



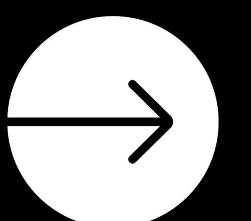
Lucy Barks
Procurement Adventurer

Intro

Lucy and I crossed paths very briefly at innocent drinks in 2011. Since then, we have worked with several of the same companies, but never at the same time – until now! This year I was fortunate to do an assignment for Lucy in her latest role at **Bold Bean.**

Here's her story...

October 2025



How did you get started in procurement?

I didn't take the obvious route into procurement – but then again, I don't think anyone ever really does. I studied English Studies at university – not exactly the fast track to supply chain. I worked full-time in restaurants through my degree, which meant I knew how to order ingredients and manage stock.

When I finished uni, I wanted a job without the unsociable hours working in restaurants, so I joined Boots the Chemist in Nottingham. I thought I'd stay a year; I stayed seven. That's where I fell in love with supply chain – the creativity, the problem-solving, the tangible impact. Procurement came later, at Innocent Drinks, when I was asked to build a new contract manufacturing function from scratch. That's where it clicked: **this is what I'm meant to do.**

Where did your love of food come from?

Definitely from those early years working in restaurants. I didn't grow up in a foodie household – food was functional. But working in delis and restaurants opened my eyes. I discovered how creative food could be. I'm a practical cook – I love baking because it's precise – but mostly I just appreciate the craft that goes into great food.



Tell us about your current role at Bold Bean Co.

I'm **Head of Supply Chain at Bold Bean Co.**

That means I look after everything that moves – procurement, logistics, quality, NPD, and sustainability. We're small, so no two weeks are ever the same. One day I'm negotiating with a European co-manufacturer, the next I'm deep in B Corp recertification. It's busy, varied, and I absolutely love it.



What's the best part of your role?

Solving problems. Every day brings a new challenge. I enjoy the variety and the pace of a fast-growing business. And I'll be honest – negotiating is fun. Not the I win/you lose type but the ones where both sides come away better off. Done right, it builds long-term relationships.

**"In a small
business, when
something breaks,
everyone feels it."**

...And the hardest part?

When things go wrong. I take it personally, even when I know it's part of the job. In a small business, when something breaks, everyone feels it. You learn to balance being proactive with forgiving yourself when the unpredictable happens.

How do you source Bold Bean's amazing beans?

It's a mix of partnerships and persistence. Some growers reach out to us, others we seek out because we know what we want. We've built long-term relationships with co-manufacturers across Europe who help us select from the best harvests and varieties. Our butter beans, for example, come from a specific region in Poland – they're triple and quadruple sorted for quality. Every batch goes through optical, mechanical, and manual sorting before we approve it. It's obsessive, but that's what makes them so special.

**"Staff cycled
around the
factory"**

What's the most memorable factory or field visit you've ever done?

The first one at Boots, when I was 21. They had their own factories in these beautiful old listed buildings – like Edwardian ballrooms full of industrial machines. I remember watching toothpaste being filled and thinking: there's so much about the world we never see.

Later, I visited a machinery plant in Germany where staff cycled around the factory because it was so vast. That blew my mind too – seeing the engineering behind the engineering. And I've been to some pretty big warehouses too.



**"Hire razor
sharp people
who care"**

What's the secret to scaling a supply chain in a fast-growing SME?

Hire **razor-sharp people who care**. Give up your spreadsheets earlier than you think. And invest time in your suppliers – trust is everything. I'm also a bit of a geek for ERP systems. We're researching one now, maybe even an AI-based version. The right system will be a game-changer for us.

What are your favourite procurement techniques?

Number one – **the professional wince**. The moment someone quotes a price and you instinctively flinch. It works more often than you'd think. Then there's '**Demands of Wishes**' – I learned that at Innocent, it's genius. And finally, I love a good **RAPID** – knowing who's Responsible, Accountable, and who actually Decides keeps everything moving.

And which techniques do you find hardest?

Writing briefs. I either go into too much detail and close off creativity, or I'm too vague and invite chaos. I'm getting better by asking for peer feedback – and yes, I even use ChatGPT to sanity-check my clarity sometimes.

How do you balance price with sustainability?

It's tough. At Bold Bean, we balance price with quality, sustainability, and availability. Our values help – **Be Bold, Be Hungry, Be You, Be One Team.** 'Be Hungry' means getting the best deal for the business, but never at the farmer's expense. Beans are naturally sustainable – they're good for soil and need to stay viable for the people growing them. So, we think in terms of value, not just price.

Has B-Corp changed how Bold Bean Co. operates?

Yes. It's made us think deeply about the impact of every choice. A good example is our packaging: glass jars need protection, but we swapped plastic and bubble wrap for a cornstarch-based Ecoflow filler that dissolves in water. It costs more, but it's aligned with who we are.



What about climate change – how's that affecting your supply chain?

We're already seeing it. Our Polish butter bean farmers are facing hotter springs and summers, which is impacting yields. We're supporting them as best we can while exploring UK-grown alternatives. Ironically, the changing weather might make beans more viable here in the future – it's an evolving story.

**The buyer of
tomorrow?**

**"Curiosity.
Empathy. A Sense
of Humour"**

What skills and attributes will the buyer of tomorrow need?

Curiosity. Empathy. A sense of humour. You have to like people – procurement is human at its core. Yes, systems and AI matter, but only if you know what you're trying to achieve with them. You're always negotiating with another person, even if they're behind the algorithm.

Which language do you wish you could speak and why?

I'd love to speak Spanish fluently – a lot of my team are Spanish. But if I could pick anything, I'd go for **Japanese or Chinese**. I've always been fascinated by languages, especially ones that come from completely different roots.



What item could you not live without?

My passport

If you could host a bold bean supper, who would you invite?

Stephen Fry, because he's brilliant. Naomi Novik, because she's an incredible storyteller. And Taylor Swift – I'd love to know what she's really like behind the scenes.

Favourite Bold Bean Co. recipe?

It's got to be black beans, sweet potato and tender-stem broccoli bowls from our newest cookbook – it's SUPER easy to make and I think black beans are an underrated bean!

Rapid Fire

Butter Bean or Chickpea?

Both are great but I'd go **butterbeans** - they're so versatile.

Out in the field or in a factory?

Factory as I love to see how things are made.

Pie or casserole?

Always a pie. Flaky pastry, not shortcrust.



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