

**IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
THROUGH MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT OF MUNICIPAL
PURCHASING DEPARTMENTS – CASE STUDIES FROM
ONTARIO CANADA**

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ABSTRACT. This paper could have implications for both public service managers and academics alike. Some of the most difficult challenges facing public purchasers, including those associated with public sector procurement, purchasing consulting services, and purchasing department involvement are discussed. This paper presents insight into the beliefs of municipal purchasing department managers as they relate to meaningful involvement of their departments in consulting service acquisition processes. These research findings may assist others with developing the strategies necessary for increasing municipal purchasing department involvement in these acquisition processes in order to improve organizational effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Purchasing by public agencies (federal, state, provincial, county, municipal, public school systems, public libraries, public hospitals, public colleges and universities, and various other government agencies) is characterized by a unique set of problems (Leenders & Fearon, 1997). In fact, some of the earliest literature acknowledges the difficulties associated with public sector procurement (Forbes, 1929; 1941; Weidenbaum, 1965) and in particular, the challenges associated with

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municipal purchasing including legal restraints, administrative regulation, and rapid growth and change (Liuzzo, 1967).

Purchasers in the public sector face the classic dilemmas related to public sector organizations, that is, political scrutiny of their activities through both audit and in-house reviews, intensive review by the public for any suggestion of mismanagement of public funds, and sudden changes of policy that characterize government decision-making (Gordon, Zemansky & Sekwat, 2000; Mechling, 1995; Pettijohn & Qiao, 2000). In addition, the set of required purchasing procedures followed by the public sector often increases the number of potential suppliers to consider – managing a much larger number of tenders and suppliers increases the management complexities associated with the selection process. The imperative for public accountability and the increased complexities associated with managing this responsibility make studying the problems associated with public procurement important.

THE PROBLEM OF LOW INVOLVEMENT

The purchasing department has been shown to play a significant role in helping to ensure that funds are spent properly, improve the quality of goods and services purchased, and save both time and money (Ellram & Birou, 1995; Mendez & Pearson, 1995; Leenders & Fearon, 1997). Despite this, purchasing department involvement in purchase decisions relating to consulting service acquisitions has been noted as an area of significant weakness. A 1995 CAPS (Center for Advanced Purchasing Studies) study, that surveyed 34 government organizations in the United States, found that in terms of the total dollars spent on consulting services only 5% included any input from the purchasing department (Fearon & Bales, 1995). This study did not describe the type of involvement that occurred nor the basis for these low involvement levels. These findings might suggest that these services are being acquired without appropriate consideration of organizational goals and objectives and the possibility that taxpayer funds are being spent improperly.

These low-involvement levels may be of even greater significance if one considers the types of services that are being purchased. Consulting

services have not only been responsible, in part, for the propagation of new frameworks, tools, and techniques in organizations but may well have been one of the most significant and enduring types of services purchased by organizations over the last 50 years (Canback, 1998). In addition, as a purchase category, consulting services can be one of the most difficult to purchase. This is problematic, because the impact of poor purchase decisions related to these services, on organizational performance, can be far greater than with the purchase of goods. In essence, poor purchase decisions related to these services can lead to poor performance, while good purchase decisions can lead to good performance (Mitchell, 1994; Soriano, 2001; West, 1997). This suggests that the role of the purchasing department is even more important in such purchase decisions.

While public purchasers have admitted that the purchasing department is capable of adding value to traditional purchase decisions involving such things as raw materials, special and standard production items, and maintenance, repair, and operating supplies, consulting services constitute a purchase category not typically considered to be within the realm of the purchasing department's acquisition capabilities (Smeltzer & Ogden, 2002; Mitchell, 1994). Purchasing managers have stated simply that they do not understand how to manage the buying process for these services which can be very different from the process followed for goods (Smeltzer & Ogden, 2002), thus requiring special training or skills to make these decisions effectively.

If we are to utilize more fully the function of the public purchasing department in these important types of purchase decisions, it is crucial for us to understand the basis for its low involvement levels. In addition, the imperative for public accountability makes studying the problems associated with public sector procurement important. Despite this, the issues related to the public sector still remain an area of traditional neglect within the management literature (Davies, 2002; Gordon et al., 2000) and is particularly true of the topics related to local government purchasing (Murray, 2001). As such, the existing literature provides very little towards an understanding of the basis for low purchasing department involvement in purchase decisions related to consulting services made within the public sector.

With this in mind, this research involved an examination of purchase decisions in which five Canadian municipal purchasing departments

were *meaningfully involved* (Johnson and Leenders, 2003; Schiele, 2000; Stuart, 1989) in acquisition processes for consulting services. Johnson and Leenders call this type of involvement “an ultimate state of perfection... that is not normally attainable.” Stuart originally coined the term meaningful involvement to describe the type of involvement that occurs when the purchasing department uses its knowledge and expertise in all aspects of the acquisition process, including the decision making process, leading to the best buy decision with the objective of satisfying the immediate needs of the specifier and the long term needs and strategic objectives of the organization as a whole. Stuart further qualifies this definition by saying that the purchasing department is meaningfully involved only when it makes a significant contribution to four areas while helping a client department meet its immediate needs and ensuring that the long term needs and strategic objectives of the organization are met as well. These areas are supplier input, functional and technical specifications, consulting service utilization, and time savings. Each of these areas is characterized by certain types of purchasing department contributions.

Supplier input contributions relate to the establishment of links between previously unknown suppliers and client departments and the encouragement of information flows between them. Functional and technical specifications contributions relate to the determination and description of the characteristics and quantities of the needed items or services in a clear and comprehensive manner. Consulting service utilization involves ensuring that the needed item or service meets the immediate needs of the client department, while not conflicting with the long term objectives of the organization as a whole. Time savings involves reducing the time expended by the client department during the purchasing process.

Johnson and Leenders (2003) expands upon Stuart’s (1989) work by stating that purchasing department involvement in purchase decisions can range from none, to documentary, to professional, to meaningful. No involvement represents cases in which the purchasing department has essentially been bypassed. Documentary involvement represents a level of involvement in which purchasing performs very basic administrative activities for the client department, such as posting an RFP, collecting and distributing proposals received by the department, or issuing a purchase order. Activities of this type require only rudimentary skills. Professional involvement refers to cases in which purchasing performs

higher order activities such as meeting with client departments to discuss their needs, providing information not originally requested by the client department in order to facilitate the purchasing process, or carrying out any other kind of activity focused on the client department's needs in a manner that exceeds documentary involvement. Meaningful involvement refers to an ideal level of involvement on the part of the purchasing department. It occurs when purchasing carries out the activities that characterize professional involvement while also considering the interrelationship between the various purchasing activities performed and their effects on the long term needs and strategies of the organization.

For the purposes of this research, it was concluded that meaningful involvement occurred for each of the ten purchase decisions examined by this study when both the purchasing agent and the client department agreed that the purchasing department had made a significant contribution in all of the four areas described by Stuart (1989), in a manner consistent with the classification scheme provided by Johnson and Leenders (2003). These cases represented a level of involvement in traditionally difficult purchase decisions that is believed to be unique, exceptional, and normally unattainable. When combined with the fact that these purchase decisions involved five purchasing managers, ten purchasing agents, nine client department representatives, and a wide range of consulting services purchased, the relevance of the research findings can be considered important.

This study collected, in part, municipal purchasing department manager's viewpoints regarding their departments' involvement in these traditionally difficult purchase decisions. Reported herein are the viewpoints of five purchasing managers on how to meaningfully involve a municipal purchasing department in consulting service acquisition processes. The findings from this research may assist others with developing the strategies necessary for increasing municipal purchasing department involvement in these acquisition processes and thus, in effect, improve organizational effectiveness.

METHODS

Given the scarcity of literature and research relating to this work (Davies, 2002; Gordon et al., 2000; Murray, 2001) and the exploratory nature of this research, a case-based methodology was chosen for use by this study. This kind of methodology is useful in developing well-

grounded theory and is especially helpful in explaining how and why events have occurred (Meredith & Samson, 2001; Stuart, McCutcheon, Handfield & McLachlin, 2002; Voss, Tsikriktsis & Frohlich, 2002; Yin, 1994).

Municipal research sites were chosen because of geographical convenience and the likelihood that they would be able to provide a sufficient number of cases to facilitate both within and across site analysis. Random selection of research sites in case research is not necessary, nor is it recommended (Eisenhardt, 1989). These sites were selected from a population consisting of all of the 571 municipalities located in Ontario, Canada. Municipal purchasing managers were contacted randomly and asked about the extent to which their departments were involved in acquisition processes for consulting services. If they were able to identify two cases in which meaningful involvement had occurred, we asked them to participate in the study.

Ultimately, 43 municipalities were contacted before ten cases could be identified where municipal purchasing departments were meaningfully involved in purchase decisions related to consulting services. This total consisted of two cases from each of the five municipal research sites that agreed to participate in the study. This number provides a credible basis from which to address the research questions posed. Also, it is within the range suggested for case-based research by Eisenhardt (1989) and Miles and Huberman (1994). Given the low levels of public purchasing department involvement in consulting service acquisitions, the ability of this research to identify the very existence of cases where municipal purchasing departments were “meaningfully involved” in consulting service acquisition processes was of major significance in and of itself. Table 1 provides the key statistics concerning the municipal research sites and cases included in this study.

Through the use of a structured interview protocol, a total of 25 informants were interviewed, including five purchasing managers, ten purchasing agents, nine client department representatives, and a consultant. Initial interviews lasted in duration between one and two hours. Several subsequent interviews were also conducted. Appropriate procedures were followed for data collection and analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Patton, 1990; McCutcheon & Merideth, 1993; Miles & Huberman,

TABLE 1
Case Studies – Key Statistics*

Site	Municipal Population	Capital and Operating Budget (Canadian Dollars)	Purchasing Department Employees	Case #	Type of Consulting Service Purchased by the Municipality	Value of Consulting Service (Canadian Dollars)
1	1,000,000	\$515 million	20	1	Media	\$250,000
		\$1.7 billion		2	Executive Development	\$35,000
2	2,500,000	\$981 million	44	3	City Planning	\$2,200,000
		\$5.9 billion		4	Service Assessment	\$26,000
3	440,000	\$67 million	7	5	Strategic Plan	\$89,000
		\$191 million		6	Service Assessment	\$500,000
4	142,000	\$12 million	6	7	Taxi Study	\$40,000
		\$61 million		8	Senior Citizens Study	\$49,000
5	468,000	\$135 million	11	9	City Planning	\$100,000
		\$510 million		10	Services Assessment	\$193,000

Note: * reported by case study informants.

1994; Yin, 1994). These procedures ensured that any issues related to validity and reliability was addressed. The study concluded in September of 2002.

RESULTS

Activities Associated with Meaningful Involvement

Table 2 presents the activities that purchasing managers said were typically performed by their departments when they were meaningfully involved in acquisition processes for consulting services. These types of activities as they might have been performed during each of the eight stages of the acquisition process, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Activities That Purchasing Managers Said Were Typically
Performed by their Departments

Activities performed by the purchasing department when meaningfully involved in consulting service acquisition processes as per municipal purchasing managers from each research site.	Research Site					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
STAGE 1						
Contacted immediately by the client department		X				1
Involved in the planning processes of other departments					X	1
STAGE 2						
Helped to determine the timing of the delivery needs	X	X		X	X	4
Helped to develop a Statement of Requirements	X	X		X	X	4
Clarified the purpose of the consulting need	X	X		X	X	4
Classified the client department's needs versus its wants		X		X		2
Discussed budget amounts with the client department	X				X	2
Clarified the client department's operating environment		X				1
Met face-to-face with client department					X	1
STAGE 3						
Helped to develop the RFP document	X	X	X	X	X	5
Identified delivery needs, terms and conditions	X	X	X	X	X	5
Helped to develop the evaluation criteria and scorecard	X		X	X	X	4
Had preliminary discussions about possible sources	X	X		X	X	4
Discussed and chose a procurement method	X	X				2
Discussed alternate strategies to meet the consulting need				X		1
Met face-to-face with client department					X	1
STAGE 4						
Publicly posted the RFP	X	X	X	X	X	5
Notified specified suppliers about the consulting need	X	X	X	X	X	5
Held meetings with consultants to address questions				X		1
STAGE 5						
Consolidated and opened proposals received	X	X	X	X	X	5
Prepared summaries of proposals for distribution	X	X	X	X	X	5
STAGE 6						
Acted as a liaison between suppliers and client departments	X	X	X	X	X	5
Arranged for presentations by suppliers	X	X	X	X	X	5
Jointly evaluated proposals selected	X	X	X	X	X	5
Challenged evaluations made by others	X		X	X	X	4
Prepared a formal report to Council		X	X	X	X	4
Participated in the final supply choice	X					1
STAGE 7						
Arranged delivery, payment and purchase order	X	X	X	X	X	5
Notified suppliers regarding choice	X	X	X	X	X	5
STAGE 8						
Took corrective action regarding service levels etc.	X	X	X	X	X	5
Debriefed suppliers		X	X	X	X	4
Administered a client department satisfaction survey			X	X		2
Evaluated quality of consulting service post delivery			X	X		2

Need Anticipation or Recognition of a Problem

Once a client department determined that it had a consulting service need, it contacted the manager of the purchasing department for the purpose of receiving guidance with respect to purchasing a particular consulting service needed. Often times a purchasing manager visited with other operating departments in order to learn more about the “goings-on” of these departments and or sit in on some of the other operating department’s long term planning sessions. Purchasing managers reported that this addressed several issues. First it developed essential relationships that were necessary for their departments to work with other operating departments. Second, it developed awareness by other operating departments of the types of services that the purchasing department had to offer. Lastly, visiting other operating departments allowed the purchasing manager to be aware of the upcoming needs of departments and be better prepared to meet these needs as they arose.

Determination of the Characteristics of the Consulting Service

Once the purchasing manager was notified of a particular need, he or she asked a series of questions intended to get a high level idea of what it was that the client department was trying to accomplish, in order to develop a plan of action, outline some terms of reference, establish the significance of what was needed, and develop an idea of what types of deliverables were needed.

The client department was then asked to summarize this information using a document commonly known as a Statement of Requirements. The Statement of Requirements would then be sent to the purchasing department and reviewed by a purchasing agent assigned by the purchasing manager to assist the client department with making the purchase decision.

The specific objectives to be met, a detailed description of the work to be carried out by the supplier, the extent of the activities to be performed, the qualifying characteristics required of the supplier to ensure the successful delivery of the service, a budget range, the work methodology, a time frame and milestones, the deliverables, and the selection criteria were all part of the Statement of Requirements that the purchasing agent and client department worked together to develop.

Once the purchasing agent reviewed this document, he or she would develop the evaluation criteria that would be used to evaluate potential suppliers. These criteria took a balanced scorecard approach that included a weighting scheme and pass / fail thresholds. At this point, the purchasing agent would ensure that there was demonstrated value for money spent. This was achieved by assigning cost as a weighted factor, usually 25 per cent, with the balance representing the more technical aspects of the evaluation criteria.

Description of the Characteristics of the Consulting Service

Once the Statement of Requirements was completed, work began on the RFP document. The purchasing agent normally sent a template to the client department that would help to structure the RFP development process. The client department then created a first draft of the RFP that was then sent to the purchasing agent, who reviewed it and made suggestions for improvements. These improvements included separating the client department's needs from its wants, clarifying issues regarding deliverables, suggesting options for consultants to respond to base need, and occasionally, review of the RFP by another person outside of the client department.

The purchasing agent and the client department then reviewed the various procurement methods available and selected a preferred option; determined sourcing and procurement strategies; established cost, time, and performance standards; and standardized and consolidated the requirements into an evaluation scorecard that was used to assess potential suppliers. Once these items were clarified, a final RFP document was prepared that included detailed specifications for the need, including terms and conditions, special clauses, and timelines for delivery of the service needed.

Search for and Qualification of Potential Sources

Once the RFP document was approved by both the purchasing department - which usually involved approval by the purchasing manager - and the client department, it was posted for tender on the municipality's web site. Sometimes the purchasing agent also notified other suppliers on a Bidders List or that the client department wanted to be included in the bidding process for the particular consulting service needed.

Acquisition and Analysis of Proposals

Bids for the work advertised in the RFP would then be sent to the purchasing department where they were collected and opened by the purchasing agent at the specified closing date. The names of the potential suppliers would be read into the public record. Copies of the proposals would then be made by the purchasing agent and sent to the various representatives of the client department's evaluation team.

Evaluation of Proposals and Selection of a Service Provider

Once the client department received copies of the proposals, they would be judged using the evaluation criteria developed. Often the client department and other interested parties, such as councilors or other members of the evaluation team, met with the purchasing agent to complete this evaluation. The purchasing agent acted as a third party, impartial aid in the evaluation process. Extreme differences between individual evaluations would be discussed at this time until a point of understanding or agreement among members was reached.

An evaluation team used the evaluation criteria to develop a short-list of two to three possible suppliers. These suppliers were then invited to make presentations to the evaluation team. Once these presentations were completed, the short-listed suppliers were further evaluated and a final scoring took place. These final scores were then reviewed by the purchasing agent to verify the process, to ensure that value for money spent was achieved, and to guarantee consistency across team member scores. Once this review occurred, a final supply choice was made, and the purchasing agent prepared a final report to Council for approval.

Selection of an Order Routine

Once Council approved the supply choice, the purchasing agent notified both the successful and unsuccessful suppliers of the final decision. Payment terms and delivery conditions were finalized shortly after this. The purchasing agent then processes the purchase order, assigned vendor codes for payment, and ensured that all required legal documents are completed.

Performance Feedback and Evaluation

When requested to do so by unsuccessful suppliers, the purchasing agent debriefed suppliers, discussing with them both the strengths and

weaknesses of their proposals. This was done to aid these suppliers in developing better proposals for the next time that they bid for municipal business. Managers also reported the use of both informal and formal feedback mechanisms to collect information about the services provided by the purchasing department. These feedback mechanisms could include informal phone calls made by the purchasing manager to the manager of the client department or more formal feedback surveys.

Lastly managers reported that they were often asked to act as third party problem solvers when problems arose with the consultant providing the service. Managers noted that this involvement helped to ensure that client department's needs were met in an effective and timely manner, and that consultants were not being asked to do more than what was originally agreed upon in the original services contract.

Factors Affecting Meaningful Involvement

Purchasing managers also discussed a number of factors that they felt affected their department's ability to be meaningfully involved in acquisition processes for consulting services. These factors are presented in Table 3.

In terms of environmental factors, the purchasing managers felt that their departments tended to be more involved as a result of a need for a defensible process. This need resulted from the ever present pressure from the public to ensure that public funds are being spent wisely. Purchasing managers also stated that in terms of the availability of suppliers, either a scarcity or an abundance of suppliers increased the purchasing department's level of involvement. Indeed, both scenarios could increase the difficulty associated with selecting the best supplier and the need to meaningfully involve the purchasing department.

With respect to organizational factors, purchasing managers discussed the policies and procedures in place that directed client departments to involve the purchasing department in these purchase decisions. While purchasing managers acknowledged that client departments tend to be very creative at finding ways around these policies and procedures, they did feel that these policies helped to ensure that they at least had the opportunity to make the types of contributions associated with meaningful involvement once they became aware of a particular consulting service needed. Purchasing managers also discussed

TABLE 3
Factors Noted by Municipal Purchasing Department Managers that
Affect the Ability of the Purchasing Department

Factors noted by municipal purchasing department managers that affect the ability of the purchasing department to be meaningfully involved in consulting service acquisition processes.	Research Site					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS						
Availability of suppliers to provide service		X	X	X		3
Public scrutiny and / or pressure		X	X	X		3
Need for a defensible process			X	X		2
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS						
Policies and procedures in place	X	X	X	X	X	5
Structure of the purchasing department.		X		X	X	3
Mandates for enhanced involvement of PD		X			X	2
CLIENT DEPARTMENT FACTORS						
Trust of purchasing department		X	X	X	X	4
Prior awareness of purchasing dept's value		X	X		X	3
Current workload			X	X		2
Knowledge and experience		X	X			2
Willingness to accept guidance from PD		X			X	2
PURCHASING DEPARTMENT FACTORS						
Broad knowledge and experience	X	X	X	X	X	5
Open and friendly approach	X	X	X	X	X	5
Ability to demonstrate value of PD	X		X	X	X	4
Ability to meet deadlines	X		X	X	X	4
Ability to solve problems	X		X	X	X	4
Ability to use tact	X	X		X	X	4
Initiative and proactive nature	X	X			X	3
Current workload			X	X		2
Knowledge of CD's needs				X	X	2
Ongoing relations with other departments	X				X	2
Flexibility			X			1
Respect for CD's position					X	1
Service-based approach				X		1
CONSULTING SERVICE FACTORS						
Dollar value of the service		X	X	X	X	4
Complexity of the consulting service needed		X	X	X		3
The urgency associated with the needed service			X	X	X	3
The strategic nature of the service			X			1

how a centralized purchasing department can have the effect of increasing the propensity for meaningful involvement to occur. They believed that a centralized purchasing department was more visible than a non-centralized purchasing department resulting in a higher profile within the municipality. This tends to make potential client departments more aware of the purchasing departments' service capabilities and the higher profile, so long as it is a positive one, tends to build confidence within of this capability.

In terms of client department factors, purchasing managers suggested that meaningful involvement by the purchasing department partly rests upon the client department's willingness to accept guidance from the purchasing department. This, presumably, is a function of the client department's belief, or trust, or awareness that the purchasing department would positively contribute to the purchase decision. In addition, a client department is more likely to seek aid from the purchasing department when it has an excessively heavy work load and or limited knowledge with respect to purchasing the desired service.

Purchasing managers also spoke about factors related to the purchasing department. First, purchasing managers strongly believed that they provided the vision, structure, control systems, and, most of all the initiative to ensure that purchasing agents could be meaningfully involved throughout the acquisition process. In addition, purchasing managers also stated that the ability of the purchasing agent to perform the activities related to meaningful involvement strongly affected the extent to which their departments could be involved. With respect to this, the purchasing manager from research site four stated the following:

Purchasing has to be knowledgeable, proactive..., show client departments what they can do for them, meet deadlines, solve problems, exercise some tact when working with people, remain open and friendly, but most of all remember they are providing a service.

In addition, he also stated:

We have to show client departments that we can add value, that we are there to save them time in the long run..., help solve problems before they occur. If they understand what we can do for them, then they will be more likely to come to us for help.... Some clients see us as a policing function rather than someone

who can make a contribution. That's a real barrier to involvement.

Finally, in terms of consulting service factors, purchasing managers suggested that an increase in the dollar value, complexity, urgency, and strategic importance of the consulting service needed increased a client department's willingness to seek out the assistance of the purchasing department. This may be a result of the perceived risk associated with making poor purchase decisions related to these services, thereby increasing the need for and subsequent involvement of the purchasing department. In speaking about consulting services, the purchasing manager from research site one stated:

It is especially important with consulting services that you pick the right supplier from the start. The problem is that you really don't know if the right supplier was chosen until it is generally too late. It is not like a piece of equipment.... Consulting services are much harder to evaluate so spending a lot of time up front is key to a successful service being delivered. This can be even harder when there are a limited number of consultants to choose!

As a whole, purchasing managers believed that in order for the purchasing department to be meaningfully involved, it must use an open and friendly service based approach when working with departments. This combined with the purchasing agents' broad knowledge and experience, and their positive ongoing relations with other departments, allowed them to build the trust required for departments to include them in purchase decisions related to consulting services.

CONCLUSION

These findings have provided considerable insight into the beliefs of municipal purchasing department managers as they relate to meaningful involvement of their departments in consulting service acquisition processes. While these views have some limitations with respect to other types of services and private organizations, they are a basis for improving the way that public organizations purchase these types of services. These findings also contribute to the development of the public purchasing field by filling some considerable gaps in the public procurement literature. These results can be used to improve organizational effectiveness with respect to these purchase decisions and

as a foundation for future research. These findings have also expanded upon previous findings by showing that the *public* purchasing department is also capable of playing a significant role in helping to ensure that public funds are spent properly, improve the quality of goods and services purchased, and save both time and money.

If public purchasing managers are to meaningfully involve their purchasing departments in these traditionally difficult purchase decisions, they must ensure that they possess the necessary capabilities and benevolent intentions that allow them to contribute in such a way that characterizes meaningful involvement. This in turn will develop trust. Trust will determine whether a client department is willing to involve the purchasing department. Purchasing managers and agents alike must be proactive in the way that they develop this trust by promoting themselves and the role of the purchasing department. Without this, client departments would simply fail to become aware of the value associated with purchasing department involvement, allowing the problem of low involvement to persist. A client department informant, making the significance of this recommendation clear, made the following statement:

Purchasing needs to do a better job of promoting itself. I was just not aware of what they could do for me.... Having gone through this experience with the purchasing department, I will never do it again without them!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to several individuals who assisted me throughout the course of this research. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Michiel Leenders from the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business, whose invaluable assistance made this research possible. I would also like to thank the five municipalities and, in particular, the 25 informants who participated in this research. These individuals provided the abundance of necessary information to address the research questions posed, helped to review and edit case study reports, and facilitated the final case study release process. Lastly, I would also like to thank the reviewers of the *Journal of Public Procurement* whose comments helped to improve the final version of this paper.

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