



Jump at opportunities – even if you feel out of your depth

Surround yourself with experts, learn everything you possibly can and be confident in your decision making, says CIPS president Sam Walsh

The CIPS Supply Century study last year highlighted the rapid evolution of procurement's role from order-taker to change-leader.

As a procurement leader, and someone who has made the transition to CEO, I've always tried to surround myself with smart people – often people who are smarter than me. These people help us to fill our gaps in skills and knowledge, and stretch our own understanding.

People often ask me how I made the move from procurement to CEO. There's no magic formula, of course, but getting the right mix of people around you and embracing opportunities that come your way means you're off to a good start.

That attitude can be a challenge for some procurement people, who have a very narrow view of their role and what they are responsible for. My advice is this: don't define yourself by what your peers are doing. Differentiate yourself and take things on that stretch your knowledge and thinking. This will then get you noticed.

You also need to be open to looking for and receiving good advice. I have had a mentor for many years, and I encourage my team to find the same for them. My mentor has encouraged me to stretch my thinking and understand why I think the way I do. He has held my feet to the fire and helped me deliver beyond what was normally expected. Even now, after his retirement, I still take guidance from him. I would encourage you all, no matter what level you are at, to find a way to get a mentor. You won't regret it.

Many of the successes throughout my career have been the result of the good people that I have been surrounded by, not just down to me. These people have helped me and the organisations that I have worked for achieve great things. What's so special about the teams I have managed? Their professionalism: the knowledge of their business specialism, high emotional intelligence and influencing skills, and having that oversight into the wider organisation's strategic goals.

The real success comes when you finally find the winning mix of skills and knowledge that complement each other. No one is expected to be an expert in everything, but do make sure that you know some decent experts to call on when you need them.

The truth is that it's up to each and every one of us to manage our own careers – nobody else will do it for you, after all. So, make a plan and have an idea of what you want to achieve.

Here are my six tips to get you started:

1 Make sure you fill the skills gaps in your repertoire, whether that's legal, marketing, finance skills, knowledge or communication and interpersonal skills. Work out what it is and make sure that you get up to speed.

2 Form both formal and informal networks, surrounding yourself with experts – and especially the ones that will help you fill your gaps.

3 Have a sense of urgency and understand other people's urgent needs, too. This will get you recognised as someone who not only delivers but also understands what it is that people need.

4 Opportunity knocks but once – I'm a true believer in this. Jump at opportunities, even if it might make you feel as though you're out of your depth. Someone must believe in you in order to offer you the opportunity, so start to believe in yourself in turn, and then ensure you rise to the challenge.

5 Stretch your experience. Take on a non-executive role or volunteer with clubs and charities – even try out being a school governor. These experiences will expose you to all the activities of running a business, but on a smaller scale.

6 And lastly, if there was one piece of advice I could have given myself early on in my career, it would be to be more confident in my decision-making. Have some conviction – and don't be afraid to stick your neck out.

Article extracted from: <https://www.cips.org/en/supply-management/opinion/2017/july/jump-at-opportunities--even-if-you-feel-out-of-your-depth/>

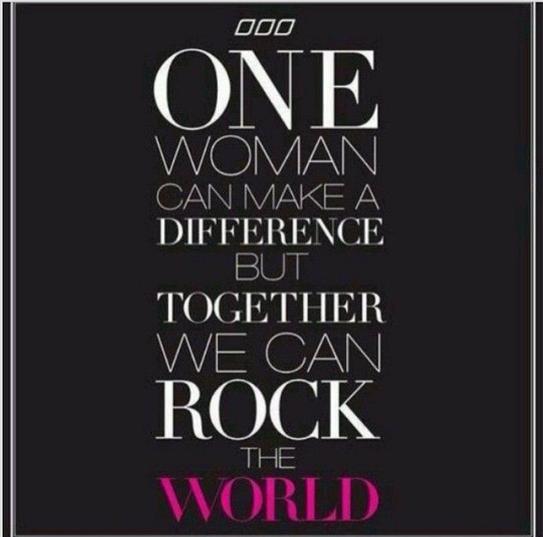
Women's Day "9th August"

"A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform."

Diane Mariechild



THERE
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