

Editorial



Dr Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chair



PERSONALO VALDYMO
PROFESIONALŲ ASOCIACIJA



The Association for
Key Account Management

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KAMaraderie

Hello? Where are you?

If you're in the UK or elsewhere in Europe, you should come to the AKAM workshops on 13th June. It's a unique opportunity to upgrade your game and recharge your batteries! And you can optimise your time and your gain through the half-day workshop on New technologies in KAM on 12th.

We've chosen Guildford because it's really easy to get to - right by Gatwick airport, with constantly shuttling buses from Heathrow and London. Plus a frequent train service.

Why? What will you gain?

- Currency and important updates - the latest KAM insights and methodologies.
- Support and advice - you'll discuss critical issues with experts and peers
- Network-building - research says your network is one of your most important attributes
- Advancing in your ecosystem - everyone and everything says KAM isn't just about supplier/customer pairs now. To be effective these days you need to extend into the business ecosystem - which we'll bring to you in Guildford.

KAM is a tough and complicated job, so come to the University of Surrey Business School in June to get the boost you need! The opportunity only comes by once a year now. (See p4)

Now's the time! Register [here](#) by 1st June

Do you have some ideas and insight into KAM that you could share with others? Then don't keep it to yourself or let it go to waste! Drop me an email (address below) and we'll find the right medium for sharing it. You'll enjoy the process and enhance your image at the same time!

Best wishes,
Diana

Dr Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chair

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FREE Open webinar - Feedback and AI in KAM action planning

Dennis Chapman, Founder of the US-based Chapman Group, is a great exponent of the value of data, so he'll pinpoint the right leading feedback info to gather and how to interpret it. He'll explain what it's telling us and how to use it to assess the now state of the relationship between a strategic supplier and its key account. Not to be missed!

Key learning points:

- Feedback and performance metrics that provide valuable insights
- AI and Relationship Management, the connection to guide the way
- Example of a dashboard approach in account planning
- Launching metrics – what, how, by whom and when?
- Challenges associated with any metric-based program
- The future!



[Find out more here](#)

Dennis Chapman, Chapman Group, USA

5th July



FREE Open webinar - How do you measure up v the 3 crucial KAM success drivers?

Key account management success is much more likely when the right mind-set, skill-set and tool-set (and 3 supporting capabilities) are in place. But what does 'right' mean? Simon Hazeldene will explain

Webinar highlights:

- How to know if you're working at the right level of KAM
- The capability responsible for the majority of KAM success
- Critical mind-sets required for KAM success
- How "split screen thinking" underpins KAM
- The common mistake that will have your key account managers defecting to your competitors



[Find out more here](#)

Simon Hazeldene, Mentor Group

FREE Open webinar
Friday, 31st May

Feedback and AI in customer-centric KAM action planning
Denis Chapman, The Chapman Group, USA

IN-PERSON meeting, P4
12th & 13th June

University of Surrey, Guildford, UK
(Via London LHR & GTW airports)

AKAM 'Technical'
Wednesday, 12th June
Afternoon, 2.00 – 5.00

Delivering Customer Centricity through emerging technologies
| Prof Niema Heirati, University of Surrey

AKAM Workshop day
Thursday, 13th June
All day, 9.30 – 5.00

AI and KAM??? | Giedre Rajuncė, Serial entrepreneur, Lithuania

Emotion in KAM | Filoumena Zlatanou, QMUL

KAM-Procurement Relationships: Danger of Corruption! | Prof Stephan Henneberg, Queen Mary University London

Well-being in the workplace: Managing stress | Charlotte Bull, The Human Habits

FREE Open webinar
Friday, 5th July

Three drivers for KAM success
Simon Hazeldene, Mentor Group

FREE Open webinar
Friday 13th September

The challenge of internal alignment
Denise Freier, ex CEO SAMA & Bob Sacco, ex IBM MD, USA



In-Person Technical workshop & full AKAM meeting, Guildford

Wed 12th June (afternoon) & Thu 13th June (all day)

AKAM Technical:
Wed, 12th June

Delivering Customer Centricity through emerging technologies



With Nima Heirati, Surrey Business School, University of Surrey

Customer centricity is a way of doing business that places customers – not products, services, or technologies – at the core of their strategies. Achieving real customer centricity means designing everything else around this mindset. Many companies have started using new digitalization technologies to enhance customer-centric processes. In this workshop Dr Nima Heirati will clarify the potential for new technologies in your relationships with key customers and take you through a toolkit to get them adopted by your organisation.

Optional AKAM Social - Informal networking event
12th June, at the Coppa Club, the Georgian Townhouse, Guildford High Street (7.00-10.00 p.m.)

(Not included in meeting attendance)



Location: Hosted by the university of Surrey, UK.

Stag Hill, University Campus, Guildford GU2 7XH

AKAM full day meeting:
Thu, 13th June

AI and KAM???



With Giedre Rajuncė Serial entrepreneur and innovator.

- What's true and what's not about AI today?
- Does AI and sales/ KAM have anything in common?
- Will AI make it better or worse?
- Concerns and opportunities.

Emotions in Key Account Management



With Filoumena Zlatanou, QMUL

- Signalling trust and satisfaction to enhance engagement and long-term growth.
- Overcoming challenges, addressing negative emotions
- Incorporating emotional awareness and management into KAM strategies

Non-Members
€120

Register for this event and receive a 12-month membership to AKAM for free! Access over 250 resources and attend inspiring events.

Members
FREE

This ticket is for those with Corporate, Programme or Individual membership with AKAM. You still need to register to attend.

KAM-Procurement Relationships: Danger of Corruption!



With Stephan Henneberg, Queen Mary University of London

- Strong inter-personal relationships between KAM and Procurement is performance-enhancing, but...
- ...it can also increase the likelihood of 'over-trusting', resulting in (often inadvertent) actions against the interests of their organisations.
- So too strong and close inter-personal relationships between KAM and Procurement managers may reduce and corrupt overall business relationship performance.
- Mitigation strategies are needed to ringfence the positive performance outcomes of strong KAM and Procurement relationships while reducing the danger of corruption.

Well-being in the workplace: Managing stress



With Charlotte Bull, The Human Habits

- Understanding Emotional Intelligence: Learn the basics of EQ and how it impacts personal wellbeing and workplace dynamics. Gain insights into your emotional intelligence and how to leverage it for stress management.
- Actionable Stress Management Techniques: Equip yourself with practical, evidence-based strategies to manage stress, both personally and within teams.
- Building a Supportive Workplace Culture: Learn how to embed a culture of wellbeing that supports mental health first aid, emotional intelligence, and inclusivity.

Click here to find out more or register now!

KAM-wrecking key customer picks

How poor selection can destroy KAM



Dr Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chair

The selection of key accounts is often a surprisingly casual and poorly executed process. And poor selection is likely to be followed by poor results. So why does it happen and why is it important that it doesn't?

Maintaining KAM seems to be a constant battle for many companies, possibly because it requires cross functional commitment to deliver to key customers' expectations, but also because businesses mostly operate on very short-term objectives, and KAM's payoff is medium- to long-term.

Which is not to say that there's no short-term rewards. But it does require action and investment right now to reap the payback in the future, which is most probably at least a year or two out. So that means incurring internal disturbance and maybe cost NOW for future gain, which a lot of companies seem to find very difficult. Even though it is the essential nature of any investment: invest now, gain later!

Short-termism is the enemy of KAM

In order to maintain a KAM programme, decent returns on those investments need to be demonstrated. If the

right accounts have been chosen, that shouldn't be a problem. From anecdotal experience over many years, a good KAM programme grows the key account portfolio faster than the rest of the customer base, often at about twice the rate.

Growth is fundamental to most companies so such an outcome should be deemed a success and the principal objective of the KAM programme. Some companies manage to achieve a price premium with their key accounts, but many don't - these customers are no fools and know how to negotiate a good deal. Nevertheless, the increased volume (and other benefits) amount to more contribution to profits, which is surely the ultimate aim.

Poor performers bring KAM itself into disrepute

The problem comes when customers who might be already big but unlikely to grow for the supplier are included in the key account portfolio. So when the KAM programme is reviewed, these customers dilute the performance on the key growth metric and thus bring the whole initiative into disrepute.

Of course, you need to treat your big, steady customers well. But equally and clearly, you should avoid investing in them if you can't see the likelihood of a good return. The resources you waste on them could have been used with an account offering growth opportunities.

Then when the CEO wonders if the results would have been the same without KAM, he/she may well be right in those cases. If you haven't made the distinction between these customers and 'real' key accounts, senior management will probably fail to distinguish between them too and condemn the KAM programme as a whole.

If the right selection is so important, how and why does it often go wrong?

What's wrong with key account selection?

There's plenty of ways !

- large pre-set target number
- too many accounts
- same 'fair' number for each division/country
- instinctive choice of 'obvious' candidates
- legacy accounts
- poor set of criteria, poor process
- current size over emphasized v potential
- exaggerated attractiveness
- assessment by single, biased individual
- unverified information
- willingness to respond not established
- it's just a list!

1&2. Too many accounts

Investment in customers may mean money, but most of it is time. Much of that time needs to be contributed by functions outside the Commercial department: which functions, exactly, depends on the unique offer made to each key account. Let's be clear – key accounts are not interested in receiving more of your attention unless it leads to useful action that delivers tangible value. Key account managers identify and specify desirable value for their customers, but they are not in a position to provide it.

The delivery functions of the company have to perform for the whole customer base, and there's a limit to how much variation and exception they can cope with. If too many accounts are selected, key account managers find themselves making empty, unfulfillable commitments which will enrage disappointed customers who, if not genuinely key, are still sizeable and important.



3. 'Fair' number for each division/country

It's an unarguable fact that some divisions and countries do more business than others. It's also unarguable that every organisation has finite resources. As commercial entities, their aim must be to achieve the best return on those resources. Where a division or country has, for example, 10% of the turnover compared with another SBU, it is unlikely to have any customers that can make the returns available from the key accounts of the larger entity. Harsh but true. And investing resources where they can't

possibly make the returns required will have a backlash on the whole KAM programme.

4&5. 'Obvious' selection

Many suppliers just make a list of their key accounts on the basis that they are 'obviously' the right ones to choose, without exploring why they think so. It's often a mix of big accounts and 'friends and familiars' from the past and present (but not necessarily the future). Henkel (chemicals, based in Germany) found that the key accounts it 'liked' best cost them a lot, but profitability and growth were poor. They hadn't realised that some demanding key accounts – disliked by their people – performed very well for them. But it took a research project to establish these facts, they weren't visible from looking at the portfolio as a whole.

Some suppliers believe there will be a clear grouping of key customers 'out there', that their size will have selected

them automatically. But selection of key accounts depends on finding the alignment between each customer and supplier, and then both wanting to work together: so even in the same marketplace the real portfolio is different for each supplier, and **NOT** obvious.

6. No process/poor process

Surely decisions with the serious implications that follow KA selection should be made through a considered process? Maybe not, it seems. Often a list is assembled based on minimal data, discussed at a meeting and that's it – selection made! It's often

based on a single, quantitative criterion, generally historical sales. That ignores qualitative factors like customer behaviour, which can be crucial in determining the 'quality' of turnover in terms of profitability – see Henkel above. It also overlooks important external factors, e.g. growth or decline in the customer's markets.

There should be a balanced set of criteria around customer attractiveness factors (about the customer); another set of criteria owned by the key account (about your company), and a process to collect data and arrive at a reasonably accurate assessment of them (see next Bulletin for a full description) before making the selection.

7. Current size over-emphasized v potential

This article suggests that the real success criterion for key account management is growth – profitable growth, of course. So the customers receiving KAM treatment should be those with the most growth potential. Some of those will not be in the biggest top 10 (yet) but they should be the ones with the capacity to grow – in their markets, in their organisation and in their strategies.

Past/current sales are not necessarily a good indicator of potential: they don't reliably reflect the future. After all, your sales are as much an assessment of your own organisation's performance to date as it is of the customer's. So other criteria (like their market growth) should be applied that include expectations of potential. Selection decisions should be all about the future – the past is over.

8&9. Assessment bias

The key account manager shouldn't be the only person who is well informed about the customer, others in the supplier must have dealings with them too. So the key account manager doesn't need to be – and shouldn't be – the only person assessing the customer's attractiveness. Relying on the view of a single individual would be a bad idea anyway, but particularly if it's someone who feels that they have a vested interest in getting their customer adopted as a key account.

It should come as no surprise that key account managers tend to



exaggerate their own customer's attractiveness. Inflating scores to produce the 'wrong' decision is in nobody's interest, especially not the key account manager's. Over-optimistic scores set up inflated expectations, and the key account manager will suffer the backlash if they are not fulfilled. Furthermore, wrongly selected customers will impact the performance of the portfolio overall, resulting in the negative judgements of the whole KAM programme that we are trying to avoid.



10. Unverified information

Companies can be surprisingly deluded about their customers, even longstanding accounts. Sometimes they don't have key information because they've never asked for it! Some key account managers are reluctant to ask fundamental questions like 'How much do you spend annually on goods and services like ours'? This is a crucial piece of information and while some customers won't tell you, many will. There's no reason for them to be offended by this question or other relevant queries.

There are alternative ways of finding out the size of the customer's 'wallet', but it clearly is an essential piece of information – among others – which should not be assumed without external verification. Suppliers can be amazingly wrong when they don't check fundamental information with their customers!

11. Willingness to respond not established

While you can select any company as a key account, there's really no point unless they are going to behave as a key account. KAM is not something that you can impose unilaterally on a customer. None of your resourceful strategies will succeed unless the customer plays their part, so unless they are willing to do so your initiatives will potentially be a waste of resources.

The most important element to establish before finalising the key account selection is that the customer is willing to participate in the relationship and work jointly with you to develop the right strategies and then adopt them.

The 'partnership' word is much over-used in KAM and mistrusted by customers (not without reason). But being open to partnership, even if that's not where the relationship is now, is the ultimate killer criterion in key account selection. If it's not going to be there, in the foreseeable future, there's no point in designating that company as a key account.

12. It's just a list

A list is an oversimplification that doesn't illuminate the nature of key accounts. As already explained, the customer's current view of your company needs to be included in the selection process, and mixing it in with your view of their attractiveness just muddies the waters. A matrix presentation of the portfolio will reflect both points of view and identify different types of key account: those that are already very substantial and of current strategic importance, and those with substantial potential who will be major growth contributors.

Because it may be hard to exclude them, some other really big customers get included even if they can't or won't grow, or where you get low profitability business you don't want to grow. You can include a few of them as another type of KA – but recognise them for what they are not! The matrix helps to identify which is which, to ensure that you put your money and efforts into those who can and will give you a return for it.

Conclusion

- Has your company fallen into any of these traps?
- Do you feel that some so-called key accounts shouldn't be in the portfolio?
- Are they taking up resource that could be better used elsewhere?
- Do you think that undermines internal perceptions of the value of KAM?
- Does that scepticism make your job harder?

Clearly, there are many pitfalls in selection to avoid, but it's really, financially and strategically important to make and present a definitive selection.

The next issue of the Bulletin will describe the whole process in 7 steps.

Dr Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chairperson | May 2024

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AKAM News



Key Account Manager of the Year Award

Highly commended: Luca Tiozzo

The process - "I was thrilled to submit my application and felt truly honored to be recognized for my achievements and contributions. Applying for the Key Account Manager of the Year Award 2023 allowed me to reflect on my professional journey and acknowledge the efforts I put into my job every day.

The process involved self-reflection and introspection, as well as an opportunity to connect with my

peers and colleagues. I believe that receiving an Award of this kind provides validation of my accomplishments and competencies and represent a significant milestone in my professional journey.

It also helps as a source of inspiration and motivation to continue pushing myself to achieve even greater success and provide a boost of confidence and motivation to continue striving for excellence in KAM".

The situation - Bonfiglioli (Italy) leads the power transmission market. The past three years presented a global supply chain crisis with challenges

such as limited raw materials, increased demand, and soaring prices. The importance of product readiness was crucial to remaining competitive in the market. Bonfiglioli successfully addressed customer needs through an interdisciplinary task force that identified a common bottleneck, co-engineered with the customer to find an alternative in the market, and tailored the supply flow.

The result was the production of three interchangeable variations of the same gearbox produced in three countries near the customer factories. The strategy proved successful, and Bonfiglioli, as a result, has strengthened its partnership with the customer besides a rewarded increase in more profitable business.

**Next year, it could be you!
2024 applications open soon.**

**Winning Key Account
Manager of the Year 2023
Michele Carlos
Viatrix, Philippines**

PostGraduate Diploma in KAM launches in 2025

AKAM and TUDublin have gained accreditation for the only PostGraduate Diploma in KAM in the world! Online and a natural follow-on from the PG Certificate (you'll need to do that first) - 30 more credits and 2/3 of the way to a Masters. At last, proper qualifications for key account managers!

Transfer to the UK

AKAM is now fully established as a not-for-profit company in the UK. Our move from Ireland was just prompted by administrative convenience and because, now we have members worldwide, staying in the eurozone is less important than we originally thought. So membership subscriptions - still the best thing you can do with your budget in KAM! - will change to GBP: individuals £120; full corporates £5,500; programme members £2750; and education £4,500.

New members of the Academic Advisory Board

We think it's important to bring you the latest findings in and around KAM and, indeed, to encourage and enable more KAM research. Too much of what companies do with KAM is based on instinct rather than properly established knowledge. Our Academic Board shares their latest projects in KAM and forms collaborations for new projects. So we are delighted to welcome new joiners Dr Sebastian Forkmann at the University of Alabama in the US and Dr Rodrigo Guesalaga of the Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Chile, stretching our reach further westwards.

Returning Board Member



Geoff Quinn was an AKAM Board Member for 5 years before joining SAMA's Board in the US for 2 years.

He was much missed by AKAM, so we are delighted to welcome him back to the AKAM Operations Board as of the beginning of May.

Sponsoring the GSSI Conference in Montpellier

AKAM is participating in the Global Sales Science Institute conference, mainly aimed at academics sharing their research into all things sales, partly to bring you the latest relevant findings that can benefit AKAM members. But also to highlight the importance of KAM and developments in it and its environment that researchers might usefully explore.

AKAM Ops Board Members - John Bailey, Director International Key Accounts & OEMs, HIAB, and Dr Diana Woodburn, AKAM's Chair - are leading a focus discussion group on KAM together with Dr Christine Lai of EM Lyon. And we're sponsoring two 'best papers'. Hoping to bring you fresh insights in the next Bulletin.

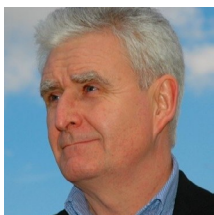
Alliance Management and KAM: mirror images



High street retailer

A well-known UK high street retailer wanted to bring together its technology suppliers into a coherent and collaborative group that could together amount to more than the sum of its parts, and dream up added value projects and activities to benefit the retailer customer.

The thinking around how to achieve the desired breakthroughs with multiple partners developed actionable best practices, through which the retailer could manage and benefit from its valuable ecosystem of suppliers and partners.



**By Mike Nevin,
Managing Director,
Alliance Best
Practice**

Not surprisingly, KAM and alliance management best practices are very similar. A research project scoring best practice application for key accounts showed that those with the highest scores were also the most commercially valuable accounts and likewise, those with the worst scores were the least valuable and most problematic accounts.

Clearly the two are linked, though which is 'cause' and which 'effect' isn't conclusive. But it does strongly imply that alliance management and key account management are closely related. So there are useful lessons for exponents of KAM in these cases from the IT sector.

Researching common success factors in commercially successful alliance relationships led to identifying a range of best practices that can be divided in to 5 areas as in the table:

1. **Commercial**
2. **Technical**
3. **Strategic**
4. **Cultural**
5. **Operational**

The case demonstrates the very substantial value that can come from working with the ecosystem – beyond traditional, two-party buyer-seller pairings. It should be a lesson in the

Best practices in alliance management and KAM

Supplier alliance management and key account management have converged over the last 20 years and are now closely connected, the mirror image of each other. The two management disciplines can both become more effective through further integration under the general categorization of strategic relationship management.

52 Best Practices in Strategic Alliances

Commercial	Technical	Strategic	Cultural	Operational
Co1 Joint Business Value Proposition (BVP)	T11 Valuation of assets	S20 Shared objectives	Cu31 Business to business trust	O39 Alliance process
Co2 Due Diligence	T12 Partner company market position	S21 Relationship Scope	Cu32 Collaborative corporate mindset	O40 Alliance Audit
Co3 Optimum Legal / Business Structure	T13 Host company market position	S22 Tactical and strategic risk	Cu33 Collaboration skills	O41 Revenue flow
Co4 Alliance Audit	T14 Market fit of proposed solution	S23 Risk sharing	Cu34 Dedicated alliance manager	O42 Business plan
Co5 Key metrics	T15 Product fit with partners offerings	S24 Exit strategies	Cu35 Alliance centre of excellence	O43 Communication
Co6 Alliance reward system	T16 Identified mutual needs in the relationship	S25 Senior executive support	Cu36 Decision making process	O44 Health check
Co7 Commercial cost benefit	T17 Process for team problem solving	S26 B2B Strategic alignment	Cu37 Other cultural issues	O45 Alliance charter
Co8 Commercial benefit	T18 Shared Control	S27 Fit with strategic business path	Cu38 B2B Cultural Alignment	O46 Change mgt.
Co9 Process for negotiation	T19 Partner accountability	S28 Other relationships with same partner		O47 Operational metrics
Co10 Expected Cost value ratio		S29 Common strategic ground rules		O48 Operational alignment
		S30 Common vision		O49 Exponential breakthroughs
				O50 Internal alignment
				O51 Project plan
				O52 Issue escalation



potential of such an approach for key account managers struggling to find differentiation and new value for their key account.

Engineering manufacturer

This manufacturer had identified five elements in its global physical logistics which cost it well over £100,000 per year, and had set a target to reduce costs by 20% within 4 years.

- Road transport
- Warehousing
- Freight forwarding
- Packaging
- Inbound/outbound logistics

The company believed that collaboration between chosen preferred partners in each area would drive process improvements and lead to cost savings. Personal interactions between the key account managers in each of the chosen elements were critical to achievement of the target.

As would be expected, the business was extremely valuable to the account managers identified. But despite the long-term contract value of the business, some of the key account managers were simply incapable of acting in a collaborative manner. Instead of viewing each activity and process from the perspective of the value it would create for the client, they consistently viewed it from the perspective of ‘What’s in it for me’.

They were loath to attend brainstorming sessions and share knowledge with the other account managers in the group and they very often criticised other account

managers to the client (not a wise move in a customer-driven project!). The manufacturer reluctantly came to the conclusion that they must request the removal of certain account managers from the project. In at least one case this led to a company being excluded from the project altogether.

Some account managers seemed to find it impossible to act in an alliance related manner and consequently lost business.

Global systems integrator

Some years ago one of the biggest wanted to develop a consistent and coherent alliance sales process. The best practice research led to the development of a methodology called ‘The Collaborative Business Experience’ in which the systems integrator partnered with technology companies to deliver more holistic value to clients.

They looked at how a Collaborative Business Experience could be a unique feature of their account management programme. The systems integrator’s key account managers would aspire to become ‘Trusted Advisors’ of major clients and would use the partnering techniques and processes in the Collaborative Business Experience to partner effectively with the client.

As one major account executive put it: “We don’t want to be an order taker, we want to be a trusted adviser to our key clients, and to do that we need to treat

them as a partner and not a customer. A customer is someone you sell to. A partner is someone you create joint value with”.

If you are a major account manager treat your client like a partner not a customer

For further information on the Collaborative Business Experience [click here.](#)



Telecoms

Internal research showed that, in answers to the question, ‘What skills do you currently lack that you will need in the future?’ collaboration came in the top three places across all divisions of the telecoms company. So they set up training in collaboration for all account managers. Collaboration is much more than just a positive mindset, it has its own principles and practices to be learned and trained in (see Institute of Collaborative Working (ICW)).

As a result of the change in approach from its key account managers, the company consistently outperformed bigger competitors and gained significant market share through demonstrating and deploying exceptional agility and innovation through collaboration.

You can gain big dividends by training your account managers in alliance management techniques.

Large global systems integrator

In 2021 a global systems integrator surveyed over 300 of its partners and produced a paper entitled 'Building high impact partner ecosystems'.

(Click here to view)

The research concluded: "It's a different world out there now when it comes to the interactions and business relationships between providers and partners. Providers must lead with a mindset focused on shared ecosystem success that fosters co-innovation and collaboration with partners, or face existential threats to their businesses.



Providers should offer their partners a path for growth and help develop the capabilities they need to achieve that growth. Create a partner strategy with partner and customer experiences at the core—experiences that enable meaningful outcomes and profitable growth for the partner, supported by the provider's capabilities, data and support.

Partners have more choices of providers than ever. Be the provider of choice".

One account stood out. The key account manager for the customer set up regular two-weekly face to face meeting with another technology company's general manager who was responsible for the same customer on their side. They had only one agenda item 'What can we do together to improve the customer's business in the UK?'. The account's CIO and other key suppliers to the same company

asked if they could attend too, with the result that revenues from the account increased fourfold in three years!

If you want to increase the revenue from your key accounts, improve the client's performance by involving both your client and your client's ecosystem of suppliers and partners in joint alliance planning.

with clients, utilising alliance skills and approaches to create joint value.

The approach is not without its challenges:

- Some people are not natural collaborators and will fail in the role if forced to act in an 'alien' way
- Account managers in established and valuable accounts are extremely important and powerful people in the hierarchy of many companies. Firing them when they do not act in a collaborative fashion is not an option. The revenue implications are too dire to contemplate.
- Drawing the line between active and value adding collaboration and 'going native' is extremely fine and it takes real skill to manage both aspects.
- Both alliance management and account management are heading towards strategic relationship management. A fusion of both disciplines into a collaborative approach to partner ecosystem development should put selected key accounts at the centre of the ecosystem.
- In such a model the key, indeed the only question that the ecosystem managers should be asking themselves, is 'How can we help our client improve through acting collaboratively together?'

What does this mean for the future of KAM?

Best practices in both KAM and alliance management are converging and the future for account managers lies in developing collaborative relationships



By Mike Nevin, Managing Director, Alliance Best Practice Ltd

mike.nevin@alliancebestpractice.com or info@alliancebestpractice.com

Related Resources

[The collaborative business experience™](#)

[Strategic partnership conversations: from supplier-customer to partnership](#)

[Are you offering a genuine partnership or just rebranding sales?](#)

Want access to 250+ additional resources? See [page 15](#) for more information.



Job opportunity

Key Account Manager – UK & Ireland

As pioneers and global leader, Hiab is ambitious to write forward our success story, inspiring and shaping our industry. The world in which we operate with our class-leading products, intelligent services and innovative digital solutions is constantly changing.

Together, we keep everyday life moving to build a better tomorrow

We're looking for a **Key Account Manager** who will be responsible for supporting the head of the unit in the development and growth of the structure and guidelines for KAM. The position is responsible for all profit generation activities within the scope of Key Account Management in line with Hiab's business strategy and goals, and contributes to strategic decisions and future growth as part of Hiab's global key account team: based in the UK.

Main tasks and responsibilities

- Develop and maintain profitable business with designated account(s); responsibility for the budgeting and profitability.
- Provide attractive solutions to the key accounts (products, services and digital offering) and liaise with key internal stakeholders and centres of competence in all required business segments
- Support in developing a medium and long term strategy for key account development
- Expand sales, introduce new products / services to clients and organise visits to current and potential clients
- Retain and intensify long-term customer relationships by providing comprehensive integrated proposals for established accounts
- Responsible for the coordination of the deliveries, order to cash cycle, including Hiab equipment, installation scheduling, frameworks scheduling, truck deliveries and handover
- Coordination technical solution development to ensure customer needs are met or exceeded.

- Ensure Value Selling is implemented in all customer discussions
- Manage analysis and follow-up performance of the Key Account agreements and follow up and report of Key Accounts performance

What you'll need to succeed

- Relevant academic degree (e.g. master or bachelor in business)
- Experience in different sales and key account management roles as well as business development (preferable in the same or similar industry)
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- Strong experience in negotiating long-term deals
- Solution sales experience, service understanding
- Strong understanding of load handling business, understanding of current and future offering
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Helen Wilson, Chief Experience Officer at IPSOS explores the science of the forces of customer experience and their impact on KAM strategies. What are the essential elements driving successful feedback programs and what truly makes a difference to the customer journey? Who does it well? Find out where you can learn more about Customer Experience overall.

Joining the dots: from KAM to bidding. Article

This article takes you through the whole 9-step process through account management from business planning to customer feedback and retention. Its focus on the crucial bidding process includes a whole list of things not to do and why not. Which is invaluable, because often there's more to learn from mistakes than there is from an example of perfection.

When KAM corrupts. Research article

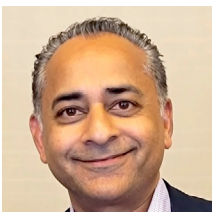
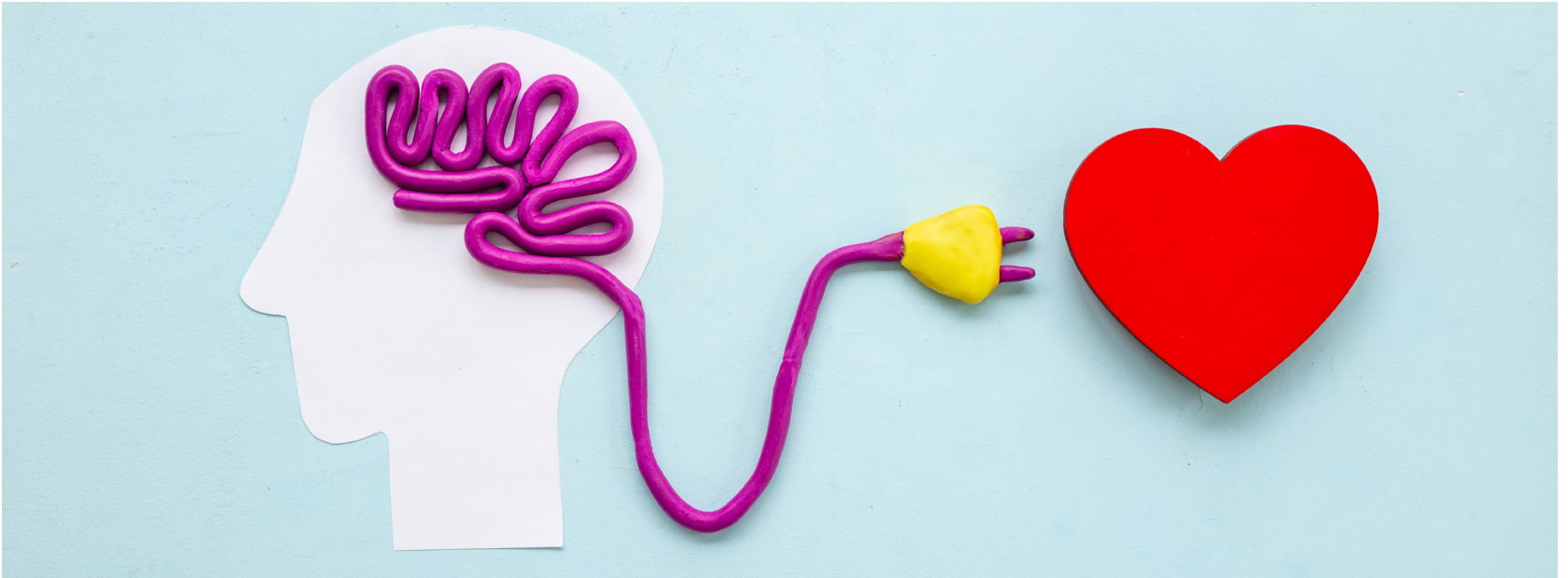
What is boundary spanner corruption? It isn't a familiar term to practitioners, but perhaps it should be, it's becoming an increasing threat. Corruption may seem like a tough label for everyday relationship management practices that don't necessarily involve bribes and direct monetary exchanges – but familiarity doesn't mean they aren't corrupt. There's a slippery slope to watch out for.

The QBR delusion. Paper

Quarterly (monthly/weekly/regular) business reviews are an important ingredient of your relationship with your key account: they are probably when you will see them most often. But maybe that's why they are often routine, dull, poorly prepared, frustrating – or that's how the customer sees them. Key account managers need to do better.

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Exercising your heart and mind for KAM



Janti Masani, CEO & Founder & Keshini Masani, Mindset Coach

CXOIMPACT
value growth relevance

What does it take to be a successful key account manager today? Customer and supplier expectations have moved on, now they're looking for key account managers to:

- **develop a growth mindset**
- **show up a different, authentic way**
- **demonstrate strong collaboration**
- **employ a high level of emotional intelligence**
- **build strong customer engagement.**



Structured minds, humanistic hearts

A structured mindset is crucial to giving meaning to what you see and hear. Clear and concise communication should employ words and visuals that convey and validate the meaning behind your understanding. A key account manager who is already good can become great by combining visual thinking (structured mindset) with a cognitive humanistic approach (growth mindset). Creating excellence through this route can positively impact yourself and others.

The combination of both approaches combines 'mind' with 'heart'. The 'mind' focuses on aspects such as data, insights, communication and even creativity, whereas the 'heart' focuses on aspects such as feelings, emotions, beliefs, and values. In both personal and professional lives, decisions are rarely made based on using the brain alone. Even professionals use a combination of what their brain (structured mindset) is saying together with what their heart (growth mindset) is telling them.

Key account managers who rely on just one mindset can negatively impact outcomes. To create excellence in how you show up and stand out, you need to use the two mindsets in conjunction to support one another. This article will highlight some of the key areas of the 'heart', as this is an area where KAM coaching is currently limited. Its value is

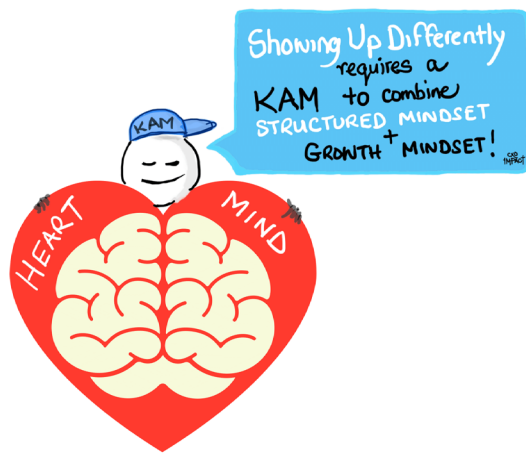
highly underestimated in business and in society today (Ed. See **Filoumena Zlatanou on 'The role of emotion in KAM'**, AKAM meeting, 13th June).

What is growth mindset?

Our mindset is very powerful: it can strongly affect success in all areas of our lives. Mindset relates to how success and failure are perceived, how you view your sense of self, and how you choose to respond in adverse situations. Your chosen mindset will guide your achievements, so to reach a high level of fulfilment and wellbeing you need to train your brain to think in a growth mindset and adopt a positive attitude, even when faced with adversity. You need to believe that your abilities can be cultivated and learn from setbacks.

Embracing a growth mindset can remove the fear of failing which often holds you back. A growth mindset embraces the belief that your abilities and intelligence can grow over time and lead to long-term success. Adopting a mindset of turning a negative into a positive - that failure is an opportunity to grow - is a way of exercising resilience. Failure is probably still an unpleasant experience but it does not have to define you.

There's a difference between success in a growth mindset and success with a fixed mindset. In a growth mindset, success can be viewed as an individual doing their best, learning and constantly improving. In a fixed



mindset, success can be seen as being the best and staying on top.

Key account managers are highly driven by creating successful outcomes, achieving results and striving to create win-win solutions. Two fundamental areas of growth mindset, grit and authentic self, have a major impact on how we present ourselves.

Grit and resilience

Grit is a standout factor that drives resiliency, having stamina that can be applied in all aspects of life. It can come from a mindset of doing something not because you must, but rather because you want to. Grit is the part of your character that relates to hard work and perseverance and can be understood as 'running a marathon, not a sprint'. Becoming 'gritty' is key to building your resilience and helping you to show confidence and seriousness.

It's often thought that resiliency in key account managers means toughness, extreme perseverance, and acting in haste in adversity. These moments, especially for a key account manager, are inevitable. The question is, how to change mindset and build resilience around these situations?

Key account managers must know how to cope with sudden change or unexpected events. For example, when you have been working on a deal for weeks and suddenly in the first email of the morning the customer announces that they want to take a different direction. Or a negative meeting with your manager on a Friday afternoon spirals your whole weekend downhill.

The power of pausing

A simple tool that has shown to have significant benefits is 'The power of pausing'. In an adverse situation people often want to disregard heavy

and uncomfortable feelings, which represents a mindset that can have a negative effect on wellbeing. It's important to take a period for digestion, pausing and allowing yourself to dwell in your initial feelings. Learning the art of slowing down is key to creating a positive impact on our mindset and helping you to get back on track.

In today's culture taking time to pause feels very uncomfortable. You enjoy a fast-paced life and taking a moment to pause makes you feel you might miss out on something. But conversational intelligence is important for key account managers, and developing the ability to pause is beneficial when understanding the needs of our customers. Only by pausing can you listen better, hear more, understand more and validate what it is the customer seeks.

Taking time to pause can make us more proactive rather than reactive in situations, and learning how to deal with silence is pivotal to avoid hasty 'survival mode' reaction. Being able to 'slow down to move faster' can make you more thoughtful and mindful when engaging in conversation and careful when reacting to both positive and negative situations.

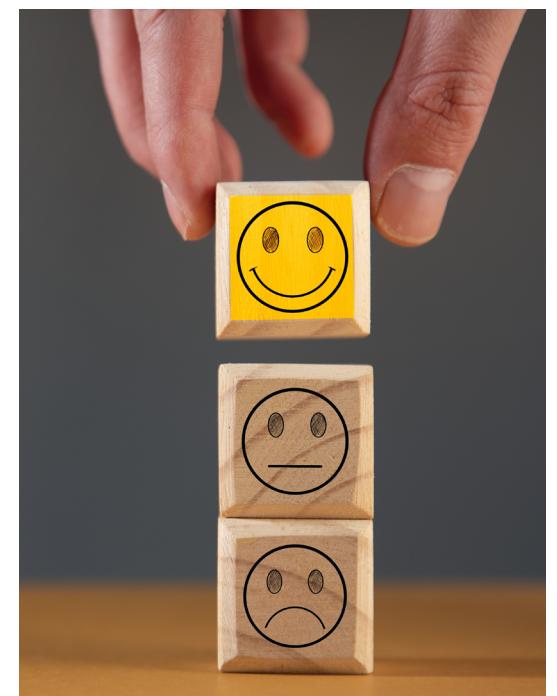
Taking even 90 seconds to pause and think through the situation and what choices you have to respond can make the difference between a favourable outcome and a setback. It's about learning how to make a measured response, not just to react. Turning the concept of pausing into a habit helps to differentiate you and supports long-term success.

Authentic self

To display your 'authentic self' you need to understand yourself - and others - through your strengths, beliefs and values. These are all key components of your persona that can be changed and developed. They help you to appear unique in a way that others appreciate. You want to be different from all the other key account managers the customer meets so they see our value in an authentic way that is 'true to yourself'. It's possible, but not easy.

You start by building the self-awareness and social awareness: technical skills are necessary too, but they are no longer sufficient alone. Key account managers must have

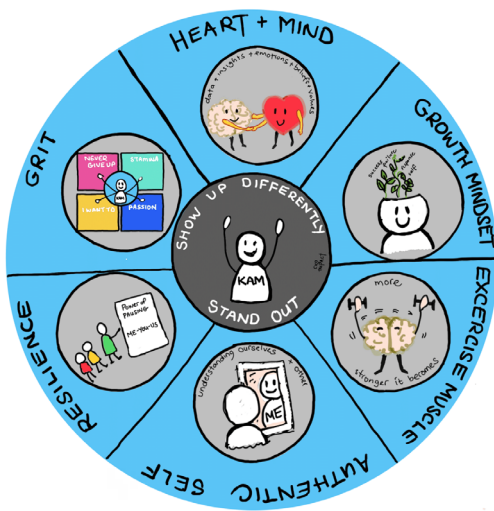
strong engagement skills to work with customers, teams and leaders, although few companies place enough emphasis on such attributes. When you are engaging with your team, managers, leaders and customers, you want to be thinking about how you appear to them. This means being aware of your own thoughts, behaviours and actions and how they impact others around us. Asking yourself simple questions such as "I feel...", or "Before I act, I choose..." can help you to become aware of your mindset, how it might be visible to others, and how to best manage it.



Social Awareness

Alongside self-awareness, you need to establish social awareness. Do you understand the environment and how people around us are feeling? This is known as 'reading the room'. Becoming aware of both verbal and non-verbal cues is key to being able to understand the mindset of others. For example, someone's eye contact, posture and subtle gestures shows how they are feeling. Asking questions such as "I see..." Or "I sense you are..." or "I think my team needs..." can be extremely beneficial to managing a situation before it takes over, for better or for worse.

Having self- and social-awareness is critical to recognising the emotions and mindset of ourselves and others. It is even more important to build that information into flexibly managing situations to avoid and resolve conflict or misunderstandings. Such skills are game-changers in growing trusting relationships. These key account managers communicate and



collaborate every effectively with their team and with customers.

Building the authentic self through this mindset starts with 'me' (self-awareness), then moves to understanding 'you' (understanding the thoughts, behaviours and actions

of others) and finally ending with 'us' – understanding the mindset as a collective. This is the 'me-you-us' framework.

Conclusion

The cognitive and humanistic approach is receiving new attention in KAM. Skills like grit and authentic self, self- and social-awareness have not previously been taught in business or at schools and universities. But the importance and impact of these skills for key account managers is becoming increasingly apparent, particularly as technology begins to take over some of the information supply that used to a large part of the job. Organisations are now realising that these 'softer skills' are the harder skills.

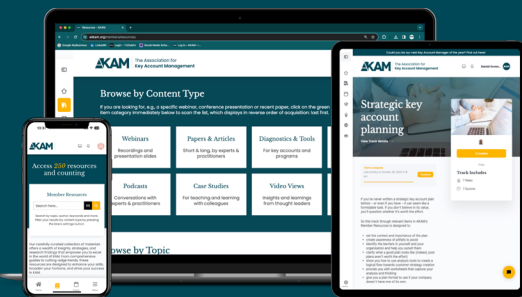
Developing these skills is a journey, it's not a matter of learning facts

and regurgitating them on demand. Becoming aware of your own mindset is the first step, and then build it up takes time, perseverance and patience. But the more you focus on it and practise, the easier it becomes – it's like a muscle, the more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes.

Many organizations want to develop their key account managers from good to great, to stand out, look and be different. Combining your 'mind' and 'heart' to become an even better version of yourself can create a huge impact, you'll be surprised!. It's a game changer!

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