

Q&A: How AI-powered automation is advancing government procurement

Introduction

Public sector procurement is a demanding process, shaped by compliance and efficiency pressures. Yet, many teams are slowed down by paper-heavy processes and legacy systems, with critical information buried across disconnected documents.

This 'dark data' – trapped in unstructured content – is out of reach to AI agents, workflows and teams responsible for managing procurement processes. As a result, miscommunication arises, compliance risks quickly surface and ultimately processes break down.

So, how can you advance a process previously burdened by bottlenecks to one that's streamlining procurement cycles?

For over 40 years, the public sector has put their trust in Tungsten to transform their critical government processes. Recognized by analysts as a leader in Intelligent Document Processing (IDP), we help governments turn documents into AI-ready insights to streamline, simplify, and reduce wasted resources across procurement workflows.

In this Q&A session, John and Alec explore the steps to procurement success with advanced document and workflow automation.



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What are some of the core issues slowing down government procurement?

Alec Wyhs: First, there are a lot of processes just to serve processes in the DOD these days, and an overall need to trim the fat in government procurement. We also need a better understanding of the needs of the government for our vendors. Whether there are breakdowns because of vendors not listening or the government not conveying the message in a digestible manner, the reality is something like 20% of bids submitted to government requests are noncompliant bids.

A lot of the time that's not because they don't have the right tools to help the government, it's because there's a disconnect between what the government needs and what the vendor community and the private sector think that they need. Finding ways to eliminate that 20% is going to help speed up a lot of the processes including making sure that the government's getting what it needs faster.

John Beglan: We also often see inconsistent data and reporting. Maybe something wrong fell into the code originally and that spawns a whole series of corrections that further delay the turnaround time. There is a lot of opportunity to automate what is automatable, using artificial intelligence, to help really take on and improve some of the currently manual responsibilities.

The time is ripe to do that now – doing compliance checks, adding self-auditing in the process, that's something that we can do right away. And agencies can measure these successes in stages. We don't have to boil the ocean here. We can implement these measurable solutions to reduce cycle time first, focus on that, and then move on to how do we reduce error rates and enhance compliance?





Government leaders are closely focused on performance-based metrics for success. What sort of measurable outcomes might agencies expect from implementing more automation in procurement?

Beglan: From what we've seen in our studies, there's an opportunity to put in about a 30 to 40% reduction just in contract execution time. The current time, right now in the current state, is over 30 days. We believe we can get that well under, to 10 days or less. Automation can also help reduce cost per purchase order. And in the flow itself, there are often bottlenecks in the approval process. If someone who needs to approve is on PTO or unavailable, often something can just sit on their desk instead of moving forward. Instead, we can automate approval processes at scale, help move these decisions further along on their own, and have any exception handling be the part that's really where the human is involved.



As the General Services Administration (GSA) works to create a "new end-to-end integrated and highly efficient procurement ecosystem," a major focus of that effort is integration and interoperability among tools and solutions. How can Tungsten support these efforts?

Beglan: One of our greatest attributes is interoperability. The entire product set, and specifically our TotalAgility® solution, is predicated on the fact that it is adaptable to every legacy environment out there, and we have an entire marketplace devoted to building connectors for the TotalAgility platform. If you are an Oracle user, we work with it. If you're an SAP user, we work with that. If you're a Salesforce user, we work with that, too.

All of this means that you can use TotalAgility as a single-pane-of-glass platform to do the hard work that you need to do by bringing in the data, and then let it go at rest somewhere else. But we do it all, with AI, under the single platform – whether it's on prem or in the cloud.

And of course, if the data is not digital, we also can help with the capture piece of that. We realize a lot of paperwork is still flying around out there, so we help with the ingestion, the categorization of that data, accurately validating the data and its authenticity, and validating that any touch points are authorized as well. Then we bring that data to a point where insights can be made so that decisions can be drawn from it quickly. That increase in velocity of decision-making is really at the heart of AI within our platform.



How do you envision advancing AI continuing to impact the evolving procurement landscape over the next year or so?

Alec Wyhs: For one, I hope that the government will be in a better place to really see and analyze where spends are occurring more accurately and more rapidly, so they can make decisions more quickly. This is especially critical as many agencies have seen significant workforce changes, including reduced staffing. Solutions like TotalAgility can help support overburdened staff and sustain increased levels of transactions amid this workforce transformation.

Ultimately, agencies and the public will all benefit from the fact that we now have the technology to help accelerate the transactions that need to take place for mission-critical programs. We want to have a part in that and help accelerate the government's ability to transact with the private sector.

John Beglan: Technology has continued to accelerate at an exponential pace, and we've struggled more and more with the gap between where we are and where we need to be. The kind of AI capabilities and end-to-end automation that Tungsten can bring to the table are key to us being able to close the gap. And this administration is teeing itself up to be able to take that leap.

Look at OneGov, for instance, and some of these other creative procurement strategies they're considering – possibly consolidating contract vehicles down, streamlining everything through GSA. There are pros and cons, but one thing it would do for sure is simplify things. That would absolutely present a really good opportunity, through simplified acquisition, to start introducing some of this automation and these functionalities that are going to increase the speed of the procurement process, buying cycles, and the operational efficiency of our government.



Put your trust in Tungsten Automation

With 40+ years' experience serving the public sector and chosen by 25,000+ customers, Tungsten uses market-leading IDP and responsible AI to streamline legacy procurement workflows, reduce backlogs, and strengthen compliance.

Discover how together, we can modernize your procurement processes.

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