

THE 2025 ANNUAL

**PROCURECON
CPO REPORT**

An Analysis of the CPO's Current Role in Decision Making and Technology Implementation



FOREWORD

Members of the ProcureCon community:

As we enter 2025, the role of CPOs continues to evolve. The latest survey from ProcureCon Insights, which includes responses from senior leaders across industries, reveals significant changes in this area.

For example, 53% of respondents anticipate an increase in their CPO's involvement in high-level decision-making over the next year. This underscores the growing strategic importance of procurement within organizations, and the expanding influence of CPOs in shaping business outcomes.

As procurement teams navigate complex challenges and seek to drive value beyond cost savings, the insights provided in this

report are more valuable than ever. We believe this analysis will serve as an essential resource for the ProcureCon community, offering actionable strategies to align procurement with overall business goals and enhance its strategic impact.

We invite you to explore these insights and join us in shaping the future of procurement leadership. And be sure to register to attend any of our upcoming ProcureCon events to learn more.



Michael Dunlap
Portfolio Director
ProcureCon North America

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

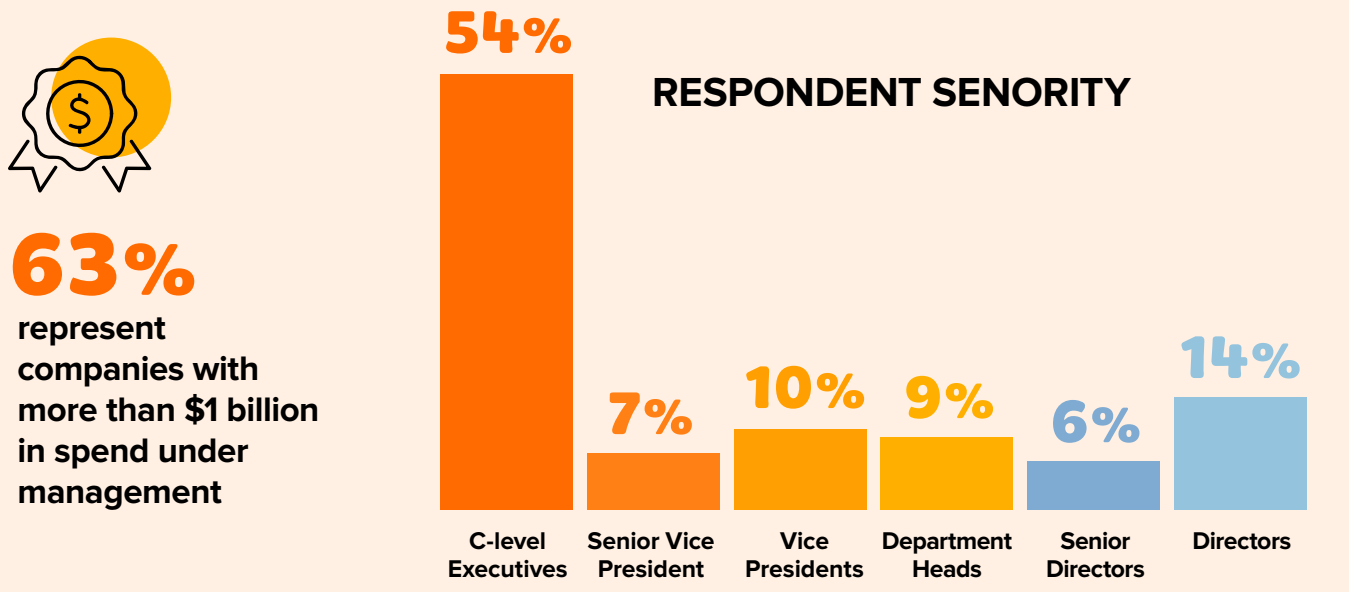
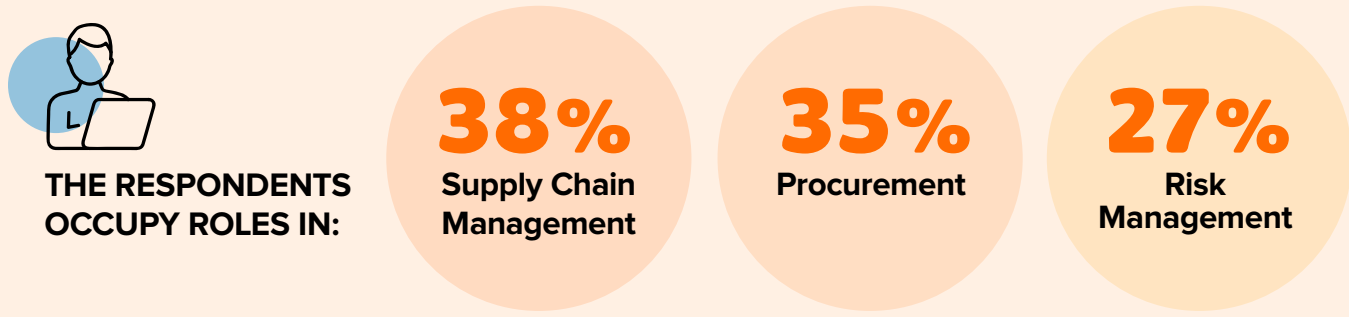
This report presents the findings of the ProcureCon 2025 Chief Procurement Officer Survey, which gathered insights from 100 industry leaders across supply chain, procurement, and risk management roles.

The survey reveals a shift in the strategic importance of Chief Procurement Officers (CPOs) within organizations, with 53% of respondents reporting that their CPOs play a more substantial role in high-level decision-making. This represents a significant increase from last year’s study, in which only 46% of the respondents said the same.

Looking ahead, the survey highlights the growing emphasis on technology and innovation in procurement, with 66% of respondents identifying the use of AI in procurement processes and decision-making as a high priority for CPOs over the next 12 months. The report delves into various aspects of the evolving CPO role, including strategic partnerships, technology initiatives, and future challenges, providing a comprehensive outlook on the changing landscape of procurement leadership.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

The ProcureCon Insights research team surveyed 100 leaders from a variety of industries to generate the results featured in this report.



KEY INSIGHTS

Among the respondents:

53%

say their CPO's role in high-level decision-making **has increased over the past 12 months**, while 63% believe their role **will increase over the next 12 months**.

53%

say procurement becomes involved in the purchasing process **once purchasing requirements and specification are defined**.

66%

say leveraging AI in procurement processes will be **a high priority for the CPO in the next 12 months**, while 55% say the same about improving speed-to-value and ROI.

64%

say their **maverick spend KPIs have improved over the past 12 months**, while 49% say the same about their purchase price variance KPIs.

82%

have **identified or prioritized potential use cases of AI** for their procurement team.

90%

have **considered or are already using AI agents** to optimize procurement operations.

60%

say their CPOs will be **one of multiple leaders leading technology initiatives** over the next 12 months.

65%

are **only somewhat confident in their ability to effectively leverage AI** over the next 12 months.



Procurement Reimagined

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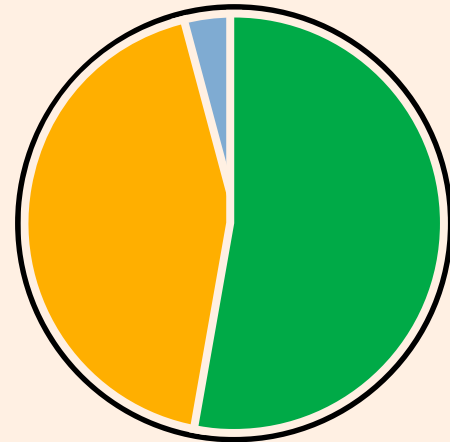
THE CPO'S ROLE IN DECISION MAKING AND STRATEGY

CPOs have risen to become key strategic advisors to the rest of the organization over the past several years, albeit to varying degrees. While some CPOs have reported in the past that they have obtained an important seat at the table in high-level discussions, others have said that they are still primarily responsible for duties like cost reduction and supplier management.

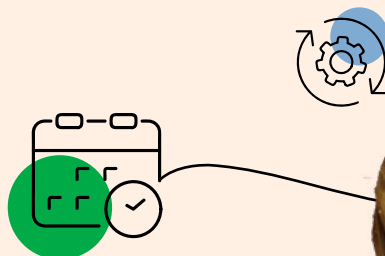
According to the **2024 Annual ProcureCon CPO Report**, only 46% of the respondents said their CPOs were playing more of a role in high-level decision-making. Most of the respondents from this year's study (53%) report that their CPO has played a more significant role in high-level decision-making over the past 12 months, while 43% indicated no change.

This trend suggests that procurement is gaining recognition as a strategic function, with CPOs increasingly involved in shaping organizational direction. The shift likely reflects the growing complexity of supply chains and the need for procurement expertise in navigating global economic challenges.

In the past 12 months, how has your CPO's role in high-level decision-making evolved?



- **53%** The CPO plays more of a role in high-level decision-making.
- **43%** The CPO's role in high-level decision-making has remained about the same.
- **4%** The CPO plays less of a role in high-level decision-making.



Looking ahead to the next 12 months, an even larger majority (63%) expect their CPO to play an expanded role in high-level decision-making. This anticipated increase underscores the growing confidence in procurement’s ability to drive value beyond cost savings. It also highlights the need for CPOs to develop broader business acumen and leadership skills to effectively contribute to strategic discussions.

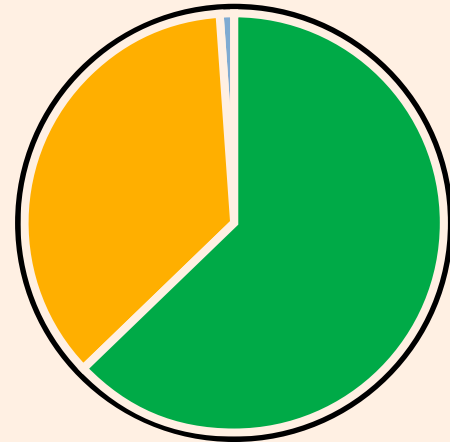
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Over the last decade, CPOs have transitioned to key business delivery leader roles that are critical to not only deliver bottom-line impact and compliance, but also to enable revenue growth and value generation. The criticality of sustainability through extended supply chain has changed the focus of CPOs from solely cost savings to value chain resiliency in various sustainability dimensions.”



Darshan Deshmukh
President
ProcureAbility

How do you expect your CPO’s role in high-level decision-making to change over the next 12 months?



- **63%** The CPO will play more of a role in high-level decision-making.
- **36%** The CPO's role in high-level decision-making will remain about the same.
- **1%** The CPO will play less of a role in high-level decision-making.



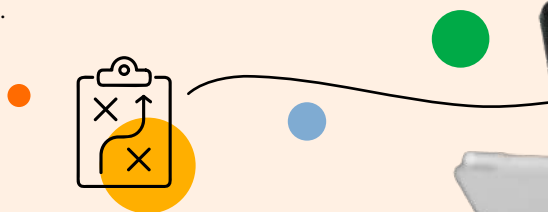
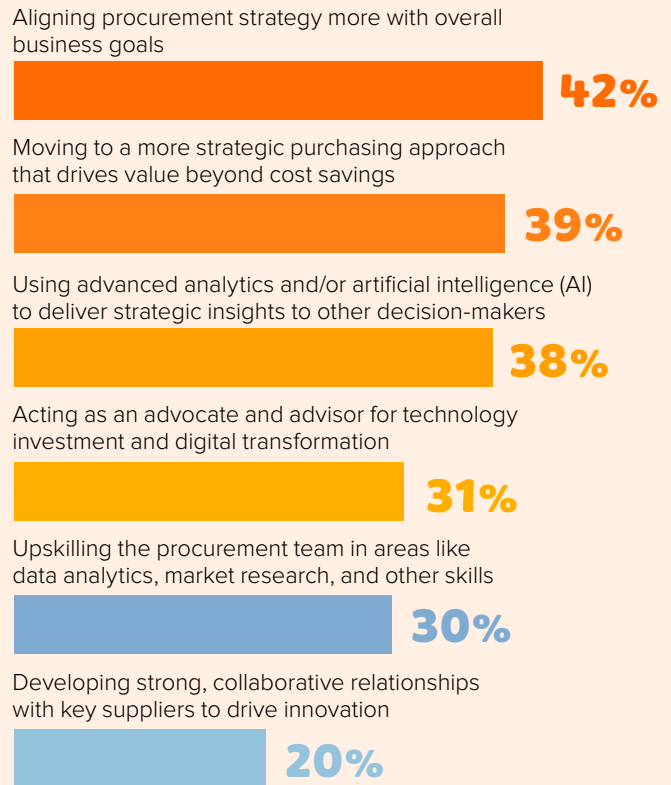
When it comes to positioning procurement as a strategic partner within the organization, 42% of respondents identify aligning procurement strategy with overall business goals as one of their CPOs' top two most effective strategies. This approach emphasizes the importance of procurement's integration with other business functions and its role in supporting broader organizational objectives.

By aligning with business goals, procurement can demonstrate its value beyond traditional cost-cutting measures.

Another 39% of respondents cite moving to a more strategic purchasing approach that drives value beyond cost savings as a top strategy. This shift indicates a growing recognition that procurement can contribute to innovation, sustainability, and risk management. It also suggests that CPOs are increasingly focused on long-term value creation rather than short-term cost reductions.

Notably, 38% of respondents mention using advanced analytics and/or artificial intelligence (AI) to deliver strategic insights as one of their CPOs' top two most effective strategies. Data-driven decision-making is of growing importance in procurement, and AI has the potential to transform the function. CPOs who leverage these technologies effectively can provide valuable insights to other decision-makers, further cementing procurement's strategic role.

Which of the following two strategies has your CPO found most effective in positioning procurement as a strategic partner within the organization?



“

One of the things we've learned is that you must involve your stakeholders in change management from the very beginning. You must understand what their needs and pain points are, and you must be able to articulate how change is going to benefit them. If you don't involve your stakeholders at the start, you're going to have a very difficult time implementing changes.”

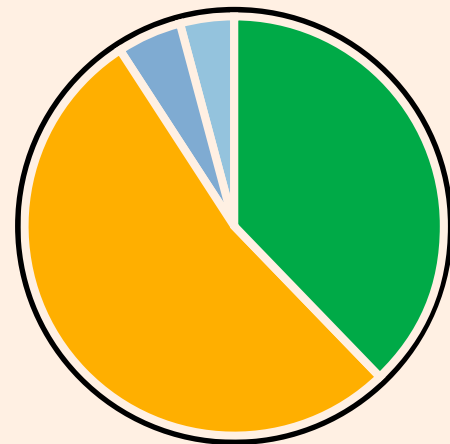
– Eric Dulin, Director of Global Sourcing, YUM! Brands, ProcureCon Indirect East 2024

Increasingly, procurement leaders and CPOs are becoming more involved in purchasing processes. However, 53% of the respondents say that procurement becomes involved once purchasing requirements and specifications are defined. Only 38% report procurement involvement from the outset, during strategic planning and budgeting phases.

These results suggest that some organizations may need to engage procurement leaders earlier in decision-making processes. Often, CPOs have valuable insights to add to strategic discussions, and they can offer holistic perspectives about how certain decisions could affect the entire organization.

CPOs should strive for earlier involvement to maximize their strategic impact and ensure alignment with organizational goals from the start of any purchasing decision.

At what stage are your stakeholders required to engage the Procurement team in the purchasing process within your organization?



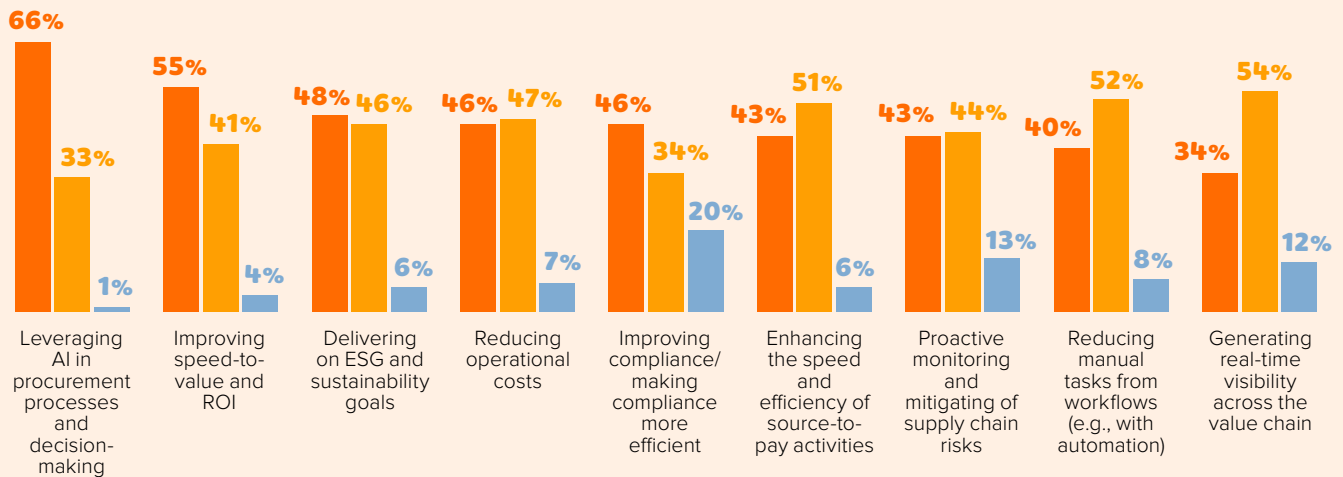
- **38%** Procurement is involved from the outset, during the strategic planning and budgeting phases of any purchasing decision.
- **53%** Procurement becomes involved once the purchasing requirements and specifications are defined.
- **5%** Procurement engages only at the vendor selection or contract negotiation stage.
- **4%** Procurement is involved exclusively for high-value or high-risk purchases.

CPO PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

CPOs and their teams are facing a wide range of challenges in their efforts to further digitize and automate their operations. They are also tasked with new priorities relating to technology implementation while still overseeing traditional procurement responsibilities, such as sourcing, supplier negotiation, and identifying cost-saving opportunities.

How much of a priority are the following efforts for your CPO in the next 12 months?

● High priority ● Moderate priority ● Low priority



Leveraging AI in procurement processes and decision-making emerged as a top priority, with 66% of respondents considering it a high priority for the next 12 months. This strong focus on AI adoption reflects the growing recognition of its potential to transform procurement operations. CPOs are likely seeing AI as a key enabler for improving efficiency, enhancing decision-making capabilities, and gaining a competitive edge in an increasingly complex supply chain environment.

Improving speed-to-value and ROI is identified as a high priority by 55% of respondents. In other words, most CPOs emphasize the need to accelerate value creation and maximize return on investment for the organization.

This indicates that CPOs are under increasing pressure to demonstrate tangible results quickly. It suggests a shift towards more agile procurement practices and a focus on initiatives that can deliver measurable impact in shorter timeframes.

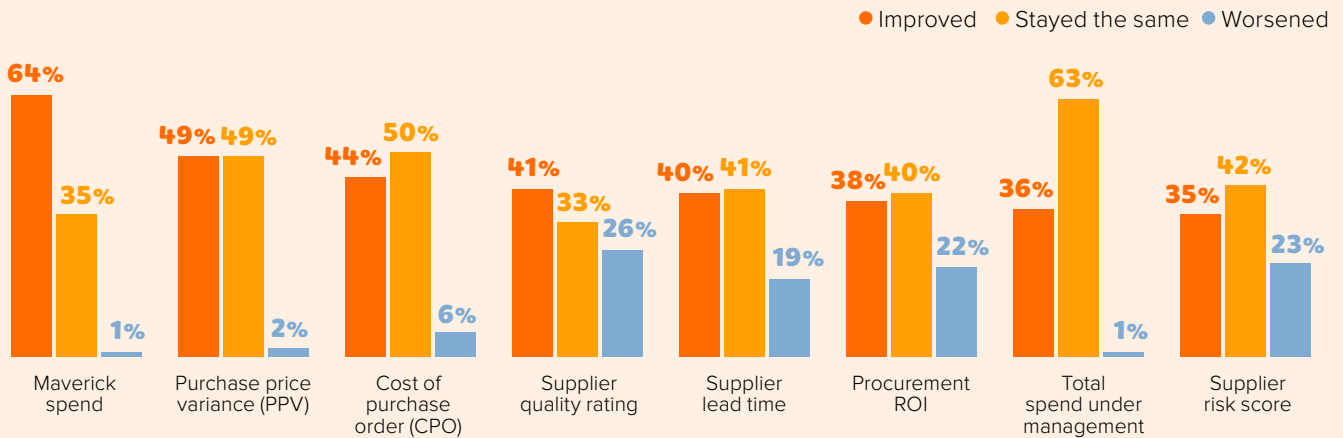
Meanwhile, delivering on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and sustainability goals was considered a high priority by 48% of respondents and a moderate priority by 46%. Furthermore, reducing operational costs was reported as a high priority by 46% of respondents and a moderate priority by 47%.

These results highlight the growing importance of sustainability in procurement, but they also suggest that some organizations may still be grappling with how to effectively integrate ESG considerations into their procurement strategies.

And while cost reduction remains a core focus for procurement, it is no longer the sole or dominant priority. CPOs are seeking to optimize costs while simultaneously pursuing other strategic objectives, such as sustainability and innovation.

Most of the respondents also list generating real-time visibility across the value chain (54%), reducing manual tasks from workflows (52%), and enhancing the speed and efficiency of source-to-pay activities (51%) as moderate priorities. These priorities are also standard for the function, and they still hold importance among the department’s future projects.

Considering the efforts of your CPO and your procurement team, have the following performance indicators improved, worsened, or stayed the same over the past 12 months?



In terms of performance indicators, 64% of respondents report that maverick spend reduction has improved over the past 12 months. This is a positive sign, indicating that procurement teams are successfully

implementing controls and processes to manage off-contract spending. It suggests that CPOs’ efforts to increase procurement’s influence and improve compliance are bearing fruit.

The survey also reveals that supplier quality rating (26%), supplier risk score (23%), and procurement return on investment (22%) were the performance indicators that worsened the most over the past 12 months.

These results highlight the ongoing challenges in supplier management and performance measurement. CPOs may need to reassess their supplier evaluation and risk management strategies, as well as how they measure and communicate procurement’s value to the organization.

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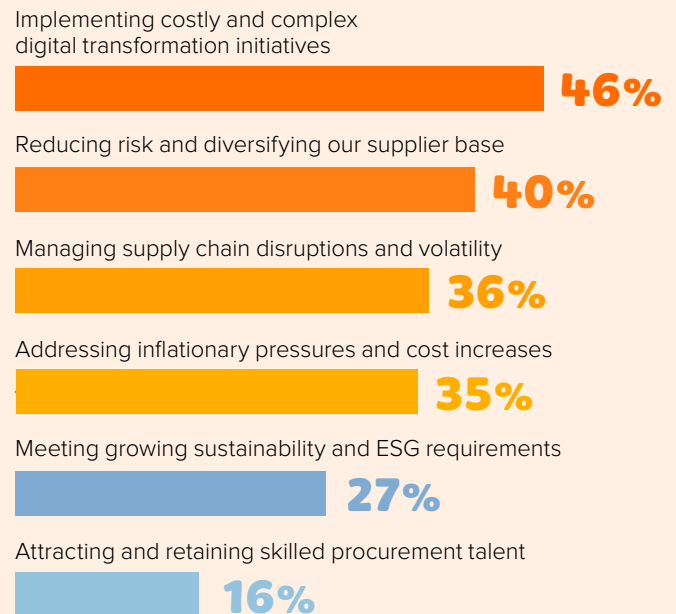
A bad process combined with good technology is still a bad process. It’s crucial to first perfect your process, even if it relies on something as simple as email. Once that’s done, transfer that process to the technology, and then make improvements from a technological standpoint.”

– **Andy Mayer**, Director, IT Contracts and Vendor Management, **Post Holdings**, **ProcureCon Indirect East 2024**

Finally, 46% of the respondents identify implementing costly and complex digital transformation initiatives as one of their procurement function’s top two challenges, while 40% cite reducing risk and diversifying the supplier base.

CPOs face significant hurdles in modernizing their operations and managing supply chain risks. Successfully navigating these challenges will require careful planning, stakeholder buy-in, and potentially new skill sets within procurement teams. Furthermore, although digital transformation initiatives may be complex, they could also lead to new efficiencies and help teams overcome specific challenges, such as mitigating the risks of supply chain disruptions and addressing cost increases.

What are the two biggest challenges facing your procurement function over the next 12 months?

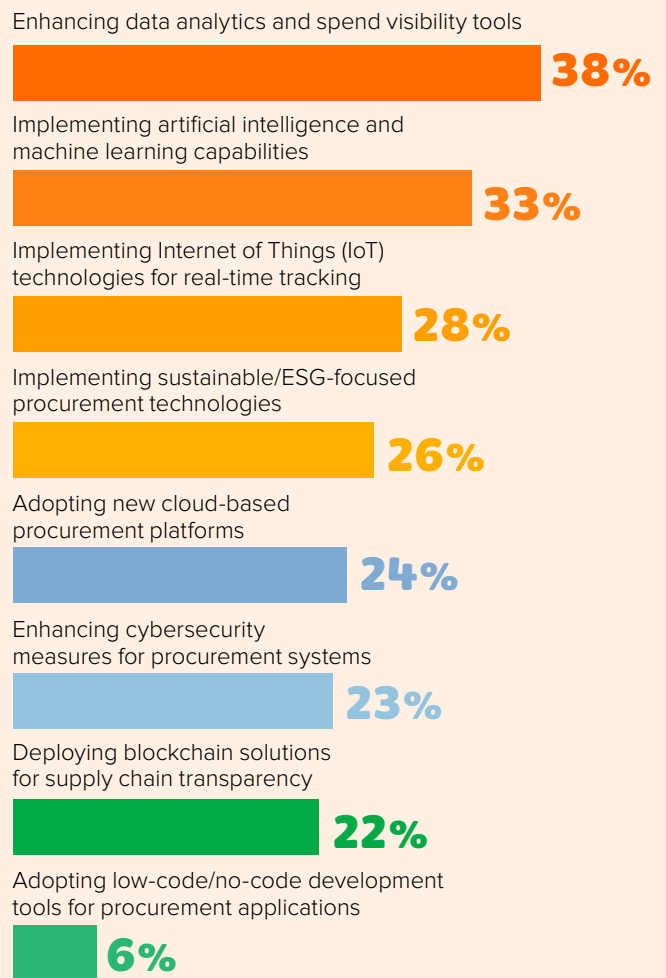


PROCUREMENT'S OUTLOOK ON FUTURE TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

Technology selection and implementation will be important topics for CPOs and procurement teams moving forward. Not only does the function play a role in identifying useful technologies, but it can also provide insights into how key technologies can transform the business, as well as their procurement processes.

When asked about the most significant technology initiatives for their procurement function over the next 12 months, 38% of respondents identified enhancing data analytics and spend visibility tools as a top priority. By enhancing analytics and improving spend visibility, CPOs can identify cost-saving opportunities, optimize supplier relationships, and make more informed strategic decisions.

Which of the following are the two most significant technology initiatives for your procurement function over the next 12 months?



CASE STUDY

ALLY FINANCIAL DOUBLES ROI WITH INNOVATIVE SPEND MANAGEMENT TOOL

In the ProcureCon Indirect East panel discussion, “*Spend Wisely: Adopting Next-Gen Solutions for Effective Procurement Spend Management*,” Cynthia Gore-Bright, Director, Ally Supply Chain at Ally Financial shared how the company had implemented a new spend management and spot buying tool about a year prior to the conference. The implementation of this tool had already demonstrated a significant return on investment, doubling the expected ROI within the first year.

The tool was designed to address challenges in managing tail spend and rogue spending, as well as to identify potential savings opportunities. Gore-Bright emphasized the importance of data in this initiative, particularly in analyzing P-Card spend.

The process involved collaborating with various stakeholders, including select business units and internal category leads, to ensure buy-in and to demonstrate the value of the data-driven approach to spend management.

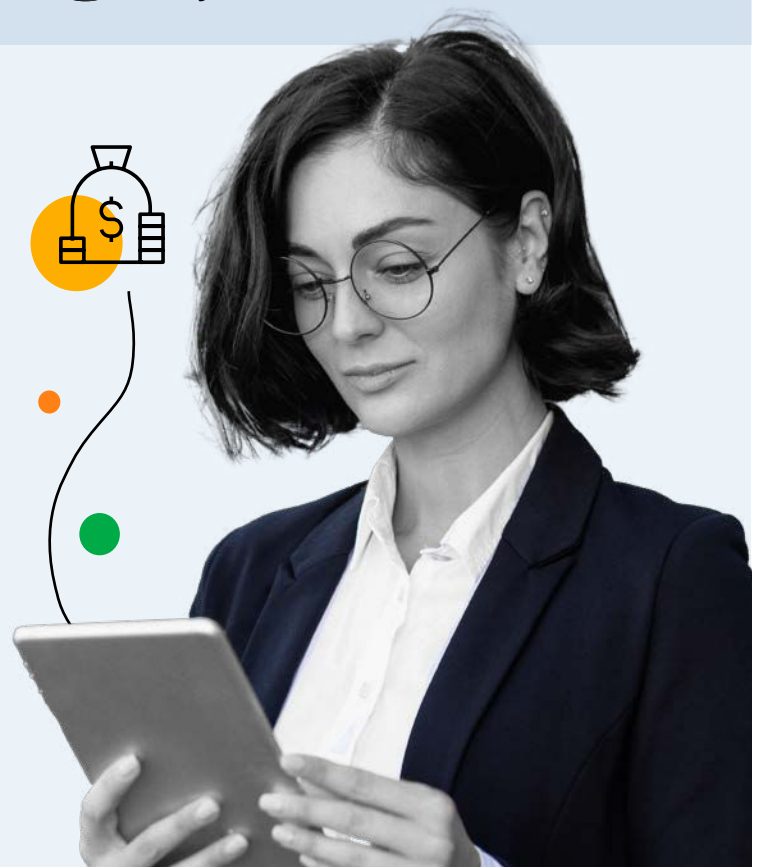
*Source: 2024, ProcureCon Indirect East.
Panel – Spend Wisely: Adopting Next-Gen Solutions
for Effective Procurement Spend Management*



Data is key... We really dug into that data to identify instances where we had multiple purchases from the same supplier at different rates on a P-Card. This allowed us to pre-identify opportunities for improvement up front.”



Cynthia Gore-Bright
Director, Ally Supply Chain
Ally Financial



Implementing artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities is cited as a top initiative by 33% of respondents.

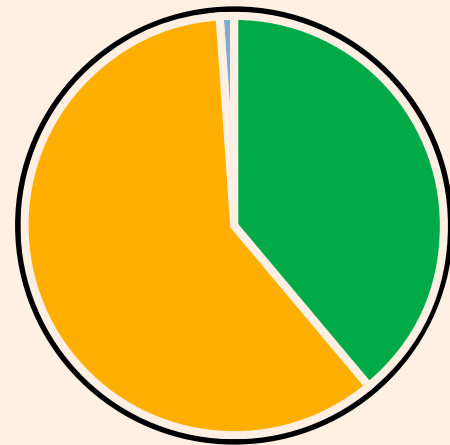
This trend reflects the increasing recognition of AI’s potential to transform procurement processes, from automating routine tasks to providing predictive insights for strategic sourcing. CPOs embracing AI and machine learning can expect to see improvements in efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making capabilities across their procurement functions.

In each case, more than one-fourth of respondents indicated that implementing IoT technologies for real-time tracking (28%) and implementing sustainable or ESG-focused procurement technologies (26%) are top technology initiatives.

These results highlight the growing importance of supply chain visibility and sustainability in procurement strategies. IoT technologies can provide real-time insights into inventory levels and supply chain operations, while ESG-focused technologies can help organizations meet their sustainability goals and manage reputational risks.

Regarding the CPO’s role in these technology initiatives, 60% of respondents say their CPOs would be one of multiple leaders leading them, while 39% say their CPOs will lead these initiatives themselves. This distribution suggests that while CPOs are taking an active role in driving technological transformation, they are often collaborating with other executives, such as CIOs or CTOs. This collaboration could help ensure procurement technology initiatives align with broader organizational goals and IT strategies.

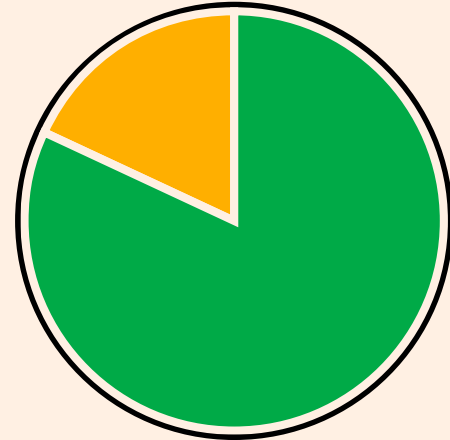
What role will your CPO play in the two technology initiatives you selected in the previous question?



- **39%** The CPO will lead these initiatives.
- **60%** The CPO will be one of the multiple leaders leading these initiatives.
- **1%** The CPO will advise but not lead these initiatives.

Artificial intelligence has also become one of the most important technologies for organizational transformation. The survey reveals a high level of engagement with AI in procurement, with 82% of respondents saying they have already identified or prioritized specific use cases for AI in their procurement team or organization. Most procurement departments have moved beyond the exploration phase of AI implementation and are actively seeking ways to leverage AI. Some are already using AI to improve efficiency.

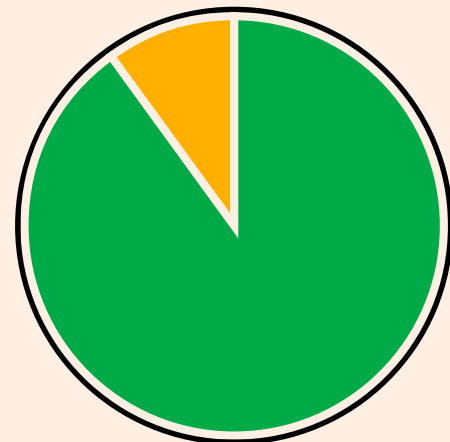
Have you identified and/or prioritized potential use cases of AI for your procurement team/organization?



- **82%** Yes, we have identified and/or prioritized specific use cases.
- **18%** No, but we plan to identify specific use cases soon.

Furthermore, an overwhelming 90% of respondents say they have considered or are considering using AI agents to optimize their procurement operations in the next 6 to 12 months. This means procurement teams are looking to automate more complex tasks and decision-making processes, potentially leading to significant efficiency gains and cost savings.

Have you considered / are you considering using AI agents to optimize your procurement operations in the next 6 to 12 months?



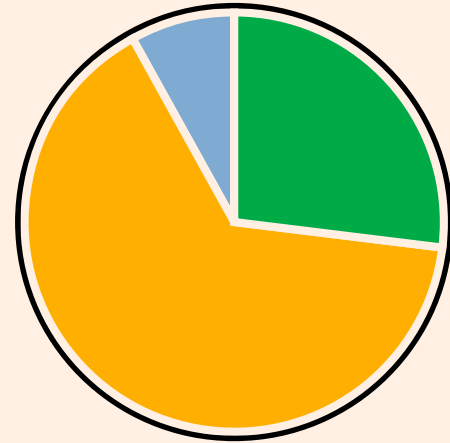
- **90%** Yes
- **10%** No

When asked about their confidence in their procurement team’s ability to effectively leverage AI for process automation over the next 12 months, only 8% of the respondents say they are not very confident. Meanwhile, 65% say they are somewhat confident.

However, only 27% say they are very confident in their teams’ ability to effectively leverage AI for process automation.

Although the outlook is generally positive, many organizations still lack the necessary skills and resources to implement AI solutions and use them to their fullest capability.

How confident are you in your procurement team’s ability to effectively leverage artificial intelligence (AI) for process automation over the next 12 months?



- 27% Very confident
- 65% Somewhat confident
- 8% Not very confident

“

Generative AI should be considered as a complement, rather than an alternative, to traditional AI that can deliver practical and actionable solutions for procurement professionals. A strategic Human-Centered AI (HCAI) approach to work design will determine the success of using generative AI in solving key procurement use cases.”

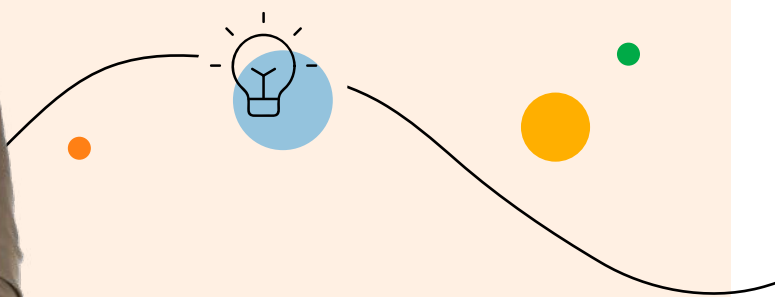
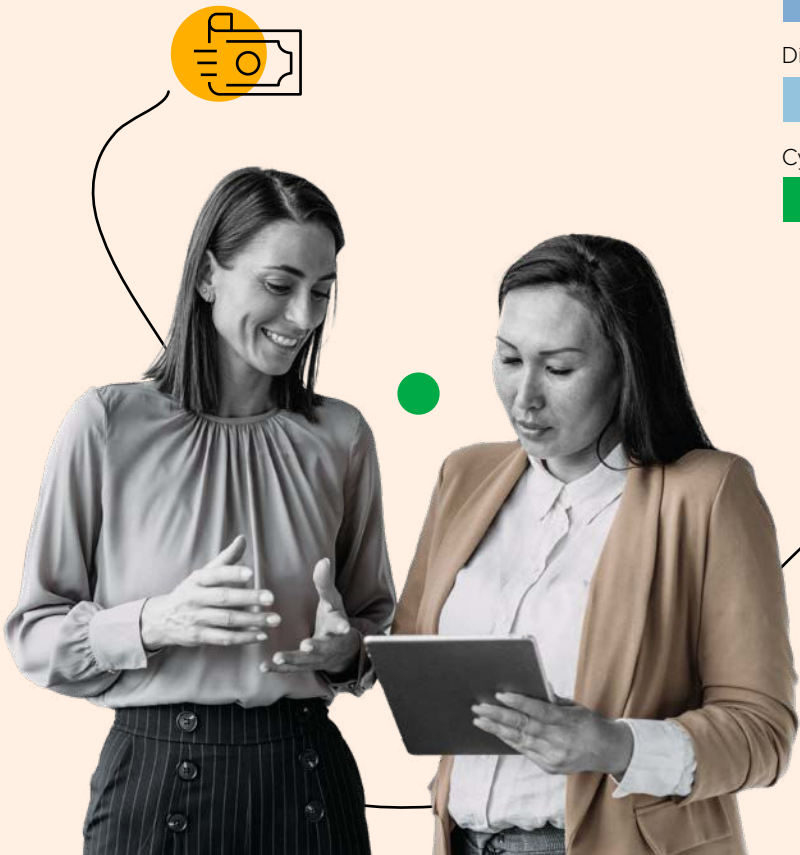
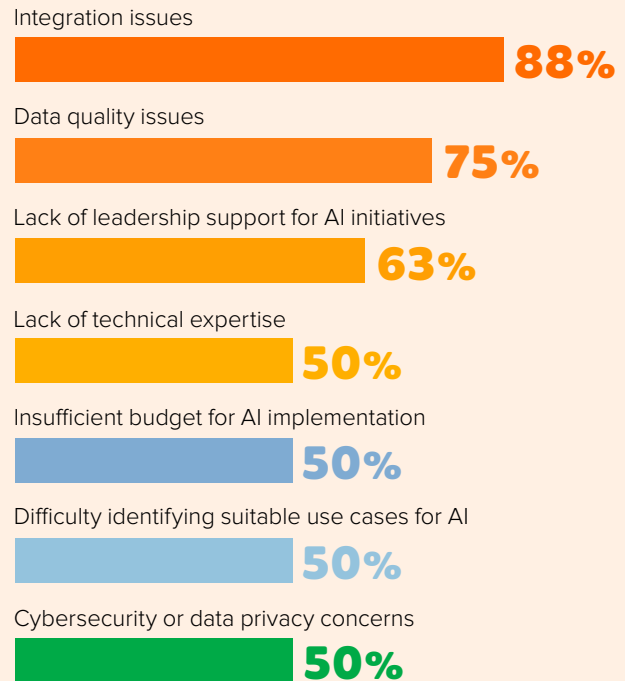


Darshan Deshmukh
President
ProcureAbility



Among the 8% of respondents who are not very confident in their teams' ability to leverage AI effectively, their main challenges are integration issues (88%), data quality issues (75%), and lack of leadership support for AI initiatives (63%). These results highlight the importance of addressing technical and organizational barriers to AI adoption in procurement.

Since you said you aren't confident in your procurement team's ability to effectively leverage artificial intelligence (AI) for process automation over the next 12 months, which of the following challenges is your team experiencing in its implementation and use of AI?

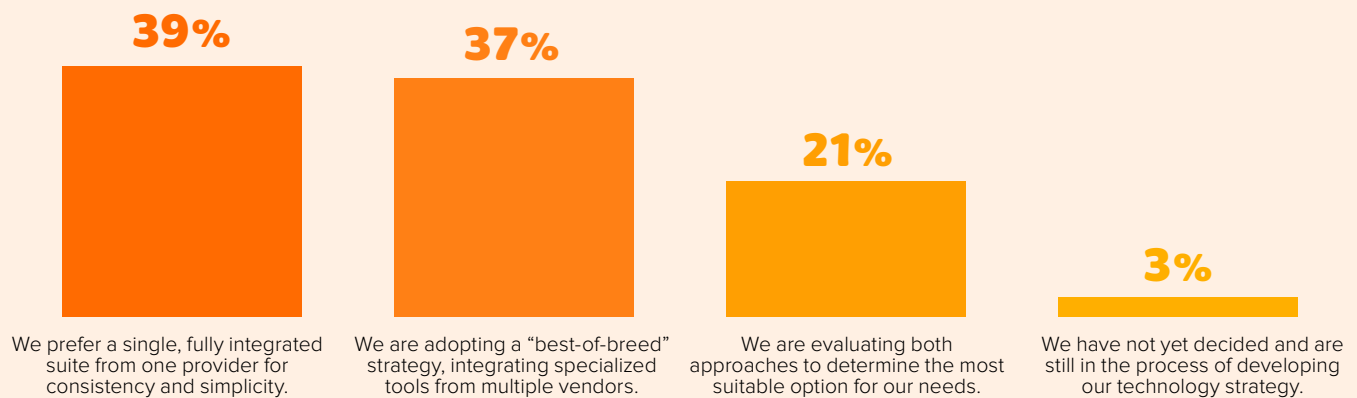


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I believe that a significant challenge for any organization—whether in procurement or any other area—is the continuous improvement mentality. This culture or behavior heavily depends on the leader.”

– Gaston Alvarado, Sourcing Director, Lincoln Electric, ProcureCon Indirect East 2024

Is your organization planning to build, or have you built, a technology roadmap around a single, fully integrated suite of solutions from one provider; or, do you plan to adopt a “best-of-breed” strategy by integrating multiple specialized tools from different vendors?



Finally, procurement teams have differing points of view regarding technology roadmaps. In each case, more than one-third of the respondents prefer a single, fully integrated suite from one provider for consistency and simplicity (39%) or a “best-of-breed” strategy that integrates specialized tools from multiple vendors (37%).

This nearly even split suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to procurement technology, and CPOs must carefully consider their organization’s specific needs and capabilities when developing their technology strategies.

Overall, these results indicate a strong focus on technological advancement in procurement, with AI, data analytics, and sustainability emerging as key themes. CPOs and procurement teams that successfully navigate these technological initiatives will be well-positioned to drive value, innovation, and continuous improvement within their organizations.

CONCLUSION: HOW THE CPO ROLE WILL CHANGE IN THREE YEARS

As we've noted, one of the most significant changes in the CPO role over the past few years has been the CPO's increasing relevance to strategic decision-making. However, recent trends indicate that procurement leaders are also playing a larger role in technology initiatives, and this may be the standard for CPOs moving forward.

Conversations with the respondents reveal that they envision the future CPO as a key strategic partner within the organization, fostering cross-industry partnerships and strengthening relationships with suppliers. Many respondents highlight the importance of digital literacy and the ability to assist in the integration of advanced technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and data analytics, in procurement processes.

As one department head suggests, CPOs will be "adopting platforms for supplier collaboration to create a responsive procurement system." This technological focus is expected to enhance decision-making capabilities, improve risk management, and drive innovation throughout the procurement function.

Beyond technology, CPOs will play a role in driving a culture of continuous improvement and experimentation within their organizations, embracing new tools and methodologies to increase efficiency without compromising quality.

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We're now aligned under IT, giving us access to new technology and highlighting opportunities for the younger generation to showcase their abilities. This alignment has challenged the status quo in procurement and allowed us to use generative AI and the latest tools effectively. By ensuring quality data management, we can better appeal to the talented younger workforce joining us.”

– Greg Cone, Category Manager,
Procurement/Professional and Corporate
Services, **Crowly, ProcureCon Indirect
East 2024**

As one C-level executive notes, CPOs will be “transforming procurement to be proactive rather than reactive,” indicating a shift towards more anticipatory and strategic approaches to procurement challenges.

Additionally, the respondents emphasize a need to build resilience into procurement strategies to better navigate global disruptions, climate risks, and geopolitical challenges. Ultimately, CPOs will be positioned as vital contributors to their organizations' overall success and adaptability as businesses harness the power of emerging technologies, face increasing supply chain risks, and embrace the next generation of technology-proficient procurement leaders.

KEY SUGGESTIONS



EMBRACE AI AND ADVANCED ANALYTICS TO DRIVE STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING AND PROCESS OPTIMIZATION.

This approach will enhance your ability to deliver valuable insights, improve efficiency, and stay competitive in an increasingly data-driven procurement landscape.



PRIORITIZE SUSTAINABILITY AND ESG INITIATIVES IN YOUR PROCUREMENT STRATEGY.

By focusing on these areas, you'll not only meet growing stakeholder expectations but also contribute to long-term business resilience and brand value.



DEVELOP A PROACTIVE, RISK-AWARE PROCUREMENT CULTURE THAT ANTICIPATES AND MITIGATES POTENTIAL DISRUPTIONS.

This mindset will help your organization build resilience, adapt to market changes, and maintain continuity in the face of global challenges.



FOSTER STRONGER, MORE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPPLIERS AND CROSS- INDUSTRY PARTNERS.

By nurturing these connections, you'll create a more agile and responsive supply chain, unlock innovation opportunities, and better align procurement with overall business goals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ProcureCon Insights

ProcureCon Insights, the industry research and digital publishing arm of ProcureCon, delivers cutting-edge data and analysis on trends, challenges, and opportunities in the procurement and supply chain management sectors. Through comprehensive research reports, webinars, and thought leadership initiatives, we empower senior-level procurement leaders to make informed strategic decisions and stay ahead in the rapidly evolving procurement landscape. Our deep industry intelligence not only informs procurement leaders but also connects innovative solution providers with key decision-makers, fostering a dynamic ecosystem that drives the future of procurement and sourcing in the business world.

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We combine leading methodologies, analytics, market intelligence, and industry benchmarks with our uniquely flexible and customizable service delivery model. Global organizations of all sizes trust ProcureAbility to transform their procurement operations, drive growth, and reimagine what's possible.

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Darshan Deshmukh
President
ProcureAbility

Darshan has extensive global operations and delivery experience in the managed services and advisory fields. He has deep expertise in building global programs focused on procurement, strategic sourcing, category management, and supply chain/procurement transformation.

Prior to joining ProcureAbility, Darshan spent most of his career building large-scale, global delivery operations. He spent a decade in a series of global leadership positions in IBM's Integrated Supply Chain organization and then joined Denali Sourcing Services as operations leader and was instrumental in establishing and growing the company's global delivery capability. After Denali's acquisition integration with WNS, Darshan transitioned to tech start-ups, OpenGov and Icertis, where he built their global professional services and customer success organizations. Darshan has worked with global clients in high-tech, financial services, manufacturing, retail, utilities, and healthcare/pharma.

Darshan holds an undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering, a graduate degree in supply chain from Penn State, and an MBA from MIT Sloan School of Management. He loves international travel, movies, and everything food, and divides his time between Seattle and Palm Springs.