

Purchasing 4.0 - The Digital Transformation of Purchasing - A Status Enquiry from Practice

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Abstract

The fourth industrial revolution, also known as Industry 4.0, shows that through new technologies such as robotics process automation (RPA) or artificial intelligence (AI) tasks, that were previously handled by humans, may be carried out by machines, robots and software. This leads to process changes that involve the entire company. Even though many experts are already talking about the digital transformation through Industry 4.0 in purchasing. The practice often looks quite different. In many companies purchasing is still far away from digitalisation. Despite the high importance, it is not yet sufficiently illuminated how the individual technologies can be used in the purchasing processes and which concrete benefits can result for the company.

This research paper shows what is meant by the term Purchasing 4.0, where it derives from and in what it differs from e-procurement. In this context, this paper clarifies whether companies already using Industry 4.0 technologies in purchasing or when they are investing in them and how purchasers see the importance of this technologies for procurement processes. Moreover, it will be shown which obstacles exist in connection with digitisation in purchasing in the companies. In order to collect this data, a survey was carried out with buyers from practice. The evaluation of the survey shows that there is still a great need for action among many companies and employees in the area of digital transformation in purchasing.

Keywords: Purchasing 4.0, e-procurement, digital transformation in purchasing, automation of purchasing processes, optimisation in purchasing, Industry 4.0, Modern Procurement