

## Art of Procurement Podcast Transcript

Episode 153

[How Ace Hardware Uses a RASCI Model to Drive Stakeholder Collaboration w/ Fraz Baig](#)

**Fraz:** [00:00] I felt very happy too. I'm glad we're starting off with that question because that's something that's very near and dear to my heart. As a father of two toddlers, I have a soft spot in my heart for kids. I've been fortunate enough to have the ability to volunteer my time and money to help individuals and families less fortunate than us.

[00:25] Recently, my wife and I along with like-minded friends started a not for profit organization. The name of the organization is Flying Mustangs. And really the vision, the vision for the not for profit is to provide a platform to help individual volunteers make a difference in their community. Some of the areas that we're focusing on is early childhood development, education, and health care, and really near dear to me is the eradication of poverty within our community.

**Philip:** [01:01] So, is this a local non-profit or is it something that's a little bit broader in terms of its reach?

**Fraz:** [01:08] Yes. So, it really started off with more of a broader reach. Some of the folks that we're working with today are actually located in Greece. As some of your listeners may know, there's a refugee crisis out there. And so, we're helping with the individual volunteers within those camps provide for example -- an example of the way that we're helping is really providing art supplies to those camps. And so, there's children and families within the camps that not only use the art supplies to draw but it's really a form of therapy for them to express their feelings of what they've gone through as they've made the flight from their homeland to these refugee camps. And in return, what we do is auction off those art pieces to raise funds back for the family so they may be able to provide a better opportunity back home.

**Philip:** [02:04] If anybody's listening, how can they find out a little bit more? Is it easier to just getting in touch with you? Is there a website they could go to? Because I'm sure that some of the things you talked about would really resonate. I'm sure there may be listeners who are interested to know a little bit more about what you're doing.

**Fraz:** [02:20] Yeah, absolutely. The best way to participate and learn a little bit more would be to contact me directly. Setting up a not for profit through the governments is a long-winded process, so were in the process of not only setting it up within the state of Texas where the like-minded friends are based out of, but really having the opportunity to make those charitable dollars count for your tax returns. And to be able to kind of buildup that structure a little bit more within domestic US. The website will be up and running but please do contact me and I'll be able to provide some detail as to where to find these auction pieces and kind of how to get involved.

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**Philip: [03:06]** Okay, cool. What I'll do is I'll actually share the show notes' URL towards the end of the show but I will include your contact details there if anyone who would like to get in touch.

**Fraz: [03:15]** Thank you. Thank you.

**Philip: [03:16]** Let's talk procurement. A couple of questions I actually ask a lot of the times when I'm interviewing procurement leaders in the practitioner side. First of all, did you choose procurement or is it something that you kind of stumbled across?

**Fraz: [03:29]** Yeah. As a kid, I wanted to be a pilot. As a college student, a lawyer. But to answer your question, procurement kind of chose me. I did my undergrad in business as I prepare to take my while I was in college. How I ended up in procurement – Geez, 17 years later is I was applying to a job post for an IT gig where you're responsible for building the old servers and plugging in all the components and doing some testing. So, I needed a gig. It's seems like, Hey, I'm doing undergrad in business. You know, this just might be a way to pay the bills. Fifteen years later I'm in procurement.

**[04:16]** Some of the roles I played throughout my journey to get me here was---. After the tech, I moved into more of a development role. So, really doing some coding and websites. And then I went and moved in to sales. I saw a lot of sales guys. And the lifestyles they were living, so that was attractive. I said "Hey, why don't I turn my head in sales?" I did some IT sales for a while. And then made the switch from you know the sales side to more of the procurement side. So, I went into more of a consultative role, advising organizations on how they should be purchasing. I played procurement manager role. My current role is as senior manager within procurement where I'm really responsible for overseeing all of our corporate spend across IT, supply chain, and marketing.

**Philip: [05:06]** That's a pretty broad background then. I like the fact you talked about it. You touched on sales. I think that's always really important and something that I wish as I grew through my procurement career I have focused a little bit more on that and to kind of getting some of those experiences from outside the function because I was somebody who always just came up and worked in only the function. After I left I guess that I recognized the value that some of those other experiences can bring and also different perspectives, I think that you actually approach situations with stakeholders, with executives - the kind of influence by some of those past experiences outside of the profession.

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**Fraz:** [05:43] Yeah. Absolutely. I think that's one of the key skill sets that have helped me grow within this role I'm in today. Understanding that -- the vendors, right, it's a machine on their side. Right? Especially when you're dealing with some of these large vendors. Everything's very calculated and drawn out. They have a map of stakeholders and kind of the levers that they need to push into a deal that's a win for their side. And so, what I try to do is really get our ACE house in order in order to be able to combat - I know that's kind of a strong word but you know when you're going through some of these strong negotiations, we're making sure that our house is in order in order to have an agreement that is beneficial for both parties.

**Philip:** [06:32] Yes, so you are better prepared. One of the things that I always think as well is if we leave the market to basically dictate the terms to us in whatever it is that we're buying, then ultimately you are not really going to get a win-win relationship. You are probably going to get a relationship where the supplier comes out on top if you're not at least informed as to what a win-win looks like. You're going into any discussion on negotiation with as much information as you possibly can. So, it's just not a one-way stream kind of a one-way discussion.

**Fraz:** [07:07] Yeah. Absolutely. There's many talented individuals on our side of the house and it's really just ensuring that we leverage everyone's input and also the market and our network to ensure that we have, as you said the right information to make sure it's a win-win for both parties.

**Philip:** [07:24] Yeah. I think I heard you say about a background in IT and that you were coding at one point. Is that right?

**Fraz:** [07:30] It is, yes.

**Philip:** [07:34] I guess you're well positioned to think about the impact of digitization then on procurement having been in the world of essentially creating product in the IT world. How do you see technology digitization actually impacting us as a profession first of all? What's kind of the art of possible?

**Fraz:** [07:56] Yeah. That's a great question. And so, when you think about IT traditionally, right, and it's still current in the industry today. You're talking about computer systems to support internal business operations, right? You are talking about networks, storage, base, individual skill sets and resources to manage the IT infrastructure to support the organization. And today in more of the digital world, and as I touch on I'm helping lead the organization forward with kind of what's going in business space specially--. For example, how the supply chain and - let's say your organization look at warehouse

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management system? Right? That's core supply chain but it has an impact to the IT organization and the business outcomes as a whole. And most importantly, how does your end consumer find that beneficial to them? It's hard to put our why to it. It's not IT, right? It's supply chain but it's all the different individuals working together to deliver an experience to the end user. In ACE hardware, it's our retailers and consumers.

**[09:18]** That's really the change that's gone in place. You're not thinking "Hey, I got to go out and buy widgets. Or I got to go and buy more servers or more services to support the servers. It's really more from how do you support the business. The digitalization that's taking place is a big component of how that whole shift is taking place within the industry. It's going to be impacting you know IT professionals. So, my goal is to really align what's going on in the marketplace and helping my team prepare with our internal stakeholders how to face those new challenges that are being presented from the business and the vendor community.

**Philip: [10:01]** And sorry, are you... I guess I got a couple of questions off of that. One is you talked about the goal being to kind of understand what's going on in the marketplace and bring that back in house. I'm all for that. It's about spotting those innovations and being a driver of innovation as opposed to waiting for somebody in the organization to spot something they think might be helpful for them, and then you are doing the transactional piece of making it work. I'm interested in ways that you're actually able to go and bring innovation from outside. Or at least not even if you are implementing it, actually being aware of it so you can have those conversations on a peer to peer level if you like with your stakeholder as opposed to them talking about some wonderful innovation they've seen and really not having any idea of it.

**Fraz: [10:46]** Yeah. Yeah. You know what? The innovations, one of those what I call like a fuzzy word, right. We all kind of understand what it means but in practicality how do you understand the definition of it for your organization and to drive it forward. I've been fortunate enough to work with many many organizations within my career and they're all in a different cycle of the procurement maturity. Right? And so, within ACE what I would say is we've been really empowered. Our role within the organization is very strategic in nature. I know a lot of organizations are trained and trying to get to their strategic adviser role with this for their organization. Some of the practical advice that I would give to the listeners is your network. Right? Develop your network not only on avenues such as LinkedIn, but really get out to some of those industry conferences. I know ACE prescribed, for example Gartner. I've spoken at procurement conferences as well and being a part of that conversation. So, really understanding where those conversations are within the industry. And you know it's a great opportunity to really interact with the vendors in a non-negotiation role.

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**Philip:** [12:11] Right. They are really getting to know you.

**Fraz:** [12:14] Absolutely. And where they see the industry going. And so, for example, a lot of times now what the vendors are doing is kind of bypassing IT. And really going to business saying “Hey! This.” For example, ACE hardware. There is this new innovative way to do something new on your website for example. They're going to bypass IT altogether and go to the business and then the business is driving the decision. And so, I would say historically how it's been done is you know who you are working with IT and working with the business and now a lot of the vendors are really bypassing IT and procurement and going right to the business leaders. And so really understanding, for example, a fast solution. How does that impact the organizations? So, really taking the time to understand and gather information from the outside, interacting with the vendors, and bringing that in house and coming up with a game plan and how to tackle that change of goal within the industry is what I would advise the listeners to do.

**Philip:** [13:19] Yeah. It sounds like--. But also, is requiring much stronger internal partnership because you know maybe before there were some traditional lines of engagement even when you were buying a technology, even when you're buying a service. With technology isn't involved then it's a business decision, you work with procurement. When technology is involved, then you're through IT, and IT involves the business. And now it's all about – One, going through the business. But, two, pretty much – well, I don't want to say pretty much because that's too broad of a statement – a lot of what we buy actually has technology. There's a technology component of it. So, where you had an IT buyer for example who would only just be buying some software, some hardware, networking, whatever it may be, now they're actually involved in buying HR services or financial services or whatever it may be because technology is infusing it. And that changes how you need to build relationships with your stakeholders and kind of come together more collaboratively, I think.

**Fraz:** [14:15] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. One of the things that our team here at ACE did was really build a RASCI Collaboration Model. We were a new group within the organization, in a ninety-year-old organization, and so it was really important. And one of the challenges we saw is - Well, where does procurement fit into what we've been doing historically. Right?

[14:42] And so, one of the challenges that we took on was to really break down all of the sourcing steps. Right? Depending on your organization, it may be 5 or 7. And then really understanding kind of who are the partners within the business organization and within the business units themselves that need to be part of that sourcing step. Beyond that, who is going to be responsible for kind of leading that sourcing step, and who is going to

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be responsible for providing input into that making that decision, and who needs to be informed. Who is kind of that technical go-to person?

**[15:22]** To lay that out within our RASCI Collaboration Model that we've deployed here at ACE, we really help drive that conversation forward and bring value to our procurement organization and to the business. Because now it was clear in terms of the area of responsibility and how everyone kind of works together. As I took this forward and present it to the leadership within the organization, it went over well because it was well defined. It was very transparent. If procurement is leading the negotiation with the vendor, on the backend everyone's working collaboratively to make sure that we're all on the same page. Because what the vendor is going to do is call the business, call IT. And remember, I'll say no within the organization to get a bit of knowledge that is beneficial to them. It's really, as we alluded to earlier, it's really getting our house in order in a structured manner where everyone understands their role responsibility and is transparent within the organization. That's really helped our negotiation power with the vendor.

**Philip: [16:35]** Interesting. If I could try and visualize the model for people who are listening to try and visualize it, think of it as being the RASCI but is it kind of the typical procurement takes the lead on the sourcing process? You know we have the business involved. Perhaps an approver, and from a consultant perspective. What are the key roles and responsibilities you actually define and you split among the business unit and procurement. For example, in IT.

**Fraz: [17:10]** Yes. If I could help the listeners visualize it, what I would say is on the left-hand side is where you have your activity. And so, some of the first one's that you're going to be doing in a sourcing process is gathering and defining the requirements, supply selection, managing the sourcing activity. So that could be done with the tool itself. And then moving that to the final vendor selection. And really where it's kind of sticky or fuzzy for the internal stakeholders of ACE is when you get to that negotiation and that strategy piece. I fully understood the business. Not at first feel comfortable with doing what they've done historically with the relationship they've built to pass that forward to a third - you know an internal group within the organization. What I advised them is when you think about that next set of activity, the manage and negotiation strategy, it's really broken up into four stop points, I would say.

**[18:10]** So, we have the business term negotiations which ultimately the business is responsible for and will own. Yet the technical term negotiations, so that's where you know when we're working with IT, they own that. And what I advise the business is – I don't want to take a conversation that you want to have and me have that technical

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conversation with the vendor. Right? I am not that technical lead on this project so go ahead and have that conversation with the vendor but keep me involved. You know whenever the vendor says “Hey, that’s going to impact pricing.” say “That’s fine. That’s procurement’s responsibility.”. This is what we need from a technical standpoint.

**[18:49]** And to get into the price and term negotiation, that’s really IT’s core role within the manage negotiation strategy bucket of activity. And then there is the legal term negotiation. So, it may seem very stable or straightforward to some procurement organizations that are more mature but for our organization today it was really important to break that apart and make sure that everyone understands their role responsibility and how that comes forward.

**[19:17]** And of course, after that management negotiation strategy bucket, you’re going to move forward to implementation and management of the deliverables. That’s where the conversation I have with IT stakeholders as I was looking to build this was – Hey! At the end of the day, I fully understand that IT is going to be responsible for implementing it. That’s why it’s really important that their part lead in their technical term negotiation. They’re providing that input into the earlier activity where we’re selecting the suppliers to bring in to this RFX, right? But everyone’s constantly involved in the process.

**[19:54]** At the end of the day after we’ve delivered the project, it’s very clean in terms of everyone’s area of responsibility and where they provided input. So that’s activity on the left-hand side. On the right-hand side, you are going to have the different groups which are the business unit, IT, indirect procurement. You might have a financial planning and analysis organization within finance as well and the legal team involved in the sourcing of projects.

**Philip: [20:23]** And so from an indirect procurement perspective, you are then managing all the different handoffs between – as the responsibility shifts for example between gathering and defining the requirements all the way through to the different point that you talked about that define a negotiation strategy. You’re ultimately coordinating it. But other areas of the business have a responsibility to actually fulfill a certain part of the process.

**Fraz: [20:49]** Yeah, absolutely. As I ran through the steps, IT has a role in all of those stuff. Some of those might be just more informational when it comes gathering and defining the requirements. But yes, there’s certainly a hand off and us driving that process forward. They’re certainly within the organization, there is project manager as well. Again, this is kind of how we operate within the organization so everyone has the same information and everyone including the project managers are doing their part to drive the projects forward.

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**Philip: [21:24]** So how were you able to get buy in from all those different groups? Because you mentioned, I think it was five different groups who are actually a part of this engagement model. For some of them, specifically the business unit, that may require them to actually give up some things that they would like to retain in terms of responsibility. They don't necessarily have to give up control to any other group when it comes to defining a requirement or even negotiation. How are you able to get everybody to buy into this?

**Fraz: [21:53]** Yeah, I know that's a great question. Number one, our organization reports up to our CFO. We have executive overview of the organization in ensuring that we're delivering to the organization. For me, it was really important to -- As a procurement professional, let me say, it's really important to identify the gaps. Right? That's a skillset that I think has served me well. And so historically, our organization had been doing procurement. Right. And they've been doing the job they know that they have in addition to doing procurement activity. For me it was really important to identify what are those steps that are being done today. As the procurement professional, what are the steps that we should be focusing in? Or where can procurement bring value to what we've been doing historically?

**[22:46]** It's really important to, number one, lay out all the steps and educate the business at IT as to what are all the stuff in a traditional sourcing process and modifying it to cater to ACE's organization. That step was really you know -- we're a new group within finance. And so, it was to determine how are we going to engage moving forward. Because it was the challenge. Right? We are a four-year-old group within a ninety-year-old organization. This was a pain point for the organization. So as taking responsibility, bringing knowledge and coming up with a structure that I can take to the stakeholders and lay it out for them to identify all the steps.

**[23:33]** Then it was to work with the leaders within the organization to say "Well, I think IT should be responsible for negotiations." Right? And then they push back and then it got into -- Well, let's break this up. And to make it clear that "Hey, at the end the day we're not going to take on the ownership of the solution that we purchased." And so, you know business. You're still going to be responsible for that so go ahead and negotiate what you want out of it. And the pricing, we're going to leverage our background in negotiations and the input that we have from our own organization to get the best deal possible.

**[24:09]** It was a lot of back and forth. I'm not going to say that the first iteration went over extremely well but it was -- let's find the right fit. What we came up with ACE might not be the right fit or the right responsibility for some of those buckets within another organization. We have to cater it to ACE. At the end of the day, were miles and years

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ahead of where we were just four years ago in terms of going to market. And overall everyone had to buy in to the process but it was something that they helped develop. And there was a pain point that we had. Really, where it came down to is when we had the final iteration, I had met with all the stakeholders within the organization and had these conversations with them and then went into the executive room to share the final product with them so everyone had already seen it, everyone had already provided their input. We had had those hard conversations. And so, that final presentation to leadership went over really well because we've done a good job of tackling the pain points prior to it being rolled out.

**Philip: [25:25]** You had everybody on board before you went and start the final decision.

**Fraz: [25:29]** Absolutely. And everyone -- the great thing here is everyone loves the organization and wants to do the right thing. And so, when you kind of take that focus as opposed to "Hey, IT wants to go ahead and get the benefit of negotiating the best deal." It's not about that. It's about how do we drive our organization forward and leverage the strength of all the different leaders that we have and the great talent that we have here at ACE.

**Philip: [25:57]** I think what's really important in the engagement model as well and this is something that we -- it seems so obvious but I think that we do sometimes forget about it -- is that at the end of the day you know the business unit is the one who is responsible for making the vendor and supplies selection. So, you're not trying to take that away from them. We are not trying to push on them suppliers they might not want to use. You are just trying to help them use the suppliers they do want to use. Or enable them to be able to afford to use the suppliers they want to use in a way that is more of a win-win as opposed to it all being one way. It's all in the supplier terms or it's affordable that the business can actually work with the suppliers they want to work with.

**Fraz: [26:37]** Absolutely. Just like any procurement professionals going out the industry and talking to their network. The business is doing that as well. They know who plays in the space, and who plays well in the space. They have great references. However, our job is to say "Yes. They're really good. They are probably who we want but by the way there's three other vendors that we've identified that are already part of the organization or we've heard from the industry that might be worth considering as well. So, let's go out and buck them in and let's go to market." Give everyone the same information and the same opportunity. At the end of day if we end up with the supplier that you felt was the right one out of the gate, awesome. But if we learn something about another supplier that might be an option and/or component that they have that we might want to include

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as part of an offering from a preferred supplier, right? As you alluded to earlier, the better information you'll have, the better it's going to be for the organization moving forward.

**Philip: [27:38]** You mentioned about the fact that you know this is early in your evolution or maturity of procurement. I think you mentioned that being a four-year-old function in a 90-year-old organization. I'm interested in where this fits in your journey in the evolution and kind of how it has helped you continue that growth within ACE.

**Fraz: [27:58]** Yeah. That's a great question and something that I had to reflect on in my time here at ACE. As I mentioned, I used to work for large big five consulting IPO organization. And as a consultant, you're constantly raising and you've seen decisions implemented at many organizations that are right based on industry.

**[28:32]** And here at ACE, I don't mean the--. Obviously, a 90-year-old company - awesome My job is to make sure that it continues to deliver its promise for the next 90 years. With that there's tenureship here at ACE. Again, when you say that, sometimes it's taken as negative. I don't mean that at all. I think when you've been in an industry for 20 years, you see things come and go, that's just called something different. And so, it's an opportunity for me to just be taking back for more. ACE Hardware, as I say openly, I love this organization. I love the people. I love what they represent. And so, for me to kind of--. In terms of my professional development to kind of slowdown rather than give a solution which I did from when I was a consultant to provide the data points and information for the individuals to go on their journey with me and come to a conclusion where in my previous year is you know X is the answer. We're going to get X. Here, it may be X, Y, Z. Let's take those steps and think about those and make sure that it's right for this culture. And then if it's not right for the culture, how do we adapt to make sure that it fits where at the end of the day we're driving ACE forward.

**Philip: [30:00]** Yeah. Even if you may have a preconceived notion of what the answer maybe, you are not going in there saying I have all the answers. But I'm going to help you facilitate a conversation so we get to the right place that is right for everybody.

**Fraz: [30:14]** That's a great summarization of my answer. I appreciate that.

**Philip: [30:19]** As you put the engagement model in place, it was early in your mature years as a procurement function. Where are you now? Where has that enabled you to go? And I guess there is a second part of the question. Maybe it's even two separate questions. How are you then leveraging technology as you're evolving and maturing in the procurement organization at ACE?

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**Fraz:** [30:41] Yeah. So, the RASCI model is something that we put in. I've been at ACE for four years. I put that in place two years ago. Prior to that it's become an organization form. There was really just getting a procurement policy in place and dusting off kind of the different dispirits documents and consolidating that, and really putting that together for the organization to have an opportunity to take a look at and review and understand the policy with procurement and the process.

[31:14] When we talk about the process, four years ago, a lot of our internal reviews and approvals were all paper-based. And so, when the organization became an organization with our leader within indirect procurement was really put together and implement Ariba. We use Ariba, it's an SAP tool. So, we implemented the contracts module and also the sourcing module. We like the contracts module today and again, we cater that to ACE to take us out of the paper-based process and have an electronic review and approval of quotes and documents within the system itself. It obviously allows us to give up the paper but have electronic compliance virtual compliance to see if the right folks are reviewing and approving contracts. And then it's a central repository as well.

[32:16] When we were looking to build up our contracts and understand where they are within the organization, they were all over the place. There were on people's tasks, folders, computers. And so, we really took the lead in terms of putting that solution together. And as far as the social module within Ariba we're utilizing that to run our events. So, we're readying RSPs for indirect categories as well. And when you talk about innovation, everyone in the conversation, we've actually extended that out to more of our direct side as well. So, our direct merchants are able to leverage the sourcing tool to run events.

[33:00] In terms of bringing innovation forward, I'm sure a lot of organization are doing this already indirect but for our organization here that was something that we hadn't looked at for 10 years or so. When they saw the result and they understood how we can take a review of a category from eight weeks to two hours, that was value that IP brought to the organization. Not from a traditional sense, right, in terms of indirect procurement but really understanding the value that technology can bring and how do you drive this forward. And again, if you have that mindset, how to drive your organization forward and think of that as opposed to -- my role is to reduce spend or get something quicker and faster in the supply chain. I think that really helps your listeners with their personal and professional growth.

**Philip:** [33:52] Yeah. I couldn't agree more. I'm sure our listeners are fed up with hearing me talk about my experiences in outsourcing but you know you had two sets of people. One, who would put their head in the sand and look at how they can resist change, and

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another who would actually embrace it and want to figure out how they can best take advantage of the opportunities at outsourcing. It is time. It is probably 10 years ago presented to them. And there was the put the head in the sand who really badly affected those that embraced it. We're able to drive what the future looked like and also if that future then didn't include them at their organization, I've outsourced myself out of a role before but their skill sets are then in demand on the outside. So, it's just trying to take advantage of all these new technologies and figuring out how we can use them to your advantage rather than trying to resist them I think.

**Fraz:** [34:40] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And again, it's always about thinking outside of the box where I think the talent within the procurement space is really going to push the procurement organization further and align to some of those challenges that we're being faced with from some of the vendor community and digitization. And so, just another example I'll catch on real quick is in terms of our group having grown our footprint within the organization is you know--. Again, when you think about traditional procurement, you know your line maybe to a business unit or a category. Traditional folks trying to drive efficiency and drive down cost. And so, yes, that's a component of what we do but beyond that ACE Hardware, we're 5,000 retailers strong now. A lot of listeners may not know this but ACE is a coop so all those individual stores out there, the majority of those individual stores are individually owned and operated. And there are leadership. What we did was take a look at "Hey, we have corporate contracts in place for spend categories. Right? For example, IT. Our retailers are purchasing IT components to help with their individual stores. How about we take those contracts and those pricing and give the retailers an opportunity to take advantage of that as well, right. And so those involves conversations with groups within our organization that aren't traditionally involved with indirect spend. And we really build out a group called Saving Source within the organization where we take package deals that corporate direct/indirect procurement has put together and push that to have the retailers an opportunity to take advantage of that and lower their operating cost. So, at the end of the day, that drives ACE forward and helps the retailers reduce their operating cost. So, that's just another example of innovation that we touched on earlier in kind of out of the box thinking that you know I think will be required of procurement professional moving forward.

**Philip:** [36:42] Yeah. You will become a GPO for your retailers essentially.

**Fraz:** [36:45] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. Exactly.

**Philip:** [36:48] I know that it's about time to wrap up. I had one final question and it's about digital transformation because you've mentioned it in a couple of answers to some of the questions today. But also, we talked off mic and I know that's something that you're

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really passionate about especially with the IT background that you have. I just wondered how do you think digital transformational attitude change the role of procurement?

**Fraz:** [37:12] Yeah. That a great question and I appreciate you bringing a highlight to that because I think that's really what's driving our industry. So, at a very high level in terms of how procurement business and vendors interact, historically, it's been you know within IT. The projects are coming to IT and the vendors are hitting IT to drive the business forward. What you see is a little shift in terms of how vendors approach to organization. A lot of times they are working with the business directly or reaching out to the business executives directly to drive change. And so, nothing one way is right or wrong. It's really about understanding the business. Again, aligning internally to understand some of the changes that are happening in the marketplace and being able to start up a structure internally to what's going on in the marketplace to be able to kind of counteract to what's going on in the industry. And my goal within my role across IT supply chain and marketing is making sure all those components of the business are talking to each and driving that change within ACE.

**Philip:** [38:34] So we talked maybe fancifully about technologies like block chain and IPO. I know that I've been as guilty as others in bringing these kind to the floor because I think they're just... I have no idea what their impact may be. I think it's something we have to be aware of. I just wonder if you, given again your background, is more in the IT or the digital space, what your perspective is on those emerging technologies. Are they kind of fanciful at the moment or can they be transformative?

**Fraz:** [39:06] I think they definitely have to be transformative in nature. I think what you see is that within the industry a lot of large big vendors/mega vendors buying up all those smaller technology. Because in terms of adaptability for organization, it allows them to adapt quicker and faster and keep up with the competition at hand. And so again, one of our challenges is how do you take a ninety-year-old company and make it nimble. That's the challenge I'm looking to help solve for ACE moving forward.

**Philip:** [39:41] I always say the easiest question, given the fact that we do have to wrap up now. I just wonder if you could share where our listeners could find out more both about the journey that you've been on - connecting directly with you but also about the nonprofit Flying Mustangs that you talked about earlier.

**Fraz:** [39:56] Yeah. So, the best way to contact me is LinkedIn. F-r-a-z B-a-i-g. I know you are going to go and provide that information to the reader.

**Philip:** [40:04] Yeah.

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**Fraz:** [40:04] And really, connect with me directly. I'm happy to share my input, my journey, and see how I can help you and your organization or vice versa. I'll have more information on Flying Mustangs within the coming months. But I'll be able to share some of that more information and details when we connect.

**Philip:** [40:25] Awesome. Well, thank you very much again Fraz for joining me. The show notes with your contact details will be at [artofprocurement.com/ace](http://artofprocurement.com/ace). That's [artofprocurement.com/ace](http://artofprocurement.com/ace). I really appreciate talking to you. So, thank you.

**Fraz:** [40:39] Thank you Philip.

**Philip:** [40:40] Thanks!

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