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# Chris Page

## Senior Procurement Category Manager

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**Royal  
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Advancing geography  
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**Job title:** Senior Procurement Category Manager  
in Digital Marketing and Media

**Organisation:** Aviva (Insurance)

**Location:** London, UK

### How did you get to where you are now?

I studied maths, physics, geography and chemistry at A Level so was always very analytical. I chose a physical geography degree at university, as I had a keen interest in it, and wanted to keep doors open from a career perspective. I went to Bristol and also had the opportunity to study abroad in France with ERASMUS, which was great. I ended up on a graduate scheme at Sky for Procurement – which is essentially a qualified buyer of specific goods or services – and buying everything from IT and broadcast equipment, customer equipment, HR and marketing services, software, TV production services... anything and everything! It's a great job and really varied, and you need a commercial interest. But you get to meet and support some senior people both internally and externally, and negotiate deals with suppliers.

After a few years at Sky, and some time in the banking industry, I now work in Procurement for

**W:** [www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals](http://www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals)

the Insurance company, Aviva, and cover IT Software and Marketing.

### Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

My graduate scheme was the best start to the career I could have needed, although difficult to get on, we rotated into different teams and did a professional qualification for Procurement (CIPS – Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply). I'd recommend getting as much experience as you can in internships or graduate schemes, no matter what career you are looking at. The year abroad I did with ERASMUS while at university was also brilliant it allowed me to get a new perspective, experience new cultures, learn about geography abroad, and gave me great experience when looking for a job!

### What do you do as part of your role?

Day to day, we manage a company's key suppliers, negotiate contracts and commercial deals, and can even get involved in budget setting or commercial decisions internally, so it's sort of a broad mix between finance, law and project management. We also run tenders, when someone needs a new service, getting suppliers to pitch for Aviva's money. Some of my colleagues also get involved in visiting and reviewing new or key suppliers in situ which can involve spending some time on the road.

### What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

You need to have commercial acumen, which is the most important part of the role. Being analytical helps with this too – and is a key part of a geography course or degree! You also need to be a strong negotiator when dealing with internal or external people or suppliers, and a good communicator as we present to people a lot (again, something key for a geographer)!



**How does geography feature in your work/ what difference does it make?**

To be fair, it doesn't a huge amount. But it set me up very well with a huge range of skills from experiments/analytics, report writing and IT skills, to critical thinking and presenting...

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I enjoy saving the company money – it's really satisfying when a project you work on makes a real difference in financial terms. It's very easy to quantify your impact at the end of a project or end of the year.

**What are the opportunities for career progression?**

Procurement is a huge and growing industry. Companies always need people in procurement to help them be more careful and considered when spending money. There is always a need for specialist buyers of certain services or experienced buyers (more generalist). You can work for pretty much any large company in the world in any industry (you just need to buy different things!).

**What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?**

If you are good with money (personally), enjoy negotiating, and have an interest in a commercial role, it's a good career to consider, and a potential alternative to a finance or law career that some may not immediately consider.

**Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?**

If you're not sure what you want to do for a career (at A Levels it's common!), then geography is great for giving you a huge range of skills and getting out and about to study, without committing you to a single career path. If you have a personal interest in it that's a bonus too!