



Cameron Holder

Procurement Adventurer

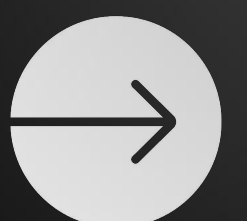
Intro

Cameron and I worked together years ago, back in 2012. We then lost contact until our orbits over-lapped when he was Head of Procurement at Gails.

As a **keen foodie** with a **curious mind** and a passion for procurement, he is a classic Procurement Adventurer.

Here's his story...

April 2023



How did your procurement adventure begin?

Like many people **I fell into Procurement.** I did a finance and economics degree which landed me my first role in Accounts Payable. I spent most of my time resolving invoice issues which in truth wasn't the most exciting. Brighter skies lay ahead with a role sourcing marketing spend for the Carphone Warehouse, a few years consulting and then a wider portfolio of marketing & indirect spend for O2. One of the highlights was working on a super cool O2 advert with Beyonce when she wore the most incredible gold outfit. I then spent an amazing time at Nando's, initially setting up their indirect procurement function before taking on all procurement and menu pricing.

Tell us about your current role...

Currently, I'm interim **Head of Procurement for the Bread Factory**, maker of the finest artisan bread and owner of Gails Bakeries. My Team sources all the materials that go in to the products, from the obvious like flour, sugar and eggs to the more unusual such as flower petals for cake toppings.

The company has ambitious targets to double in size over the next 2-3 years. This requires us professionalising the procurement team, specifically: recruiting a strong team, training them really well and sharpening up our processes.

**"We take **no
short cuts** with
the quality of
the product"**

At Gails, how do you maintain superior product quality whilst being cost competitive?

As you know from when you visited our central bakery a few months back, **we have amazing products and take no short cuts with the quality.** This means we have to work that bit harder to manage costs as with this approach, challenging the spec isn't always the easiest. What works really well though is that the Procurement Team works closely with NPD. As an example when I buy all the flour I often do supplier visits with our head baker. This helps us make the trade offs between cost and quality.



What does platinum Sustainable Procurement look like in the bakery sector?

Our sustainability strategy is to **help fix an industry-wide broken food system** – we focus on both the land, especially not depleting it, and the people who manage the land. We also try to use materials that are in season and not flown in from miles away. As an example, we make a delicious cake with rhubarb in winter when it's bountiful in the UK and use English strawberries throughout the summer months.



**"I counted
thousands of
plastic eyes in
Hong Kong!"**

How do you see Procurement evolving over the next 10 years?

I think procurement is behind especially with systems and it will need the next decade to catch up. As an example, we should be able to get to a place where we can **run tenders fully automatically** but in truth most businesses are miles away yet. Too many procurement systems seem to centralise what we do over email / in excel rather than really address the question: “how can the system truly make the buyer’s life easier and get to an excellent result quicker?”

The other area the procurement sector needs to think about is how we adapt our training for those in the earlier part of their careers. As we start using systems to automate basic procurement tasks, roles are getting more strategic and yet graduates don’t get sufficient exposure to the simple nuts and bolts of procurement to understand the work properly.

What's been your most interesting or exciting procurement adventure?

I can tell you the weirdest! I was sourcing Easter Egg toys for Cadburys when I was consulting. We had a tip off that maybe the toys weren't being made in the selected/audited factory in China which could have caused a risk of child labour etc. So I flew out to China to investigate. **By counting thousands of boxes of plastic eyes** I was able to ascertain that the right factory had all the materials to make the toys, so all was OK.

While at Nando's I led a project to **connect our ovens to the internet** - it sounds odd but it gave us the ability to dial into ovens remotely so we could diagnose and fix them around a third of the time without sending an engineer out. Not only did it slash maintenance costs, but it also reduced oven down time for the restaurants.



Who or what is your greatest source of inspiration?

My time as Head of Procurement for Nando's.

We did a brilliant job embedding our values in the way we worked. To give a feel of this we brought our suppliers together for an afternoon to ask them what would make them happier (at the time Nando's described their mission as 'creating lasting happiness'). It was a fascinating discussion and a very different approach to improving supplier relationship management.

Creative people inspire me – I like to see what they come up with. One person really stands out is Roy, our creative director at Bread Factory. It's great to see how he challenges the business to be authentic and constantly comes up with ideas to make the Gail's brand better. My job is to make sure he has an ecosystem of great suppliers to create with and to work with him in a way where we can develop amazing products that are also commercially savvy.



**"It's easy to fall
into the zero
sum game"**

What would you like your suppliers to say about you?

That I'd engaged them properly and considered their needs – I wouldn't want them to say that I'd negotiated to win totally at their expense. It's easy to fall into the trap of a zero-sum game.

Why should graduates choose procurement over other opportunities?

I can't think about many professions that offer so much variety as procurement with such **good opportunities to learn a range and depth of skills.** Over the years I've learned anything from how the flour market works, to how ovens are made, how chillis are grown, how to buy cloud based software to the behaviour of mice (pest control). Because of the scope of procurement you learn something new just about every day.

What advice would you give your younger self?

That it's OK to not always know exactly where you're going. I'm a very organised person, but I've realised sometimes I just need to take a big leap and have faith that it will work out.

What's your favourite procurement technique?

Staying quiet

Where would you like your career to be in 5 years' time?

I really like the hospitality industry and I'd like to manage the end-to-end commercials and P&L so looking to the future, a **Commercial Director** role would be great.

If you could take a 3 month sabbatical, where would you go?

South America: Mexico for culture, Peru for food and surfing, Argentina for the amazing steak / wine and Brazil, well because it's Brazil!

Rapid Fire

Pain au raisin or almond croissant? Both are delicious but my favourite is our **cinnamon bun**

Durban or Cape Town?

As a South African, I'd say **Cape Town to live**

Pub or Coffee Shop?

Pub

A silhouette of a person in a wetsuit running on a beach, carrying a surfboard under their arm. The person is running away from the camera towards the ocean. The background shows waves and a bright, hazy sky. The text 'Cameron Holder' is overlaid in large green letters, and 'Procurement Adventurer' is overlaid in white italicized letters below it.

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