

## **The Italian Job**

This week has taken me to Milan for a couple of days. My company has been associated with the not for profit group [Acquisti & Sostenibilità](#) for many years and co-founders Luca Guzzabocca and Angelo Santi Spina have become great friends over the years we have been working together.

The main purpose of the event was to present the 7<sup>th</sup> annual report into the world of sustainable procurement, [The Sustainable Supply Chain Review](#). This is a great report and well worth a read of the easy to read summary in English obtainable from the website. The research has applied 33 criteria to 430 organisations who report their sustainable procurement activity in the public domain, often through transparent reporting through schemes such as Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Of course this means it tends to rate organisations that are good at reporting in public and does not consider those that maybe do more and communicate less but nonetheless transparency is key to sustainability and I have been so impressed with the evolution of this work since I first met my Italian friends seven years ago I plan to get more involved next year, with greater emphasis on other sectors and UK based companies. It also only shows companies that report in public and therefore have some commitment to sustainability, so it could be said this is a review of more enlightened companies. Among the myriad statistics I was struck by the finding that 66% of companies reviewed had some sort of sustainability commitment for their supply chains but only 15% had internal resources dedicated to the task and only 10 from 430 had full time resources. Does this suggest that companies are talking a good job but not investing in resources to make it happen? Probably.

The presentations on the day were excellent, there was a minimum of “Death by PowerPoint” and an international panel was invited to speak briefly and take questions from the floor. I was particularly impressed by the work of the [Global e-Sustainability Initiative](#) (GeSI), a long standing collaborative initiative between competing companies in the telecoms and technology sectors. It was refreshing to see all panel members talking about collaboration in one form or another. However I was less impressed to hear about the almost exclusive focus on form-filling, policing and auditing suppliers. Being an Italian conference there was a debate about “falling in love with sustainability”. As a supplier I don’t think I would fall in love with the idea of filling in lots of forms and having an auditor turn up once a year to tell me what I am doing wrong. Maybe we need a bit more south European passion and flair and a bit less north European regimentation applied to this subject.

As always I fell in love a little bit with Italy but can we help our supply chains fall in love with sustainability? We have probably got to this first kiss but we are a long way short of matrimony!

**Shaun McCarthy OBE**

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