

A day in the life of a Purchasing Professional

Work starts just as soon as the front door closes and you start to thumb through the daily newspaper on your way to the Railway station. To be honest your day really begins once you've got your seat and are able to open your broad sheet at the financial section of your newspaper.

After a quick look at who's taken who over, whose shares have moved the most, how the commodity indices have moved and the normal "tit bits" of information, an appraisal of the overall market can be absorbed. Once in work and with the first cup of coffee of the day the routine procedures of updating any commodity indices, the upkeep of contract records and the normal administration record keeping of a Purchasing Office, the days post can then be attacked. First the day's e-mails, if I'm lucky, someone has already sorted them into, meetings to be accepted, meetings to be rejected, product information to be read and filed, information requests and order requests. The actual post is then divided into similar sections for action and dissemination.

Post completed and second cup of coffee in hand the day's order requests are examined, with the pertinent questions being asked whether they are within budget, have the correct authorisation been obtained, has the Company's purchasing procedures been followed in producing the request, does an Invitation to Tender document need to be raised to proceed with the purchase, or does the request constitute a contract purchase or low value one. Depending on the value of the purchase request formal tenders or competitive quotations will need to be activated. The production of any formal tender document will need to carry all the relevant terms and conditions and those specific to the product or service and these should be agreed with your Legal Department.

A continuous dialogue should always be kept with your ordering departments as well as your financial department and weekly meetings to cover the Commercial viability of the Company will need to take place. By this time, morning is drawing to an end and the third cup of coffee is in hand. Noon is normal the time when sealed bids are opened by a Company Director and the Purchasing Professional, these are initialled, date stamped into the business, (electronically received quotes can then be opened) and a summary can then be produced. Discussion with the ordering department and an agreed strategy can then be agreed on the next steps of the procurement.

So to the afternoon with a sandwich already consumed and washed down with, you guessed it a cup of coffee. Probably the first negotiation of the day then follows, (don't believe that "Purchasing" is all about freebee lunches, trips to suppliers, and attending Buying Consortiums, it's not, it's about researching your product, knowledge of your market, knowing the Companies your dealing with and having the ability to negotiate in a one to one scenario. Probably only one per cent of a Buyer's time is spent in negotiating the rest is spent in collating the above information in preparation of the negotiation.

Mid afternoon would then be the time for all outgoing orders to either be electronically verified and sent to Suppliers or manually checked and signed to catch the evening post, any rejected orders being returned with an explanation as to why.

Once the orders are completed the day's mis-matched invoices are examined for reasons as to why they were rejected, resolution and correction if necessary should then be completed on the same day.

Probably several other meeting then follow together with the intake of more coffee before catching the train home where the highlighted magazine articles can be read in the calm of the railway carriage.

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