

TRANSFORMING PROCUREMENT WITH DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS

MEDIANEWS GROUP'S
JOURNEY WITH SUPLARI



JEFF BALL

HEAD OF PROCUREMENT
MEDIANEWS GROUP

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With the help of Suplari, one of the nation's largest newspaper publishers, MediaNews Group, has transformed its procurement processes with AI-driven insights.

The group's head of procurement, Jeff Ball, manages every aspect of procurement for the media giant and a few other entities. And he has more than thirty years of experience streamlining his efforts:

"I came into procurement in a happenstance sort of way. After business school, I joined a strategy consulting firm called Mitchell Madison, which was formed by a number of McKinsey partners in the early to mid-1990s, and they were later acquired by a company called US Web CKS."

His upward momentum led him to join MediaNews Group in 2015, where he has been applying his vast skill set to the group's vast procurement initiatives:

As one of the largest newspaper groups with properties - such as Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, the Denver Post and the San Jose Mercury News - all over the country, we have substantial spend under management. I only expect this number to increase.

To say that Jeff has his hands full dealing with procurement would be putting it mildly. He's not only purchasing items and services for the MediaNews Group but also managing revenue relationships with suppliers, negotiating contracts, and ensuring cost efficiency while aligning with the company's goals.

"Procurement's an interesting role, because I talk to everybody. I contend that procurement has the largest vendor visibility and certainly one of the largest visibilities of its company because of its reach. I deal on a daily basis with HR, legal, our circulation department, our digital team, our IT team, and so on and so forth. So it's a very broad span of control, which is a blessing and a curse."

Enhancing Procurement with the Help of Suplari

Jeff has had great success integrating Suplari into his workflows. For him, Suplari serves as the spend analytics vendor for MediaNews Group, providing capabilities that our ERP tools currently lack. Its spend analytics are clunky and underdeveloped, requiring data to be exported to Suplari for meaningful insights. This process is inefficient, as our ERP should ideally handle these analytics directly, but it struggles due to its organizational complexities. Thus, Suplari's capabilities fill a critical gap, enabling more effective data analysis and procurement strategies.

For years now, Jeff has been using Suplari and found it to be a powerful and effective tool:

“When you think about building a comprehensive baseline of spend in your organization and being able to slice it and dice it very easily and very quickly, Suplari is the first phase of procurement’s do, check, act cycle.”

“I love its UX. It’s very easy to use, and they have a great dashboard that suggests sourcing opportunities. Yes, it’s ground zero of my sourcing philosophy. As I looked and shopped around. I found Suplari to be the best fit. Here we are four years later, and it’s still the best fit, and it’s a cost-effective tool. As I said, it is easy-to-use and I’ve got a great rapport with their management team.”

“They’re always helpful and responsive, so I have nothing but pleasant things to say about Suplari.”

In particular, Jeff and his team have found Suplari invaluable for their process of zero-based budgeting. It plays a critical role in this process by providing detailed spend visibility and analytics.

Identify Spending Trends:

Suplari's insights allow for precise tracking of expenditures across the organization.

Facilitate Collaboration:

With Suplari's data, cross-departmental teams can have informed discussions about spending and sourcing opportunities.

Support Decision-Making:

The platform's ability to slice and dice data ensures that cost-saving opportunities and inefficiencies are easily identified, aligning procurement efforts with zero-based budgeting goals.

"One key to success in my role is the fact that we do zero-based budgeting. I co-lead that effort with our CFO; the folks that I work with at Suplari know this full well."

Why You Should Consider Suplari for Procurement

Jeff has some closing words as to what procurement executives can expect with Suplari:

“All of this comes from having the data at your disposal, at your fingertips, to be able to say, ‘Why is this cluster of titles or business units paying 5X, 10X more for the same product and service that these clusters are titles are paying for?’ You can’t do that without Suplari.”

For those using an ERP or some other vendor who are unsure whether Suplari’s AI-driven spend analytics can provide you with value and actionable data:

“I think most CFOs intuitively get it. Quickly, ‘Well, why don’t you just do it through other enterprise software systems?’ Then, you have to explain why these other vendors aren’t the vendor of choice to be able to do this. They don’t understand how Suplari is a best-in-class solution for spend analytics.”

For procurement managers who are already thinking about prepping their teams for a Suplari rollout, Jeff has a last bit of advice:

“I would encourage any of my colleagues or peers to look at it through those three dimensions, if you will. UX, price, and ultimately the capability set—as well as where Suplari is and where it’s poised to go.”

Through Jeff Ball’s leadership and the integration of Suplari, MediaNews Group has transformed procurement from a back-office function into a strategic driver of cost savings and innovation.

Suplari’s intuitive analytics, actionable insights, and support for zero-based budgeting have empowered Jeff and his team to make data-driven decisions that impact the company’s bottom line.

For organizations looking to elevate their procurement strategies, Suplari offers a best-in-class solution that balances cost-effectiveness, usability, and advanced capabilities.

By simplifying complex data and empowering teams with actionable intelligence, Suplari has supported MediaNews Group’s goals of reducing waste, improving workflows, and making smarter business decisions across procurement.





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