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Angela Qu, SVP Head of Procurement

Company: Lufthansa Group

1. How and when did procurement & supply become your passion and career choice?

A government job I had in China facilitated working with a Siemens joint venture. I supported the related General Manager (helping to open the factory, hiring people, etc.) and was asked which function I'd like to join - purchasing was my first selection for a personal and career choice.

The 9 years at Siemens gave me lot of opportunities working from operational tasks, to category managers and later on as Senior consultants optimizing Supply Chains for Siemens factories and suppliers.

2. How did that lead to your recent roles, and what has occupied most of your time?

After being headhunted to set-up the global sourcing department for Leybold Optics, I then moved to ABB firstly in Germany. Later I moved to Switzerland and remained for a total of 13.5 years. I had a lot of focus on harmonizing the sourcing and category management processes across the different fractionated ABB organizations. People development was also significant: career paths, job profiles, high potential programs and knowledge management (in 2014 we won an Award from the Procurement Leaders organization). Recently I was leading the largest business division in ABB, with about 7 Billion purchasing volume and 850 people.

3. What makes you proud of your team?

Changing the mind-set of the purchasing community has been a key milestone. From local traditional tactical methods to becoming one of global sourcing excellence. Staying the course over multiple years. Within the last months I've moved as the CPO of Lufthansa and now work in Frankfurt.

4. How do you see the CPO role evolving next 3-5 years?

Procurement has become an important function to the boards of many company's – this is increasing every year. Procurement brings solutions and game changing alternatives to the business agenda. Purchasing is the ultimate facilitator to leverage a massive amount of technology and innovation from suppliers, which I purposely call business partners.



5. Where should Procurement report in the organization in order to enable sustainable performance?

Group CFO in my opinion. Alternatively, as visibility increases, Procurement can also report to CEO, COO or even CMO – all aligned to enhancing the positive customer experience.

6. In what ways do you see procurement's effectiveness being improved by digitalization (AI, robotics, analytics, and connectivity)?

There are many different views, but for me getting the basics right first is critical. By this I mean data harmonization and standardization - although unglamorous - it's essential. I've been involved in a project where robotics algorithms have been used to check contract clauses and enhancing claim identification – this had a high return on investment.

7. What would be your one piece of advice to the future procurement leaders?

Always have the right data, organization set-up and talent/people. With this triple combination success is basically guaranteed.

8. What differentiation does Switzerland offer as a place to do business?

In my experience, and I've dealt with many countries and cultures, the Swiss organization culture is extremely open (because in many places it is highly multi-cultural). This enriches diversity and out-of-the-box-thinking. Being keen to try new things yields innovation and better business outcomes.

9. What are your wrap-up thoughts?

If your team has an attractive purpose and you connect to both their heart and their heads – you create a team that is empowered and proud of its achievements and they will want to go the extra mile.

The above CPO interview is part of a series of management-level insights from Swiss-based global procurement leaders. Switzerland is home to some of the most successful multi-national companies and non-government organizations. CIPS Switzerland uniquely engages with them and offers our community best-practice events, workshops and networking opportunities. More info via:

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