



NEW PS-DBM HEAD ATTY. DENNIS S. SANTIAGO

VOWS TO INSTITUTE PROCUREMENT REFORMS AND TRANSFORMATION

The change of administration following the May 2022 national elections heralded winds of change across all government agencies, including the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM).

Not long after she assumed office, new Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman named Atty. Dennis S. Santiago as the new Executive Director (ED) to head the PS-DBM — one who carries a noble reputation and is seen as a harbinger of reform and transformation.

For the agency's long-time employees, ED Santiago's name rings a bell. After all, he is no longer a stranger in the field after having been previously considered for the position twice.

"Before the time Director [Estanislao C.] Granados was to retire, I was asked to do a sort of concurrent function as the head of GPPB-TSO and of PS-DBM. But operationally, that would be very difficult... so I declined," he says.

In 2018, when then Executive Director Bingle B. Gutierrez considered retirement, ED Santiago was again tapped to take over. It was in the same year, however, that he decided to conclude his career as an accomplished public servant. Consequently, his stint as head of the Government Procurement Policy Board-Technical Support Office (GPPB-TSO), which he held since 2011, likewise ended.

"I declined because *paalis na ako ng* government. I had to attend to my family," he adds.

The rest, as they say, is history. Today, despite initial reservations, the task that he seemed to elude for years finally found its way to him as ED Santiago is now at the helm of PS-DBM.

"When the position was offered to me [again], there was hesitation *kasi alam ko* it would be a gargantuan task... But our principals were saying, 'Give it a try,' and let's see how we move forward and institute the necessary changes — perhaps, irreversible changes — along the way," he says.

It did not take long before these changes started manifesting. But he has only just begun.



THE COMEBACK

To reform and transform an organization warrants the recognition of its present condition and circumstances, whether good or bad. ED Santiago is fully aware of the challenges hounding PS-DBM as of late, but admits that the real challenge lies in what efficiencies he can bring to the table.

“I just want to work... There’s a lot of news about PS... Of course I will support PS alongside what is legal and what is right... But coming to this office is more of... what we can do and what we can offer,” he says.

ED Santiago has all the right to bank on his expertise as his professional record would prove that he is fit for the job.

Known as a reputable procurement adviser and consultant with extensive work experience in both public and private sectors, including government agencies, consulting firms, development partners, and multilateral development banks, much of ED Santiago’s performance revolved around procurement review, assessment, monitoring, evaluation, management, and capacity development.

As a lawyer, he took particular interest in handling civil, criminal, labor, and corporate cases, among others. His academic background is just as impressive, having obtained bachelor’s and master’s degrees with honors from local and international institutions.

With remarkable credentials, ED Santiago is often engaged in various fora as a resource person, lecturer, or panelist in government procurement.

For ED Santiago, PS-DBM is not an unfamiliar territory. He is at the forefront of its workforce.

It must have felt like a comeback — perhaps, a welcome home.

Years prior, ED Santiago used to frequent PS-DBM as an observer for a non-government organization.

“I learned the basic rudiments of government procurement here in PS... We learned it here first... pre-procurement meetings, pre-bid conferences, opening of bids... I visited PS-DBM many times *para maintindihan ko mabuti kung paano mag-procure ang gobyerno*,” he recalls.

While he acknowledges that there are unfavorable news reports about PS-DBM, ED Santiago takes pride in the fulfillment of the agency’s mandate to operate a centralized procurement of common-use supplies and equipment (CSE) for the whole of government since its establishment in 1978.

“There were challenging years for PS-DBM but most of those years were served with passion and dedication... In so far as procurement policies and procedures, specifically in the selection process, *marunong at bihasa na ang PS*,” he says.

THE JOURNEY AHEAD



Despite the proven competence and proficiency of the PS-DBM workforce, ED Santiago intends to continually improve the employees' level of expertise to ensure that they remain equipped with the changing times.

"I want things done. Not today, [but] earlier yesterday... Kasi nga, napag-iinanan na tayo... 'Yung mga magagawa natin today, dapat nagawa na natin kahapon... 'Yung style of leadership ko would really be country and people-focused. I want to deliver. Perhaps, not want to deliver; I need to deliver," he says.



BENJAMIN E. DIOKNO
1998 - 2001



ATTY. ESTANISLAO C. GRANADOS, JR.

ED Santiago speaks highly of former Budget and now Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno as well as the first Executive Director of PS-DBM Atty. Estanislao C. Granados — both of whom he considers influential to him as a leader.

In the fulfillment of this aspiration, ED Santiago has no penchant for antics and theatrics.

"Borrowing from Sec. [Benjamin E.] Diokno, what you see is what you get (WYSWYG)... *Kung upset ako, upset ako. Kung masaya, masaya,*" he adds.

ED Santiago expects much of his colleagues' support and dedication. His plea is for officials and employees to "do what is right and legal. Nothing more. Nothing less." He attributes this mentality to the values instilled in him growing up.

"Uphold morality... Since we were young, *tinuruan naman tayong gawin ang tama at narapat. Sa mga colleagues natin sa PS, 'yun lang ang ine-expect ko. Mag-deliver ng tamang produkto sa tamang panahon, tamang presyo, tamang kantidad, at tamang kalidad,*" ED Santiago emphasizes.

This guiding principle, he believes, will change other people's preconceived notions about government workers — whom he considers "lucky, fortunate, and privileged" for being able to serve the country and the people.

"If they only knew how dedicated people are in the government, maybe the mindset will be different... So while serving the people, do what is right, because that is what's demanded from us," he reminds.

Meeting this, however, is not a walk in the park. Apart from the differences in individual discretion, internal issues and concerns may arise, too.



ED Santiago with the personnel of the Warehousing and Delivery Division at one of the warehouse facilities in the PS-DBM Main Office in Paco, Manila.

Since taking over the PS-DBM, ED Santiago has already identified the areas in the agency's transactions and operations that need to be improved:

• CSE PROCUREMENT

"Supplies are dwindling. I want to focus on the procurement of CSE kasi iyan naman ang mandato natin... [Also] streamlining and restudying what's really needed by the government... We have to deliver quality goods, *hindi 'yung mapupulaan mga goods natin.*"

• HUMAN RESOURCE

"Expose our officials and personnel including Bids and Awards Committees to training, local and abroad. *Para* we can act more with efficiency and expertise... I always believe that a well-informed, well-trained, and well-capacitated personnel belongs to a very well-managed office, that's why I need to push for capacity-building for our people... I'm looking at even tapping other government agency resources so we could link them for training."

• MARKET COMPETITION

"When we do market research and market approach, we have to gather as much information as we can. When you have more market operators or market players, you have better competition; you get the best quality goods at the best price. How do you arrive at that? You have to craft out very good technical requirements and specifications, *vis-à-vis* realistic budget to attract more market participants."

• RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STAKEHOLDERS

"If you have good business relationship with your suppliers, in the strictest sense, you get them to your side and support you — not for anything else. Support you in your thrust to provide the best quality goods at the best price... Creating a level-playing field for the market is also one of my goals. *Pantay-pantay sila itrato. Pantay-pantay silang opportunities and exposures.*"

• SECURITY OF TENURE

"The clamor and sentiments to be regularized have to be studied very carefully."

• SUPPLY CHAIN / CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

"I need to beef up and strengthen our Supply Chain Management. I need to look at Contract Management as well. Contracts must be managed from the time of inception up to contract completion and closeout."

• TIMELY DELIVERY

"Little by little, we narrow down occasions of delay... *Dapat mabilis 'yung delivery natin kasi the need is already defined. Alam na kung anong kailangan ng agencies, so tayo dapat makatugon sa kanilang pangangailangan.*"

• TIMELY PAYMENT

"Bidders are our partners to progress — they're the ones supplying our requirements... Timely payment — *'yan 'yung matagal nang reklamo sa government contracting... Pwede naman mapabilis 'yan.* Let us cut short payment time."

• WORK ENVIRONMENT

"With the number of people that we have, I think we also have to have a new structure... Add more workspaces conducive to work... to add zest and enthusiasm at what you're doing."



ED Santiago gets perky with a staff of the Comptroller Division.



ED Santiago begins his day at work reviewing documents to ensure the agency's operational continuity and efficiency in this period of transition.

“These issues are issues that are there for many years now. *Hindi naman na bago ‘yan*. I mean, we recognize the issues, then we address them,” he says.

ED Santiago adds that the functional groups of PS-DBM, namely the Procurement Group, Operations Group, Regional Operations Group, Administrative and Finance Group, and the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) Group, have to collaborate more.

“PS-DBM has to be a cohesive and cooperative agency. Are these [groups] really working side by side with each other? *Dapat ganoon*,” he ponders.

Going into detail about the potential of PhilGEPS, ED Santiago hopes to employ a state-of-the-art system to be able to conduct e-bidding, e-reverse auction, and e-shopping on the platform to lessen the procurement workload and exposure of government employees.

“There are so many features of PhilGEPS that we can improve, and perhaps add more. As a matter of fact, it can be an income-generating platform... for advertisements of products of suppliers and distributors. PhilGEPS can be an end-to-end platform that supports its own and generates its own resources,” he explains.

The cohesion, coordination, and collaboration are enforced not only among its ranks, but also between the PS-DBM and its mother department. ED Santiago says that he fully supports Secretary Pangandaman's plan to “evaluate and streamline the Procurement Service to ensure proper oversight and stricter controls, and thus, safeguard the integrity of the procurement process.” He adds that the agency's harmonious relationship with the DBM shall be maintained by following the “cadence and directives” of the Secretary, and by laying out short, medium, and long-term plans and goals in consultation with the senior officials of PS-DBM.

“Public procurement delayed is public service denied,” he says.

On previous occasions, ED Santiago has reiterated the essence of the same mantra, underscoring that Procurement Service and public service go hand in hand.

“In PS, you get two powers: the ‘power of procurement’ and the ‘power of service’,” he said in his remarks during his introduction as the new agency head. According to ED Santiago, efficient, economical, and effective procurement supports excellent public service.

Asked about how he sees PS-DBM several years from today, his answer ignites a glimmer of hope at a time when the agency is beset with challenges.

“PS-DBM is a dynamic institution, efficient, with colleagues who are confident, proud, and are doing the right thing... We pray to God that we will be able to achieve all these with His guidance, and to our Blessed Mother for wisdom,” he concludes.

With ED Santiago's evident resolve and earnest goal of instituting procurement reforms and transformation, it may not take much time before his vision is realized.

The future of PS-DBM is bright, and the journey to get there begins not today — it starts right now.

By Communications Team

Text Kevin Joshua G. Rebutan
Research/Photos Pam Candice V. Medina
Sittie Laila A. Guinomla
Layout Josef Ray C. Sy