



Interview with **Les Ball**, Vice President SCM Europe, Middle-East & Africa, **Eaton**



What is the level of stakeholder engagement at EATON? What are the infrastructures in place to ensure shared visibility into processes?

Stakeholder engagement at Eaton is critical! Eaton is an integrated operating company unified by standard processes and tools called *EATON Business System (EBS)*. Through its terminology, common approaches and language, EBS helps stakeholder engagement as it sets a common theme and reference point. Supply Chain is one of the tools within EBS Operational Excellence that ties everyone together. This helps the organisation to have a common set of goals and objectives which serve the ultimate vision of EATON.

EBS enables effective interaction across businesses and functions, both regionally and internationally. This has facilitated transferable practice sharing, as well as enabling key stakeholders to become engaged in change that's focussed on improving business results.

EATON has also implemented standardised and systematic change management processes that also has helped to improve stakeholder engagement, ensuring there is awareness and desire around new projects and programs. This is a process rather than an infrastructure, and includes getting the necessary and appropriate project sponsorship. One example was showcased at ProcureCon Indirect 2009 during May.

In today's changing economy, how do you think procurement practices and strategies will change?

Within EATON, one thing that will not change relates to our strong principles around business ethics. This remains a cornerstone in how we conduct business ("doing business right"), and we are most proud about how we position ourselves in this area - by ethics in a procurement context, we mean how we treat our suppliers, and how we achieve results. At times like this, an organisations commitment to ethics can be tested, but not at Eaton.

In terms of procurement practices that *could* change – greater focus on risk management and supplier continuity can be expected. More companies will adopt a more balanced sourcing strategy to protect themselves from exchange rate fluctuations and unpredictability of specific local economies.

There is increased expectation from procurement to create greater bottom-line impact, so I would anticipate most organizations to be exploring how to gain even further leverage on key categories, and perhaps even explore new categories not on their existing radar.

Eaton has evolved to a global power management company that helps its customers to use power more effectively, efficiently and safely. Therefore, sustainability and green elements of procurement will continue to be important to Eaton, and will continue to influence practices and strategies in Eaton, and undoubtedly across all sectors of industry.

Where do you see the greatest opportunity in current market conditions for procurement?

As previously mentioned, assessing how and where to achieve increased leverage of spend is one such area. I believe that many organizations will assess this element, both within direct and indirect categories of spend. Indirect categories still offering opportunities for many people, a fact reinforced recently during ProcureCon 2009.

Additionally, preparing for the rebound – making sure that the supply base remains financially secure and capable, able to cope with the current trading conditions, and to be positioned to react positively when the inevitable upturn arrives.

What take aways from last year's ProcureCon conference did you implement back at your office?

I found the sessions on change and stakeholder management particularly of use, which helped in our thinking and approach. With the market uncertainty that many organizations face, the presentations on outlooks for procurement in 2020 and ideas around future-proofing the supply chain in terms of climate change have become good reference points. At ProcureCon 2008, there was a lot of intellectual exchange beyond the benefit of networking.

What are you looking to get out of participating in ProcureCon 2009?

My goal is to expand my network, and to gain new ideas in transferable practices, including how procurement can add incremental value. I am also looking forward to hearing how others are coping with the current economic conditions, how they strengthen key stakeholder relationships, and optimise support and influence.



2 – 5 November 2009
Hotel Le Plaza, Brussels
www.procurecon.com