

By Corey Matthews

Work Together for Transformation Performance and Success

Invest time to build integrated transformation teams that will drive the organization to best-in-class performance.

More and more, companies of all sizes are seeking to transform their procurement and supplier relationship management processes — an activity that has a tremendous upside but to say the least, is very disruptive. Procurement transformation impacts every internal and external supply management process and relationship, and so requires a significant commitment in terms of resources, time and energy by just about every part of the organization.

As change management initiatives go, procurement transformation is especially difficult due to the patchwork way in which they are staffed. For instance, some employees usually remain from the legacy purchasing infrastructure, but it may take time before these folks are fully on board with the new direction. To this nucleus, add those who may be transplanted in from other business units such as finance. While they bring much needed analytical skills and knowledge of how things work in their “functional homeland”, they may not initially see the big picture or appreciate how all the pieces fit together from source to settle. And

finally, it’s often necessary to fill a few roles with people from outside the company who bring valuable subject matter expertise but need time to acclimate to their new colleagues and company culture.

So, what can leaders do to ensure procurement transformation is a glowing success? I recently posed this question to several chief procurement officers who’ve “been there, done that” a few times and have distilled their responses down to six suggestions that can help the leader, their team and their company transform successfully.

1) Communicate honestly, fervently and frequently. The department’s mission, vision and strategy must be stated so often that it becomes a team mantra. The leader shouldn’t worry that they’re over communicating, especially at first. The only way for a team to reach goals, reflect the proper values and demonstrate the right behaviors is if the leader’s goals, values and behaviors are indelibly imprinted on their hearts and minds. In the first six months, leaders of high-caliber transformation teams must also determine which employees possess the right skills and leadership talent; which ones have the right skills and will

get with the program; and which might not have the right skills or the desire to go along with the transformation. Then, the leader must communicate the expectations as well as development objectives for each associate that will be on the bus moving forward. Leaders should also adopt management guru Tom Peters’ approach of MBWA (Management By Walking Around) — it’s the only way to catch people doing the right things the right way so that the leader can praise them.

2) Project positivity, positively. If a leader wants their organization to be praised throughout the company for its confidence, assertiveness, optimism, preparedness and value delivered, they must project those qualities in a positive manner. But being positive doesn’t mean being a “Pollyanna” or someone who “never lets them see you sweat.” Rather, it’s precisely in times of high stress, missed projections and other professional and personal challenges where leaders have the biggest opportunities to lead by example and in the process, build trust with their team. Leaders should be authentic about disappointments, yet remain confident and positive.



Certified Professional in Supplier Diversity® (CPSD®)

The Certified Professional in Supplier Diversity® (CPSD®) is a certification for supply professionals who demonstrate knowledge, skills and expertise in supplier diversity. CPSD® is also for business professionals with responsibility for strategic diversity initiatives. This professional designation demonstrates to your employer, your colleagues, your suppliers and even your customers that you are serious about helping your organization and diverse suppliers succeed. The CPSD® proves you understand procurement and the supply chain, not just supplier diversity.

**Stand out among your peers when
you earn the CPSD®.**

Register for exams, order study materials or find out more information about the CPSD® program at www.ism.ws/2475.



3) Break down barriers, provide mentors, and cross-functionalize. The team must function as a cohesive unit that's able to advance the mission and respond to myriad challenges, so any barriers within the team need to come down. One way to remove obstacles and build cohesion is team-building exercises or scheduled events away from the office. It's also a good idea to let future leaders in the group mentor new associates for a period of time. One tactic to help new recruits assimilate and begin building stakeholder rapport is to pair them with peers in their relevant stakeholder groups. For example, if you hire a category manager of benefits from outside the company, ask the benefits department head if your new associate can shadow one of their managers for a few hours, participate in a benefits departmental project, or attend a benefits-related conference with their stakeholder colleagues.

4) Maximize strengths and minimize tragedies. Align team members' core strengths with categories and projects that will maximize their opportunities to succeed and minimize opportunities to slip up. For instance, an existing team member struggling to proactively engage a difficult stakeholder can temporarily be paired with a manager or mentor with stronger stakeholder-engagement skills, who can lead the initial conversations and then step away. In time, each position will be staffed by people with all the tools and the knowledge to use them equally well. However, it could take a year or more to get to the point where the organization has attained a higher level of maturity and is fully staffed, so it's vital for leaders to help team members play to their individual strengths from the beginning.

5) Don't license mediocrity, but do issue 'learners' permits.'

Make it clear that people will be evaluated on how they do the job, not just what they do. It's also important for the leader to model how they expect their teams to behave. For instance, the next time someone is struggling to illustrate some piece of data in a format that their stakeholder will understand, the leader can embrace this as a teaching opportunity and demonstrate what it should look like in a way that advances technical skills, teaches soft skills and delivers value to the business. As stated earlier, straightforward communication of what is expected, modeling what good behavior (and good communication) looks like and giving second chances to get it right all help to create a team that knows they will be treated fairly — and that's very impactful.

6) Invest in the team. Conduct regular group training and recognize and reward excellence. It may sound counterintuitive to place this at the end rather than at the top of a team-building to-do list, but all the training, rewards and recognition a leader can bestow will be of little long-term benefit unless every team member is on board and knows what is expected. However, once the fundamental elements of team building and accountabilities are in place, it is critical that the group receive continual training, regular feedback, recognition and rewards to assure everyone is on the same page and doing their part to propel the organization toward its best-in-class future-state. **ISM**

Corey Matthews is employment chair of ISM—Dallas, Inc., and leads the Procurement and Supply Chain Executive Search Practice at Kaye/Bassman International of Dallas. For more information, send an email to author@ism.ws.