

# Procurement Block S1E5 Kevin Jackson

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

digitalization, business, customers, small businesses, digital transformation, people, technology, services, procurement, restaurant, digital, kevin, relationships, interact, spy satellite, network, processes, building, waitstaff, business partners

## SPEAKERS

April Harrison, Kevin Jackson

### April Harrison 00:03

Welcome to Procurement Block, a podcast all about digital transformation in procurement and supply chain and how blockchain, risk management, and change management all factor in. I'm your host April Harrison, Marketing Director for Trust Your Supplier. I'm a procurement novice eager to learn more from the people who are at the forefront of procurement innovation. On today's episode, I am being schooled by Kevin Jackson. With over 200,000 followers on social media, Kevin Jackson provides consulting and digital media services to leading technology companies, including Microsoft, AT&T, Intel, Ericsson and IBM. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Tulane University. His executive experience includes Vice President of JP Morgan Chase, IBM World Services sales executive, and SAIC (Engility) Director of Cloud Solutions. Kevin's education includes an MS in Computer Engineering, an MA in Strategic Studies, and a BS in Aerospace Engineering. Kevin is also a USA today and Wall Street Journal bestselling author whose books include "Click to Transform" and "Architecting Cloud Computing Solutions". Join us as Kevin and I discuss digital transformation for small businesses. Learn why it's important for small businesses to make this investment, what pitfalls to avoid, and the future of ordering food from a restaurant. Bon appetit. Kevin, welcome to the podcast.

### Kevin Jackson 01:35

Well, hi, April, thank you very much for inviting me. This has been on my calendar for a few

weeks now. And I've been excited to be with you on this. This is a new podcast for you, right?

A

April Harrison 01:46

It is it is I'm excited about the project, but also about speaking with you because I always have a good time when I'm talking with you.

K

Kevin Jackson 01:54

Mutual mutual. I mean, we've been we've been working together for I guess almost a year now. And it's it's been great.

A

April Harrison 02:02

Yeah, and you're such an interesting person. And I've given our listeners a little bit of your bio, but can you tell us a little bit more about yourself?

K

Kevin Jackson 02:10

Oh, well, um, yeah. Many people may not know that. I actually worked on the New Horizons spacecraft. And when it went to Pluto and took the picture of the heart.

A

April Harrison 02:24

Really?

K

Kevin Jackson 02:25

Yeah. I was in the Navy. And I worked in the Navy Space Technology program on spy satellites to be to be honest. But when I retired, I worked on a payload spacecraft payload processing project by NASA, where we were developed a wireless system that used a heads up display and a wearable computer to manage the processes and keep track of all the processes and steps needed to process payloads on the shuttle. And it was also used for the New Horizons spacecraft on the Atlas Launch. And that was that was pretty interesting, sort of a early look at digitalization. I know we're going to talk a lot about that.

A

April Harrison 03:23

Wow, spy satellite. So you're a real life James Bond.?

**K** Kevin Jackson 03:29  
Stay behind the curtain, you know.

**A** April Harrison 03:33  
After that information, it seems a little silly to ask you this. But if you've had one superpower, what would it be? And I think you've already...

**K** Kevin Jackson 03:42  
You know, one of the things I always talk about is the rapidity of change. One reason that business is so hard today is because it's not it's not stagnant. Years ago, 50s/60s, business, the world, changed relatively slowly. And you know, you would have people executives in a company that did the same thing the same way for 10, 15, 20 years. And everything would be great. Because the business models didn't need to change. The audience didn't need to change the the products and services that will be delivered, didn't change. And you know, if it ain't broke, don't fix it became really the mantra. But in today's world, change is rapid over the 70s 80s 90s. And today you see change every day. And as a business, you have to recognize the changes in your customers and their wants and their needs. And a lot of this is because of the expansion of communication. Back in the day, you know, You didn't really care about what was happening in another country, or, and your television set was just about what was happening in your local area or in your state, you barely noticed what was happening in the country. Now. I mean, we had three television stations and no, the nightly news, Walter Cronkite, I'm giving off my age, but we interact internationally, constantly over the internet, over social media, we can publish things to the world at zero cost. So we are learning more. And that means change is is accelerating. And this change is good. But it's hard to keep up with. So if I had a superpower, it would be to be able to stop time. So that I could catch up to all occurring around my life and around business.

**A** April Harrison 06:04  
I'm with you there I have two teenagers and their generation is considered digital natives. Yeah. And they laugh at me, because some of the things that they watch or show me it's it overstimulates me, you know, I'm like, wait, slow down, slow down, I can't absorb. That would be a really nice one. Kevin, not only am I a procurement novice, but I'm also lacking in knowledge about the needs of small businesses. So I need you to school me a bit on digital transformation within a small business. And let me start with a foundational question, what is digital transformation.

K

Kevin Jackson 06:40

So I see digital transformation. And the reimagining of business in the digital age. And it's really a broad view. And it's, it's really about thinking about the needs of society, the needs of an individual, and you as a business, how you fit in this changing society. So So digital transformation really requires the overhaul of your internal processes, your operations, and fundamentally your customer relationships, as well as your employee relationships. So it's processes and relationships with people. But you have to keep in mind that these relationships, these interactions, now, more and more virtual, so it's not face to face, you can't shake the hand. It's you know, device to device,

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April Harrison 07:51

You've just put a couple of puzzle pieces together for me, because when I see the words digital transformation, I immediately think technology, but you've just laid out how it's really about the relationships, whether it's with customers or employees. And it seems like then the way to connect is more digital now.

K

Kevin Jackson 08:11

Yes, that's really it. That's it. Digitalization is about relationships. It's about people. It's being able to initiate dialogue, continuous dialogue with the people that are important to you and to your business,

A

April Harrison 08:34

Given that most tools are built for enterprises, is digital transformation reachable for small businesses.

K

Kevin Jackson 08:42

Oh, absolutely. Because digitalization is not about technology. It's really about your processes. Understanding who your customers are, what they need, understanding the context, that they are interacting with you within you need to really address the channels that you're interacting with, with your customers and employees, how to make it easy, easier for them to identify the products and services that you have and to place them within context of their needs. Because we're transitioning from Well, not transitioning from but we're augmenting our physical world with the virtual world. There will be some technology that needs needs to be used and leverage. But it's the technology of everyday life. It's the it's the smartphone, right. It's the it's the internet. It's about interfaces to these

mostly and mostly free capabilities. I mean, you don't need to pay To use Twitter, but it's a it's a perfect, one of the best conduits for interaction out there.

A

April Harrison 10:10

So social media, those types of things are what we're looking at in terms of, quote, Technology?

K

Kevin Jackson 10:17

Right. It's the services, some of these Technology Services is not buying or or building your IT infrastructure. In fact, that's the worst way to do it. You want to leverage cloud services, you need to the way of consuming information technology today is through consuming IT services, not building your own data center.

A

April Harrison 10:48

Gotcha. So with some of those relationships, like to employees, or to customers, what does that look like?

K

Kevin Jackson 10:56

So this is, that's a great question, because everyone always thinks about their customer. But what's more important is to make it easy for your employee to interact, and deliver services to the customer, from wherever they are. Over the past year, we've all experienced the big migration from offices to home, right? Being able to interact with customers from home? What are your internal operational processes that allow your employees to easily address your customer needs and requirements? What are your internal business processes that manage the data and information that flow from your customer, to your employee? And to your business partners in your broader ecosystem? How do you protect that data? What about privacy? How are you transmitting that data, the channels that you're using? All of this is digitalization,

A

April Harrison 12:17

I was thinking when you were talking about that about how you know the the migration to home. I was thinking about in particular, restaurants and how they had to quickly adjust and start offering takeout. Yeah, I'm imagining there was a lot of process and relationship changes to to get customers and their employees used to that new way of doing business.

K

Kevin Jackson 12:42

That's a great example. Because when you think about small business, a restaurant, you know, sort of is the epitome of small business, right? And when COVID happened, restaurants really had to do a hard shift from on premise, supportive customers to delivery and takeout. So So think about the channels they had had to absorb, how can my customer order food or with a smartphone that, you know, they're not going to be sitting in my restaurant and looking at a physical menu anymore? So I got to think about the app, the apps. Okay, what do I put on the menu? I may need to have different items. How do I design the menu so that it's easier to interact with? What type of phone? Well, my customers had? Do they have? You know, iPhones? Do they have androids? I mean, what about the internet and bandwidth? Everyone doesn't have brought broadband. So all of these things, is really thinking through digitalization, right. How do you order? How do you take the money to use credit cards, you can't put cash in the smartphone. But and it's really easy to look at delivery and takeout, right? But restaurants also leverage digital to provide better service to on premise diners. I remember and I saw it more overseas and but now it's really becoming prevalent in the United States. Also, if you any edit airport, and you go to a restaurant at the airport, there's all the tablets sitting on on the tables, and you sit at the table and you basically do a QR code scan of your ticket. So now you know What flight you're on, and you can order your meal right there from the table. You can pay for it by swiping your credit card. The first time you see a waitstaff is when they're delivering your drink, and deliver your food. Okay, so you do everything from your cable, what is that? It's digitalization, right. Yeah. provides better service to your on premise diners. It also helps to address many of the staffing challenges that these restaurants are having right now. And it also improves cleanliness, and safety. So digitalization has a lot of value through these small businesses.

A

April Harrison 15:56

Yeah, I never really thought about that helping with the staffing shortages. I think there were some other relationships that had to be developed, if we stick with the kind of the restaurant example is that there are now all these delivery services. Right? Right, people can go on and order and get the food delivered. So it's not just pizza, you can get any more you can pretty much get delivery from any restaurant you want.

K

Kevin Jackson 16:18

Absolutely. So the whole business ecosystem expand dramatically. Right? So how do you interact with, you know, the door dashes? A lot of Uber Eats, okay, it's digitally. So you have to have the channel, you have to have the communication, you have to have the ability to communicate with those extended business partners. So a small business has a

very broad ecosystem as well,

A

April Harrison 16:54

For those small businesses that are at the beginning of their digital transformation. What does that look like? Is it a big bang approach? Or is it more of a phased rollout?

K

Kevin Jackson 17:06

Well, it's definitely a phased rollout. Because your environment is different, your context is different. So what works well, for another company, small business or big, may not work for you, you know, your customers, you know, how they view and leverage your products and services. And so you need to think about your own, not just your internal processes, but your external processes, and what other business partners you may need, and how you will transition from your existing manually intensive activities to be to digital activities and digital interactions. And then do it step by step, every step you will learn more. And once again, change is constant. So if you do a big bang, two months from now on everything you put in place, may be obsolete.

A

April Harrison 18:18

Just like my phone right? Obsolete as soon as I take it out the box. With this digital transformation, is it even possible for a small business to not go through digital transformation at this point.

K

Kevin Jackson 18:33

So if you are not implementing a digital transformation for your organization, right now, you are basically committing suicide to your business. So yeah, it's necessary. It's not sufficient, but it's necessary.

A

April Harrison 18:54

And I'm sure that looks different depending on what industry you're in or what what your business provides, services. But in this day and age, something is necessary. It sounds like.

K

Kevin Jackson 19:06

Digitalization reduces the cost of delivering products and services. A lot of people are

scared because they think you need a lot of capital to buy the technology in order to digitize. But that's far from the truth. You don't. In today's modern world, you don't buy hardware and software, you need to try to avoid hiring, you know, people in staff to run that IT infrastructure, you consume it services, and it's on a pay as you go basis where you only use it when you need it when you're actually serving customers and getting revenue to cover the costs. So it reduces your cost. It also increases your profit margin.

A

April Harrison 20:03

Yeah, that's a good point. So it sounds like it's definitely cost effective. And even as you mentioned earlier, with the example of the waitstaff, right, I'm reducing your cost in that way as well.

K

Kevin Jackson 20:14

There's a lot a lot of when people say, well, you're replacing people with technology, in some ways you replace the old paths that people do with the technology, but then you free those people to do what people do best. And that's think, imagine, reimagine, and build those relationships. No, I'd rather have a person the check out in my restaurant interacting with my customers, then stuck in the back kitchen, you know, because they have to work back there.

A

April Harrison 21:00

I imagined to it's kind of like, at some point, the stagecoach driver was out of a job. But now we have taxi and Uber drivers.

K

Kevin Jackson 21:09

Right, right, exactly. You I mean, the skill sets will change, definitely. But you're not replacing people anytime soon.

A

April Harrison 21:20

So are there any pitfalls or other issues that small businesses need to consider or be aware of?

K

Kevin Jackson 21:27

Well the first thing is, don't be afraid. Fear is the greatest challenge overcoming the fear



of change, because it's required. But second, is, don't be fooled by the shiny objects. I mean, everyone's gonna come at you with all types of new tech this in a new way that.

A

April Harrison 21:50

Too many of those not only can add up cost wise, but then you can also spend a lot of your time managing those tools rather than working on your core competency. Right?

K

Kevin Jackson 22:01

Right. Absolutely. Yeah, you got it, you got it right. And you spend more time working on the tools, then actually leveraging and using the tools or and you don't get any value from.

A

April Harrison 22:12

So Kevin, for those of us new to procurement and digital transformation, do you have any advice or tips that you would be willing to share something practical that we could try at work or at home,

K

Kevin Jackson 22:25

Where only I've talked about the fact that digital transformation is really about relationships, it's about building and maintaining your relationships, augmenting your physical relationships with virtual relationships. The practical tip is your relationships form your network, and your network is the most valuable thing you have in in business. And digitalization actually is broadening your network, it's no longer just the people that you can interact with. Physically, you've broadmead the people that you may interact with physically every once in a while, but you can interact virtually on a daily basis. And it's even broader than that there are people that you will never physically interact with, but you can still interact with them on a daily basis. So the practical tip is to recognize the power of your network, and to build, cultivate and actively manage that network. Social media is one of the most powerful tool that you have in business and in your personal life.

A

April Harrison 23:50

Yeah, I would agree with that. That's good advice, as you said, not just professionally, but personally as well. Because there's all times we need a network behind us supporting us.

**K** Kevin Jackson 23:59  
You can't do anything alone. There's a whole, I mean, those that go at it alone, almost always fail. You have to rely on others.

**A** April Harrison 24:10  
Yeah, you know, my big takeaway, I think, from our conversation is despite the fact that we're in 2021, and we have all this technology, business still boils down to relationships.

**K** Kevin Jackson 24:24  
Yeah, people do business with people they like, and you like somebody based upon shared experiences. Now I'm in the old days, that shared experience had to had to be physical. But today, that's no longer the case. Think about COVID. It's the it's the first time that we had a global event that everyone experience in essentially the same way. And then we could discuss it in real time on a global basis. I mean, that's That's powerful. Powerful.

**A** April Harrison 25:02  
Yeah, it really is the same shared experience is, is very powerful. You're right. And thank goodness for technology that helped keep us connected through that. Right?

**K** Kevin Jackson 25:12  
Absolutely. Oh, and don't forget to technology that gave us the vaccines. Hallelujah.

**A** April Harrison 25:17  
Yes. Exactly. I feel like I also want to talk with you at some point more on that whole NASA and spy satellite. Since you've retired from that, what projects do you have on the horizon? And where can our audience find you to follow and connect?

**K** Kevin Jackson 25:39  
Actually, I'm working on a new project called Fund Black Tech, you know, the American dream of rags to riches stories, where now you come up with an idea, you go out and get money and you create this new business and become a multi billionaire, right? Yep. Well, brown and black Americans, sometimes even their greatest efforts are not proportionally reward, because they don't they don't have access to resources. That's that's one thing.

But you say, Well, a lot of people don't have access to resources. But it's also there is a sparsity of examples. There's a lack of generational wealth, that can help black and brown Americans realize their dreams. And from a societal point of view, many of them have had to focus on safety, as opposed to following their dreams. Absolutely. So there is a big scarcity of black and brown entrepreneurs in technology. And they have trillions of dollars that flow through banks that are invested in young white entrepreneurs. But this is contributing to a widening racial wealth gap. So in black and brown tech entrepreneurs, actually don't get the opportunity. One particularly jaw dropping statistic is that the United States, as a government has a program called the SBI, our small business inner made of research, and they give 10s of millions of dollars to a year to young startups with great ideas, just so they can figure out if that idea would would work, right. Less than 1%, less than one half of 1% of those funds go to black or brown entrepreneurs. Wow.

A April Harrison 27:56  
Wow, that's staggering. Wow.

K Kevin Jackson 27:59  
All right. There are ideas, ideas, don't know the color of your skin. So but investors do. So I'm we're looking to try to raise 100 million for black entrepreneurs. So Fund Black Tech, you'll see that coming. So you can catch me on twitter at Kevin underscore Jackson on LinkedIn, and my podcast, Digital Transformers through Supply Chain Now.

A April Harrison 28:31  
Thank you for sharing all of that information and for schooling me on digital transformation for small businesses. I've learned a lot and I definitely feel like I need to go now and reach out to somebody on my network just to say Hi. Thanks for the inspiration.

K Kevin Jackson 28:48  
It's all about the people. You know, don't forget that the people in your in your business.

A April Harrison 28:56  
Absolutely. Absolutely. Kevin, thank you again, and I hope to talk to you sometime soon.



Kevin Jackson 29:03

Thank you for your opportunity.



April Harrison 29:05

All right. Bye, Kevin. That's it for this episode of Procurement Block. I'd like to thank our guest, Kevin Jackson, for joining me on the show. Procurement Block is produced by Trust Your Supplier. You can reach us at [ProcurementBlock.com](https://ProcurementBlock.com). Show notes are available on our website and you can leave your questions and comments via the listener comment form. Thank you for learning with me today. I'll leave you with wise words from Benjamin Franklin, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest".