

Fabrizio Santini

In the last almost two years, the global economic situation has been literally upset by the pandemic created by Covid-19, highlighting the importance of the purchasing process and the procurement function, which were the crucial points to enable a structured business continuity plan.

The Procurement managers have increasingly felt the need to confront each other to find new methods to deal with new and unexpected market situations. For this reason, ADACI has organized continuous opportunities for discussion, often carried out in webinar mode, such as the CPO Lounge Community and the Negotiorum Fucina. In addition, the search for different, new and innovative solutions has led to the search for collaboration with university professors who are engaged in scientific research in various fields and, thus, analyse corporate paradigms of strategic behaviour in the management of supply chains from different perspectives.

The Magister conference organized in collaboration and during the SIMA conference on 7/9/20 was indeed a meeting point between university culture and business managers in the framework of the ADACI SMART project.

For more than 30 years, researchers, managers and consultants have discussed and pleaded the need for a transition from the traditional vision of the purchasing function - considered a pure cost centre with mainly administrative responsibilities - towards a strategic approach to supply chain management, a real opportunity for the redefinition of entire intra-company relationships (e.g. between the company and its suppliers).

However, most businesses still underestimate and do not optimize this feature to the best of their ability.

Nonetheless, the debate between industry and academia has so far developed on often parallel tracks, only occasionally offering opportunities for exchange, debate and critical confrontation.

In a rapidly evolving context in which early adopter companies apply and pass on winning models to other organizations, the question remains why so many organizations have not been able to evolve their strategies in this framework. Albeit in light of the rapid changes in the competitive context there is increasing attention to the practices applied by companies considered “best-in-class”, an element that would suggest widespread confidence in the possibility of replicating winning models in different application contexts, the question remains why many organizations have not been able to evolve their skills and competency management strategies in this area and why relations between companies and universities do not always have achieved the desired results.

The procurement process, if interpreted no longer only as a control valve for the optimal flow of goods and services but also as an opportunity

for integration between the various functions of the company, for the distribution of organizational value and the development of collaborations with suppliers, can therefore truly guide the identification of a strategic direction for the company and support the most appropriate business decisions.

“The ADACI SMART project aims to become a useful cultural reference for those researchers, managers and consultants who want to rigorously investigate the new evolutionary perspectives for the world of purchases. Therefore, the recipients are scholars, academic and non-academic, of business management, organizational sciences, management engineering, economics, and, more generally”.

In times of scarce resources, efficiency is a crucial matter. This concerns material flows in production processes and time, money, creativity, and other intangible resources that might lead to progress in the relationship between academia and industry.

The search for such efficiency has been the guiding force behind the organization of the ADACI's (Associazione Italiana Acquisti e Supply Management) SMART (Supply Management Academic Research Table) conference, held in Livorno on 8th November 2019 and in Pisa on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020. These conferences introduced a new format of collaboration between practitioners and scholars aimed at enhancing synergies between supply chain managers, who can provide access to relevant research environments and the benefits of privileged access to scientific stimuli, and researchers, who can apply scientific methods to solve urgent problems and are constantly challenged to advance their research and teaching performance.

Such collaboration contributes to exploring the practical and theoretical aspects of supply chain management from an inter-and trans-disciplinary perspective.

ADACI can and must be the organization that stimulates and supports this organic project.

The format consists of a two-year cycle with periodical meetings among practitioners supervised by a Scientific Committee that stimulate collaboration between companies and academia and prepare the grounds for a bottom-up definition of the key topics to be discussed during the final conference. The SMART conference follows a call for papers and a peer-review process where contributions are selected based on their scientific and practical relevance, which is a prerequisite for enabling synergies among the conference attendees. The best contributions are then divided into thematic panels where both practitioners and researchers act as discussants to ensure the necessary interaction and stimuli for improvement within a lively and dynamic environment.

What is the future of the ADACI Smart project? Only grow more.

ADACI will organize new cultural and professional events at an international level, including new call for papers, to involve European universities and beyond. The World Summit of the IFPSM (International Federation Purchasing Supply Management) will be held in Florence on

22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> September 2023. Grounding on the experience developed in the framework of the SIMA Conference, this will be just the first opportunity to organize further discussion sessions between researchers and practitioners in the ADACI Magister to explore new professional challenges and frontiers.

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Introduction

## Academic or professional position and contacts

**Fabrizio Santini**  
National President ADACI  
e-mail: [fabrizio.santini@adaci.it](mailto:fabrizio.santini@adaci.it)



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