

REMEMBER THE HEAD
SOLUTION

Rupert Gaster

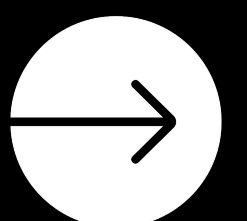
Procurement Adventurer

Intro

Rupert is the **founder and MD of Procurement Heads**, within the very highest tier of specialist procurement recruitment consultancies in the UK.

Since its launch in 2012, Procurement Heads has been my go-to for procurement talent. Why? It's simple – they don't just fill roles with the very best procurement experts; they really care about giving their candidates and clients the best experience. And it's helped that our two businesses share the same mission: to put Procurement firmly on the map and ensure it is a driving force for good in every business. Such was our shared passion for procurement that we formalised our partnership earlier in 2022.

November 2022



How did you come to work in Procurement?

In the early part of my career I was introduced to someone working in recruitment. The way they described it appealed to me – a focus on people with a good dash of marketing and sales. This led to my first role with one of the big global recruitment agencies where I first specialised in the finance and accountancy sector. Procurement teams often reported into Finance so I got a taste for what they did. This transpired to be the catalyst for setting up Procurement Heads.

**Some folk barely
knew what
Procurement was**

What was it about specialising in Procurement that was most appealing to you?

15 years ago, procurement was still relatively untapped and some folk barely knew what it was. When meeting people for the first time and explaining what I did, their response would often be, “what’s procurement?” But I could see then that procurement’s time would come. Spotting the opportunity I set up Procurement Heads and I’ve never looked back.

As a result of Brexit, Covid, climate change and all the World’s VUCA, procurement has become instrumental to the survival and growth of companies. To be part of this sea-change motivates me every day.

**Great
Procurement
Teams don't
need a mandate**



When you're considering procurement talent, what is it your clients and your team are most looking for?

My answer to this has changed considerably over recent years. In the past, clients would be most interested in a candidate's sector knowledge and expertise – eg “don't bother sending me anyone who's not already an expert at professional services”. Of course, this is still important. But now, what we're looking for most is how candidates deploy their skills and knowledge: how they partner with other teams around the business; how they work with suppliers without an un-necessarily aggressive approach; and how they work without a mandate – great procurement professionals are so good at building relationships, they don't need a mandate.

Closely linked with this is how good candidates are at selling – or rather how I like to think about it is ‘story telling’ – how well they bring to life the change they are wanting to make.

**Procurement is
fast becoming a
talent exporter**

Why should graduates pick procurement over other options?

The variety of experiences and depth of skills that those new to procurement can gain is second to none. They might start by learning about contract law, moving on to finding, vetting and developing suppliers to helping launch new products and services.

Coming back to sustainability – Millennials and GenZ cite caring for the planet as one of the most important drivers for choosing the company they work for. Being able to align their personal motivations with their careers is powerful.

Secondly, procurement is fast becoming a talent exporter and a conduit to senior leadership roles. Procurement professionals who have spent 10-15 years building up their operational and strategic acumen are becoming the C-Suite business leaders of the future.



What is the hardest or most interesting role you have filled?

We've filled all sorts of amazing roles from The Supply Chain Director for world-famous wine merchants Berry Bros & Rudd, to Head of Procurement for THIS plant-based Meat, and many more. But of all the roles, the hardest to fill was for a tea taster at Twinings. We had to scour the land for someone with incredible taste buds. We reviewed 300 foodie candidates and only one hit the mark. To give a feel for just how hard it was, during the Tea Tasting part of the interview the candidate had to be able to tell the difference between seasons, years and tea estates. I tried the test and it's fair to say I didn't pass.

PROCUREMENTHEADS



**"Someone
mistook
Procurement
Heads for a
Job Centre!"**

What's the funniest thing that's happened to you when you've been interviewing a candidate?

I can't publish the funniest thing, but I can the second. One time someone walked into our office with their dog thinking we were a Job Centre. Unfortunately, the dog decided to do a whoopsie in the middle of the office whilst we were interviewing a candidate. In this instance Procurement Heads failed to find a role for either the interloper or the dog!

What makes Procurement Heads unique in what you do?

We're lucky to have an amazing team, one that has been built in recent years around a strong values set and that is dedicated to finding brilliant candidates who exceed the expectations of our clients. What we really want to do is invest back into the profession. Three ways we do this are:

- Thought leadership to shape the future of procurement
- Inclusion and diversity – when I started working in procurement recruitment I could sum it up in three stark words: ‘male, pale, stale’. I didn’t want to perpetuate this legacy so at Procurement Heads we work super hard to support and promote the careers equally of people from all walks of life, age, sex, beliefs, nationalities and religions.
- We partner with several other businesses like yours which means that we really understand the wider context of the procurement profession

When will procurement finally stop being called a support function?

The profession has taken giant strides forward these last few years. Procurement can cement their position at the top table when their results are consistently so good that their value is without question and they can tell their story in a compelling way.

What trends are you seeing between interim and FTE resourcing?

The April 2021 IR35 change for private businesses resulted in a large number of interims caught inside IR35 switching to permanent roles. Currently there are many unfilled positions in the UK across all job categories. It's likely that we will see companies less fixated on FTEs and more likely and willing to recruit on a project-by-project basis. Interim work has increased for Procurement Heads over the last couple of years from ~10% to 30% of the total.

**"A cocoa
buyer is less
likely to
become an
IT buyer"**

Can a procurement pro be good at both direct and indirect sourcing?

To a degree procurement skills are transferrable and we have a number of candidates who make the switch. However, some roles are highly specialist – as an example a cocoa buyer is less likely to become an IT buyer and vice versa. My advice to candidates is to seek out the broadest range of experience as early in your career as possible. Specialisation too early can create a type cast in later years.

If you could have dinner with three famous people, who would they be?

- **Kevin McCloud of Grand Designs** – I love his use of words to describe buildings
- **The rugby player Martin Bayfield** – I met him in New Zealand when he sidled over and drank my beer! He's a giant at 6ft10" but an incredible raconteur.
- **Keith Floyd**. I grew up in an era when rabble rousers were celebrated.

I think I'd have some stories to tell after that dinner.



Kevin McCloud

What is Family Gaster's ethos or moto?

We'll try everything once. Being profoundly scared of heights this has tripped me up a few times with Bungee jumps and tall buildings!

We love the outdoors as well as most sports including cycling, surfing, golf, football, cricket and rugby.



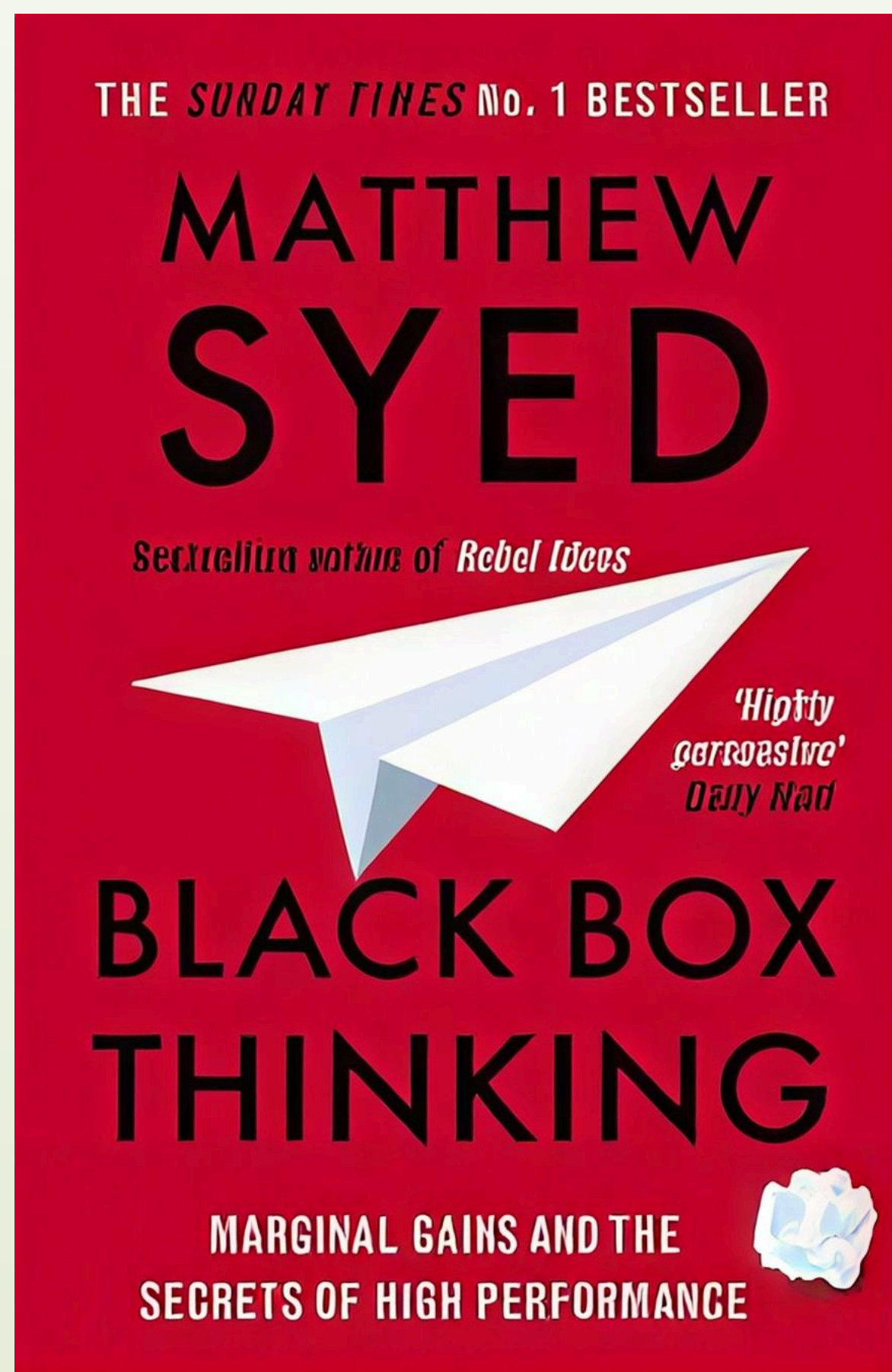
What would you do during a 2 month sabbatical?

I absolutely love India. I did an amazing trip from Mumbai down the Western Ghats to Kerala and then across to Chennai. My memories were of the often-suffocating chaos of the cities but the incredible spirit of the Indian people that made us feel so welcome. My grandparents lived in Sri Lanka for 6 years.

Holidays were a sensory experience from a young age with the myriad of smells of Colombo's food markets, to the cool coastal breezes. A huge culture shock, but one that I've loved and embraced ever since with regular family trips to Asia and South East Asia.

Recent 3 books read

- Black Box Thinking - Matthew Syed
- Open - Andre Agassi
- Will it make the boat go faster? - Ben Hunt-Davies



Favorite Gadget?

Apple watch, although in truth I'm somewhat of a technophobe, preferring the simple pleasures!

Rapid fire

Cycling or Surfing - Surfing

Thai or Indian food - Indian

Modern or Period architecture - Period

I walked past the High Courts on the Strand last week and thought, "they don't make 'em like they used to"

Rupert Gaster

*Procurement
Adventurer*

