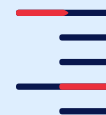


Human Intelligence in the Age of AI: Rebuilding Procurement Capability

A white paper by Richard Beaumont, produced
in collaboration with Skill Dynamics.





Skill Dynamics partnered with Richard Beaumont to produce this white paper to combine deep practitioner insight with cutting-edge learning solutions. Richard's extensive experience in procurement leadership, coupled with Skill's expertise in building role-based, AI-enabled development programs, allows us to explore the human challenges behind technological acceleration and offer practical approaches to developing the next generation of procurement talent.

About Richard Beaumont

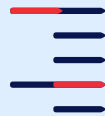
Working across the UK, Europe, US and Asia, Richard Beaumont is an internationally renowned Procurement Leader, Trainer and Executive Advisor with over 30 years' experience across multiple industry sectors. Richard specializes in helping procurement teams to deliver greater value, reduce risk and build innovation through better use of technology. After a career journey from Army Officer to MD to McKinsey Consultant to CPO, Richard realized that his passion was helping businesses to transform their procurement teams through an experience-based mix of keynote speaking, training and coaching with a particular focus on driving the triple bottom line of profit, people and planet.

Internationally renowned Procurement Leader, Trainer and Executive Advisor



"At Skill, we are enormously proud to work with a great many of the very best procurement, supply chain, and trade compliance professionals globally. We know, now more than ever, that skillsets are crucially important for companies to thrive – and that human intelligence must work seamlessly alongside artificial intelligence. As Richard describes, AI adoption and delivery will be blunted if humans are unable to lead and utilize its power – we're here to help deliver on the promise of HI and AI.

Sam W Pemberton, CEO, Skill Dynamics



Procurement at a Tipping Point

Procurement has always evolved, although given that “Using Tech to Sort Spend Data” appeared on the ProcureCon agenda in both 1999 and 2024 one wonders how much. But the last two years have not been evolution; they have been acceleration. Artificial Intelligence has moved from theoretical promise to operational reality. AI is now embedded across the procurement value chain: supplier risk monitoring, contract summarization, invoice automation, negotiation preparation, market intelligence and the guidance of category strategies.

The evidence is unequivocal. McKinsey’s cross-functional analyses suggest that 60–70% of procurement activities can already be fully or partially automated with existing technologies [1]. Accenture’s research shows that up to 40% of procurement work is currently augmented by AI, primarily in data interpretation, supplier analysis and workflow automation [2].



60–70% of procurement activities can already be fully or partially automated with existing technologies.

40% of procurement work is currently augmented by AI, primarily in data interpretation, supplier analysis and workflow automation.

The ProcureCon CPO Report 2025 reinforces this trend with real-world data from 100 senior procurement leaders across Europe. According to the report, every respondent is already using AI or automation in at least one part of the source-to-pay process. The most mature use cases – supplier risk monitoring (60%), contract lifecycle management (58%), invoice automation (57%), and sourcing/RFP management (38%) – are notable because they are exactly the activities that have traditionally formed the backbone of procurement apprenticeship [3].

AI Use Cases

60%

Supplier Risk
Monitoring

58%

Contract Lifecycle
Management

57%

Invoice
Automation

38%

Sourcing/RFP
Management

Real-world data from 100 senior procurement leaders across Europe.





The direction of travel is clear. As Pactum's CEO puts it in the report:
"The future is humans managing agents. More and more manual tasks will be done efficiently via agents working for them." [3]

This aligns directly with the hypothesis I put to an audience of 100 senior leaders in April this year: AI could replace 50% of procurement headcount by the end of 2026 and will replace over 50% by the end of 2027.

Many disagreed, but it is difficult to deny the trajectory when adoption is already so widespread.

But here is the "but". Confidence in procurement's ability to handle this disruption remains measured. The ProcureCon report shows that 69% of leaders feel only "somewhat confident" in their current strategies and operating models, with just 4% "very confident". Only 10% of teams feel "highly prepared" to adopt AI and digital tools at scale, even though adoption is already underway [3].

Procurement is therefore in a difficult place. The technology is accelerating faster than the profession feels ready to absorb.

In fact, beneath the optimism about AI lies a more uncomfortable truth. We may be transforming the function faster than we are transforming the people within it.





The Emerging Talent Crisis in an AI-Accelerated World

This brings us to the deeper concern, which is not about technology but about people.

For decades, procurement careers have been built the slow way: through apprenticeship, repetition, stakeholder conflict, negotiation wins and scars, supplier visits, data cleansing, RFx mistakes, reflection and the weight of responsibility. This journey built not just capability but judgment, the unique blend of experience, context, emotional intelligence and consequence-awareness that defines Human Intelligence (HI) at its best.

Now imagine that journey disappearing.

AI is absorbing exactly the roles and tasks that once formed the foundational learning ground of procurement. Procurement leaders are noticing. The ProcureCon CPO Report 2025 captures a striking pattern in open comments:

- "Without experience, many new professionals won't grasp procurement."
- "Without entry-level roles, people may not develop the same confidence."
- "Without these opportunities, we might not have the ability to fill senior positions." [3]

This is not resistance to technology. It is recognition that the career ladders that build capability are quickly and quietly being dismantled.

At the same time, leaders highlight capability gaps in the very areas that cannot be automated: strategic supplier relationship management (32%), category management and sourcing (30%) and regulatory/ESG expertise (25%) [3]. These share a common DNA of being judgment-heavy capabilities. They require context, curiosity and consequence, all of which are built through doing, not observing.

Capability Gaps

32%

Strategic Supplier
Relationship Management

30%

Category Management
And Sourcing

25%

Regulatory/ESG
Expertise

Yet only 17% of teams list talent acquisition and upskilling as a top priority and just 26% prioritize digital transformation or AI from a capability-building perspective [3]. As Carine Assaf puts it: "You can't deliver resilience or transformation without developing people." [3]

Meanwhile, the barriers to AI adoption remain as human as they are technical: legacy system integration (39%), resistance to change (24%) and data governance concerns (20%) [3]. One respondent summarizes the tension: "We might have amazing tech in the future but no qualified people to work with it." [3]

As Carine Assaf puts it:
"You can't deliver resilience
or transformation without
developing people." [3]

White Paper

Complication



This is the heart of the complication. AI is accelerating but the human learning journey is not.

We risk creating organizations that are technologically advanced yet humanly fragile; efficient yet brittle; automated yet underdeveloped; with powerful systems but shallow judgment.

In this world, the “future me” becomes a real problem. If AI removes the formative work that shaped today’s leaders, where will tomorrow’s leaders learn the craft? Where will they gain the instinct, the judgment, the confidence born of consequence?

Think about it: would you remove medical residency and expect brilliant surgeons?

So what happens when we remove procurement apprenticeships and expect CPOs with judgment?

This is the talent crisis that AI quietly creates, not because AI is wrong but because our capability models are outdated.



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Designing the Human Intelligence Pipeline for the AI Era

The path forward is not to slow down AI. It is to redesign the human journey that must sit alongside it.

If the traditional procurement apprenticeship is disappearing, we must build a new one that is deliberate, engineered and scalable, suited to a world where AI handles the repetitive work.

In other words, we must shift from experience-acquired judgment to deliberately-engineered judgment.

This can take several forms:

Redesign the Capability Curriculum for an AI-Enabled Workforce

The curriculum itself must evolve. Instead of training people to run procurement processes, capability-building must train people to govern them. This includes skills such as critical thinking, systems awareness, data interpretation, responsible use of AI, and the ability to challenge algorithmic outputs.

Platforms designed around role-specific, scenario-based learning, supported by diagnostics and adaptive pathways, provide an efficient way to deliver this at scale and ensure the learning reflects real business environments.

Establish Internal Judgment Communities

Alongside technology, organizations need to rebuild the human transmission of experience. This means forming internal communities of practice where senior practitioners share stories, decision rationales and lessons learned from live business situations. Unlike traditional mentoring, these are lightweight, ongoing conversations embedded into the rhythm of the business, such as small-group huddles, post-project debriefs or peer-review forums.

This is a powerful internal practice that strengthens leadership and should be cultivated within the organization.

We must shift from experience-acquired judgment to deliberately-engineered judgment.

Create a Multi-Modal, Practice-Rich Learning Environment

The first requirement is a learning environment that gives people repeated exposure to real situations, through structured, multimodal practice. This means combining short, targeted learning moments with realistic case studies, scenario-based tasks, stakeholder challenges, and problem-solving exercises that mirror the judgments required on the job.

These experiences allow learners to rehearse decisions, explore trade-offs, and see the consequences of different choices in a safe, guided way. When built into a continuous learning pathway, this approach recreates much of what traditional "apprenticeship work" once provided, but in a more intentional and scalable format.

Create Internal Responsibility 'Test Grounds' for Emerging Talent

Finally, organizations need controlled opportunities for people to hold responsibility before they take ownership of major categories, suppliers or negotiations. These "responsibility test grounds" might include shadow leadership roles, supervised decision-making windows, rotational exposure or structured trial periods managing smaller spend areas.

These crucible experiences draw on real stakeholders, governance structures and genuine decision rights, and are key to building best-in-class internal development practices.



This is where Skill Dynamics plays a central role. The next evolution of training is not simply teaching skills but shaping the pathways through which those skills are applied. Organizations will need structured onboarding, rotational exposure, simulation-based learning and AI-assisted mentoring models. These are not optional enhancements; they are the foundations of the next generation of procurement capability.

The truth is simple. AI will give procurement extraordinary power but unless we simultaneously grow human capability, we will not have the wisdom to guide it.

This white paper is not a defense of the old world. It is a design brief for the new one. A call to rethink talent from first principles. A blueprint for building the “future me”, the leaders who will work in intelligent partnership with machines, shaping value, resilience and trust.

If we get this right, we will create procurement functions that are faster, more insightful, more strategic and more human than anything we have known.

If we get it wrong, we will build organizations that are technically brilliant but judgment-poor, a risk far greater than any algorithm.

The question is not whether AI will change our work. It already has. The question is whether we will change how we grow the humans who do it.

The danger is not that AI replaces tasks, but that we fail to replace the learning those tasks once created. Without new ways to build judgment, confidence and consequence-awareness, no amount of technology will compensate for the leadership we lose.

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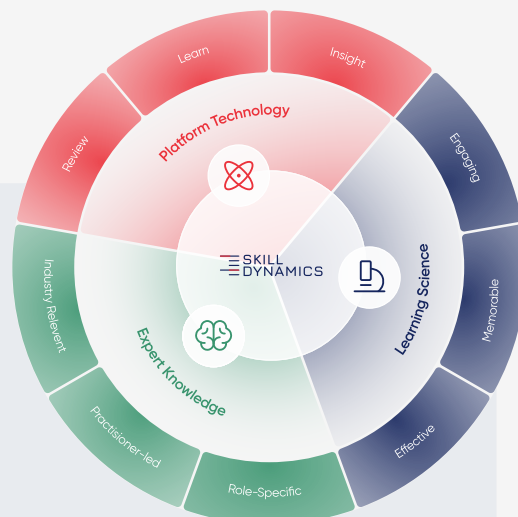
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Skill Dynamics provides specialized role-based learning through its Supply Chain, Procurement, and Trade Compliance Academies, designed to equip teams with the practical skills, judgment, and confidence needed to operate effectively in a rapidly changing, AI enabled environment.

The Skill Dynamics Framework

Skill Dynamics has created a unique, learner-first approach to role-based development, explained by the Skill Dynamics Framework. It transforms how you experience learning by combining three key elements: Platform Technology, which personalizes your journey; Learning Science, which helps you retain and apply what you learn; and Expert Knowledge from seasoned professionals, ensuring every lesson is practical and relevant.



Platform Technology

At the heart of Skill Dynamics is a powerful three-step platform that personalizes your learning journey:

- **Review:** Begin with a diagnostic assessment that identifies your strengths, gaps, and areas for growth, creating a learning path tailored specifically to you.
- **Learn:** Access multi-format modules packed with practical, role-specific content and scenario-based tasks that you can apply immediately.
- **Insight:** Track your progress with real-time analytics, linking your learning to measurable outcomes.

Learning Science

Our courses are built using proven cognitive science principles to ensure learning is not just delivered – it's enjoyed, retained, & applied:

- **Engaging:** Active learning, gamification, and feedback loops keep you motivated and on track.
- **Memorable:** Multimedia, storytelling, and real-world scenarios make lessons relatable and easy to remember.
- **Effective:** Techniques like spaced repetition, chunking, and personalized learning help you master and retain new skills.

Expert Knowledge

All content is developed by senior professionals with hands-on experience in supply chain, procurement, and trade compliance, ensuring your learning is relevant and actionable:

- **Practitioner-led:** Real-world insights from experienced professionals ensuring human transmission of judgment.
- **Role-specific:** Learning tailored to your job role and level.
- **Industry-relevant:** Always updated to reflect current trends and challenges.

AI in Skill Dynamics

The Skill Dynamics platform leverages AI to enhance the learner experience, creating personalized learning plans, interacting adaptively with learners, and adjusting pathways based on performance. Each academy includes AI training; in the Procurement Academy, in particular, we now provide specialized modules on AI enabled decision making, automation workflows, and scenario-based problem solving to nurture judgment in an AI accelerated world.