). This approach recognises that the very nature of data collection, analysis and development of theory are related and affect each other (Saunders et al 2012). Therefore by analysing at the same time as collecting, it will affect the follow up questions to be asked of the interviewees.

When data is analysed it will be grouped into categories (themes) to allow for trends or commonalities to emerge, the specific categories will be developed as the data is collected and again the ability to re-engage to clarify points or follow up on points that emerge later from follow up questions may be useful.

**Data presentation methods**

As described in the ethics section earlier, data will be presented at group level rather than transcript form. The data collected will be presented in a series of common themes that have emerged from the interviews. Any biases that arise in terms of gender bias, as well as any market sector or national bias as different nationalities have been selected will be reported.

The report will also present the differences between the interviewees that they used in developing their influencing skills, their thoughts on influencing and discuss the impacts of these.

Finally these discussions will draw conclusions to suggest methods to increase influence both for procurement as a function and also for the individual.
Emerging themes from interviews

This section of the paper presents and discusses the emerging themes that flowed from the interviews. In order to meet the; Identify what the common traits of influential people in procurement are; How best to develop and train these skills. The report groups the emerging themes into functional, traits of the individual and how to develop.

All of the delegates identified that the number one leadership trait for procurement leaders is influence and influencing skills which is more important that technical procurement ability. There was however a slight contradiction to this as discussed later in this paper.

Where there are direct quotes from interviewees, the author has used italic font to indicate this.

Functional Influence

1) Influence increases as procurement is aligned to the business

This was the opening statement from over 14 out of the 19 responses of the people interviewed and appeared in all of the interviews and responses.

Interestingly there was no bias in this comment as this was both mentioned and not mentioned by all the different groups of people interviewed.

In order for procurement to increase its influence (or as one interviewee put it to even be relevant to the business) then there is a clear requirement to be aligned to the business in which it operates. There is a link back to Fawcett (2009) which suggested that procurement requires business and commercial leaders, rather than specific procurement technicians in order to be relevant to the wider business.

Interviewees mentioned understanding the role of procurement in the business, i.e. what the business needs from a procurement function now, be it savings, or risk reduction or developing relationships and this need is a function of both the maturity of the procurement function and the maturity of the organisation.
There is a link here back to the CEB (2013) maturity model, as well CIPS (2012) by procurement becoming both a deliverer and an enabler, as a cost-reducer and a deliverer of tangible value.

Other interviewees talked about partnering with the business to deliver their needs, which suggests that a more mature approach from both the business and procurement has transpired and that there is a level of expectation on procurement of delivering value. This supports the view that alignment has taken place, and procurement is seen as a value add and that there is now a level of expectation of delivery of value outside of price reductions.

This alignment to the business requires the strategies of both procurement and the business to be aligned where there is a clear linkage from the procurement vision and strategy to the organisations and clear lines of delivery from strategy to operations can be found. The cascading requirements of this strategic approach then defines the need for each subsequent linked strategies, i.e. category strategies linked to procurement and business strategies which can be traced up line strategic hierarchy suggests a need both for understanding the basic concepts of strategic decision making and to be involved in the strategic decision making process. This leads us to the next point of procurement influence;

2) **Is the reporting level important?**

This was a fascinating part of the interviews as opinions were widely divided between those that believed a reporting line to CEO/boardroom and others who thought it was not needed. This is also a question that is raised at most procurement conferences and is not confined to procurement. Donovan et al (2015) identified that other business support services, such as HR also had this as an important issue. The phrase “seat at the table” is one that dominates discussions between procurement practitioners and indeed was one of the reasons why the author chose this subject to review. How can procurement increase its
influence to achieve its “seat at the table”? It is a circular argument in some respects as some of the interviewees pointed out. In order to achieve the position to influence business strategy you need to be influential in the first place. Other interviewees felt that the relationship with the key business leaders gave them the ability to influence business strategy and that reporting lines aren’t important. There is a linkage in this discussion to French and Raven (1959) and their bases of power. The author explored this with the interviewees who mentioned it and there was a split in that some of the interviewees felt that the legitimate power was essential whilst others felt that over the last 10-15 years this had eroded and that referent power or charisma was now important. This view was refuted by several with one interviewee stating that a “charismatic leader does not last”. Some of the delegates suggested that whilst the position was important this alone was not enough and that it is the style of the person who can draw people in. This suggests that it is a balance of several of these differing sources of power (charismatic, hierarchical and informational) that can make an individual more influential. Again there were no natural biases in this area as opposing views were held within the same groups of interviewees.

3) The function is only as influential as its people

Whilst the need for a clearly defined vision for procurement as a function is required in the board level, most respondents felt that the “function” didn’t influence but the people within it did. This means that the function itself doesn’t generate the influence but it is a measure of the people within the function. One of the interviewees stated that “procurement can only become more influential if its people increase their influencing skills”. The interviewees all mentioned things that they have done to increase their influence and these all had a common theme of delivering against stated objectives. Therefore the individuals themselves were seen as influential and then by extension the function became more influential. These specific traits of influence are now discussed.
**Common Traits of influence**

As discussed the majority of the interviewees mentioned that they felt influence was a leadership trait itself; below this paper summarises the most frequently mentioned traits of influence as identified by the interviews.

1) Delivered results and built trust

The interviewees identified that the need to deliver on the promises that have been made by them (or the people they had identified as good influencers) was seen as the individuals’ “ticket to entry” to a wider discussion. Therefore the ability to keep ones promises i.e. contractual trust (Sako 1997) was identified as a non-negotiable to build trust both for the individual and the function. In fact trust, and therefore making and keeping promises, was mentioned by all the interviewees as being both a trait of influential people as well as the main way that procurement as a function can increase its influence within its organisation. One of the interviewees stated that as part of their modus operandi, they “carefully consider the promises that they make and only make the promises that they are 100% sure they can deliver”.

Recently, Procurement has identified that it may not have the entry barriers to the profession that others have, such as law or medicine, but rather should try to gain the position of “trusted advisor” (Atkinson 2012, Hackett Group 2015), which was also mentioned by 9 out of 19 of the interviewees as a phrase, indeed one of the interviewees suggested that the business must trust them so that they are “ok to spend their money”.

Several of the interviewees mentioned that their influence increased within their business the more they delivered either on bottom line savings or on specific projects that they were asked to deliver. One interviewee stated that they “had a track record of delivering benefits so got more involved and earlier involved with the business”. This could then indicate that past success correlates to increasing your personal influence.
2) Excellent communication skills

All of the interviewees stated that the most important trait to of influential people was the ability to communicate effectively. Specifically 3 of the interviewees when referring to one of the people, who they considered influential, stated that “when they spoke to a room, it felt as though they were personally being addressed”. In reading several biographies of sports leaders such as Bill Parcells, Vince Lombardi, and Sir Alex Ferguson, the authors of those books, in their interviews with former players all suggest that this communication trait was present with them also. The ability to communicate too many people and make each person think that the message is for them is a key communication skill.

Whilst all the interviewees identified communication as a key, when asked to describe what specifically about communication skills was important there were different aspects of communication identified as described below:

a) Developed and adapted communication plans based on the listener

5 of the interviewees mentioned that the most influential people they knew when developing communication plans, considered how the person they were trying to communicate with liked to be communicated to. This then drove their method of communication be it face to face or electronic as well as the actual content. This adaptability of communication is, according to the interviewees, is one of the traits that made these people influential. This echoes, both Donovan (2015) and Goleman (1998) who suggest that effective planning specifically for the individual is a critical success factor for effective communication and therefore influencing. In his seminal book on Muhammed Ali, Thomas Hauser quotes the legendary trainer Angelo Dundee on the unique way he had to communicate with Ali. Dundee stated that “everything needed to be Alis idea. So they only way to get him to do something (ie influence him) was to suggest that he was already doing it. i.e., what a great jab you threw in that round. The next round he would come out jabbing.” (Hauser 1992)
b) Made persuasive arguments

7 of the interviewees mentioned persuasiveness in terms of communication. This was linked to making points in specific language that the listener understood. In some way this links back to a functional influence point mentioned earlier that the business and procurement need to be aligned, however the point here being that: when making persuasive arguments, top influencers spoke the language of the listener rather than their own procurement (or finance in one interviewee case) language. As one interviewee stated, “knowledge is only good if you can share it”. This links back to the literature review with Goleman (1998) which suggests that influencing is about the deployment of specific persuasive arguments and Reynolds (2003) and the persuasion model.

d) Read the room and understood body language

“Being able to read between the lines”. “Listening to what is not being said”. “Tuning into the vibe in the room”. 3 quotes from the responses all echoing the point that it is more than what is being said that makes an effective listener. Non-verbal communication was discussed by Mehrabian (1981) and this supports the view that the non-verbal skills have the most impact on how the listener is receiving the messages.
When reviewing the potential bias, it was interesting to note that those who had worked in primary industries all identified the body language and non-verbal communication as essential traits of great communication; this wasn't mentioned by the other industry groups. There were no other biases as the sub points were spread across the delegates.

3) Top influencers have empathy

“Empathetic not sympathetic” appeared as a quote on multiple occasions. The author clarified with several of the interviewees their understanding of the differences. These were described as sympathetic listening is that we care and show we care about the other person and we pay close attention and maybe share their feelings, whereas when we listen empathetically, we go beyond sympathy and attempt to seek a fuller understanding in how others are feeling.

In reviewing this trait, it’s interesting to note the inter relatedness to the points 2c, and 2d, in that empathetic listening means listening to the responses and asking more questions to understand the points made, which requires excellent questioning and close attention to the nuances of emotional signals.

Whilst the literature review did not specifically identify empathy, it did allude to the requirements of empathy, namely active listening and emotional intelligence (Goleman 1998) and questioning (Rackham 1988). Empathetic listening also helps to build trust and respect between the parties (Sako 1997).

4) The best influencers have great knowledge

16 of the interviewees mentioned the need for top influencers to have credibility in order to be considered influential. This makes a lot of sense, as previously the interviewees have identified the need to have gained trust though proving their ability, which in turn gives credibility to themselves. When reviewing those who they consider to be influential the interviewees discussed that all of those people had “been there, done that” and were able
to bring a huge amount of experience and credibility. One of the delegates mentioned that a key for them in delivering a credible solution was their ability to prove that they had actually done some of the things they were talking about, "sometimes I can catch people when they are following a textbook".

This referencing of credibility is an interesting development in the research in that it clearly references French and Raven’s (1959) expert power which wasn’t considered to be one of the key levers of influencing.

Does this mean that the ability to show that the individual has delivered on outcomes previously, is an increasing trait to gain influence?

Coupled with the previous points of delivering results and trust being gained by effective delivery this could mean that being a procurement expert is a key point of being seen as influential. Of further interest: whilst the need for the harder, procurement specific skills have been seen as being less important, could the expert power trait potentially affect that position?

If the knowledge of procurement or sector specific areas is deemed not as necessary as the soft skills (Mckinsey 2014) then how does this impact the point that the interviewees made, that top influencers have credibility in their particular field?

5) Top influencers have a passion about what they are doing

“Got to believe the bull****!” This was possibly one of my favorite quotes from the interviews, but encapsulates the theme from the interviews about passion and flows naturally from the credibility theme above. When the author followed up on this, it was discovered that the passion relates to the field in which the influencers excel, be it procurement, negotiation, analytics etc. This allows the influencer to demonstrate knowledge about their subject matter, which will increase the ability to deliver great oratory, however too much passion may negatively impact the piece of communication as the language used may not be understand by some.
Whilst knowledge and credibility can be linked back to the literature review in terms of Expert Power (French and Raven 1959), passion about the subject is less clear to the author. It could be argued that using passion as a method of persuasion links back to the use of emotion as a persuasion tool (Reynolds 2003, Steele 2009).

There is some logic to this especially when considering Goleman (1988) who suggested that it was the deployment of multiple persuasion techniques that increase influence. Emotion, coupled with facts (knowledge and credibility) would support the interviewees’ views on both of these key traits.

6) Networked and built great teams

The idea of networking with other senior leaders, influencers appeared in 11 of the 19 interviewees’ responses. Upon further questioning, the author discussed with several interviewees what the intention was around networking, and this was identified as the ability “To “pre-position” resources”. By connecting with someone, they are making themselves available to answer their questions and support them, they, in turn are available to help the original connector. This also helps the development as a procurement professional in that people connect with other people that may have a need in the future that either party could help with.

Harvard Business Review (2007) identified networking as operating at three levels, Operational, Personal and Strategic. In order to be an effective influencer, the manager needs to operate at all three levels.
As influencing is identified as a leadership trait, there is an implied link to team building; however the networking and team building did not emerge during the literature review.
How to develop influence

These are the emerging themes that stemmed from questions asked around what the individuals have done to increase their influence, or what they would have done differently earlier in the career. Some of these themes emerged when the author asked supplementary questions around who the interviewees felt was influential, and what they did.

1) Observation is king

All of the interviewees identified that the number one thing that they either did or would like to have done earlier was the observation of others; especially those that they felt were influential. When the author investigated this further as to what the interviewees did with this observation, it was discovered that they internalised what it meant to themselves and whether they felt it was something that they could do themselves, or something that they did not wish to do or could not apply to their own way of influencing.

This could suggest that the interviewees either all had exactly the same learning style, “reviewing” (Kolb 1985), or “reflectors” (Honey & Mumford 1986) or that this part of the learning cycle is important to master if using external observation as a method to increase influence.

The author concludes that it is the latter, as some of the interviewees then talked about the specific plans that could ensue when getting ready to start putting plans into action. The author also concludes that if the individual can understand their own learning style, then this will allow them to plan ways which will be useful to the individual to increase their own influence.
2) Training programs can add value…but need to be linked to on the job development

Several of the interviewees mentioned that attending a specific training program provided lightbulb moments for them in terms of developing influencing skills. Specific programs mentioned included the Dale Carnegie training program, sales training programs and a negotiation program delivered by Paul Steele.

However 13 out of the 19 interviewees stated that whilst having the theory was important, it was more important to be delivered in a context of the workplace, or that on the job coaching, mentoring or training was more important. When questioned further some of the interviewees stated that this was unlikely to be a “learned skill” from a textbook, but more of an acquired skill through observation and mentoring. Other stated that understanding the theory was essential and that having a structured plan for deployment in the workplace was the key to ensuring successful transfer of learning from the classroom to the workplace.

This is interesting from a linkage to the ways people learn and echoes the points made by both Kolb (1985) and Honey and Mumford (1986) and seems to add further credence to the 70 20 10 learning methodology (Kajewski and Masden 2012) and its application for active learning programs, and the use of formal mentoring or coaching activities.

3) Learnt as much from bad influencers as good

When discussing the fact that the observation of others was a key to developing their influencing skills, the interviewees also pointed out that they could learn what not to do from observation, as well was what to do. This is an interesting aspect to observation as it demonstrates that the observation of poor performance of individuals can be as important as observing good performance. The interviewees were quick to point out that identifying things that they definitely didn't want to emulate required the same process of internalisation and self-reflection as the observation of good behaviours. In consideration of planning how to, or in this case how not to, utilise what they had observed, the
identification of what not to do is sometimes easier to identify then what actually to do. This links well to reflexive ways of learning in that the observer is focused more on the actions of the influencer and observing their impact on the wider environment and then understanding how it impacts the individual being influenced.

4) Feedback loops from trusted sources

Whilst formal and informal mentoring was identified by some of the interviewees as a key way to help increase influencing skills, of more interest for the wider cohort, was the requirement for an independent person to review performances and give detailed feedback on what was done well and not done well. This was considered by the interviewees to be a key ingredient to developing the skills and specifically on seeing how effective a plan was in deployment.

The trusted sources could be a mentor, either formal or informal, however they could also be someone that the individual trusted or rated as a top influencer.

One interviewee identified that doing this earlier in their career was something that they wished that they had done, as they had found it very illuminating when finally completed.

5) Diversity helps

Linking to the above theme of having feedback loops the interviewees also mentioned that, having a different perspective in giving this feedback was a great way to develop skills, both in general and in relation to the topic of influencing.

This theme was interesting to the author as all of the interviewees mentioned diversity but in different ways. Some specifically identified diversity, others did not identify diversity expressly; however the author determined an implication of diversity into some of the points that they raised. The diversity points discussed were:

Understanding cultural diversity requirements; one interviewee mentioned that it was hugely important to gain perspectives from all the different nationalities and cultures that they work with, (indeed one of the interviewees had deliberately built a hugely diverse
Similarly, gender diversity was also identified as an approach that would drive a different viewpoint being received and therefore increase effectiveness in delivery. Several of the interviewees (both male and female) identified that the observation of differing genders also drove improvement in influencing skills.

Understanding industry sector diversity; one interviewee stated that as they had worked across multiple industries this was a key ingredient in their effectiveness as an influencer as this allowed a range of aspects to be considered that were aligned to a specific market sector.

Diversity in working in international cultures was also seen by some of the interviewees as an ingredient in developing their influencing skills as this gave them insights into how procurement is perceived and received in differing parts of the world and also allowed them to see how influential people act.

6) Practice makes perfect

All of the interviewees discussed the need to practice the new skills when they had learned them. Whilst this links back to the earlier identified method of more on the job based training, or more planned activities following specific training programs, the interviewees also discussed the fact that the more they practiced and prepared the better they got.

The learning points from these tips are clear, there is not one single thing that a procurement professional can do to increase their influence (i.e. no magic bullet), and rather it is a whole range of things that must be delivered to improve their skills.

All delegates indicated that a key component to achieving success is to have a plan to influence a person or people and gaining feedback on how the plan is being deployed is an essential component when considering how to influence a specific set of people.
More broadly, identifying how you can deploy these six emerging themes and committing to its development will see an increase in a person’s influencing skills.

Bias

Most of the themes came from across all areas of the diverse groups identified and didn’t encompass all of the group members. I.e. not all of the UK ex pat community identified that diversity was a good way to drive influencing skills, but 75% of them did. This is interesting, however as it is a limited sample size, it would be interesting to see if this was repeated across a wider sample size, using quantitative analysis tools.

Aside from the identified bias reported against the specific themes, the following biases were identified.

The Australian procurement interviewees all bar one mentioned formal mentoring specifically aimed at influencing, whereas the remainder (UK/Expat) mentioned general mentoring occasionally as opposed to specific mentoring. When questioned to see exactly how used in developing influencing, the UK/expat interviewees discussed observation of a range of others (as discussed in the ways to increase influence) rather than a formal mentor.

Sales training/ Sales roles/ Role swapping was mentioned by 5 interviewees who were all the UK/expats. This was not mentioned by any other nationality interviewed.
Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to identify the current state of influencing skills in procurement and to identify ways to increase these influencing skills.

In order to understand how to do this it was necessary to understand what influencing means both as a subject and to the procurement community, what the current status of procurement and influencing skills in procurement are and to develop some guidelines for individuals to follow in improving these skills.

What the author found that was fascinating was that all of the areas within influence and increasing influence are linked together and that there isn't one single thing that individuals can do to increase their personal influence, more that it is a number of measures taken together that increases influence and if you overdo one particular area it could mean that the level of influence actually decreases.

The literature review identified and the interviews confirmed that procurement is on an evolving journey from administrative function to becoming a key part of most high performing organisations. The need for procurement to focus on more added value activities such as risk reduction and supplier enabled innovation rather than bottom line savings is clear, however the interviews also revealed that the ability to deliver what is perceived as a core element of the function (reduce prices paid) is a key for gaining entry into more strategic parts of the business.

Also significant from the literature review was that procurement as a function is trying to mature and evolve into the other value added activities that are required, such as risk reduction and driving innovation,
The core activities cost management; supplier management, etc are still required to be completed. What this has meant is that some organisations have developed organization wide cultures to deliver these core objectives, meaning that some procurement activities have become part of normal business activities carried out within the business units and smaller more agile teams for procurement have developed focusing on strategy and delivering the added value areas.

In reviewing influence and influencing techniques, the literature review identified that the deployment of persuasion techniques and the importance of good communication was vital and the interviews revealed a correlation with the literature review. However, most interesting is the range of activities that are needed to increase influence and the general agreement of the interviewees, that there is not one thing to be done to increase influence, indeed but without all the key ingredients influence will not be increased.

The interviews also revealed that influence is a personal skill, and that the function of procurement is dependent on the people within it to increase the sphere of influence. The way for procurement to obtain its “seat at the table” is therefore to concentrate on the individual’s ability to influence. In order to gain entry to begin to influence the key decision makers in any organisation, the start point is to actually deliver on promises. However this alone will not deliver the “seat” it is merely the start point.

It is this fact that the literature review and interviews revealed and that many procurement practitioners need to realize that constant and consistent delivery of traditional procurement activities, such as sourcing, negotiation etc., only gets you the ability to begin to influence and not achieve the overall goal of increasing procurement influence, i.e. this is the price of entry, not the price of staying relevant.
Having knowledge about a subject is essential but as one of the interviews stated, having knowledge is nothing without the ability to communicate it. Procurement can plan the communication and understand that there are differences in the way to deliver this communication to different people, but without the passion about the subject the message will not get through. The downside with passion is that this tends to cloud the message in terms of speaking the language of the deliverer not the listener.

The literature review identified the ways that people process and learn are vital in understanding how to develop these skills. Know yourself is an important piece to learn how you process and revive information. In reviewing the differences between reflective and reflective this is a vital cog in the self-awareness development for the procurement professional.

The interviews echoed this in that when planning for ways for individuals to develop these skills, the overwhelming input from delegates was that the observation and self-reflecting on what this means for the individual is the best way to develop rather than a training course alone. Having the ability to practice and also gain constant feedback from respected and trusted advisors suggests to the author that mentoring either formal or informal is an important part of any procurement professional’s armory of skills development activities as is the link between understanding the “how”, and practicing the “do”.

The paper revealed that the importance of building effective teams and also the ability to network both internally and externally are an essential part to building the individuals influencing skills.
This paper has also identified that there is the need for additional research into the application of influence. Quantitative studies would be able to review the results from a larger data set and expanding this across multiple geographies would reveal the wider impact of networking on influence, any further biases that may arise as well as identifying potential sector specific practices.

The authors’ key points from this study are that;

- There is a need to identify who you are trying to influence and decide on the best way to influence that individual.
- This means that the practitioner needs to have multiple ways to influence rather than rely on the same approach for all.
- If you want to develop your influencing skills then there is a key need to understand the way you process information and learn new skills. This is normally a factor of maturity and experience
- Observational skills are paramount to increasing your influencing skills.
- Procurement as a function can only increase its sphere of influence when the people within it improve their influencing skills.
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