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### Next Generation of Guided Buying

## How Röhm Modernized Procurement in Three Months

**Digital procurement initiatives are often seen as slow, costly, and high-risk. Many companies struggle with overly complex system landscapes or overloaded solutions. Röhm shows a different path. Within just three months, the chemical company modernized its catalog procurement by prioritizing standardization over customization while integrating AI-supported tools. The result: tangible efficiency gains, greater transparency, and measurable savings.**

Sabine Schulz-Rohde, 1. Dezember 2025

Modernizing procurement is often perceived as a large-scale, costly transformation program. Röhm, a global chemical company, demonstrates that digital transformation can also be achieved with a focused scope and manageable effort. Within three months, Röhm rebuilt its catalog-based procurement on a new technological foundation, integrated AI-supported tools, and streamlined operational purchasing processes. What made the difference was not the introduction of another complex system, but the willingness to reduce complexity and abandon legacy, highly customized solutions. The project “Next Generation of Guided Buying” shows that digitalization delivers impact when it simplifies processes instead of adding new layers.

Five years after its carve-out from Evonik, Röhm was in the midst of a strategic realignment. The company had inherited procurement structures and systems designed for a global corporation with more than 30,000 employees. Today, Röhm operates as an

independent organization with around 2,750 employees – lean, agile, and internationally positioned. The existing procurement setup reflected its corporate past: complex processes, a procurement suite that was internally controversial, and limited user acceptance. Röhm’s goal was clear. The new procurement organization needed to be more agile, more automated, and better integrated with SAP S/4HANA – supported by an intuitive user experience for requisitioners.

“We were working with a system built for a large corporation,” said Dr. Benjamin Wenn, Head of Technical Procurement at Röhm. “For a mid-sized company like ours, it was simply too heavy. Our objective was to reduce complexity and manage procurement in a more data-driven way – through integrated, low-maintenance processes rather than manual workarounds.”

## **A Technology Reset Under Time and Budget Pressure**

The starting conditions were demanding. Röhm was in the middle of its SAP S/4HANA implementation while running a broader transformation program in parallel. The budget for modernizing the procurement platform was limited to a low six-figure amount. At the same time, the solution had to be rolled out globally within three months.

Despite these constraints, Röhm decided to reset its procurement landscape. Instead of another comprehensive suite, the company deliberately chose a solution with deep SAP integration and a reduced functional scope.

Following a business case analysis, Röhm selected Crowdfox. The decisive factors were its seamless SAP integration and the ability to manage catalog content, marketplace connections, and reporting through a single interface.

“The real effort was not the catalog migration,” Wenn explained. “It was cleaning up our SAP system internally. The technical integration of Crowdfox into SAP S/4HANA, including testing, took about one day. Most of the work was rethinking our processes.”

As part of the project, Röhm consistently aligned its procurement processes with SAP standard functionality. The objective was fewer custom developments and more end-to-end process continuity. Procurement activities were to be executed centrally within the ERP system rather than across multiple parallel applications.

A particular challenge was the simultaneous rollout in Germany, China, and the United States. Coordinating across time zones required clear governance structures, a high degree of standardization, and consistent training concepts.

## **Three Systems, One End-to-End Process**

The *Next Generation of Guided Buying* initiative consists of three tightly integrated components: Crowdfox as the central catalog platform with direct SAP integration, OptiMate, an AI bot for automated best-price purchasing of MRP-driven materials and ChatCFX, an AI-powered assistant supporting requisition creation.

Through Crowdfox, requisitioners can compare items from different suppliers and order directly within SAP. Identical products are consolidated, and the best available price is highlighted. “In more than 95 percent of cases, we now purchase at the lowest available price, provided alternatives exist,” said Wenn.

OptiMate automates best-price determination for material requirements generated through MRP runs. It uses inventory and demand signals from SAP, identifies the most cost-effective supplier, and automatically triggers purchase orders. This significantly reduces manual effort for operational buyers while shortening lead times and lowering costs.

ChatCFX addresses the earliest stage of procurement. It supports users when creating purchase requisitions, complements missing information, suggests suitable catalog items, and reduces erroneous free-text requests.

## **Data Governance and Information Security**

With ChatCFX, Röhm is deliberately entering the field of AI-supported procurement processes. “From a technical perspective, SAP integration is no longer a major issue,” Wenn noted. “The real challenge lies in data protection and security: which data is allowed to leave the company, where it is processed, and how it is protected.”

The integration is currently being implemented in close collaboration with Röhm’s IT organization, with a rollout planned for the end of 2025. The focus is on governance topics such as data classification, approval mechanisms,

and the question of operating AI functions in a public cloud environment.

Röhm sees clear opportunities in AI but follows a controlled approach. “Technological innovation only makes sense if it is combined with the right security mechanisms and delivers measurable financial value,” Wenn emphasized.

### **No-Touch Processes and User Adoption**

In operational procurement, Röhm is pursuing largely automated no-touch processes. Once approved, requisitions are converted into purchase orders automatically, and required information is assigned in SAP wherever possible. Procurement intervenes only when thresholds are exceeded or special cases arise.

To ensure high user acceptance, Röhm invested early in structured change management. Key users from all regions were involved from the outset, training sessions were adapted locally, and a soft launch with selected users one week before go-live allowed for testing and fine-tuning in the live environment.

In total, more than 100 suppliers were connected, and around 500 employees were trained – within the planned timeframe and budget. Adoption rates exceeded expectations, and user satisfaction increased significantly.

### **Measurable Savings and Tangible Impact**

After three months of implementation and global rollout, Röhm achieved savings of more than six percent across total spend. In highly competitive categories, savings exceeded 20 percent. The project paid for itself within six months.

Implementation effort remained limited. Suppliers were informed about the platform change in a standardized manner, while Crowdfox handled catalog migration and item mapping. Feedback from suppliers was largely positive, particularly from small and medium-

sized vendors who welcomed the simplified setup compared to the previous system.

Röhm now uses a hybrid approach for supplier communication: EDI for large suppliers, email with PDFs for smaller ones. The case demonstrates that procurement modernization is feasible even with constrained resources – provided integration and governance are clearly defined. The key was prioritization: simplify processes first, then connect systems.

Three principles shaped the success of the project:

1. Integration over feature overload: Röhm deliberately chose a small number of tightly integrated systems, benefiting from speed and low maintenance.
2. Clarity of data and processes: Most of the effort went into cleaning up processes and data flows – not into technology itself.
3. AI with pragmatism: ChatCFX marks Röhm’s entry into AI-supported procurement, while underscoring the importance of governance and data protection.

Looking ahead to 2026, Röhm plans to integrate additional marketplaces into Crowdfox to further reduce free-text orders and increase competition in C-parts procurement. ChatCFX is also expected to autonomously trigger requests for quotation up to defined value thresholds.

Procurement at Röhm is increasingly understood as a data-driven steering function within the organization. “We’ve learned that standardization is not a step backward,” said Wenn. “It is the foundation that allows new technologies like AI to deliver real value.”

The approach serves as a compelling example of how mid-sized industrial companies can successfully modernize complex procurement environments – through clear priorities, consistent use of SAP standards, and focused user involvement.