Catalogue quota: share of procurement volume via electronic catalogues

The catalogue quota describes the proportion of procurement volume or ordering processes that is processed via electronic supplier catalogues. It is a central key figure for the maturity of digital procurement and shows how much procurement is carried out in a standardised, automated and governed manner. A high catalogue quota reduces processing costs, improves data quality and strengthens purchasing policy compliance in day-to-day operations.

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Key facts at a glance

01 The catalogue quota typically measures the proportion of order lines or order value that runs through catalogues.

02 Higher catalogue quotas reduce process costs because search, approval and ordering effort falls significantly.

03 Catalogues are particularly suitable for C parts, consumables and recurring standard requirements.

04 As a rule of thumb, many industrial companies in practice target catalogue quotas of 40 to 80 per cent of indirect procurement.

05 Prerequisites are well-maintained catalogue content, clear approval rules and functioning catalogue management.

06 The quota should always be supplemented by price quality and deviation quotas in order to avoid misdirection.

Definition: catalogue quota

The catalogue quota is the key figure for the proportion of procurement transactions processed via electronic catalogues within e-procurement. It can be based on order lines, number of orders or procurement value.

Calculation principles

In practice, a department-based view has proven effective: catalogue lines divided by all order lines, each per period and organisational unit. A value-based quota is additionally used when management wishes to steer the volume invested. What matters is a uniform, documented definition of scope so that figures remain comparable across periods and locations.

Distinction from other quotas

The catalogue quota is not identical to the order quota per catalogue, which describes the volume per individual catalogue, or to the system of savings types, which measures price and cost effects. It also says nothing about the level of other key figures such as the backorder quota. Rather, it describes the procedural channel choice and thus forms the basis for further impact analyses.

Classification within e-procurement

Catalogues are one form of structured procurement alongside punchout scenarios, free-text ordering and classic requests for quotation. The higher the catalogue quota, the greater the automated share of operational procurement. This frees up buyers for strategic tasks such as supplier feasibility review or supplier self-assessment.

Methods and approach for increasing the catalogue quota

A rising catalogue quota does not come from mandates alone, but from systematic demand segmentation, catalogue expansion and accompanying change management.

Demand segmentation and ABC analysis

The starting point is a clean requirements analysis and requirements determination across all indirect material groups. An ABC analysis identifies the volumes suitable for cataloguing: high order frequency, low specificity, standardised products. A items with high values often remain classically negotiated, while B and C requirements are consistently transferred to catalogues.

Catalogue structure and price sheet integration

On the supplier side, structure, prices and conditions are mapped in a price sheet or catalogue format. Uniform item master data, characteristics and images are important in order to achieve search hit quality. Classifications such as eCl@s or UNSPSC in generally common form facilitate cross-catalogue searching and comparability.

Approvals, rollout and incentives

Authorisation concepts and approval levels must be designed so that catalogue ordering is the fastest route. A structured rollout management with training, communicated usage rules and an exception process secures acceptance. Those who make the quota measurable and report regularly create leadership attention and behavioural change on the user side.

Key KPIs around the catalogue quota

The catalogue quota is only meaningful in the context of supplementary metrics. A balanced KPI set prevents the quota from being optimised at the expense of price, delivery capability or compliance.

Order quota per catalogue and channel mix

The order quota per catalogue shows which supplier catalogues are actually being used and where content or prices need to catch up. In addition, the channel mix should be considered: catalogue, punchout, request for quotation, free text. A high free-text share signals gaps in the assortment or a lack of user engagement.

Price and process metrics

Important accompanying metrics are average order value totals, cycle times from order to goods receipt, the share of automated invoices and cost effects per process, usually expressed as transaction costs per order. The backorder quota and delivery reliability of catalogue suppliers also show whether the catalogue strategy delivers operational stability.

Compliance and data quality metrics

Purchasing policy compliance can be represented by the share of policy-compliant catalogue orders, for example within approved assortments and budget limits. Data quality is reflected in the hit rate of the catalogue search, the cancellation quota and the correction quota in invoice matching. Supply chain analytics combines these metrics into an overall picture of procurement performance.

Risks and controls with a high catalogue quota

A high catalogue quota is not an end in itself. Without control, maverick buying, weak price enforcement and dependencies can arise.

Misdirection at the point of demand

Users buy what is quickly available, not necessarily what is economically correct. This can lead to mixed stock, duplicate stock or missing parts. Structured missing-part management and clear substitute logics in the catalogue mitigate this risk. Regular spot checks of basket composition reveal undesirable behaviour.

Price enforcement and assortment maintenance

Catalogue prices must be actively maintained. In practice, price sheets become outdated faster than expected, especially in commodity-driven assortments. Agreed adjustment mechanisms, index clauses and a fixed review cycle secure competitiveness. Blocked stock management and stock reconciliation prevent catalogued items from being procured although committed stock is available.

Supplier risks and exceptions

High catalogue quotas concentrate volume. Supplier certificates, financial ratio reviews and contingency plans for critical categories are mandatory. For selected materials, a second source threshold defines from when a second supplier must be established. Functioning exception management governs the controlled exceptions to the catalogue rule instead of pushing them into shadow processes.

Current developments: catalogues in transition

Catalogues are evolving from static price lists to dynamic, networked data products. Digital technologies and data standards are changing their structure, maintenance and use.

Dynamic pricing models

Instead of fixed catalogue prices, dynamic pricing agreements are increasingly prevailing: discount tiers, volume-dependent scales or index-linked adjustments that are automatically reflected in the catalogue. This combines standardisation with price enforcement and reduces manual renegotiation.

AI-supported catalogue management

Modern systems support the classification of items, the de-duplication of master data and semantic search. This increases hit quality and significantly reduces maintenance effort. Artificial intelligence also helps to detect deviations in purchasing behaviour and derive targeted steering measures.

Sustainability and life cycle consideration

Catalogues increasingly integrate sustainability attributes, certificates and life cycle costing approaches instead of pure procurement prices. Buyers can thus make total cost decisions directly in the ordering process. This shifts steering from downstream reporting to the user's moment of the click.

Implementation: increasing the catalogue quota in your own company

Increasing the catalogue quota is a multi-stage programme with clear responsibilities, measurable targets and regular review.

Roadmap and target setting

The starting point is an as-is analysis of the channel distribution by material group and organisational unit. From this, realistic quota targets are derived per unit and quarter. Target achievement should be part of the performance objectives of operational procurement so that priority becomes visible.

Supplier selection and supplier shortlist

Based on demand segmentation, a supplier shortlist is drawn up of the candidates whose assortment

promises the greatest quota lever. Criteria are assortment coverage, data quality, logistics performance and conditions. Complex negotiations on catalogue content should be structured by clear technical requirements for the price sheet and delivery cycles for catalogue updates.

Steering, governance and improvement loops

After the rollout, continuous steering determines lasting success. Monthly quota reports, analysis of non-catalogued requirements and structured evaluation of exceptions reveal the need for action. For persistent deviations, a 5-why analysis helps to address real causes rather than symptoms.

Typical metrics

Metric	Typical value
Catalogue quota (proportion of order lines)	40–80 % *typical target corridor in indirect procurement, depending on industry structure*
Order quota per catalogue	> 70 % *proportion of relevant requirements per catalogue; shows quality of usage*
Transaction costs per order	significantly lower than free-text orders *catalogue processes typically incur a fraction of the manual effort*
Catalogue search hit rate	> 90 % *indicator of master data quality and user acceptance*
Catalogue update cycle	monthly to quarterly *frequently agreed rhythm for price sheet maintenance*

Practical example

A medium-sized mechanical engineering company with around 400 employees had a catalogue quota of under 20 per cent in indirect procurement. Free-text orders dominated, invoice matching was laborious and prices were hardly controlled. Within twelve months, the quota was raised to over 60 per cent.

- ABC analysis of all indirect material groups and transfer of the top 800 items into three supplier catalogues
- Agreement of dynamic price tiers in the price sheet instead of static list prices
- Approval levels set so that catalogue ordering was the fastest procurement route
- Monthly reporting of catalogue quota, backorder quota and order quota per catalogue with monthly steering

Conclusion

The catalogue quota is one of the most informative metrics for the process quality of operational procurement. It measures how much procurement is carried out in a standardised, governed and automated manner – and frees up teams for strategic tasks. However, a holistic view is decisive: only in combination with price quality, delivery reliability and compliance metrics does the quota prevent misdirection. Those who run cataloguing as a continuous programme with clear governance achieve sustainably high quotas in practice. This turns the procurement process from a cost factor into a measurable value creator.

Frequently asked questions

? What is the catalogue quota in procurement?

The catalogue quota is the proportion of order lines or procurement value that is processed via electronic supplier catalogues. It is regarded as a key indicator of the degree of digitalisation in operational procurement. Higher quotas typically mean lower process costs and better compliance.

? How is the catalogue quota calculated?

The usual formula is: catalogue lines divided by all order lines, multiplied by 100. Alternatively, the value share is considered, i.e. catalogue order value divided by total order value. What matters is a consistent definition of scope so that the trend remains comparable across periods.

? What is a good catalogue quota?

That depends on the industry and material structure. For indirect procurement, many industrial companies in practice target values between 40 and 80 per cent. More important than the absolute value is the development over time and comparison with the intended channel-specific target.

? How can the catalogue quota be increased?

Key levers are demand segmentation using ABC analysis, expanding well-maintained catalogues of good quality, simple approval processes and user training. Regular reporting and clear governance of exceptions ensure a lasting impact. The quality of the search function also significantly influences usage.

? What are the risks of a high catalogue quota?

Potential risks include maverick buying in favour of available rather than suitable items, outdated catalogue prices and increased supplier dependency. Countermeasures include substitute logics, regular price sheet reviews, contingency plans and defined second source thresholds. Functioning exception management keeps exceptions controllable.

? Which products are suitable for catalogues?

Catalogues are particularly suitable for standardised products with high order frequency and low specificity, such as consumables, tools, operating equipment and IT accessories. For complex, project-related requirements, enquiries with a supplier feasibility review are the better choice. For

this reason, the catalogue quota should not be managed as a global figure but by material group.

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