



Technology and the Future of Procurement Event

Speakers

Keynote:
Roger Gonourie,
Chief Commercial Officer,
Crown Commercial Service

Paul Desrosiers,
Partner, Powered Procurement,
KPMG

Simon Thompson,
Vice President Sales UKI & Nordics,
JAGGAER

Sean Williams,
Founder and Chief Executive,
AutogenAI

Facilitator

Hari Pillai,
Director, Local & Regional Government
and Public Sector Procurement & Supply
Chain, KPMG



The BSA, in collaboration with BSA member KPMG, held an event to explore the role that technology will play in the future of procurement.

The event focused on how data analytics and new technologies, such as AI, can be harnessed to streamline the procurement process. The discussion included the potential time and cost savings for both suppliers and contracting authorities when AI is used in the bidding and bid assessment processes and how time saved could allow procurement officials to concentrate on more specialised tasks.

Themes for discussion also included upskilling the workforce and building AI into everyday operations, and how to address the potential challenges that may emerge when using AI in the procurement process.

Hilary Robertson, Chair of the BSA, welcomed attendees to the event and set the scene by outlining trends in emerging technologies across all aspects of daily life. Hari Pillai led the session and introduced Roger Gonourie to deliver the keynote speech.

Roger Gonourie began by providing an overview of his role in the Crown Commercial Service. He then shared a perspective on the Government's adoption of technological change and outlined the importance of technological progress in the context of Crown Commercial Service and the role they play in procuring and managing suppliers of technology solutions.

He discussed the potential benefits that technology can bring across the procurement lifecycle from helping contracting authorities to optimise supply performance, managing supply risk and contract management, in turn providing greater supply chain transparency whilst freeing up time for procurement officials to carry out duties that cannot be automated. The importance of governance was also discussed, including securing strong data and digital foundations prior to advancing new digital solutions beyond the discovery and piloting.

The event explored the challenges that the use of AI may bring to the procurement process, and the importance of maintaining the human element to ensure bids are compliant and deliverable. There are also commercial considerations, including ethics, intellectual property, privacy and data security concerns.

Sean Williams delivered a presentation which explored the various capabilities of AI to streamline the procurement process. AI can read and write at a significantly faster pace, and in larger volumes, than humans can; it can almost instantly scan tenders to extract key information and quickly strengthen and add to subject matter expertise. In the new technological age, employees who utilise these capabilities will have an advantage against those who do not. AI will bring technological change in the next decade similar to the change that the invention of the Internet brought to the way we work.

Simon Thompson discussed technology as a critical facilitator to successfully embed change within an organisation. Alleviating concerns about advancing AI capabilities substituting human roles, Simon argued that it is, in fact, those persons embracing new technologies that will replace those persons that do not. AI presents an unparalleled opportunity for procurement practitioners to efficiently meet and exceed the expectations of an ever expanding remit; enhancing their ability to react to change, reduce risk and develop a greater competitive advantage for their business

Paul Desrosiers then spoke about tackling change management in the context of technological change and the characteristics of positive change. Reaction to change was posited as fundamentally personal, suggesting that when implementing AI, organisations could benefit from considering different approaches based on various audiences and their reaction to technological change.

Following the presentations, Hari Pillai facilitated a Q&A session with all speakers.

Some attendees raised the topic of job security in the age of AI. There was a discussion, involving all the panellists, on the potential that AI brings in freeing up time to complete specialised tasks, to build relationships with stakeholders, to collaborate and to be creative. This was followed by a discussion on the potential capability of AI to automate and speed up administrative tasks, thus allowing individuals to focus on tasks that add higher value and create innovation.

Panellists discussed the need for interoperability between software and systems to streamline the bid evaluation process, and the efficiency savings this could incur.

This led to a discussion about the bid marking criteria and how the current process could potentially result in many AI-supported bids scoring similarly. It may then become challenging to evaluate bids in the tendering process. The panel discussed the potential, then, to condense the bid scoring process to include fewer but more specialised questions focusing on the most crucial elements of the contract. In turn, this would allow for greater attention to be given to the key deliverables of the bid and differentiation between bids based on how the supplier would deliver the service, how outcomes will be achieved or how innovation will be delivered, for example.

Other topics discussed by attendees and panellists included how to instil confidence in organisations that technology can be trusted, and how to address apprehension towards technological change. This is often linked to organisational culture.

The conclusion was that technology, including AI, brings various potential benefits to the workforce. This includes freeing up time to concentrate on wider tasks, which could help with managing workload and boosting productivity. In procurement, AI can streamline bid writing and evaluation processes, which could benefit both suppliers and contracting authorities. Considerations of the potential challenges that AI may bring to procurement, and how these may be managed, are important and will require continuous development and revision, with the public sector and industry working in close partnership.

The event closed with gratitude expressed to all speakers and participants.