

A man with short brown hair, wearing a green zip-up sweater, dark trousers, and brown shoes, is crouching next to a bright orange McLaren sports car. The car is a McLaren 720S, featuring black accents and large black wheels with yellow brake calipers. The background is a plain white wall with the McLaren logo in large, dark letters. The man is smiling at the camera.

McLaren

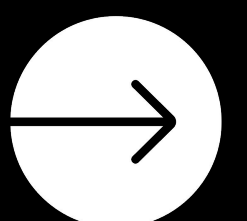
Will Jefferies

Procurement Adventurer

Intro

Will and I have worked extensively together since 2002 - first at Mars, then at innocent drinks. Will is a true creative thinker. He's never encumbered by bureaucracy or outdated paradigms. Instead, he has an uncanny knack for finding solutions others miss. After **10 successful years at McLaren**, he's now embarking on the next chapter of his career and keen to find a new and exciting challenge.

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How did your career begin?

I began my career in 2002 on the **Mars Management Development Programme**, completing three placements:

- **Manufacturing** – pet food at Melton Mowbray, Mars' major UK production plant
- **Sales** – coin and note validators within the Electronics Division
- **Trade Marketing** – for the Drinks Division

The Mars Management Development Programme was a fantastic opportunity to explore different roles and discover where my strengths lay. Mars was also exceptional at helping you understand yourself and how to work effectively with others.

It proved the perfect springboard for my next move - heading Supply Planning at innocent drinks. My number one task? Making sure we never ran out of stock - not easy when the business was growing at breakneck speed!

Simon, I'm sure you remember the infamous time when Christmas demand unexpectedly soared and we got down to just six hours of banana purée stock when we were supposed to hold three months' cover! (SF - I sure remember it!...we just got through)

**"We got down
to 6 hours of
stock"**



What's been your most recent role?

For the past ten years I've worked at **McLaren Automotive**, first as **Procurement Manager and then later as Head of Procurement**. I specialised in indirect spend across Product Development, Logistics, After-Sales, Marketing, IT, and Facilities / Property.

When the pandemic hit, it had a major impact on the company. The business needed a rapid turnaround - and I was fortunate to take on the role of Head of Transformation. It was a tremendous opportunity to overhaul overheads, SG&A, and Facilities, driving real structural change.

Now that spend is under control and the transformation work complete, it feels like the natural moment to refocus for a new challenge that will allow me to combine what I'm good at: procurement in a challenging, technical evolving environment.

**"Working with
the **Senna**
Family was a
privilege"**

What were your highlights at McLaren?

There have been quite a few: I disposed of redundant buildings, delivering a £40M saving. Working with the Senna family on brand rights for the “**Senna**” car was a privilege. And as an engineer at heart, I loved getting involved with the creation, design and procurement of specialised car parts.

Of course, no McLaren story is complete without mentioning the cars themselves. Once, I had a ride in the Senna £1M+ supercar with the McLaren test driver. The way he handled the car up the Spanish mountain hairpins is something I’ll never forget!



What's the secret to a successful transformation project?

- Clear, consistent communication
- Empowering people to act independently
- Agility and tenacity to push through roadblocks
- Comfort with ambiguity
- The right composition of skills on the team
Change is hard - but the magic happens when people start to own it.

**"It was a
masterclass in
preparation"**

Tell us about your hardest negotiation...

This is what I really enjoy and thankfully I have a few to choose from! Between **negotiating joint ventures** when I worked at Sainsbury's to **dealing with strategy consultants** at McLaren, the toughest has got to be a deal with a major telecommunications hardware provider for one of the cars at McLaren - easily the toughest, best-trained negotiators I've ever faced. They were always impeccably prepared, every single time. It was a masterclass in preparation, discipline, and control.

Please can you share your negotiation top tips...

My five essentials:

1. Plan.
2. Define clear objectives before you negotiate.
3. Understand what they want...and how you can help them get it.
4. Consider how you're perceived. For example, during my McLaren years I could have turned up to supplier meetings in a McLaren supercar, but that would have sent the wrong message.
5. Even in a digital world, face-to-face still matters. Some people find it hard, but nothing beats sitting in the same room, having a coffee, and finding a solution together.

What have been your biggest career learnings?

There have been many over the years. One that stands out came during negotiation training - when I realised **negotiation is a bit of a game**. The salesperson is playing a game, and you're playing a game too. Understanding that brinkmanship is crucial. I've loved doing deals ever since.

Beside this, striving for accuracy whilst maintaining pace is very important. Procurement often gets criticized for slowing things down. We need to make sure that we deliver our benefits whilst keeping the process moving.

**AI will
remove the
drudgework**

What will Procurement look like in 5-10 years time?

Technology and AI will transform the function, mainly by removing the drudge work and freeing Procurement to focus on value creation. Recently, I needed to draft a supplier SLA. Normally, that would take an afternoon. AI did it in 30 seconds.

But whilst AI, Tech, and eSourcing bring real efficiency, they can't replace the human side - the relationship building, empathy, and judgement that make Procurement effective.

What is the difference between values and skills?

Always recruit for values. Skills can be taught, but values shape behaviour. I look for qualities like:

- **Do I trust them?**
- **Will they support others?**
- **Would I want to have a pint with them?**

**Do them a
favour early on**

How do you get stakeholders on board?

Do them a favour early. Find something, even small, that helps them out. Solve a problem for them fast. Once you're "the person who helped", you've built credibility and trust. One example: a new stakeholder needed an urgent PO raised. I resolved it at breakneck speed. After that, collaboration became effortless.

What training haven't you had that you'd like?

On **AI**, there's a lot of noise. I'd love to cut through the hype and see where it genuinely adds value. And while I've built strong commercial acumen, I've always thought a degree in Accountancy would have been complementary to Procurement.

What's your take on Sustainable Procurement?

If they're not already, **Sustainability and Procurement will become two sides of the same coin.** Making sourcing decisions without a consideration of ESG matters is reckless in today's world. Sustainability has a role to play in everything from sourcing legal services in London to lightbulbs from China.

Prior to leaving I put together McLaren Automotives first ESG strategy and it is apparent how critically important it will be to the future of the business.

Where do you get your inspiration from?

I'm naturally **inquisitive and drawn to elegant solutions**. I'm not good with "the same old, same old." I get great satisfaction from putting in a solution that I can see works, and until that point the frustration of seeing it in front of me, not working, is inspiration / motivation to do whatever is necessary to get the job done.

What don't we know about you?

I own a **ship's foghorn**, which I occasionally blast over the Mendip Hills in Somerset.

I've competed several dangerous sports in the past, including mountaineering, in the famous cheese rolling at Cooper's Hill and skeleton bobsled on the Cresta Run.





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