



Sam Rose

Procurement Adventurer

Intro

Sam Rose is the **Head of Procurement for tails.com**. Many of you reading this have probably heard of tails.com but in case you haven't, they are one of the most successful start-ups of recent years. Their pioneering, direct to consumer pet food delivers an individual recipe tailored to your dog's specific health needs. And what better time to be talking about procurement and our canine friends? Studies suggest that dog ownership is up post lockdown and that dogs have been a key support for our welfare during Covid-19. This positive trend, as well as their recent investment round from Nestle, mean it's exciting times for tails.com. Ordinarily, it would have been great to meet Sam and her dogs Claude and Bea for a walk and a coffee but Covid-19 meant a zoom this time round.

October 2020



What was the catalyst for you to get into Procurement?

My first role was in **NPD for a food manufacturing business**. The challenge of finding good quality ingredients at the right price, was exciting and gave me a taste of negotiation. I was then fortunate to gain a place on a trainee buyer scheme, with a Dutch food company called Zwanenberg. My passion for procurement was cemented during this time under the guidance of my line manager, Shane Nowakowski. He taught me to appreciate that suppliers are an extension of one's business and how important it is to invest in the relationship with them. Shane was always calm, pragmatic and objective which made him brilliant to work for and excellent at working with suppliers.



What does a typical day in procurement look like for you?

I try to keep things simple. Daily activities typically fall into one of the following three areas:

- 1. Everyday leadership of my team supporting them deliver procurement excellence**
- 2. Partnering with my colleagues around the business**
- 3. Talking with our suppliers**

Getting these things right is the heart of what I do.

...talking about getting things right, Sam believes in being really good at the basics. And at this moment she exclaims “Filofax! Let me tell you about my Filofax when I was a trainee buyer!” An easy lead into my next question (What is the best piece of advice you have been given about procurement?)

Early on in my career I learnt to be super organised. My mantra is, 'Always be prepared'. I had a filofax and I wrote everything useful in it. It sounds so simple, but it's that important. Being prepared is the recipe to a successful negotiation. I've carried on the ethos of this approach to this day – in our team we keep meticulous digital folders with all our key information. I've also implemented a contract database (more about contracts later)

What happened to the filofax?

Sam's anecdote about her filofax triggered me to do a short investigation of "What happened to the filofax?" . A little research shows the story of the filofax started in 1921 when an American company called Lefax started exporting their leather bound organisers to the UK. The term 'filofax' was coined from the phrase 'file-of-facts'. Popularity since its peak in the 1980s waned as palm pilots, phones and tablets took off. Companies House shows Filofax Ltd is still trading. Apparently devotees include Lord Lichfield, Diane Keaton, Woody Allen...and of course Tails.com's very own Sam Rose!

What is the biggest achievement you have had in your procurement career?

A couple of things stand out – definitely the most rewarding is **supporting and coaching my incredible team of procurement professionals**. To see them flourish is so motivating. I'm also proud of the way that we have brought procurement to life across tails.com. We invented a very simple idea to train the basics of procurement, to every team in the business. It was called: 'How to buy a dog' – the parallel to procurement is that if you're going to buy yourself a dog, you'd do good research on what you're buying and make a number of checks: write down the breed and characteristics of the dog you're looking for (the specification), check out a number of breeders (supplier assessment), meet several dogs (know the product!) and so on. This approach worked really well, as people around the business could easily draw the parallel between their dog and the core procurement skills.

"Sourcing cleaning services for The Savoy Hotel was one of the most challenging things in my career."



What was the hardest thing you have ever had to source?

I was in the procurement team at the Savoy Hotel. We had to **source the cleaning services for the hotel** – not the most glamorous category and sometimes perceived as an easy task. But, it was incredibly challenging and complex in its requirements. Having a beautifully clean hotel is paramount and directly contributed to the guest experience. There were so many things to get right – not just the obvious things like cleaning rooms and foyers but attention to detail such as how hundreds of thousands of lightbulbs in chandeliers would be cleaned and what defined a shiny marble floor.

**The secret to
our SRM is its
simplicity!**

I've heard you are doing some great work on SRM - what advice do you have for others to deliver an excellent SRM programme?

The secret to our SRM is its **simplicity!** Don't have process for process' sake. If you introduce a process internally and externally, its success is its adoptability long term. For something to be adoptable, it needs to be low effort and high impact.

If you were to ask our suppliers we hope they would they find our sessions enjoyable and that it contributes to their success in being the best supplier to tails.com.



Tell us all about your dogs Claude and Bea

They are **both Parson Russell Terriers**. Claude will be 5 this Christmas and Bea is one and a half. Much to the amusement of my suppliers, they regularly appear in meetings with me on line. We're so lucky to have such wonderful creatures, although Bea decided to 'investigate' (tear to shreds) what was inside our sofa cushions recently...and eat a lump of coal too!

Apart from tails.com, if you could manage the sourcing for any product or service in the World, what would it be?

Sourcing at tails.com is awesome, we have some great products and suppliers. I'm massively into gaming and sailing, so if I wasn't working here, I'd love to be either sourcing at a **gaming company such as Bethesda games** or a **boat builder like Beneteau** would be dreamy.



**"I totally
disagree - I
love contract
management!"**

Contract Management can be one of the less glamorous parts of our work and particularly challenging on indirect spend - how did you bring this to life at tails.com?

I disagree! I absolutely love contract management. We developed a few simple guidelines on contract management. **Each contract owner is supported by a procurement partner** and they work together in reviewing the performance, risk and overall impact of the contract. Once we'd installed our contract management platform we had a contract amnesty day when those with contracts tucked away in all manner of places, could come clean and hand them in. If the contracts were complete, we filed them on our platform; if they needed finalising and signing my team would help the stakeholders do this. It was a roaring success.

**Procurement gives
you a great
foundation in
understanding how
a business runs**

What advice would you give to anyone looking to forge a career in procurement?

Go for it! Procurement has the capability and freedom for innovation, strategy building, commercial and numerical analysis, negotiation and relationship management. It also gives you a great foundation in understanding how a business is run. The CIPS programme is super helpful in providing this knowledge and all of our procurement team go through it.

What is the most valuable procurement training you have had?

I'll keep this short - **negotiation training**

How has tails.com's expertise in technology helped procurement?

Tails.com has great data. As well as benefiting ourselves we can feed this data back to suppliers, which they can then use to further support their improvements. As an example, palatability is really important to tails.com. Our consumers (the dogs) make it very clear to our customers (their owners) if they like our products or not. We get to communicate directly with our customers and the feedback is almost immediate. We can then feed these insights back to our suppliers so they can keep improving the products and their impact.

What has been the best piece of advice you have been given about procurement?

Invest in your relationships! They are key to the joint success of both parties



Rapid fire

Afghan Hound or Siberian Husky

Afghan Hound

Country Walk or London Park?

Country Walk

Lands End to John O'Groats or Swim the Channel

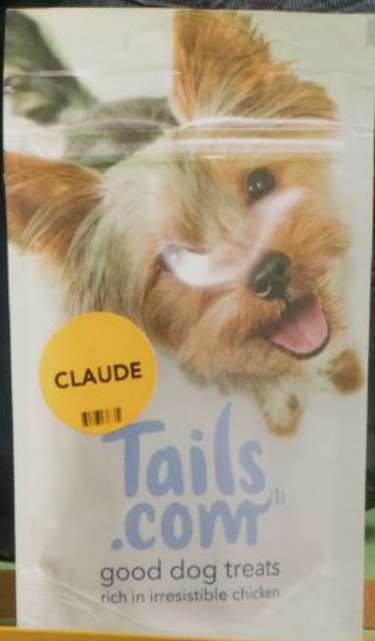
Neither - I want to sail the Atlantic

Horse Riding or Camel Trek

Horse Riding

Dame Ellen MacCarthy or Sir Edmund Hillary

Dame Ellen MacArthur



Sam Rose

Procurement Adventurer