

To my public procurement colleagues

THIRTY YEARS AGO business was looking for leadership to address the environmental movement. Supply management was not ready. Buyers were consumed by their zeal to drive down the incremental costs of whatever they had to buy for their respective organizations. Inflation was uppermost in the minds of most buyers.

Eventually senior management hired strategists to deal with the environmental issues in order to preserve profitability. These strategists were not from supply management; they were from other business disciplines. Supply management was not at the table for the discussions – this was seen as too important an issue to leave with purchasing. Thus, the engineers and marketing crowd developed new specifications to send down to purchasing in the form of requisitions to be filled.

Today, environmental issues are well established on corporate agendas and supply managers are effective at factoring in the environmental concerns when making supply decisions. When decisions are needed regarding sustainability and corporate social responsibility, organizations now look to supply management professionals. This recognizes and acknowledges the value that [organizations] receive when supply professionals act responsively to the changing needs in the market.

This new role is a juxtaposition of the economic and environmental issues, while meeting the expectations of stakeholders. This is the time for supply-minded individuals to re-brand themselves. Retrospectively, in a few years, people will look back at this as the pivotal moment when supply professionals were asked to stand up or step aside.

To affect change in business decisions involving the acquisition of goods, services, and equipment, the cognitive task is to see sustainability as an outcome of pragmatism and sound judgment. That is the strategic imperative supply managers must first get their head around. This puts them in control of their destiny. Sustainability isn't the hula-hoop of the decade.

Successfully implementing the change strategy is the managerial role for supply pro-

fessionals. This requires making sustainability an inherent part of decision making. Interpreting the plethora of information and data surrounding sustainability and applying it to the values of the organization is the challenge. This includes adapting to the ongoing improvements in materials and production or manufacturing methods; researching leading practices; becoming subject matter experts; aligning outsourcing partners to ensure quality; quantifying the cost of carbon emissions; working with suppliers to meet ever-demanding expectations; working with NGOs to objectively progress towards common goals; not accepting the status quo; engaging with social enterprises to make a difference in the community; monitoring supplier performance globally; not losing sight of the importance of being cost-competitive; developing life-cycle cost models to assess long-term value; promoting sustainability initiatives; acting as the internal sustainability resource; objectively reporting on the results; and sharing the knowledge gained with colleagues.

You have the uncommon opportunity to draft the mandate that puts supply management at the forefront of affecting change in the area of sustainability. Be ready when your wishes come true!

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Awards – a rewarding experience

I WAS WORKING ON the Internet when I came across my name as the first recipient of the *Summit* award for Excellence in Asset Management [Materiel Management Institute]. It was a moment I was truly proud of.

I am happy to see this magazine has grown in popularity and is still a very important tool, recognizing individuals who exceed in their work environment.

The article brought back memories for me of my working career, as I am now retired. Just thought I would drop a line to say thanks.

Virginia McEwen

Note: Check out the *Summit* awards for Leadership in Public Procurement and Leadership in Green Procurement www.summitconnects.com

correction notice In the November/December issue of *Summit* magazine, we incorrectly identified the federal finalist for the *Summit* Green Procurement award as being from PWGSC Western Region. It should have read PWGSC Pacific Region. Our apologies.