

DOES THE PERSONAL NATURE OF INDUSTRIAL BUYERS MATTER? KEY FINDINGS OF AN INVESTIGATION IN TECHNOLOGY-ORIENTED FIRMS

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Abstract: *Globalization and rapidly changing manufacturing processes are constantly challenging procurement departments in industrial firms in technology-oriented environments. As the complexity of the purchased goods and services in technology-firms is high the procurement departments play a key role when the overall operational efficiency and effectiveness has to be improved. Hence, the field of activity of each individual buyer in procurement departments range from e. g. building sustainable buyer-supplier relationships to awarding contracts to low-cost suppliers. Especially for technology-oriented industrial firms with an above-average real net output ratio which are acting in global markets the competitiveness depends strongly on their ability to source raw material, technological goods as well as industrial services in order to build and establish the best value-adding supply chains. Thus, the success is determined by the individual performance of professional buyers within the organizational buying process who are typically integrated in buying centers of procurement departments of industrial firms. Recent literature indicates that the individual performance of industrial buyers in technology-oriented settings is beside technical and methodical knowledge strongly influenced by their personal nature. For this reason many personality researchers focus their interests on the structure and concepts of a “professional nature”. Scholars agree on the fact that there are different factors specifying the nature of a person that may serve as meaningful determinates for classifying characteristics of personalities in professional environments. Consequently, more and more human resource managers and executives in today’s industrial firms rely on employee personality analysis to support the employee selection process and to optimize the resource allocation of the internal workforce. In front of this background and in the context of the procurement function of technology firms this contribution aims at reporting the key findings of personality characteristics of industrial buyers. Based on an adapted model built from existing scales and conceptual works of the “Big Five Inventory” a survey study was performed. The sample was drawn from the member data base of the “Austrian Federation of Materials Management, Purchasing and Logistics” on a cross industry basis. Data analysis was done by means of confirmatory factor analysis. The presented result – which is a small portion of a larg research project at Graz University of Technology – indicate that a dominant key characteristic of the professional nature of industrial buyers in technology-oriented environments is “conscientiousness”. This piece of research may contribute to management literature in the field of human resources management by indicating that paying particular attention to “conscientiousness” could help to hire the “right nature” of buyers in industrial firms. The findings may also be useful in practice to design individual education and training programmes for buyers in corporate purchasing departments.*

Keywords: *Human Resource Management, Industrial Buyers, Technology-oriented Firms.*

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