

Fit Beats Features:

How to Cut Through the ProcureTech BS and Choose Tech That *Actually* Gets Adopted

Cut the noise, avoid costly missteps, and choose tech that delivers in the first 180 days.

Written by Tom Mills



DeepStream

eSourcing Tech: Engineered To Fit



Make better decisions about procuretech

Most procuretech initiatives don't fail because the technology is bad. They fail because the organisation wasn't set up to succeed in the first place. I've been to so many conferences where I've heard fellow procurement colleagues say, "We bought a best in class solution... and nobody really uses it."

Very often too I've seen and even worked in businesses that are stuck with the pain of legacy tech purchases. Sunk cost fallacy kicks in and the damage becomes permanent as nobody wants to admit they've made a mistake.

If a tool isn't being used or even it's being vastly underused, it doesn't matter how powerful it is. It's a failed investment.

This playbook exists to reduce the chances of you choosing the wrong provider, overbuying technology, or launching another digital initiative that looks good on paper but quietly dies in practice. It's here to help you make better decisions about procuretech.

Decisions that actually lead to adoption, outcomes, and long-term success. Not just a box ticked and a go-live party.

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Throughout this whitepaper, I'm going to explore how businesses can balance building a forward-thinking procurement function while ensuring that the function is optimised for current demands. By implementing scalable processes and tailored solutions that meet the current needs and maturity of an organisation, procurement can thrive both today, and tomorrow.

About the Author

Tom Mills is the Procurement Protagonist® - a public speaker and practitioner with more than 25 years' experience across direct and indirect procurement. He is best known for championing the soft skills that drive real procurement impact: influence, communication, and collaboration, often outperforming expensive courses and qualifications. Tom has distilled his hard-won experience into practical, adoption-focused frameworks that underpin his flagship programme, Procurement Soft Skills Mastery, and he shares clear, jargon-free insight through his weekly newsletter, Procure Bites, read by over 20,000 procurement professionals.



The belief that underpins everything in this guide...

There's no such thing as the best procuretech, no matter what vendors will tell you at their expensive stands in the expo of the conference you've met them at.

There's only the best fit for your organisation, your maturity, and your problems today. I advocate for stripping ego from all your procurement. Be honest with where you're at now and make the purchase that will get you safely to the next level of maturity, while delivering tangible improvements to your organisation here are now.

The biggest risk isn't choosing the wrong vendor. The biggest risk is choosing too much, too early. I see this constantly. Teams jump straight to big suites, multiple modules, and glossy future state visions, while their basic processes are inconsistent, their data is patchy, their teams are overloaded, and everyone is already tired of "another change programme". Then everyone acts surprised when adoption is low.

It's the classic procurement scenario of being able to separate the true requirements from the 'nice to haves'.



Suites can absolutely work for some organisations. Usually the ones with strong process discipline, dedicated change capacity, clean data, and experienced product owners. But the broader the scope of an implementation, the more planning, resourcing, and change effort you're signing up for. For most low to mid maturity organisations, starting with a tightly scoped solution massively increases the chance of success. I've seen this first hand. The best solutions I implemented in my businesses were simple and commensurate to what the organisation needed at that specific point in time.

One of the biggest traps in tech selection is starting with a giant list of requirements. Hundreds of line items. Thousands of "must haves". Most of them copied from old RFPs or lifted from vendor websites. It feels thorough. It feels grown up. But it usually sends you in completely the wrong direction.

A much better starting point is getting clear on what actually needs to change in the business. Not in three years. Not in some shiny future state. Within the next 90 days.

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To make that easier, take the ['Find Your Tech Fit' Assessment](#) - a short questionnaire that benchmarks your current tech landscape against your maturity stage and suggests a sensible next step based on where you are today.





Starting small isn't playing small. It's playing smart.

Prove value first. Build confidence. Create momentum. Then expand. Before you even speak to vendors, define a small set of non-negotiables and guardrails.

Non-negotiables might include things like: usable by an average buyer with minimal training, live within a defined timeframe, and post go live success included as standard.

Guardrails might include one module in phase one, no custom builds, and no reliance on future roadmap items.

These guardrails exist to save you from yourselves, because once sales cycles start, scope creep becomes very seductive.

When it comes to providers, people often look for the one with the most capability. I look for the one that's most honest.

If a provider never tries to talk you out of buying, you should be worried. The best partners actively qualify customers. They want to know if you're ready. They want to know if you've got ownership, capacity, and executive air cover. They want to know where they're not a good fit.

For example, if a provider can't clearly explain how they get sourcing events out of Excel and email and into their eSourcing workflow within weeks, not months, that's a warning sign.

Average providers say yes to everything. Trust me I've seen it first hand. I want a vendor who's actually prepared to challenge my thinking and can say 'no, this module isn't right for you right now'. Implementation and adoption aren't optional extras. They're the whole game.

If a provider charges extra to help you succeed with the software, I've got questions. Succeeding with the software should be baked in.

Ask what good looks like 90 days after going live. Ask what usage metrics they track. Ask what happens if adoption stalls. Ask who owns success on both sides. If answers are woolly, take that seriously.

Going live isn't success. People using the tool is success. Business outcomes changing is success.

Not enough is made of client reference calls in a procure tech selection process, but for me its a core validation point. Don't use this as an 'after selection' tickbox exercise. Make the client reference calls the core of your activity.

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Now let's talk about AI

Everyone says they've got AI - but very few can explain, in plain English, what their AI actually does.

Here's my simple take. Good AI in procurement should remove grunt work, reduce cognitive load, and help you make better decisions faster. It shouldn't require a PhD to understand. And it definitely shouldn't be a black box you blindly trust.

When a provider shows you AI, push past the slides and ask to see it working with messy reality.

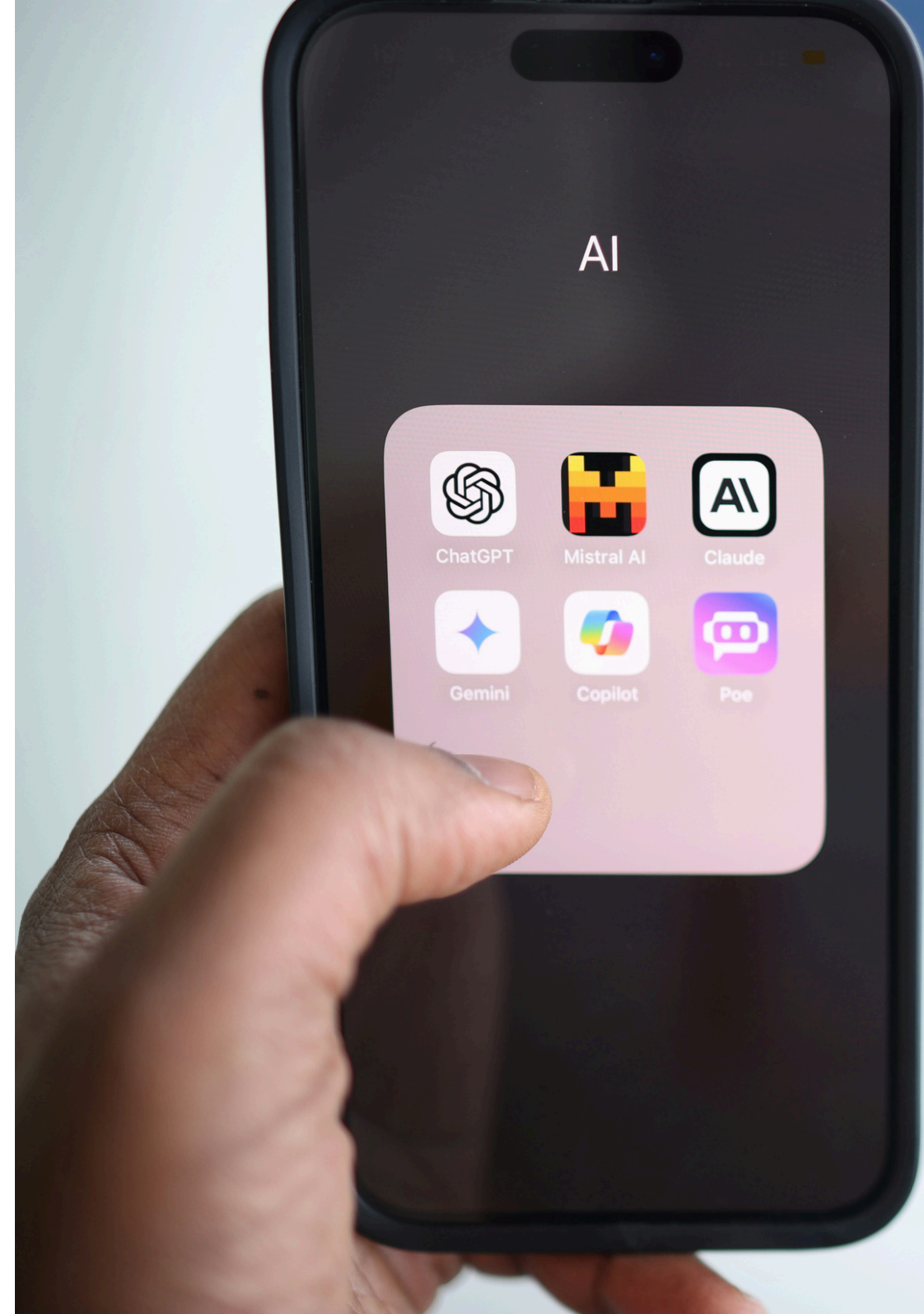
Ask:

- What's genuinely automated and what's just assisted?
- Where does a human still need to sanity check?
- What happens when the AI is wrong?
- How easy is it to override?

In eSourcing terms, a good test is asking the tool to summarise supplier responses, flag key differences, and propose an evaluation structure using ugly, real-world data. If it falls apart outside a polished demo, you've got your answer.

Treat AI as a bonus, not the reason to buy. Most organisations don't buy software. They buy demos. And that's one of the biggest reasons Procuretech disappoints.

Demos are theatre. They're meant to impress. Instead, validate reality. Use your workflows. Use your data. Get your users involved.





Demos Can Mislead. Validate Reality.

Vendor demos are designed to show idealised workflows, perfect data, and expert users operating in controlled environments. They are useful for orientation, but they are a poor basis for final selection decisions. To increase decision quality, validation must focus on how the solution performs in your reality, not the vendor's.

Validation should include:

- End-to-end workflows
- Integration quality and data flow reliability
- Realistic, messy data scenarios
- Usability for average users
- Evidence of adoption in organisations similar to yours

Particularly with larger vendors, capability breadth can hide complexity. Validation must therefore prioritise simplicity, reliability, and usability over feature depth.

The objective is to move from:

“Show me what your product can do” to: “Prove this will work for us.”

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Readiness & self-disqualification

Not every organisation is ready to buy procuretech. Buying too early creates just as many failures as buying the wrong tool. Leaders should explicitly pause if any of the following are true:

- The core problem is not clearly defined
- Post-go-live ownership is unclear
- There is no capacity to change behaviours
- The primary driver is pressure rather than need

If two or more apply, pause the selection process. I know this feels hard to do but remember what I said earlier about sunk cost fallacy. Time spent pausing the decision now could save you so much pain further down the line.

Use this time to clarify the problem, align ownership, and confirm internal capacity. Proceeding without this foundation materially increases the risk of low adoption and poor outcomes.

Not ready does not mean never. It means not yet.

To see where the main inefficiencies are within your sourcing process - take the [Procurement Efficiency Check](#).

1. Pre-go-to-market: Get internally aligned before speaking to vendors

- Clearly define the 1-2 mission-critical outcomes you must achieve (use eSourcing examples where helpful).
- Be explicit about current maturity, data readiness, internal capacity, and ownership post-go-live.
- Establish non-negotiables and guardrails to prevent scope creep before vendors enter the picture.

2. RFI / RFP: Signal seriousness and filter early

- Use the RFI/RFP to validate fit, not to collect marketing responses.
- Focus questions on how providers solve your specific problems today - not their full roadmap.
- Look for clarity, honesty, and restraint rather than breadth and buzzwords.

3. Post-RFP shortlisting: Narrow to true contenders

- Aggressively reduce to a small shortlist of providers who clearly fit your needs and maturity.
- Be willing to deselect providers who overcomplicate, overpromise, or avoid hard questions the deal.

4. Validation and testing: Go beyond demos

- Test the system using realistic, messy scenarios and real workflows (especially for eSourcing).
- Validate end-to-end processes, native integration points, and usability - not just isolated features.

5. Provider interrogation: Pressure-test the partnership

- Use face-to-face or live sessions to deeply question implementation approach, post-go-live success, and adoption management.
- Ask where they are not a good fit and what must be true internally for success.
- Assess whether the provider is trying to qualify you as a customer - not just close the deal.

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The next step: Measure Your Procurement Efficiency & Tech Fit

Benchmark Your Procurement Efficiency

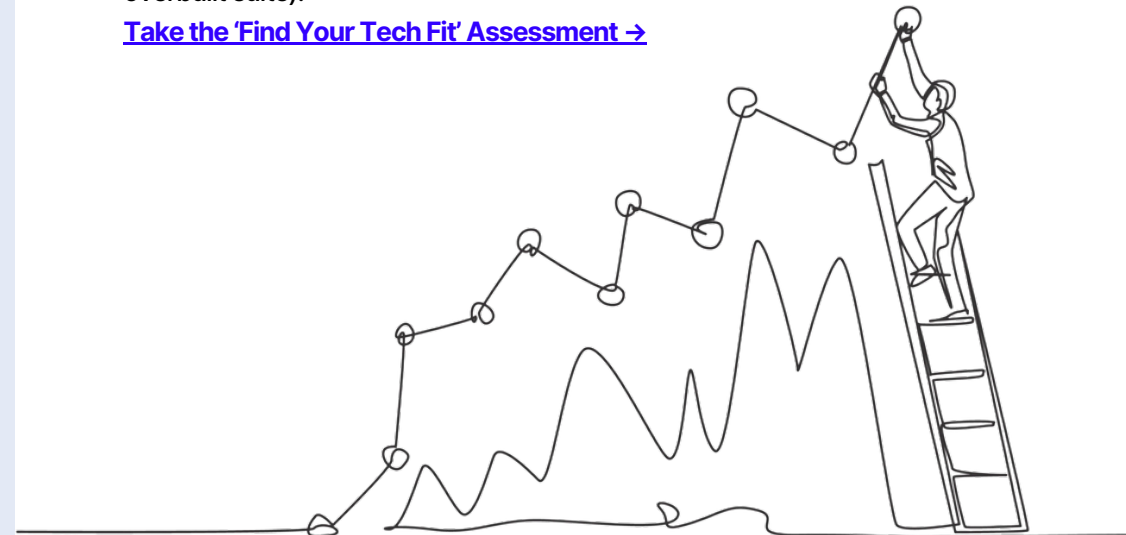
Get a clear view of how efficient your procurement function really is - and where time is being lost today. The Procurement Efficiency Check helps you map how long each stage currently takes, then shows the potential time savings an AI-augmented eSourcing platform could deliver per RFP and per quarter.

[Take the Procurement Efficiency Check →](#)

Find the Right Tech for Your Maturity Stage

Not sure what you actually need versus what's just "nice to have"? The 'Find Your Tech Fit' Assessment is a short questionnaire that benchmarks your current tech landscape and recommends the next best step based on your procurement maturity - so you choose tools that fit now (not an overbuilt suite).

[Take the 'Find Your Tech Fit' Assessment →](#)



Tech that FITS - Less BS, more DS.

DeepStream delivers best-of-breed AI-enhanced eRFx software with supporting source-to-contract modules. Our tech delivers the essential features that empower procurement teams to mature, step by step, without risking digital overwhelm. We prioritise usability, ensuring our solution is the simplest, cleanest, and most user-friendly in the industry, bolstered by our strategic customer success function.

To learn more about our best-of-breed eSourcing platform,
[reach out to our team of experts today.](#)

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eSourcing Tech: Engineered To Fit

Find out more at deep.stream

