SOFT SKILLS: THE MOVE TOWARDS BEHAVIOURAL PROCUREMENT

The CIPS/Hays Salary Guide 2020 highlights a growing recognition of the importance of soft skills to today's procurement professionals. Communication, supplier relationship management (SRM), influencing skills, internal stakeholder management and leadership are all, along with others, part of the soft skills, or 'Behavioural Procurement', skills³ from a growing body of academic research.

Right now, due to advances in technology driven by AI, RPA and digital platforms, along with the need to manage ever-increasing complexity in supply chains and geographical diversity, a skill shift is taking place. The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI)², see chart below, graphically predicts the skills that will be needed in ten years' time (2030), and highlights social and emotional skills as the second highest area of growth and a key partner to technical skills.

Behavioural Procurement, derived from Behavioural Economics, captures both known and new attributes as part of a more comprehensive and critical set of the soft skills of the modern procurement professional. This includes:
- Emotional intelligence (EI)
- Active listening skills
- Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)
- Effective communication
- Stakeholder management
- Behavioural sciences (heuristics and biases)
- Psychology (applied cognitive)
- Decision sciences
- Social sciences

For more accurate and comprehensive descriptions and narrative please refer to the CIPS recommended reading book: Soft Skills for Hard Business⁶.

In order to put soft skills into context, in 2018 I developed a model for procurement and supply professionals which identifies that even in transactional situations there is still a need for aspects of soft skills to be used. The Sociotechnical Ecosystem People Descriptors model sets out at a summary level what to expect in each of the quadrants that we are all familiar with having studied the work of Peter Kraljic and his famous four box matrix.

**CIPS Tips**

Behavioural Procurement is not new and further guidance can be found in CIPS Knowledge:

- Podcast: Behavioural Procurement
- Book: Soft Skills for Hard Business

References

¹ WEF, Leadership in the fourth industrial revolution 2018
² McKinsey Global Institute workforce skills model: McKinsey Global Institute Analysis

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