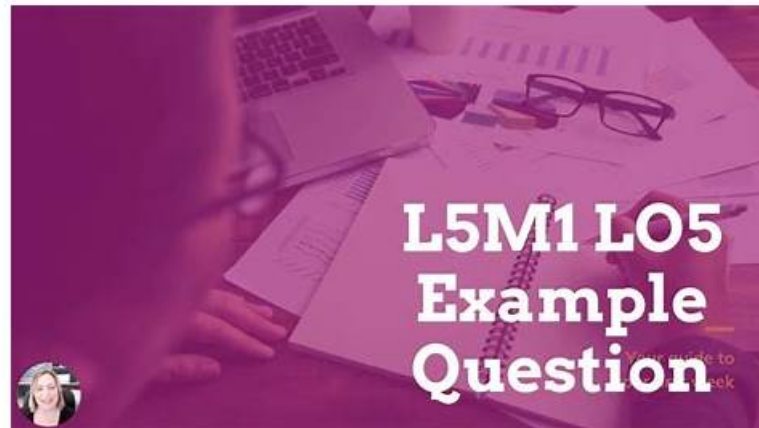


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CIPS Managing Teams and Individuals Sample Questions (Q33-Q38):

NEW QUESTION # 33

What is meant by the 'systems approach' and 'contingency approach' to management? (20 points)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Theories of management provide different ways of understanding how organisations can be led effectively. Two important perspectives are the systems approach and the contingency approach. Both move beyond early "one best way" classical theories and instead highlight the complexity and adaptability required in modern organisations.

The systems approach views the organisation as an integrated whole made up of interdependent subsystems such as HR, finance, operations and procurement. It is based on systems theory, seeing organisations as "open systems" that interact with their external environment. Inputs such as people, information and resources are transformed into outputs such as products, services and stakeholder value. Feedback loops are essential to monitor performance and make adjustments. The key idea is synergy - the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. For example, in procurement, sourcing decisions influence not only supplier performance but also finance (budgets), operations (continuity), and CSR (sustainability). A systems approach ensures that procurement strategies are aligned to wider organisational goals and continuous improvement.

The contingency approach develops this idea further, arguing that there is no universal way to manage. Instead, the best approach depends on situational factors such as environment, size, technology, or workforce capability. It rejects "one-size-fits-all" rules and stresses that management must adapt. For example, in a stable market, a hierarchical structure with formal rules may work well, whereas in volatile markets, flexible and decentralised decision-making is more effective. In procurement, this could mean using strict process controls for routine, low-value items, but adopting agile, collaborative approaches when managing strategic supplier partnerships in uncertain global supply chains.

In comparison, the systems approach gives managers a holistic view of how different parts of the organisation connect and interact with the external environment, while the contingency approach emphasises adaptability and situational leadership. Together, they suggest that effective managers need both a broad systems perspective and the ability to tailor their approach depending on context. In conclusion, the systems approach stresses coordination, integration and feedback across the organisation, while the contingency approach stresses flexibility and the idea that "it depends." Both are highly relevant to procurement and supply leaders who must integrate across functions and adapt strategies to dynamic and uncertain supply environments.

NEW QUESTION # 34

Discuss the importance of the following when entering a negotiation with a new supplier: curiosity, creative thinking, reflective analysis (25 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

When entering negotiations with a new supplier, a procurement professional must use a variety of interpersonal and cognitive skills to achieve the best outcome. Three important qualities are curiosity, creative thinking, and reflective analysis.

Curiosity (8-9 marks):

Curiosity means asking questions, exploring options, and seeking to understand the supplier's position. In a negotiation, curiosity allows the buyer to uncover the supplier's motivations, constraints, and priorities. For example, asking why a supplier has higher costs may reveal underlying logistics challenges, which could be solved collaboratively. Curiosity builds rapport, demonstrates interest, and helps procurement move beyond price to explore value-added benefits such as quality improvements or sustainability initiatives.

Creative Thinking (8-9 marks):

Creative thinking is about generating new solutions and finding alternatives to traditional approaches. In negotiation, this may involve looking for win-win outcomes rather than focusing only on cost. For example, instead of demanding lower prices, procurement could propose longer contracts, volume commitments, or joint innovation projects that benefit both parties. Creative thinking expands the scope of negotiation and helps develop more sustainable supplier relationships.

Reflective Analysis (8-9 marks):

Reflective analysis involves reviewing past experiences and learning from them to improve decision-making. Before negotiating, procurement professionals can reflect on what has worked or failed in previous negotiations. During the negotiation, reflective analysis helps assess whether strategies are effective and adapt accordingly. After the negotiation, reflection allows continuous improvement in approach. For example, a buyer may reflect on why a past supplier negotiation failed due to being too aggressive, and adjust by using more collaborative tactics with the new supplier.

Conclusion:

Curiosity helps procurement gather insights, creative thinking enables innovative solutions, and reflective analysis ensures continuous improvement. Together, these skills allow procurement professionals to build trust, secure better value, and establish strong long-term relationships with new suppliers.

NEW QUESTION # 35

Describe what is meant by knowledge transfer (10 points). How can a manager ensure strong knowledge management within the organisation? (15 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Part A - Knowledge Transfer (10 points):

Knowledge transfer refers to the process of sharing skills, experience, insights and information from one person or group to another within an organisation. It ensures that valuable expertise is not lost and that best practice can be replicated. This can happen formally, such as through training, mentoring, or documented procedures, or informally, through conversations, collaboration, and shared experiences. In procurement, knowledge transfer might involve senior buyers passing negotiation tactics to junior colleagues or documenting supplier performance insights in a shared database.

Part B - Ensuring Strong Knowledge Management (15 points):

Managers play a key role in creating systems and cultures that support knowledge sharing. Some ways include:

Creating knowledge repositories - using databases, intranets, or category management playbooks where information is stored and accessible to all team members.

Encouraging mentoring and coaching - pairing experienced staff with new employees helps transfer tacit knowledge that may not be written down.

Promoting collaboration and teamwork - cross-functional project teams and regular knowledge-sharing meetings spread expertise across functions.

Using technology - collaboration platforms (e.g., SharePoint, Teams) allow procurement staff to record supplier insights, lessons learned, and contract data in real time.

Rewarding knowledge sharing - recognising and incentivising individuals who share expertise encourages a culture of openness rather than knowledge hoarding.

Embedding learning in processes - after-action reviews, lessons-learned sessions after supplier negotiations or tenders ensure experiences are captured systematically.

Leadership behaviours - managers must role-model transparency and collaboration, showing staff that sharing knowledge is valued.

Conclusion:

Knowledge transfer is about ensuring that critical experience and expertise are shared across the organisation. Managers can ensure strong knowledge management by combining systems, processes, and culture - from IT tools and databases to mentoring and recognition. In procurement, effective knowledge management helps avoid repeated mistakes, builds stronger supplier relationships, and improves decision-making across the team.

NEW QUESTION # 36

How can following the CIPS code of conduct ensure a procurement professional remains unbiased and acts ethically? (25 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

The CIPS Code of Conduct sets out the ethical standards expected of procurement professionals. By adhering to this code, buyers are guided to remain impartial, transparent, and fair in all their decisions, ensuring that supplier selection and procurement practices are ethical and free from bias.

Firstly, the code requires professionals to act with integrity. This means avoiding conflicts of interest, declaring personal relationships with suppliers, and making decisions based on facts and evidence rather than personal preferences. For example, a buyer cannot award a contract to a supplier owned by a friend without declaring the relationship.

Secondly, the code emphasises transparency and fairness. Procurement professionals must ensure all suppliers are treated equally and given the same information during tendering processes. This prevents favouritism or hidden advantages for certain suppliers.

Thirdly, the code demands professional competence. This includes basing supplier decisions on objective evaluation criteria such as cost, quality, risk, and sustainability, rather than subjective or biased views. By applying standard evaluation models, professionals avoid unconscious bias.

Fourthly, the code promotes accountability. Procurement professionals are expected to keep proper records of decisions and provide audit trails. This reduces the opportunity for unethical practices such as bribery or corruption and ensures decisions can be justified.

Finally, the code supports sustainability and social responsibility. By considering environmental, ethical, and social factors in procurement, professionals act in the best interests of society and avoid discriminatory or exploitative practices.

Conclusion:

By following the CIPS Code of Conduct, procurement professionals remain unbiased by avoiding conflicts of interest, ensuring fairness, and using objective criteria. They also act ethically by maintaining transparency, accountability, and responsibility to wider society. This builds trust with stakeholders, improves supplier relationships, and protects the reputation of both the individual and their organisation.

NEW QUESTION # 37

Explain what a 'bureaucratic' management style is (10 points). What are the advantages and disadvantages of this? (10 points)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

A bureaucratic management style is based on the theories of Max Weber, who described bureaucracy as a structured, rule-based and hierarchical way of organising work. In this style, managers rely heavily on formal rules, policies and procedures to direct employee behaviour. Decision-making authority follows a clear chain of command, and employees are expected to follow established processes without deviation. Job roles are highly specialised and responsibilities are clearly defined. The emphasis is on order, consistency and compliance rather than flexibility or creativity.

This approach is often seen in government departments, regulatory bodies, or large organisations where compliance, accountability and control are critical. For example, in procurement and supply, bureaucratic management may be applied in highly regulated environments such as public sector purchasing, where adherence to policies, legal frameworks and audit requirements is essential.

Advantages of the bureaucratic style include:

Clarity and consistency: clear rules and procedures mean employees know exactly what is expected of them.

Fairness and equality: decisions are made based on rules, not personal favouritism, reducing bias.

Accountability and control: strong documentation and audit trails improve transparency.

Efficiency in routine tasks: structured processes can streamline repetitive, transactional work (e.g., purchase-to-pay).

Disadvantages include:

Inflexibility: rigid rules make it difficult to adapt to change or unique situations.

Low motivation: workers may feel disempowered or demoralised by lack of autonomy.

Slow decision-making: multiple levels of approval can create delays.

Stifled innovation: focus on compliance discourages creativity and proactive problem-solving.

In conclusion, the bureaucratic management style is effective where consistency, compliance and control are needed, such as in regulated procurement activities. However, it can be limiting in dynamic environments where flexibility, innovation and speed of decision-making are essential. Successful managers may therefore adopt bureaucratic methods for governance but balance them with more adaptive styles for strategic and innovative work.

NEW QUESTION # 38

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