



viewpoint

specific public-sector units for the new qualifications. Member activity in Scotland is also producing some great events and networking opportunities, with three active branches (East of Scotland, West of Scotland and Aberdeen). The recent free regional member event on risk management in Stirling was a great success, attracting 100 delegates.

The parts others can't teach

I write in respect of the article "Grading the teachers", (Adviser, 13 April). While the advice contains some pertinent pointers as regards the trainers' ability, it pays only passing credence to the immeasurable value a trainer adds by having had experience in a hands-on environment in the field.

This knowledge enables the trainer to explain the obstacles and practical aspects of procurement, using real-life scenarios, projects and documentation, to prepare them for implementing best practice.

The most effective way to inject enthusiasm into the subject matter's curriculum is to sprinkle the course with these vignettes of actual situations which students will relate to.

Perhaps from a buyer's perspective, one might like the trainer to present a brief preview by way of an introduction of his abilities.

I have secured many appointments on the basis of having a practical approach to the subject, and indeed, had one client who told me that had I been from an academic background I would not have been hired. He had a bad experience when students walked out on the first day of a course complaining the trainer recited in a rote manner the presentation and hand-outs.

I wholeheartedly endorse the vetting of trainers as otherwise our profession cannot inject the enthusiasm into the younger up-and-coming membership.

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Supplier standards and audits are the foundation for an ethical sourcing programme. Difficult issues will, however, require a more considered approach, writes **Pam Zielinski**

The science of compliance

The development of supplier standards and an audit programme to measure compliance provide a good starting point for organisations to understand their supply chain and the associated risks. But for those who want a sustainable ethical sourcing approach which can adapt to, and deal with, emerging issues it is necessary to consider many aspects of implementation.

Today's approach has moved on from the "comply or die" method to one that reflects an understanding of the issues that lie behind "non-compliant" practices. It is a more collaborative approach where buyers and suppliers share learning and find solutions.

What does this approach mean for procurement leaders? It requires more sophisticated planning to address issues that are less black and white than audit outcomes. Implementation must be managed as part of a broad programme which considers each aspect of people, policy and process requirements. This extends from the education of buyers to determining how the performance reward framework will support results. It must also incorporate ethical sourcing considerations, developing a detailed policy and determining how that sits with the commercial pressures for flexible sourcing at low cost.

This provides an opportunity for procurement to support organisational development in a way that has not been available before. The questions posed through this type of implementation get to the heart of an organisation's values and provide a robust test of the depth of ethical concern. In other words, it provides the arena where ethical concerns meet commercial drivers and competitive practices.

So what issues require consideration during implementation planning? Of primary concern is investment, not just how much but what to invest in and how to go about it. With suppliers numbering hundreds, if not thousands, it's important to look at where an organisation can best focus its efforts and reduce the risk of an embarrassing reputation exposure. And more difficult, of those suppliers found to be non-compliant, which strategy is best justified – to walk

away or to develop? Consider whether ethical sourcing can become part of normal sourcing considerations and how buying practices can be changed. Ask which organisational behaviours are providing tension in buying behaviour. For example, marketing functions may require significant point-of-sale items at short notice or continually change specifications without understanding the impact. What support is there for buyers who select higher cost suppliers because of ethical considerations and therefore increase the cost of supply? And what of flexible sourcing versus strategic relationships?

These considerations are not quickly or easily addressed, however there are benefits to be had. The type of dialogue which such issues promote between an organisation and its suppliers must help to develop relationships. Collaborative development of suppliers not only encourages

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improvement of labour standards, but addressing issues such as training and health and safety will have a positive impact on quality of output and therefore efficiency and costs. There are also internal benefits for an organisation. By linking ethical sourcing to existing values, it can engage not just procurement but other employees. And for those wanting to attract talent, recruits born after 1980 are said to look for "meaning" over and above reward and recognition.

While more difficult to navigate, the new model of ethical sourcing provides an approach which will be seen as more authentic by a range of stakeholders. Implementation requires an all-encompassing framework which anticipates and considers difficult questions, enables people to understand the tough issues and empowers them to make decisions based on core values.

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