

LESSONS LEARNED SHIFTING FROM ANALYTICS TO ACTIONS

FOR BETTER OUTCOMES



DIARMUID O'DONOGHUE

HEAD OF DIGITAL PROCUREMENT
BT SOURCED

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Since 2020, BT Sourced has been the procurement branch of British Telecom,

one of the largest telecommunication programs globally, especially in the UK.

Diarmuid O'Donoghue, the Head of Digital Procurement Garage at BT Sourced, says regarding the creation of BT Sourced, "To really unlock the true value of procurement away from the general cost savings, et cetera, we had to think differently, and we had to disrupt essentially. How do we do that? We do that via innovation. We do that via simplification, and we do that via digitalization. That's where Suplari and our other partners come in."

"So what does that mean?" Diarmuid continued,

"In essence, BT Sourced is our incubator, our method to scout pilots and then look to engage the platforms throughout BT."

How BT Sourced Is More Than a Simple Platform

When BT Sourced set out to modernize its procurement processes, it sought more than a basic spend platform. The goal was to find a solution that transformed how that data could be used. “We didn’t want just a general spend platform that relayed spend information back to us,” Diarmuid explains. “We really wanted something different, and I certainly say we know we have that in Suplari.”

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He described how this transformation was especially evident during a recent visit by BT’s new CEO, Alison, to their India office, which houses a significant portion of the procurement support team. During her floor walk, she saw first hand how Suplari is a key enabler for BT’s procurement strategy, in particular, demonstrating its ability to quickly deliver accurate, actionable data.

It was key for BT Sourced to make Suplari accessible to the entire organization as a whole, ensuring it could serve 1000s of employees across finance, sales, and accounting. This accessibility was key to freeing up the procurement team for more strategic work. Diarmuid explains:

“This approach lets us focus on what we do best on the procurement side while empowering others to leverage the tool effectively.”

Reflecting on the broader impact of technology, Diarmuid recalls a quote from Bill Gates: “The advancement of technology is about making it more normal in people’s lives.” Suplari aligns with this vision by becoming a central part of daily operations at BT. “It’s not just a tool,” Diarmuid emphasizes. “It’s basically part of our procurement team’s daily life.” By integrating seamlessly into workflows, Suplari has streamlined processes and transformed procurement into a strategic function across the organization.

Suplari's Actionable Insights

Suplari has proven to be a game-changer for BT Sourced, offering actionable insights that drive efficiency and enable quick decision-making. Diarmuid highlights the tool's intuitive functionality: "In essentially two clicks, your category manager can identify high-growth suppliers in a category or pinpoint POs raised against suppliers without a contract." These insights save time and address compliance and strategic sourcing needs effectively.

A key differentiator of Suplari is its flexibility. "We developed three custom insights along with Suplari," Diarmuid explains, "but they also provide out-of-the-box insights, and you can collaborate to create tailored ones."

This adaptability has allowed BT Sourced to equip its team in Dublin with the tools to rapidly uncover opportunities and maximize value, further solidifying Suplari as a critical enabler of procurement success.

These actionable insights allowed BT Sourced to make "quicker, smarter decisions." "Decisions can slow any company up. We save time within procurement by having the ability to pull down those insights quickly."

What AI Means for Suplari and BT Sourced

Although Diarmuid thinks that AI might be a little overhyped, he admits that there are benefits, but you can't let AI alone be your strategy. BT Sourced's team leverages AI to enhance procurement strategies while keeping business objectives front and center. Diarmuid emphasizes the importance of aligning AI applications with tangible outcomes:

"We need to make sure that we build on use cases and potential insights."

AI must solve real business problems to deliver value, a principle that also applies to spend analytics at BT Sourced. Reflecting on their early days, Diarmuid acknowledges the organization's limited understanding of its spending prior to adopting Suplari. "If it's not in front of you, you can't address it—that was our problem," he explains.

Before Suplari, BT relied on disparate systems and manual processes, leaving category managers dependent on Excel and fragmented data. This approach was not sustainable for a global organization with complex procurement needs. "We've come a long way in analytics and procurement over the last five to ten years," Diarmuid notes, highlighting how tools like Suplari have transformed their capabilities and provided the clarity needed to make informed, strategic decisions.

Looking ahead, BT Sourced is excited about the future of AI within procurement, particularly through Suplari's roadmap.

Putting It All Together

At its core, procurement is a people-driven business. Suplari plays a vital role in building trust—trust in the data, platform, and team.

This trust drives collaboration, enabling the procurement team to align on priorities and deliver results. “There has to be a bit of upfront work,” Diarmuid acknowledges, “but over time, you see the benefits as the need for changes reduces, and the quality improves.”

Looking ahead, Diarmuid sees experimentation as essential to advancing analytics.

“You need to experiment, but if you fail, fail fast,” he advises, emphasizing the importance of clear use cases and continuous learning.

This approach, combined with strong partnerships like the one with Suplari, ensures BT can adapt and innovate, using data and technology to stay ahead in an evolving procurement landscape.

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