

AKAM BULLETIN

The Association for
Key Account Management

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**AKAM 5TH Annual
Conference**

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Account Managers**

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**Cultural diversity
in GAM**

Plus:

**First graduates in KAM
PostGraduate Certificate**

Calling all KAM researchers



January 2023

editorial



Dr Diana Woodburn

AKAM Chairman



www.a4kam.org



AKAM

The Association for
Key Account Management

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KAMaraderie

Happy New Year to all AKAM members and Bulletin readers!

2023 is well underway and we've been busy setting up a programme of events to support you in your efforts to execute KAM in your organisation.

First up is AKAM's 5th Annual Conference on 9th and 10th March (see p4). We realise that a lot of our members are not likely to get to in person meetings in Europe, so the Conference will be online again this year, probably in the future too. Six varied expert and practitioner presenters will explain their insights into the three principal groups involved in KAM: Key customers (of course), Key account managers (obviously) and Senior management (maybe less obvious but absolutely critical to success).

Nevertheless, we will meet in person at ISEG Business School in Lisbon, Portugal on 21st and 22nd June. While we all have become accustomed to meetings online, there's still nothing like 'being there' to really explore new ideas, gain new perspectives from working together and develop your network. Research says that a key account manager's network is one of the most valuable attributes they can bring to the job.

Our webinar programme continues, of course, and we are trialling a new format for 21st April. We are inviting you to share your issues with a small panel and with peer participants. Whether you are a key account manager or a KAM leader driving the initiative, it can be a lonely job when you don't have like-minded people around you to support and even challenge you. So we will be giving you the opportunity to get some advice from people who know what you're talking about. No need for confidential details – either email your issue in advance to info@a4kam.org or call in on the day.

We're looking forward to talking to you – and listening to you – throughout this coming year.

Best wishes,

Diana

Dr. Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chairman woodburn@marketingbp.com or info@a4kam.org



AKAM Professional Diploma Achiever Congratulations!

Adam Sims, DipProKAM - Commercial Manager,
Pfizer Australia

Adam followed the AKAM Diploma route to gain his KAM qualification. He said "It has further cemented my knowledge of KAM, ultimately providing greater skill sets to my customer base here in Australia".

If you're interested in how to gain a Diploma, [click here](#).

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IMM Special Issue

Members: what do YOU want investigated?

Online Events

To register for webinars & other events [click here](#).

▶ **Open webinar**
Friday,
17th February

Operational KAM is easy, alignment is not!

Dr Cedric Roesler, Xseed Group/Ecole des Ponts Business School

▶ **5th Annual Conference**

Online

Thursday 9th
& Friday 10th
March

Key Customers with Nick Hyner, State of Flux & Rafi Habibian, Pfizer

Senior Management in KAM with Thierry Josselin, Axcelis: Paul Wilson, PW Consulting; & Steve Dolan, EMCOR UK

Key Account Managers with Marco Lippuner, Siemens; Geoff Quinn, Pfizer; & Dominykas Cibulskas, SIA ZB

▶ **Open webinar**
Friday,
21st April

How can we help you?

Maggie Chandler, Skanska; Dominykas Cibulskas, SIA ZB; & Dr Diana Woodburn, AKAM

▶ **Member webinar**
Friday,
19th May

Prof. Paul Smith, Manchester Metropolitan University

In-Person Events

▶ Wednesday
21st June (PM)
- Thursday
22nd June

ISEG Business School, Lisbon, Portugal
AKAM Technical
AKAM Interactive

Open Webinar Friday 17th February

Operational KAM is easy, alignment is not!

[Register NOW!](#)



Cedric Roesler
Managing Partner, Xseed
Group/ Ecole des Ponts
Business School

In this webinar, Cedric Roesler shares what he found about the current issues with KAM implementation. Surprisingly, perhaps, he saw that operational roll-out was no longer a big issue. But that's not 'job done' – KAM demands alignment and there's the rub...

By identifying the problems Cedric will guide you along a path through the 'undergrowth' that will lead to success.

- KAM partnership operational roll-out is not a major difficulty any more, however...
- Internal alignment needs to be regularly assessed and monitored
- External alignment between partners is a cornerstone of KAM - and a major cause of failure

Conference Time! Online 9th & 10th March

AKAM's 5th Annual Conference

A terrific line-up of practitioner and expert presenters in KAM

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)



This conference focuses on the three groups of people who are the 'pillars' of KAM: Key Customers, Senior Management and Key Account Managers.

Participate in the panel discussions and Q & A sessions alternating with thought-provoking presentations, offering new insights and ideas alongside practical approaches and tips.

Key Customers

Thursday, 9th March
11.00 – 13.00 GMT

Inside the buyer's head

Nick Hyner - Head of EMEA, State of Flux

- Are you dealing with 'old-school' or strategic procurement?
- Is your sales model aligned to how the strategic sourcing process works?
- Supplier relationship management and what it means for account management

Senior Management in KAM

Thursday, 9th March
14.00 – 16.00 GMT

Making senior management involvement in KAM work

Paul Wilson - PW Consulting

- Why Senior Management matters in KAM
- The Challenges of involving Senior Managers
- Ways of engaging the "C-Suite" in Customer and Supplier organizations
- The KAM as leader of Senior Manager engagement

Key Account Managers

Friday, 10th March
11.00 – 13.00 GMT

KAM - from value chain interface to ecosystem orchestrator

Marco Lippuner - Siemens AG, CE OE SAE, Head of Sales Excellence

- Digitalization results in fast-changing value chains with increasing complexity
- The B2B buying landscape is increasingly reflecting the 24/7 consumer world
- Managing the support structure is the key success factor for KAM's

Registration

Corporate and full individual members: Free (but please register)

Online members: €40 (50%+ discount!*)

Non-members: €90

[Register NOW!](#)

* The conference is an exceptional event not included in online membership

Executive sponsors: what & why?

Thierry Josselin - Axcelis, Country Manager, European Operations

- Why is Executive sponsorship is critical in successful KAM?
- Securing necessary resources
- Lobbying for cross-functional support and alignment
- Build strong relationships with key accounts

Key Account Manager competencies – are we all clear?

Geoff Quinn - Pfizer CentreOne Business Development Lead EU, UK & China Pfizer

- What are the requirements, at what level?
- Why the job demands a unique set of competencies
- Using a data-driven competency matrix
- Taking control of your own development

Recruiting Key Account Managers



By **Diana Woodburn, AKAM**

New years often prompt the review - renew - recruit cycle, which includes key account managers as much as anyone else. So this seems like the right time of year to look at the recruitment of key account managers. Which is not as straightforward as you might think.

Recruitment of key account managers needs to be about retaining the right people as well as finding and identifying new ones. It is - or should be - an ongoing process, since organisations need to balance reasonable long-term consistency and stability with refreshing their customer interfaces and developing KAM expertise.

Approaches to recruitment should be kept up to date and constantly improved to match this ongoing requirement, whereas it is too often an emergency response to a crisis, like an incumbent account manager's departure or an unfortunate change of contact in the customer. Key account managers may also be senior people approaching retirement, where ignoring the issue is not going to help.

Where to look?

Internal recruitment

Many companies have a preference for recruiting internally. It may be a purposeful strategy or just a habit, but internal recruitment of key account managers is very common and does make sense in some ways. One of the most important characteristics of good Key account managers is the strength and extent of their personal networks, inside their own company as well as inside the customer. Networks can take a long time to build and that favours



internal recruitment. However, good networkers can still do better on this front than some salespeople, who may have only worked on the fringes of their organisations.

It can be difficult to find a keen internal candidate at exactly the right level, able to develop into a key account manager with potential to fill the role and continue in it for years. Companies often find that the majority of applicants are at too low a level to risk on a key account, or too high for switching from their current position to be attractive to them.

Recruiting from the salesforce

Most often organisations look to Sales to source key account managers. It looks like the easiest and fastest route, but it drives self-perpetuating selling behaviours which should be downplayed in KAM. In actuality, its popularity as the 'tried and tested' route does not take into account when it has been 'tried and tested' and found wanting.

Even recruiting externally doesn't help if the sector's key account managers generally come from Sales. Recruitment from external sales forces is just as likely to perpetuate sales behaviour as much as internal recruitment, possibly even more, as the recruit tries to justify their appointment by producing quick results.

Recruiting from other functions

Experience within other functions is great background for key account managers, the more the better. It helps them understand how their own and their customers' businesses operate, facilitates their networking, widens their vision, and moderates selling behaviour. Procurement people are particularly well positioned to appreciate how a supplier should behave and communicate with customers' Procurement managers. Knowledge of finance, operations, supply chain and more are all valuable for a key account manager, and organisations should invite applications from such functions as much as Sales - perhaps more.

External recruitment

KAM is a highly transferable skill and external recruitment should probably be considered more often than it is. There may also be strategic reasons for external recruitment, apart from a lack of suitable internal candidates. One company's strategy is to increase diversity across its workforce, including key account managers: its history has led it to recognise itself as 'stale, pale and male' and it is now determined to change. It may also be useful to recruit a key

Continued on Page 6

Recruiting Key Account Managers (continued)

account manager with experience of the customer's sector where it is different from the supplier's, and that may automatically entail looking outside.

It can be difficult for outsiders from unregulated sectors to understand and deal with the complexity of restrictions placed upon them in highly regulated sectors and companies. But transferring a key account manager from one highly regulated environment to another (e.g. from tobacco to pharma?) might work.

Some companies seem reluctant to advertise KAM positions: perhaps they are being oversensitive? 'Putting the word out' in the sector may be more discreet and also potentially more appealing to applicants too. Many key account managers are not recruited via job adverts and applications - they are connected people who will be looking for signals from potential employers.

External recruitment can be an excellent stimulus to challenge approaches and 'stir things up'. At the same time, it can be risky and failure rates are quite high. If the organisation genuinely wants to change, the incomer's challenges can have a really beneficial impact

and be very rewarding for both parties. But if even part of the organisation is consistently resistant, new key account managers may not see the constant struggle as worthwhile and leave. Even if senior management is backing the change, it could still be a lonely and bumpy ride for new recruits introduced one at a time.

Extra effort over a longer period needs to be made to embed and retain external recruits. Recruitment without good retention rates is expensive, time-consuming and potentially very damaging to customer relationships.

Recruiting from customers

Gaining the expertise of people from the key account itself has worked brilliantly for some companies. They can bring understanding of the sector from a different perspective, or valuable insight into a different sector. Suppliers should be cautious, though: it is probably not a good idea to recruit your key contact in the customer and disrupt the relationship, or annoy the key account by poaching a valued employee. Recruitment of a Procurement manager can work exceedingly well.

What do you want?

Skills and capabilities

The most sought-after 'Skills and capabilities' cited by a group of KAM programme leaders were numerous. In no particular order:

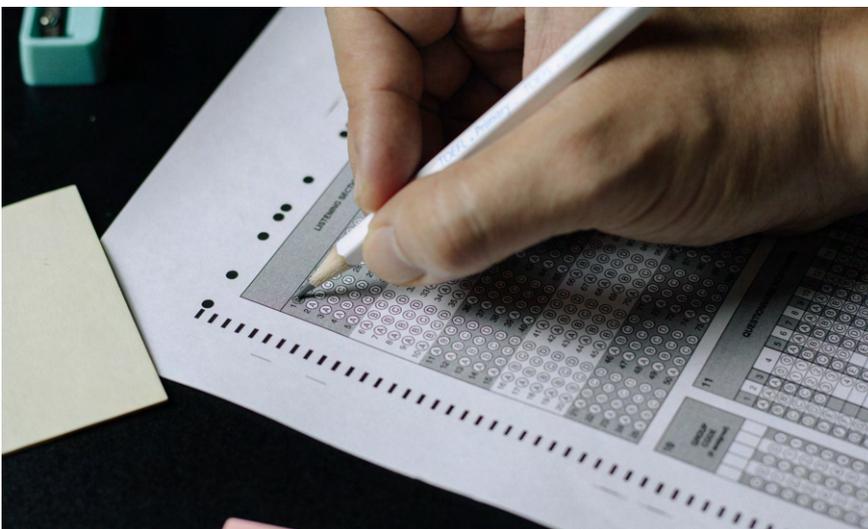
- key account engagement
- account management
- leadership
- team leadership
- business acumen
- account planning
- emotional intelligence (EI), e.g. 'reading a room'
- strategic thinking
- executive presence/gravitas
- communication skills
- collaboration
- energy
- enthusiasm/passion

Quite a few of these requirements do not seem to be either a skill or a capability, and it's difficult to be clear about the kind of person sought when the language in common use is fuzzy.

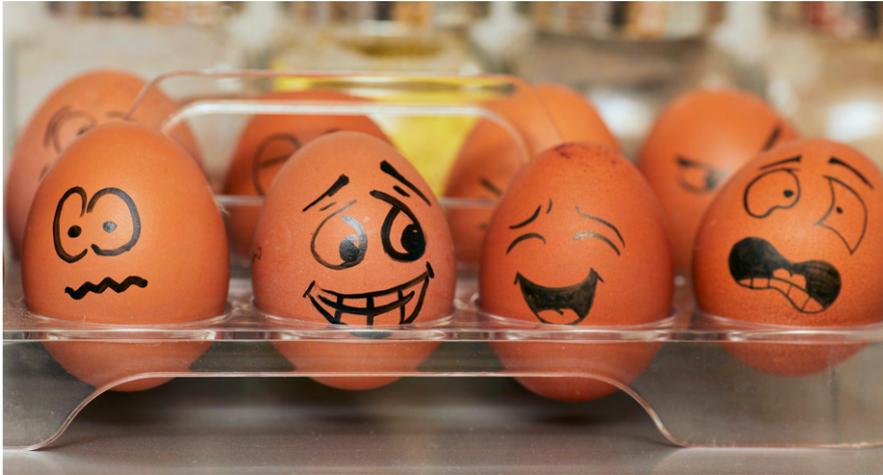
Requirements may be better defined as:

- Competencies, i.e. teachable, learnable capabilities or skills for which courses are available.
- Attributes, i.e. personal qualities, approaches and behaviours which are driven by personal values and ways of thinking. They are more difficult to change and depend on the genuine desire of the individual to change.

Candidates should be selected according to both the competencies and attributes required for the job.



Recruiting Key Account Managers (continued)



So the specification of these characteristics and their relative importance is critical in defining the requirement and the process of matching applicants with it. Some companies 'recruit for the attributes and train for the competencies', but this enlightened approach is not a quick fix.

Often organisations recruiting place more weight on competencies which they are easier to assess and justify, and which they expect to bring short-term results. However, this approach does not always produce a recruit who is well matched with the customer and some important relationships have consequently needed urgent rescue or even failed.

Competencies

Requirements like account management, leadership, team leadership, business acumen, account planning look like teachable competencies (though whether leadership and team leadership are competencies or attributes is less important than selecting key account managers who do them well.)

The additional competencies of selling and business development, consultative selling, product/technical knowledge/application have been highly valued in the past.

However, key account managers cannot be product or subject matter experts: generally the range of goods and services can buy a key customer is too wide and numerous and/or complex and technical for any individual to be able to maintain expertise across the whole business. Key account managers should be working with other functions in team-based customer development, so the required capability is rather to engage with and facilitate the participation of subject matter experts than to own technical expertise themselves.

'Communication skills' may be a mix of competency and attribute. But certainly, facility with communication technologies is coming to the fore in most markets, accelerated by the pandemic. Digitally savvy millennials began to look more interesting as potential key account managers!

Attributes

Although the list of competencies is shorter than the list of attributes - emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, executive presence/gravitas, communication skills, collaboration, energy, enthusiasm/passion - they are still of critical importance in successful key account managers. Yet selection processes often fail to recognise their relevance and/or balk at assessing them properly.

Emotional intelligence (EI) was at the top of one company's list, actually higher than any competency. As marketplace dynamics change rapidly, 'ability to learn' is also high on the list. Although such things may be harder to assess than competencies, it can be done. Some companies use instruments like Thomas International but anyway external professional help is advisable.

Conclusion

The recruitment of key account managers seems to take place across a spectrum of 'recruit in haste and repent at leisure' to many painful months of looking for the right candidate, first internally and then externally.

- Recruitment should be constantly in mind as an intrinsic part of succession planning and career development in KAM, rather than a series of isolated events.
- There is no 'one size fits all' for the job description and person specification, which should be rewritten for each recruit/replacement taking into account the latest and future changes in the customer, the supplier and the market environment.
- Selecting for the right attributes (behaviour and personal values) is more likely to be successful than simple competency-based selection, particularly given that competencies can be trained whereas attributes are unlikely to change.

This article encapsulates discussions at AKAM's Programme Directors Forum in January 2022.

By Professor Diana Woodburn

Wrestling with Procurement



**By Nick Hyner,
Head of EMEA,
State of Flux**

State of Flux is a consultancy advising Procurement and business teams in major companies on how to best manage suppliers. But in our day-to-day roles we are also strategic account managers selling services and technology to Procurement teams. Which arguably gives us unique insight into how procurement is generally managed by account teams - we hear a full range of experiences from both sides.

In the past three years, following the Covid pandemic, a management challenge has developed: key account managers can no longer influence by being physically present at the client's office, selling to business stakeholders and building familiarity with buying teams. In most cases in 2023, the client is working in a hybrid model which means they meet in smaller groups less often. So there is less chance to spend structured or unstructured time with you face to face. In some ways this has made Procurement even more relevant to a key account manager's success.

1. Is your product/service strategic in the eyes of Procurement?

Chief Procurement Officers often talk about their focus on automating their dealings with non- strategic suppliers, which means they are grouping their suppliers and focusing on those relationships where the number of suppliers is limited, cost is significant and the purchase is of critical importance to the business. Looking at the marketplace that you are in and assessing the way that any customer sees you, should help you to spend your time wisely. If your product/service is not strategic then making yourself easy to deal with - focusing on efficient provision of clear information, and submitting competitive pricing using their online channels - will be far more effective than badgering to get a relationship call with the Procurement team.

Building a relationship with the business stakeholder (as ultimate decision holder) is always time well invested but needs to be looked at relative to other more strategic accounts. If you believe you are viewed as strategic by the business but this status isn't reflected in Procurement's approach then, of course, stakeholder management is key.

Building a relationship with the business stakeholder (as ultimate decision holder) is always time well invested but needs to be looked at relative to other more strategic accounts. If you believe you are viewed as strategic by the business but this status isn't reflected in Procurement's approach then, of course, stakeholder management is key.

2. Interrogate your client's procurement process, get involved early

Established Procurement functions will work alongside the organisation in defining business requirements, investigating the market, setting the strategy, testing the market with an RFI/RFP and then ultimately managing the purchase.

You should know which stages the Procurement team will follow for your offering in order to enable you to get involved as early as possible and increase your chances of success.

3. Understand procurement drivers to negotiate effectively

In a period of increased inflation there is increased focus on negotiation to protect smaller profit margins. So anticipating and planning responses to the tactics Procurement typically employs is more important than ever before. Especially for more strategic clients, consider what else, other than reduced price, you can offer the client. And then help Procurement assign a clear value to it. The more effectively you can assign a value to 'non price' aspect of your offer – longer term contracts with price certainty, access to innovation labs, training and continuous improvement team projects - the more likely Procurement will be to respond to this overall approach. Asking if the client has a Supplier Relationship Programme may also give you an indication of culturally how receptive the client is to recognising value that is not just related to price.

Contrasting the buy and sell side perspectives of direct cost/revenue benefits and other benefits linked to a transaction



Click here to read State of Flux's complete report on Supplier Relationship Management '2022 SRM Research Report: Building Resilience'. Please note: you will need to enter your details to access the report.

Congratulations Graduates of Postgraduate Certificate in KAM



Well done!

A global programme offering huge professional and personal potential!

2022 Graduates of the Postgraduate Certificate in KAM studied successfully all over the world!



Abhishek Nyalpelly



Casey Albright



Kristy West, Australia



Ahmed Ashour



Christine Divito



Amer Albarqi



Diego Marquez



Andrea Daly



Eduardo Picoli

“While the course may seem quick, it certainly delivers! A well thought out sequence of lectures, exercises, and assessments from KAM essentials, into business analysis and planning, then wrapping with implementation. The learnings gained from the strategic account plan assignment formed an invaluable solid foundation to take back to the business to build on. I highly recommend the course to anyone considering it – they won’t regret it! 11/10, have loved it!”



Angel Gonzalez, Spain

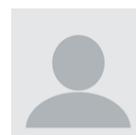
“After 10 years working as Key Account Manager, the PG Certificate in KAM allowed me to address the challenges of account strategic analysis, setting an Account centric strategy and defining the direction of our KAM team in the wake of technological disruptions and shifts in the competitive landscape. This comprehensive program complements perfectly with all my know-how in the field and provides me the tools and insights to boost all the KAM strategy”



Fernando Velez



Iara Matos



Flavia Calti



Linda Nacerddine



Flavio Ferracuti



Luigi Consoli



Holly Moore



Mirealla Tarulli

Congratulations to all of 2022's Graduates! Well Done!



Monique Esmay,
USA

"I was really able to expand my knowledge about the KAM role, strategies, and best practices to be a successful KAM and KAM organization. I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to attend this online course and all that I was able to learn to improve my capabilities as a KAM and also to take back to my leadership to help further improve our entire KAM organization for the benefit of our company and the customers we serve."



Samuel Mmusi,
South Africa

"I am really grateful for this offering, it was way beyond my expectation. The quality of education is high and appropriate for what I do as a Key Account Manager, and it has broadened my knowledge of the type of work I do and the role I play in my organization"



Mohamed
Osman



Nicki
Brown



Rana
Beshr



Thania
Penna



Roger
Campbell



Themis
Kyriakidis



Santiago Medina,
Colombia

"It was an excellent journey to enhance the knowledge in key account management while also learning on how to properly apply the theory in practical cases. With interactive lectures, tutorials to share experiences and a deep dive on creating an efficient account plan, the course provides all the necessary resources to boost the key account management program in your organization."



Rafi Habibian,
Lebanon

"The PGCert in KAM is a must have course for current strategic and key account managers or broader thinking commercial individuals wanting to develop their career in Key Account Management. The wealth of knowledge and expertise shared by the teaching team during lectures and tutorials is invaluable. It is undoubtedly worth the extra effort required and opens the door to the opportunity to pursue further academic study".

Pure KAM.

Because if KAM is what you want to do, why spend your time on something else?

The PostGraduate Certificate in KAM is totally online, accessible wherever you are and has been accredited through a collaboration between AKAM and the Technological University of Dublin.

[Learn More](#)

How about you in 2024? Click [here](#) to find out more

Cultural Diversity in Global Account Management



By Nayan Kadam, Brabara Niersbach and Bjoern Ivens

Global Account Management (GAM) is a strategic approach that has been around for over 25 years. It evolved from KAM, which centered on establishing mutually beneficial relationships with a small number of strategically significant customers by providing them with special treatment. GAM adopts a more global holistic approach, managing relationships with multiple customers across various countries and cultures.

GAM programs can bring substantial benefits to the supplying company, such as increased revenue and market share, improved customer loyalty, strengthened brand reputation, greater efficiency, and improved global coordination and alignment, as well as achieving competitive advantages.

What is culture, why does it matter?

“Culture” is a significant factor in GAM, but what does it mean? It’s been defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”, and cultural differences between a buyer and a supplier can lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions, which in turn can:

- result in delays, inconsistencies, and dissatisfaction
- influence the way in which negotiations are conducted
- impact the level of trust and cooperation between businesses
- affect the sense in which expectations and obligations are understood and managed.

The 1998 merger between German company Daimler and American company Chrysler is a well-known example. It failed due to cultural differences and resulted in billions of

dollars in shareholder losses.

Researched case: German supplier, Indian key customers

Germany is India’s largest trading partner in the European Union, and the seventh largest overall. There are more than 1700 German companies operating in India which have invested in a wide range of sectors, including automotive, engineering, and chemicals. Indian investments in Germany have increased significantly over the past few years, and there are currently over two hundred Indian businesses operating in Germany.

So this case study research investigated cultural differences in GAM between these two countries to identify best practices for managing global accounts in diverse cultural settings, focusing on:

- What are the cultural differences between German GA managers and their Indian counterparts?
- What form of framework could GA managers use to effectively manage their Indian GAs from a cultural standpoint?

What is culture, why does it matter?

Communication style

The Indian communication style is generally regarded as a ‘high-context’ style, which indicates that a great deal of meaning is conveyed through nonverbal signals and context rather than explicit verbal communication. Since people rely on subtle cues and unspoken assumptions to understand what is being said, Indian communication can appear more indirect and multifaceted. German communication style, on the other hand, is generally considered to be a ‘low-context’ style, which means that meaning is conveyed primarily through explicit verbal communication (see Fig. 1). Since German culture values precision and directness in communication, German communication can sometimes appear more straightforward and to the point (Ed. But maybe also rather abrupt and even rude?).

Business practices

Hierarchical structures with clear lines of authority and decision-making power are common in German companies. Indian companies, on the other hand, have a more collaborative approach to decision-making, seeking input and consensus from multiple organizational levels.

“It is hard for me to figure out who makes decisions, especially with our new accounts, because the hierarchical structure is so



Figure 1: Cultural differences between German GA managers and Indian counterparts

Cultural Diversity in Global Account Management (cont)

complicated, and it takes time to go through each level...we haven't had any problems since we took our relationships to the next level, which I find very interesting." – GA manager, Automotive

Decision making

In Indian decision-making, there is a strong focus on maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict, as well as on consultation and consensus building. In contrast, German decision-making is more formal and structured, with a greater emphasis on procedures and guidelines. In addition to appreciating efficiency and punctuality, German culture frequently centers decisions on rational and reasonable analysis and empirical evidence.

"Our Indian colleagues are extremely cooperative, and I have noticed that they avoid argumentative, demanding negotiations...personally, I believe they care about us more than figures." – GA manager, Manufacturing

Risk taking

Due to the heavy reliance on tradition and stability in Indian culture, Indian businesses tend to be more risk-averse and cautious in their decision-making. German companies, on the other hand, are generally more innovative and risk-taking due to the country's cultural importance of productivity and competitiveness.

This can result in a more decentralized approach to decision-making, in which employees are encouraged to experiment and take risks in pursuit of new opportunities.

"We are willing to take calculated risks... which I fully understand is difficult for Indians...but if my Indian friend sees future potential, he will definitely take a significant risk." – GA manager, Automotive

Negotiations

The Indian negotiation style tends to be abstract and relationship-oriented, which means that Indian negotiators

tend to prioritize establishing and maintaining friendly relationship with their counterparts, which can result in exploring common ground and fostering harmony during negotiations. In contrast, the German negotiation style is considered to be more direct and task-oriented, which means that German negotiators tend to prioritize the accomplishments of specific goals and objectives, sometimes resulting in an obsessive focus on logic and facts in negotiations.

"I am sometimes strong and direct in bargaining and talks, but my Indian counterpart has never responded the same way." – GAM director, Pharmaceuticals

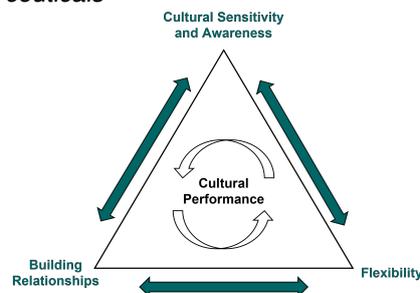


Figure 2: Cultural framework for managing Indian GAs

Cultural framework for GAM in India

According to this framework for managing Indian global accounts, "cultural sensitivity and awareness," "building relationships," and "flexibility" are interrelated factors that play a crucial role in ensuring their successful management (see Figure 2).

Cultural sensitivity and awareness refer to the ability to understand and appreciate the cultural nuances and practices of the Indian market, which includes a deep understanding of the cultural values, customs, and communication styles of the Indian market, essential for building effective relationships with global accounts and stakeholders there.

Developing and maintaining strong and long-term relationships with global accounts and stakeholders in India requires the ability to understand their needs and expectations and effectively communicate and collaborate with them to achieve common objectives.

The framework demonstrates that cultural performance in managing Indian GAs can be achieved by integrating and effectively implementing/adopting:

- cultural sensitivity and awareness to understand the Indian market and its unique needs.
- strong relationships with global customers and stakeholders to ensure successful partnerships.
- flexibility in adapting to the dynamic nature of the Indian market in order to achieve the company's goals.

Here flexibility refers to the ability to adapt to the changing dynamics of the Indian market and to be able to respond quickly to the changing needs and demands of global accounts and stakeholders. It requires being:

- open to new ideas and approaches
- able to adapt to different cultures and ways of working
- able to anticipate and manage changes effectively.

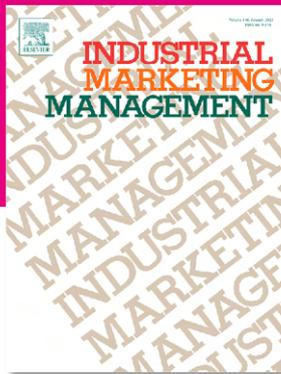
Conclusions

This case study of German managers with Indian global accounts examines the influence of cultural differences on GAM. It concludes that cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and difficulties in negotiations, as well as affect companies' trust, cooperation, and expectations. It would be worthwhile to highlight the five major cultural differences identified between Germans and Indians in support and training for global account managers in German and European companies which have customers in India or other countries with similar cultures.

*Based on 21 interviews with German global account managers with experience of customers in India

By Nayan Kadam, University of Bamberg, Germany, Nayan.Kadam@r-wu.de; Prof. Dr. Barbara Niersbach, Ravensburg-Weingarten University of Applied Sciences, Weingarten, Germany; Prof. Dr. Björn Ivens, Ravensburg-Weingarten University

Calling all KAM researchers!



Opportunity to publish in IMM's Special Issue Transformative times for KAM

In recent years businesses have experienced major disruptions from technological, ecological and social forces that have the potential to re-shape current and future business practices within and across firms (e.g., Dubey et al., 2021; McGrath et al., 2021; Rusthollkarhu et al., 2022). These forces impact both suppliers and customers and therefore Key Account Management (KAM), which sits at the heart of the interactions and activities between them. For instance, a report by McKinsey reveals that "more than three quarters of buyers and sellers say they now prefer digital self-serve and remote human engagement over face-to-face interactions—a sentiment that has steadily intensified even after lockdowns have ended." (Bages-Amat et al., 2020).

Key account managers at the fulcrum of the business-to-business relationship are necessarily involved with implementing and adapting to transformations. Key account managers are involved in intra- and inter-organizational network structures (Gupta et al., 2019; La Rocca et al., 2016) and they can also develop their role to better fit the changing business climate. They participate in a wide range of communication activities with key customers and make plans and decisions which affect the buyer - seller network.

Call for papers

This call for papers intends to focus on a variety of ongoing changes that have the potential to impact the role of KAM and, consequently, the nature and content of key business-to-business relationships, particularly:

1. Disruptive events that are reshaping global supply chains, which have revealed issues such as excessive dependence on certain suppliers and the general scarcity of raw materials, energy and components. The KAM organization could develop its role to become central in helping customers find alternative solutions.
2. The increasing adoption of digital

technologies generates opportunities for KAM (Lautenschlager and Tzempelikos, 2021), but also poses challenges caused by the empowerment of buyers (Ancillai et al., 2019). This represents a substantial shift in KAM practice, originally focused on personal selling, towards the development of supplier/buyer inter-personal relationships.

3. Sustainability and its overlooked effects in business-to-business contexts (Sharma, 2020) should be a concern for KAM organizations. The monumental sustainability challenges of today (Chakrabarti et al., 2020) can only be addressed by inter-organizational collaboration. The role of the KAM-organization is paramount in establishing sustainability collaboration projects between key b2b partners, potentially, shifting the focus of KAM from individual buyer-supplier relationships to a stakeholder/business ecosystem perspective.

Extant literature provides only limited insights into how KAM organizations are surfing the evolution of business environment and its complex realities, and empirical investigation remains particularly slim. This special issue aims to explore this gap and make a contribution to current understanding by enriching the research agenda on KAM. While both buyer and seller organizations are experiencing pressures from profound transformations, a deeper insight into the parameters that would enable them to improve their KAM practices and key-customer relationships would be very valuable.

Sub-themes and sample questions

1. How do disruptive events (such as effects of the pandemic, supply chain disruption, search for greater supply independence, energy crisis etc.) change/transform KAM?
 - Do firms rethink KAM in times of disruption?
 - How do key account managers adapt?
 - How do key account managers adapt/innovate their role to accommodate/fight disruptions?
 - How/do organizations interpret the need of a 'network view' in KAM to capture the increasing complexity in the business environment?

2. How do new technologies change the role of KAM?
 - Do new ways of buying/interfaces with suppliers change key account managers' working practices and tools used?
 - How is artificial intelligence used (or could be used) in supporting decision making in KAM?
 - How do organizations support key account managers to acquire new skills and embrace new technologies?
3. How does sustainability impact KAM from an intra and inter-organizational perspective?
 - What is the role of key account managers in intra- and inter-organisational sustainability initiatives? What kind of impact do stakeholders and the business ecosystem have?
 - To what extent are sustainability concerns and initiatives matched and shared between suppliers and customers?
 - Is there a negative (or dark) side if key account managers ignore sustainability?

We welcome papers of different types (conceptual and empirical papers, quantitative and qualitative) that examine change/innovation in the role, performance and effect of KAM and key account managers as consequence of current transformative events. As the theoretical lenses employed in KAM research notoriously have their roots in different disciplines (Ivens et al., 2018), we welcome studies that purposefully combine and draw on different theories and methodological approaches.

For further information [click here](#) or contact one of the guest editors.

Members, what do YOU want researched? Email info@a4kam.org

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