



Building Talented & Inclusive Teams: Driving & Delivering Diversity in Procurement

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Acknowledgement of Country

I pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

Overview



- Introduction
- My Background
- Motherhood and the Work-Life Balance Challenge
- Strategies for Building Inclusive Procurement Teams
- The Ripple Effect of Inclusion/Diversity
- Closing Remarks

Introduction



- Procurement: The unsung heroes of change
 - We may ask: “Did you fill the form?” but we hold the keys to real transformation
- Today’s journey:
 - From Bangladesh to Ryde : My personal story
 - Making teams vibrant and inclusive
 - Practical strategies you can use
- Why this matters?
 - What seems like IKEA-level difficulty leads to extraordinary rewards

My Background – A Story of Resilience and Adaptation

- Bangladesh Beginnings

- UNICEF procurement: Polio vaccines, flood relief, school supplies.
- *Changed lives—and discovered procurement's power to transform communities.*



- Sydney Challenges



- Credential barriers: MBA treated as a "Nice to Have" sticker.
- Cultural hurdles: Proving I could "fit in" and lead.
- The "Prove Yourself Cycle"



Lesson learnt: Just like you wouldn't judge a kebab by its wrapper, don't judge talent by their accent or where they studied.

Motherhood and the Work-Life Balance Challenge



- The Motherhood challenge
 - From "procurement expert" to "working parent" overnight
 - Red P plates, redundancies, and restructuring—all while managing deadlines
- The Solution:  Flexibility = Survival (and Success)
 - Battled for WFH (even with a clunky docking station!)
 - Proved **performance** > **presence**—results matter, not desk time
- The Lesson
 -  "If your team can't balance life and work, you're losing top talent. Period."

Strategies for Building Inclusive Procurement Teams

Diversify Recruitment Channels

- **Problem:** Traditional hiring tends to recycle the same talent pools.
- **Solution:** Actively seek out underrepresented groups through specialised networks.
- Advertise roles through multicultural media, linkedin, women-in-procurement networks, and disability employment services to reach broader audiences.
- **Collaborate with local councils and community groups** to identify talent in under-represented regions.
- **Example:** At the City of Ryde, we partnered with recruitment agencies to attract multicultural professional candidates. Also, the COR job application process tries to attract bi-lingual candidates.

Introduce Blind Hiring Practices

- **Problem:** The Problem is Unconscious bias
- **Solution:**
 - Use anonymised applications
 - Standardise interviews with competency-based questions
 - Introduce skills-based assessments
- **Example:** I can only speak for myself. I am a success story of blind hiring practices. In my first Government job in Sydney, my overseas MBA qualifications and UNICEF work experience was considered in my favour. I gained a responsible position without bias.

Strategies for Building Inclusive Procurement Teams

Foster Inclusive Leadership

- **Problem:** Diverse hires won't stay if the culture doesn't support them.
- **Solution:** Train leaders to recognise bias, promote mentorship, and create safe spaces for feedback.
- **Example:** At Ryde, Procurement Team promotes mentoring within the Team. In the purchasing team there was really a “boys”: culture with no understanding of procurement. As a mentor, I took on Purchasing Team members to shadow me so that they get a better understanding of what we do and why it is important.
Procurement is just not a set of difficult rules.
- **Lesson:** Diversity isn't charity—it's a **superpower** for problem-solving.

The Ripple Effect of Inclusion/Diversity

- **Innovation:** Different perspectives lead to creative solutions
- **People Trusts You:** Communities engage more when they see themselves reflected in their institutions.
- **Performance:** Diverse teams deliver better value



Closing Remarks

- Diversity isn't a destination—it's a journey of learning, adapting, and unlearning.
- ☒ Every step counts:
 - Revise job descriptions
 - Challenge biases
 - Listen to new perspectives
- Procurement doesn't just buy things—it shapes the future. And that future must include *everyone*.

Thank you! Let's continue the conversation—share your stories or questions.

