

CASE STUDY

Accelerating Procurement Value for a Major UK Utilities Company

FourCentric

Outcomes are Everything™

IN BRIEF



Four-year partnership, evolving from capability support to strategic programme delivery



Identified opportunity to improve efficiency in low-value procurement and release strategic capacity



Designed, implemented, and operated a Buy Desk pilot in just two weeks



Delivered a 7:1 ROI within six months



Exceeded SLAs with response times almost 10x faster than target



Developed a proven framework for future procurement optimisation

Extending a trusted relationship to deliver a high-impact Buy Desk pilot.

BACKGROUND

A major UK utilities company partnered with the FourCentric group for over four years. Initially, 4C managed specific spend categories and addressed capability and capacity gaps. The relationship evolved into a more strategic role. Reporting directly to the CPO and CFO, 4C led a major procurement turnaround programme focused on improving processes, optimising capacity, prioritising resources, building in-house capability, and providing expertise and development to strengthen the client's team and performance well beyond cost savings.

4C identified an opportunity to unlock further value by setting up a Buy Desk. The aim was to streamline lower-value procurement activities and free category managers to focus on strategic initiatives. This managed service would handle smaller, transactional activities efficiently while maintaining competitive rigour.

Recognising their expertise in setting up and running procurement desks, 4C brought in another FourCentric group company, EBIT, to design, implement, and operate the Buy Desk as a proof of concept.

CHALLENGES

The procurement team was under pressure from multiple directions. High volumes of low-value, low-risk procurement tasks were absorbing valuable time and limiting the focus on strategic priorities. While framework agreements were in place, mini-competitions within those frameworks were often skipped due to time constraints, uncertainty from stakeholders, and limited capacity among category managers.

The lack of automated systems to route requests efficiently meant the process relied heavily on manual handovers, creating delays and increasing the risk of missed opportunities. Together, these challenges meant significant untapped potential for cost savings and supplier performance improvement.



SOLUTIONS

Working together, 4C and EBIT delivered a rapid, effective solution, channelling lower-value procurement through a centralised function to ensure competitive bidding and release strategic capacity.

1. Strategic positioning and design

Advised on the Buy Desk model, defining its scope, operating principles, and expected benefits.

2. Rapid implementation

Launched a pilot, staffed by procurement experts from the 4C and EBIT teams, within just two weeks.

3. Operational delivery

Managed all incoming requests for low-value, low-risk procurement, running competitive tenders and negotiating with suppliers.

4. Collaboration and stakeholder engagement

Partnered with internal stakeholders to ensure procurement aligned with specific business needs.



Without their support, we would be forced, through bandwidth and prioritisation, to agree to pricing and contracts without competitive rigour or scrutiny.

Senior Category Manager



They have worked hand-in-hand with my stakeholders, ensuring they are listened to, involved and, in the end, are provided with the right business solution that meets their needs.

Senior Category Manager

OUTCOMES

Delivered a 7:1 ROI during the six-month proof-of-concept

Achieved response times almost 10x faster than SLA targets

Improved supplier performance by applying competitive rigour to lower value spend

Enabled category managers to focus on high-value strategic projects

Earned high stakeholder satisfaction for professionalism, responsiveness, and tailored solutions

The proof-of-concept concluded after six months due to a shift in the client's strategic priorities under a new CFO. However, the initiative demonstrated clear value and left a blueprint for future cost optimisation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Streamlining transactional procurement can free up senior talent for strategic priorities
- A well-defined pilot can deliver measurable impact quickly, building momentum for wider change
- Even lower-value purchases can benefit from structured competition to improve supplier performance

Discover how **FourCentric's** group of specialist companies can unlock the hidden opportunities across your supply chain, operations and procurement and drive change that sticks.

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