

PURCHASING REVOLUTION

Efficient purchasing at independent and international schools should be a smooth, frictionless process for budget holders and bursars. The ability to benefit from the collective size of the sector should be a given, and the opportunity to make collaborative purchases with other schools to enhance this buying power should also be a simple process. Matt Roper explains how all this is possible, and how schools can

easily make significant savings

We know that multi-national companies enjoy the best value thanks to their buying power and attractiveness to the supply chains in which they operate. They can afford to recruit and retain the highest calibre procurement professionals and they have access to the very best technology which speeds up supply chain transactions and provides procurement teams with more intelligent data with which to make sourcing decisions.

Independent schools struggle to achieve these efficiencies as their buying power is much smaller and their information systems are often not fully integrated. This makes them more vulnerable to aggressive supplier tactics and less able to make quick decisions in response to increasingly changeable supply markets. Add to this the current economic and political uncertainty (such as Brexit and currency fluctuations) and the resulting supply chain risks to schools are increased.

Creating a level playing field

The Buying Support Agency formed in 2002 in response to the challenge of delivering scale purchasing benefits to smaller organisations.

Our mission has been “to create amazing value for clients and society through the power of supply chains.”

BSA and the team at the Independent Schools Portal are determined to redress the balance in favour of independent schools and we have developed three support services which can be selected by school bursars either separately or as a combined package – BSA Buying Group, collaborative procurement outsourcing, and skills training. We can even help schools to procure more sustainably thanks to our sister division, GreenBuying.co.uk.

The breadth of options available makes BSA unique in the marketplace and ideally positioned to allow schools freedom and flexibility to make the most of opportunities, in ways that work for them.

Opportunity 1: Joining the Buying Support Group

Joining the buying support group gives schools access to approximately 18 cost categories where we have developed supplier frameworks and leveraged significant buying power thanks to our many hundreds (and growing) of clients who benefit from the Buying Group every month.

Average cost savings are 15-35% though we have achieved up to 58% cost reduction.

All we need to need, once your school has joined, is some recent copy invoices and contract expiry details.

We'll then go and seek out improved suppliers with keener prices through our tendering approach and bring back transparent savings reports to your school. There is no obligation to trade with the suppliers we introduce and as a bonus, all schools which come to us via Independent Schools Portal gain full access to BSA Buying Group completely free of charge – a saving of £1,068 plus VAT every year.

We charge the suppliers a small fee for the privilege of their being on our supplier frameworks, so we don't seek fees from your school.

However, BSA Buying Group is a short to medium term benefit, as we don't monitor prices or supplier service over time – that's down to your school to manage. But we will of course seek feedback from your school to maintain pressure on the suppliers to maintain high levels of value over time.

Opportunity 2: Collaborative procurement outsource

We believe that the bigger opportunity to make serious dents in your operating costs is through our collaborative procurement outsource. Research tells us that there remain a significant number of independent schools who have yet to collaborate with other independent schools in their region to benefit from shared intelligence, resources and economies of scale. We know that one major reason for this is that individual school bursars lack the time needed to do collaborative procurement justice. It does take considerable energy to bring together all requirements from several schools, analyse spend and to develop multi-site tenders, quite apart from monitoring supplier performance across many sites.

That's where BSA can assist. We can provide a highly experienced procurement professional to facilitate the cluster of schools, pool together the scoping brief, the tenders, the evaluation of bids, the contracts and the post contract performance monitoring. And the great thing about this approach is that each school in the cluster benefits from this extra highly experienced resource without having to pay the full amount as every school pays a small contribution every month.

Opportunity 3: Best practice procurement and negotiation training

For those schools who wish to improve the knowledge of their bursars and their teams, we offer in-house best practice procurement and effective negotiation training. Our training courses which we've run successfully over the last 15 years can be delivered either individually to one school or to a cluster of schools. Because we charge the same fee regardless of the number of delegates, the cluster approach will be more cost effective for the participating schools.

Sustainable purchasing with www.greenbuying.co.uk

A 'eco buying' option is also available within BSA Buying Group

Schools love GreenBuying.co.uk. It's the primary online source of genuinely eco-friendly school suppliers and services, and showcases the "Best of British" manufacturers. If you want to purchase competitively priced recycling bins, outdoor playground equipment & benches, non-toxic cleaning supplies, eco stationery – even 100% renewable energy and 100% green gas, we're the one-stop "eco" shop.

With school budgets being tight, we want to dispel the myth that going green is a luxury. To reinforce this, we offer 10% off all products for sale on the website for schools who quote the 'ISP' code. And you don't have to pay by credit/debit card, we also offer 30-day payment terms for schools so you can email us a purchase order if you prefer.

For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/PortalPurchasing>

MATT ROPER AND BSA

Buying Support Agency (BSA) are delighted to be supporting the Independent Schools Portal in providing independent schools with procurement support. Since our incorporation in 2002 we've focused on helping our clients to drive out costs, boost supply chain efficiencies, mitigated risks of supply failure and tightening up governance around procurement.



Founder and CEO of Buying Support Agency Ltd, Matt has spent the last twenty years advising private, public and charity sector clients in best practice procurement. Clients are typically small or medium in size but have also included high profile larger clients such as PwC, Unilever, Babcock Group, the Police, Councils, Higher and Further Educational establishments, social housing, the National Audit Office, various Non-Departmental Public Bodies and schools.

Matt has been a guest speaker at several Procurement conferences and delivered purchasing training courses to business owner/managers, including at the High Growth Business Centre at Cranfield University School of Management.

With a personal passion for all things 'eco', Matt also runs a Sustainable Schools Programme, introducing the theme of sustainability at school assemblies and workshops. He wants the next generation of consumers to challenge supply chains into becoming more sustainable and ethical.

He can be contacted by emailing mproper@buyingsupport.co.uk

