



What's ahead for procurement in 2026: A private equity perspective

As we move into 2026, procurement's role in private equity-owned portfolio companies is continuing to evolve from cost management to sustained value creation. Longer hold periods, persistent inflationary pressures, and the rising influence of artificial intelligence are reshaping what success looks like for operating partners and their portfolio teams.

The shift from 100-day plans to long-term value creation

The familiar 100-day plan is stretching into a multi-year value creation journey. Rather than focusing solely on discovery and assessment, procurement roadmaps will prioritise execution readiness and rapid enablement. For operating partners, the challenge will be keeping up momentum while ensuring procurement continues to deliver tangible improvements in EBITDA and cash generation over time.

AI as the procurement multiplier

Artificial intelligence will become the new differentiator among leading PE firms. Procurement teams that harness AI for spend transparency, supplier risk management, and contract benchmarking will unlock new levers of efficiency. The most successful teams will deliver higher savings from more data-driven procurement. Yet, scaling AI across a portfolio remains difficult. The real differentiator for operating partners will be how effectively they embed AI into company operating models, ensuring management teams fund and prioritise digital initiatives rather than relegating them behind revenue projects.

At the same time, AI is transforming procurement team design – allowing leaner, more hybrid models where automation handles transactional work and humans focus on insight generation. Operating models will become more flexible and leverage third-party support much more to enable their leaner teams to achieve more. The specialist-generalist debate will shift again, as technology enables procurement professionals to operate effectively across categories.

Balancing cost, resilience, and focus

In 2026, cash generation and cost discipline will continue to dominate boardroom agendas as the high cost of capital persists. Yet Procurement's mandate will extend beyond cost-cutting toward building resilient and diversified supply chains, especially in response to ongoing trade and tariff uncertainties.

While environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives remain on the radar, investor focus is shifting back to performance and value creation. Procurement will need to deliver measurable impact faster, with AI removing "poor data" as a perennial excuse for limited insight.

What this means for operating partners

Operating partners will play a more hands-on role in ensuring procurement and digital programs receive sustained management attention and investment. Procurement due diligence will occur earlier and more frequently, validating value creation levers upfront and helping firms demonstrate stronger procurement-driven value at exit.

In short, 2026 will reward those who treat procurement not as a back-office function but as a strategic engine of cash, resilience, and competitive advantage across the portfolio.

Seize the procurement opportunity in 2026

At Efficio, we have significant experience working with both PE firms and portfolio companies, unlocking value through procurement. Find out how we can support your goals via our Private Equity service page.

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Efficio is a global leader in procurement and supply chain management and transformation. With a singular focus in this space, we specialise in supporting businesses to get ahead of change – combining strategic insight with hands-on support to help you navigate challenges with confidence. Whether it's adapting to cost pressures, supply chain disruptions, or regulatory shifts, our expertise ensures that organisations remain ahead of the curve.

We partner with blue-chip multinationals, private equity firms and their portfolio companies, and public sector and government organisations worldwide. We help reduce costs and improve margins, build and upskill teams, strengthen supply chain resilience, maximise sustainability improvements, and more.

Our consultants don't just advise from a distance – we work alongside your in-house team to identify, deliver, and sustain improvements, helping you unlock long-term value and elevate procurement's impact across the business.

Learn more about how we can help you achieve your business goals at [efficioconsulting.com](https://www.efficioconsulting.com).

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