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Company: ETA SA

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

My “love story” with Procurement started after my business economics studies when opting for a post-university graduated study focusing on “Purchasing” in the lovely city of Bordeaux. Since then, I have the “purchasing virus”. I owe all my career to purchasing and procurement – on production sites, within Business Units, at Corporate levels and as well as via consultancy. This function offers contacts with suppliers, internal clients and stakeholders, and continuously new challenges. I’m now 6 years with ETA which is the watch movement company severing all brands within the Swatch group.

2. What is on your agenda today? What takes most of your time currently?

At ETA we are currently in a very advanced phase of building a professional and strategically acting centralized sourcing organization. It focuses on delivering added value to our internal clients all long of the product or project life cycle. At the same time, we are reorganizing our tactical and operational procurement activities aiming at reinforced purchase volume consolidation and streamlined supplier panel optimization. In this respect, continuous process improvement remains one of our challenges as we want to “make life easier” for our internal clients. Procurement digitalisation is therefore one of our opportunities.

3. What makes you proud of your team? What is the success story you would like to share with international procurement community?

To implement new approaches, certainly, needs open minded people and management support – and an attitude to be ready at any moment for new challenges. I had the chance to meet a team eager to become more professional through implementing new methods and good practices. Our industry is in constant evolution, I had also the chance to get the necessary management support enabling us to implement changes and professional purchasing methods. This led to recognition throughout all levels of the company for my procurement team’s added value in all purchase categories. Getting your people motivated is the key for changing things and getting recognized by your management.

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

Taking into account the different challenges (digitalization; globalization; ...) the CPO role will evolve towards a role providing a holistic vision and increased ability to anticipate. The CPO of the next years will evolve from a purchasing manager to a “community” manager demonstrating leadership, capacity to convince and to communicate.

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

Across my career I've worked in organizations where Procurement reports to CEO's, COO's, CFO's or Supply chain managers. In my opinion, the reporting line is not the key of success – But the sponsorship, the willingness of executives in understanding the challenges of our function. This is the drivers for sustainable recognition and performance of our function.



6. After centralized category management, could client-partnership move procurement back towards functions and business units?

Category management is a must for deploying good purchasing practices as volume consolidation, extended competitive bidding, supplier panel consolidation, etc. Client-partnerships wherever the purchasing function is located –on corporate, on business unit or on site level- are key for effective and efficient upstream purchasing integration and successful purchasing contribution - Independent from location. Key is that the purchaser besides his/her analytical and negotiation skills has to be a communicator, a person who turns him/herself towards the others. You have this skill or you don't. If you don't, the fact to be located closer to your client will not per se improve your performance.

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

Digitalization is a tool. It's only working when the organization is ready for and adapted to it. Therefore, it's not only a question of procurement effectiveness, but also a question of effectiveness and readiness of the whole organization. Within ETA, we are currently working on different procurement digitalization projects. This is not only technically wise a challenge, but also change management wise. I am convinced that digitalization represents a great chance for Procurement to achieve its own transformation and to support the company's one. Thanks to increased digitalization, we as Procurement community will have the opportunity to contribute to revenue increase. Tools of digitalized technologies will also swing the tasks of Procurement – and therefore, the required competencies.

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

My advice would be to concentrate on the skills of your team. Creating the right balance between “hard” skills and “soft” skills is a task which should not be underestimated. “Soft” skills such as communication skills and entrepreneurship, client orientation are much harder to “learn” than elaborating excel pivot sheets. Another advice would be “be visible”: the purchasing function has to sell itself better than in the past.

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

After having worked in several countries (mostly in France, but also in The Netherlands, the USA and Germany) I have to say that I admire and enjoy the diversity of Switzerland. In fact, that's an ideal place for a purchaser as you have always to adapt your own behaviour and how to conduct - and how to negotiate. At the beginning, Switzerland seemed to me as being small, but in fact it isn't at all as it is so diversified.

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: <https://www.cips.org/en/community/branches/branchlisting/switzerland/>.