



“I CHOSE THE PROCUREMENT FIELD”

EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW—
AMANDA CHRISTIAN,
Vice President and Corporate
Director of Procurement,
CACI International Inc.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS INTERVIEW. PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT TITLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

AMANDA CHRISTIAN

I am vice president and corporate director of Procurement at CACI International Inc.¹ In my role, my responsibilities include:

Managing a centralized procurement department with over 100 buyers and subcontract administrators that purchase

goods and services with an approximate spend of \$1.5 billion per year;

Overseeing CACI’s Small Business Program;

Overseeing CACI’s Purchasing Card Program; and

Managing CACI’s direct (i.e., on contract) and indirect (i.e., corporate infrastructure) spend.

Since joining CACI in 2008, I have successfully led four contractor purchasing system reviews² and maintain an approved purchasing system.

Prior to joining CACI, I worked at Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) for nine years. I started with SAIC as a procurement intern while attending Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Ohio, where I obtained my BSBA specializing in purchasing and production management. After graduation, I was thrilled to join SAIC as a subcontracts administrator. Over the years, I was given many challenging assignments that afforded me the opportunity to move up the ranks in numerous procurement positions, culminating in a promotion to Business Unit Procurement

Director. While working at SAIC, I also obtained my MBA at Marymount University.

I have been a long-time member of NCMA. Last year I served for the first time on the NCMA Board of Advisors, and this year I began my three-year term on the NCMA Board of Directors.

CM
WHAT IS THE MISSION OF CACI?

AC
CACI International Inc. is a professional services and IT solutions company with \$3.7 billion in revenue. We deliver innovative, high-end information solutions and services that support the critical missions

of our intelligence, defense, and federal civilian customers.

CM
HOW DOES CACI'S CENTRALIZED PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT FIT INTO THIS MISSION?

AC
My department is a critical member of the CACI team, procuring the goods and services required to meet our customers' needs. The CACI procurement department continuously strives to be a world-class procurement solution provider by:

- Being trusted business partners,
- Utilizing the most innovative systems and agile processes, and
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards.

CM
GIVEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT BUDGET SCENARIO AND ECONOMIC AUSTERITY, WHAT ARE YOUR KEY INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT CUSTOMER EFFICIENCIES, MISSION CHANGES, AND ACQUISITION POLICY?

AC
Several years ago, as the budgets started shrinking and government contractors were pushed to do more with less resources, I knew we needed to start leveraging corporate spend and creating partnerships with critical suppliers. Further, it was critical that we continue with process improvement to remain an industry-leading supply chain organization.

Although we had corporate-wide agreements in place, they were not being utilized consistently, nor were they centrally managed. Thus, we set up a strategic sourcing team tasked with:

- Reviewing historical spend patterns,
- Anticipating future market needs, and
- Developing process efficiencies.



IF YOU ASK PEOPLE HOW THEY ENDED UP IN PROCUREMENT, OFTEN THEY WILL SAY THEY JUST FELL INTO IT IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER. I FIND I AM IN A DIFFERENT POSITION, AS I CHOSE THE PROCUREMENT FIELD.



The benefits of strategic sourcing have been realized through a category management procurement approach³ where process efficiencies and cost savings are driven by commoditizing corporate spend into discrete “market-baskets” of like products and services, called “commodity programs.” Using this approach, strategic sourcing is able to leverage corporate buying power more specifically and create tailored processes specific to the needs of each commodity.

The strategic sourcing team has been focused on soliciting, negotiating, and awarding a finite number of preferred supplier “master strategic agreements.” The team has developed a suite of templates, smart-forms, and procedures specific to the items procured within each commodity program to further reduce process redundancies and improve award times. This strategic sourcing approach has allowed the finite number of buyers to focus on speed and improving partnerships with end-users, suppliers, and our customers.

CM
WHAT IS ONE OF THE COMMODITIES YOUR STRATEGIC SOURCING TEAM FOCUSED ON FIRST?

AC
Over the years, as CACI grew, the number of position vacancies increased. At the same time, customer manning requirements also increased. These increases were occurring at a rate that traditional means of staffing were unable to support. Line stakeholders began to express the desire for more flexible staffing approaches. In response, the procurement department’s strategic sourcing team was tasked with developing a solution.

In early 2014, the team launched the “Temporary Labor Subcontracts Program,” which consists of seven strategically sourced temp agency partners. These strategic partners were awarded master strategic agreements with a guaranteed opportunity to bid on every temporary la-

bor requirement from CACI. The strategic sourcing team was able to negotiate all the strategic partners to favorable terms, which provides unmatched risk mitigation for program managers and CACI corporate-wide. In addition, each awarded partner operates within a tailor-made procurement process—complete with smart-form compliance templates and dedicated databases—that makes it significantly easier to do business.

By focusing on ease of use and driving efficiencies within the temp procurement process, we had a high rate of early adoption, and the vast majority of temp labor awards were funneled through the temp partners without mandating use. Focused training and learning series modules helped grow the program internally. At the same time, the awarded partners began to create dedicated CACI account teams who further integrated into CACI’s network, which created a number of benefits, including:

Faster response times,
More placements, and
Larger economies of scale.

CM
YOU HAVE HAD A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN THE PROCUREMENT FIELD. HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTO THE PROFESSION?

AC
If you ask people how they ended up in procurement, often they will say they just fell into it in some way or another. I find I am in a different position, as I chose the procurement field.

When I went to BGSU, I originally thought I would get my accounting degree and become a CPA, but after a couple accounting classes, I started to question if that was the right fit for me. It wasn’t until I took an “Introduction to Management” class that I found out more about a specialization called “purchasing and production management” (which is now called “supply chain management”). I enjoyed the class and my professor, Dr.

Choi, was instrumental in pushing me to interview for a co-op position⁴ with SAIC. I was able to test out the career field and a company in an entirely different area—Washington, DC. I loved being a buyer. It just “clicked,” and I knew the career field had endless possibilities for me. Prior to graduating, I took a second internship at Lockheed Martin in contracts so I could compare the two paths.

So, unlike others that fell into procurement, I consciously made the decision to start my career with a strong foundation in supply chain management and in the services industry in the DC metropolitan area. I entered this field having several ideas of where I wanted my career to go, and have worked hard to succeed.

CM
HAVE YOU FOUND THERE TO BE ANY KEY COMPETENCIES THAT HELPED GUIDE YOU ALONG THE WAY TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

AC
I would say that I have always been an observer. I was the youngest of four children in my family. I watch people and learn what to do and what not to do. I have had several great bosses that have taught me great leadership skills over the years. They have trusted me and given me roles and responsibilities that have allowed me to grow and learn.

In addition, I have had a few great mentors that have pushed me to think strategically and shaped my vision for my department and my career.

CM

YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR SAIC INTERNSHIP WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CHOOSING THIS CAREER FIELD. DO YOU HAVE AN INTERN PROGRAM AT CACI?

AC

Yes, we do. My management team and I launched the CACI procurement intern program⁵ in 2010. The intern program has provided a pipeline of talent into my department.

At the outset of the program, my team and I formulated the following goals:

Work closer with the BGSU Supply Chain Management Department,

Have more interaction with students, and

Be a part of the curriculum.

As a result, my team wrote a services supply chain case study to be utilized in BGSU coursework. Being involved with the case study has provided my team the opportunity to interact more closely with the students and identify those individuals that excel in the classroom. We then made sure we recruited those top-tier students for future internships at CACI.

Our interns work as full-time buyers for seven months, giving us adequate time to determine whether they are a good fit for our department and allowing the interns to decide if they would like to be a part of the CACI team. By bringing fresh perspectives, the interns challenge my department to think differently—and they certainly keep us on our toes.

Over the last six years, we have had 23 interns in the department from BGSU, and we have hired over 18 supply chain management graduates from the BGSU program.

CM

HOW DO YOU ENGAGE WITH YOUR STAKEHOLDERS AND KNOW IF THE CACI PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT IS PERFORMING WELL? ARE THERE METRICS OR TOOLS YOU USE TO ASSESS AND MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY, AS WELL AS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION?

AC

I am a firm believer that you can't know if your organization is efficient or effective without using metrics. I won't lie, it is not always easy to come up with what metrics should be tracked and reported to customers and various stakeholders, but once you do, there are many rewards.

Some of the metrics that I measure my team on include:

Competition,

Cost savings,

Turnaround time (are we meeting our service level agreements?),

Number of purchase orders/subcontracts placed,

Audit compliance, and

Purchase card spend.

I, along with my management team, use these metrics to:

Set goals,

Spot trends,

Assess workload distribution, and

Right-size the organization.

I maintain a quarterly dashboard that is presented to CACI's top management team (i.e., the CEO, COO, CFO, etc.) each quarter. The information is then posted on CACI's employee portal for anyone in the company to access.

Besides meeting regularly with internal clients to obtain feedback, I utilize surveys to assess customer satisfaction across the entire company and ensure we are meeting our internal and external requirements and expectations.

CM

HAVE YOU FOUND THERE TO BE ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR THAT IMPEDES EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY, AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION—NOT JUST WITH CACI, BUT WITH ORGANIZATIONS IN GENERAL?

AC

Procurement professionals are always more effective when they are brought in early—during identification of sourcing needs. Unfortunately, sometimes we are the last persons to be notified. Thus, at CACI, my Directors and I continuously work to engage our business partners to communicate our value proposition. Since my department is centralized, we have to ensure procurement is seen by our internal and external customers as trusted advisors and are actively sought out to shape purchasing decisions.

CM

INCREASINGLY GREATER EMPHASIS IS BEING PLACED ON PROCUREMENT WORKFORCE TRAINING. HOW DO YOU REACT TO THE NOTION THAT TRAINING IS A KEY ISSUE?

AC

I am not sure I would call it an "issue," but training and talent development is even more important now that we have a large amount of the workforce retiring and being replaced by younger professionals that may not be as experienced.⁶ It is crucial that managers quickly assess the training needs of their workforce through tools

such as individual development plans and then determine how to close any educational/experience gaps through training. Whether the training is provided via internal classes, college level courses, classes provided by associations, or conferences, they all provide benefits and allow the individual to grow in the field.

CM
 HOW DO YOU VIEW THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING YOUR WORKFORCE RECEIVES? DOES IT ADDRESS THE SUBJECTS YOU BELIEVE THEY NEED TO KNOW, OR ARE THERE AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT?

AC
 Training is an area that I am quite passionate about. I feel it is imperative that managers continuously develop their talent and leaders at all levels. At CACI, I set up a "Procurement Development Center," which includes a career development portfolio that is cross-mapped to a training matrix, so my team can identify what training and skills they need to obtain by title. Within that site, we provide updates on the procurement training schedule and they can sign up for the courses and keep a record of all the training they have attended for future self-assessments.

In order for a procurement team to have a high performance mindset, managers must train and empower their people.

CM
 HOW EFFECTIVE OR RELEVANT ARE THE TECHNIQUES USED TO DELIVER THIS TRAINING (E.G., ONLINE, CLASSROOM-BASED LECTURE, ETC.)?

AC
 Our training uses a mix of training techniques. The Procurement Development Committee ensures we are preparing our procurement professionals for all aspects of their current job and future career by:

- Developing and presenting CACI training materials,
- Seeking outside training from organizations, and
- Attending CACI corporate-wide training programs.

These trainings consist of a variety of content delivery techniques. We try to do as much "in person" as possible, but with staff spread across the United States, many do participate via web conferencing. We have some lecture-based courses, but I believe the best lessons have practical "hands on" exercises in which people can apply what they have learned to real-life scenarios. We have become effective at doing the exercises, even with almost half the staff being online.

CM
 IN YOUR OPINION, HOW IMPORTANT IS RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, WHEN BALANCED AGAINST FORMAL TRAINING, IN DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TODAY'S WORKFORCE?

AC
 Relevant experience is always preferable. Every hiring manager dreams of being able to find that perfect candidate that can walk in and hit the ground running. Unfortunately, in today's environment, being able to find a strong procurement professional at the ideal level exactly when you need him or her is nearly impossible, which is why training is so critical. I believe if you find the right candidate with a strong business foundation and attributes that can generate success, you can train him or her to be a talented procurement professional.

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CM
DO YOU FEEL THAT TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION SHOULD BE APPLIED AGAINST A UNIVERSAL STANDARD ACROSS THE PROFESSION, IRRESPECTIVE OF INDIVIDUAL GOVERNMENT OR INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT?

AC
My undergraduate degree in supply chain management is a perfect example of how procurement fundamentals are universal across the profession, irrespective of the field—be it supplies or services, commercial or government. I can take the same principles I learned and apply them across all types of business situations.

CM
DO YOU BELIEVE NCMA'S *CONTRACT MANAGEMENT BODY OF KNOWLEDGE (CMBOK)* COULD SERVE AS SUCH A STANDARD?

AC
I believe NCMA's *CMBOK* is well designed and documented and can be used across all organizations to set standards. I have personally used it as a reference point to ensure my Procurement Development Center is in line with industry standards.

CM
WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOR THE CACI PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT?

AC
This year, one of my goals was to roll out the final release of CACI's Procure to Pay (P2P) system.⁷ I, along with several members on my procurement team, IT, and accounts payable, have been designing and implementing the system over the last couple of years. We have gone from working on over five disparate systems to one.

The P2P system contains:

- Supplier management,
- Purchase requisitions,
- Sourcing,
- Ordering,



Invoice routing,
Payment,
Electronic documents of record,
Supplier evaluations, and
Closeout.

It is a one-stop shop that is transforming how my department works, not only with our internal clients, but with our suppliers. All communication is done via the portal and fully documented.

Design and implementation of the system has pushed us to analyze how to be more efficient when procuring goods and services, and to streamline our policies and procedures while maintaining compliance. It has also opened up our capabilities to utilize shopping carts⁸ and pre-negotiated corporate agreements to streamline processing and reduce touch time, which is so important during these times where we must do more with less.

This system provides reporting capabilities that we have not had in the past, which is so important when pulling statistics and gathering data for your internal/external customers, small business reporting, and numerous internal and external audits.

CM
AS A LEADER IN THE PROCUREMENT FIELD, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE FOR THOSE JUST ENTERING THE FIELD?

AC
For those entering the field, procurement is a great choice because the career path is infinite. You can take on any role that you find personally and professionally satisfying—a buyer, subcontracts administrator, category manager, procurement systems expert, auditor, reporting specialist...you name it. You can also choose to be an individual contributor or pursue management.

Whether you work for the government or industry, as a procurement professional, you will always have an impact on the organization. The challenges in procurement are continuously changing and individuals that are hardworking and solution-oriented will always succeed.

CM
DO YOU SUPPORT YOUR EMPLOYEES BECOMING INVOLVED AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH NCMA (E.G., SPEAKING AT OR ATTENDING NATIONAL TRAINING EVENTS, WRITING ARTICLES FOR CONTRACT MANAGEMENT MAGAZINE, OBTAINING ADVANCED CERTIFICATIONS, ETC.)?

AC
Over the last eight years, there have been over a dozen executive orders issued that have resulted in at least 16 new regulations for government contractors to adhere to. Change is constant in this field, and procurement and contracts professionals need to understand the ever-evolving rules and regulations. Thus, it is imperative that I, along with those in my department, continuously stay involved in NCMA or similar organizations.

Our internal and external customers rely on us to be the experts, which ultimately requires us to continuously learn through taking focused training courses, reading articles, and attending training events, such as those offered by NCMA. **CM**

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. CACI International Inc. was founded in 1962. Today, it is an international information solutions and services provider with more than 20,000 employees worldwide. For more information, see www.caci.com.
2. As per *Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)* Subpart 44.3: "The objective of a contractor purchasing system review...is to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness with which the contractor spends government funds and complies with government policy when subcontracting." This review provides "a basis for granting, withholding, or withdrawing approval of the contractor's purchasing system." (FAR 44.301.)
3. *Category management* is the process of "managing commonly purchased goods and services... through common categories" through strategic sourcing, but also includes "a broader set of strategies to drive performance." The increased use of category management practices in government procurement offices, for sourcing and for performance, has been mandated by the Office of Management and Budget. (See Office of Management and Budget Memorandum, "Transforming the Marketplace: Simplifying Federal Procurement to Improve Performance, Drive Innovation, and Increase Savings" (December 4, 2014), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/procurement/memo/simplifying-federal-procurement-to-improve-performance-drive-innovation-increase-savings.pdf>.)
4. I.e., over the summer and during the entire fall semester as well.
5. For more information on the CACI procurement intern program, visit www.caci.com/job/grads.shtml.
6. See, generally, Government Accountability Office Report GAO-16-80, "Defense Acquisition Workforce: Actions Needed to Guide Planning Efforts and Improve Workforce Capability" (December 2015), available at www.gao.gov/assets/680/674152.pdf.
7. CACI's P2P system rolled out in December 2016.
8. In an online e-commerce context, a *shopping cart* is "a piece of software on a web server that allows visitors to select items for eventual purchase" (www.marketing-dictionary.org/Shopping+Cart).

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