

KAM BULLETIN

Advancing the standard and recognition of Key Account Management
through learning, support and connection

Q4 2024

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managers
talking KAM**

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PLUS

KAM qualifications
KAM of the year '24
New Resources

Editorial



Dr Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chair



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KAMaraderie

This point in the year is often a time for reflection, as business ramps up post-summer for many people. You might be looking at tough times ahead and wondering how safe your position is. And/or you are looking at a blizzard of change coming towards you - especially new technology - and wondering whether you'll cope and maybe even if you want to.

Organisations don't always recognise that your job - key account manager or KAM programme lead - is already complex, high level and high pressure. One of the common concerns we've heard over the years is the difficulty of communicating your job as a key account manager, the higher-level skills required to do it, and demonstrating that you possess them.

So AKAM has been working to close this gap. Together with the Technological University of Dublin, we have developed the Postgraduate Certificate in Key Account Management and now the next stage, a Postgraduate Diploma in KAM. Stopping work to study would be counterproductive and expensive, so these qualifications are designed to be delivered totally online: you can continue to work as a key account manager at the same time.

Now in its third year, the Certificate has given key account managers of all ages and maturities valuable frameworks and insights applicable to the business around them. The new Diploma builds on that much firmer foundation.

Being properly qualified gives you more confidence and security. *Page 04* tells you more, plus you can download the 'brochure' from there. You can apply now on the AKAM website, mid-January start. Just think what a real qualification could do for you!

Best wishes,
Diana

Dr Diana Woodburn
AKAM Chair

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Events

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Webinars occur on Fridays, normally at 11.15-12.15 GMT / 12.15-13.15 CET

FREE Open webinar

Friday, 18th October
11.15-12.15 BST
12.15-13.15 CET

Why KAM should embrace Account-Based Marketing to accelerate impact

With Dominique Côté & Kate Burda

FREE Open webinar

Friday, 29th November

How do mergers and acquisitions affect KAM?

With Elodie Colin-Petit, France

FREE Open webinar

Friday, 24th January 2025

Radical collaboration in progressive KAM

With Professor David Loseby

FREE Open webinar

Friday, 28th February 2025

Customer-centric digital transformation

With Dr Nima Heirati, University of Surrey

18th Oct

Account Based Marketing

Why KAM should embrace Account-Based Marketing to accelerate impact

Commercial enablement and strategy is top of mind for everyone. But peel back the layers to see that sales and marketing are still very silo'd in their approach to the customer.

Gone is the old precept of marketing led, sales enabled account-based marketing. Kate Burda and Dominique Côté introduce the integration of the two work horses of sales and marketing in customer value creation to create differentiation and drive effectiveness within strategic accounts. Learn a new methodology to make it happen:

Customer Led, Team Enabled

Find out more [here](#)



(L) Dominique Côté, Owner & Founder COSAWI Srl/inc
(R) Kate Burda, Owner & Founder Kate Burda and Co

Save the date!



27-28th March

**AKAM
Face to face
meeting**



**Siemens
HQ, Munich**

PostGraduate Qualifications in KAM

Learn, develop and **QUALIFY** in KAM while you're working

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Study at your own pace with online lectures and live tutorials.

Expert Lecturers

Learn from renowned industry specialists and thought leaders.

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Earn up to 60 European Credit Transfer points for future studies.

Practical Assignments

Apply theory to real-world scenarios with assignments.

PostGraduate Certificate

The **first** university-accredited qualification purely in KAM. Designed for working professionals.

What do you get?

- Development of your KAM understanding and upskilling your KAM approach.
- The first academically accredited KAM qualification worldwide, with the Technological University of Dublin. Expert lecturers ensuring academic rigour with value in practice.
- 30 ECTS, evidence of your level of learning, usable for further postgraduate study at many universities.
- Plus 12 months AKAM membership with access to its rich Member Resources.

Who should apply?

- New or aspiring key account managers and those switching roles
- Experienced managers seeking training
- Account managers in commercial or not-for-profit organisations.
- Applicants should have a level 8 first degree in any subject. If not, request exceptional entry.

How does it work? Via the Brightspace learning platform you'll access weekly recorded lectures (which you can visit as often as you like), supporting material and live tutorials. You'll have tasks to complete during lectures, gathered up as part of the assignments in addition to reflections on your experiences and observations. Plus a business-ready strategic key account plan.

Simply apply online!

Once your application is accepted, you'll need to pay the €3,000 fee. You'll then receive the student registration number for TU Dublin and your log in details for the programme modules on the Brightspace platform.

Apply Now

or visit a4kam.org/postgraduate-certificate/

PostGraduate Diploma

The **next level** of qualification for advancing, career minded key account managers.

Your career is developing and reaching out beyond simple supplier-customer relationships. You need Postgraduate Diploma skills to interact effectively with more and different professionals.

What do you get?

- Insight into areas of business only glimpsed by other account managers.
- An understanding of how and why fast-moving complex markets operate as they do, and your potential for influencing their development positively.
- The ability to participate in internal and external discussions about the supply chains that are the spine of your ecosystem and key to your success.
- The learnable elements of leadership that make all this possible.
- Plus 30 more ECTS from TU Dublin! NB You will be 2/3 of the way to a Master's degree! Look out for that final piece from 2026.

Who should apply?

- Holders of the Postgraduate Certificate in Key Account Management.
- Sorry, no exceptions, you need that grounding.

How does it work? Very much the same as the Postgraduate Certificate, with online graduation ceremony in early December.

Secure your place today!

Apply online and you will be accepted as soon as we confirm your Postgraduate Certificate. Then you'll need to pay the €3000 fee (same no travel, no extras!) by the end of November, for a mid-January start.

Apply Now

or visit a4kam.org/postgraduate-diploma/

Key Account Managers talking KAM



Gwenola Ducamp
Vetropack



Matt Sankary
Shipmoney

Navigating industry challenges and leveraging emerging technologies

We thought it would be interesting to 'compare and contrast' the situations and approach of two key account managers in very different sectors, Gwenola Ducamp of Vetropack and Matt Sankary of ShipMoney. Their businesses couldn't be more different – one is manufacturing a product, glass bottles for retail markets, and the other is a global B2B payments service – but many of the challenges they face are similar.

The exchange explored their roles, challenges, and strategies in managing key accounts in environments marked by rapid technological advances, geopolitical uncertainties, and evolving customer expectations. From financial services to glass bottles and the maritime industry to big beverage brands, their conversation reveals the multifaceted nature of key account

management (KAM) and insights into the future of the profession.

Very different sectors

Gwenola, based in Switzerland, explained her role at Vetropack, a prominent European producer of glass packaging. "We cater to a wide range of industries, including beer, soft drinks, mineral water, food, wine, spirits, and champagne," she notes. Vetropack's client portfolio spans from global giants to niche producers, reflecting a wide spectrum of customer needs and expectations. "Our role," she says, "is to ensure we deliver consistent quality while adapting to the unique requirements of each key customer."

Matt, an American who has spent almost two decades in Madrid, brings a different perspective from the maritime sector, working for ShipMoney. "Our business revolves around providing prepaid cards and banking services to maritime employers, enabling efficient crew payments and reducing the need for cash on board," he explains. His responsibilities extend across multiple geographies, including the Philippines, India, Greece, Cyprus, and Brazil, highlighting the global reach and diverse challenges of his role.

Data as the cornerstone of KAM

The conversation quickly turned to the critical role of data in managing key

accounts. Matt underscores how data has become a foundation element of his strategy. "Data allows us to offer transparency and build trust with our clients," he says. "Clients today expect more than just products or services; they want insights, trends, and a proactive approach to managing their needs."

Gwenola agreed, adding that Vetropack is intensifying its efforts to enhance its customer-centric approach through data-driven insights: "We're in the process of implementing more robust CRM systems to capture and analyse data effectively. This not only helps us understand our customers better but also enables us to anticipate their needs and offer the right customer experience for them". However, she also points out that this shift towards data-driven decision-making requires significant internal alignment and a cultural shift within the organisation.

Responding to geopolitical and economic shifts

Both managers acknowledged that recent geopolitical events, such as the Russian-Ukrainian war and the global COVID-19 pandemic, have substantially impacted their businesses and their jobs. Matt explained how these events have reshaped the maritime industry: "The pandemic initially brought cruise operations to a halt, causing a significant setback for us. However, it also accelerated digital transformation and digital payments are now more critical than ever." It also accelerated the company towards developing its business with commercial shipping, which has distinctly different requirements from cruise ships. Cargo ships have much smaller, more sophisticated crews with different requirements.

He continued, "The war in Ukraine has brought additional complexities, including sanctions, inflation, and volatile fuel prices, all of which directly affect our customer relationships and pricing strategies." The KAM team had to navigate these turbulent waters by frequently renegotiating contracts, developing more flexible payment options, and maintaining open communication with clients to manage expectations.

For Gwenola, the challenges have been similarly multifaceted. “The conflict in Ukraine directly affected us, especially since we have a production site there. Production had to be quickly shifted to other sites already working close to capacity. We had to adapt quickly to ensure business continuity while managing supply chain disruptions and rising costs,” she explains. Moreover, Vetropack faced the emotional impact of the conflict on its employees, prompting the company to enhance its support mechanisms and foster resilience within the team.



Leveraging technology and Artificial Intelligence

Matt is enthusiastic about the potential of AI to streamline processes and enhance customer engagement. “We’re leveraging AI tools to perform tasks such as writing complex Excel formulas, drafting emails, and summarising meetings,” he shares. “These tools are not only saving us time but also helping us improve the quality of our communication, especially in a global context where language barriers can be a challenge.”

He adds that AI is becoming increasingly integral to their operations. “We are exploring AI-driven analytics to better understand customer behaviour, predict trends, and tailor our offerings more precisely. This is particularly important in the maritime sector, where rapid decision-making can make a significant difference.”

It’s a different picture in Vetropack. “We are enhancing our customer-centric approach with data-driven insights. We’re investing in new CRM systems to capture and analyse data more effectively. It’s not just about understanding our customers; it’s

also about predicting their needs and responding appropriately.” But there’s a cultural shift needed within the organisation to make the most of this data. Gwenola recognises the potential benefits; “AI could help us automate repetitive tasks, improve accuracy in data analysis, and ultimately, free up more time for strategic thinking and customer engagement. But we’ve yet to fully adopt these technologies, there’s more the team needs to learn to utilise them effectively.”

Evolving customer expectations

Customer expectations are reshaping their roles and strategies. Matt highlighted that in the maritime sector, customers are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their financial dealings. “There is a growing demand for transparency, speed, and efficiency in transactions,” he noted. “This has pushed us to innovate continuously, offering new products and tailored solutions to meet these demands. Since cruise ships and cargo ships have very different crews in terms of size, sophistication and outlook, we have to evolve quite different services to meet their needs. The main thing they ‘share’ is a huge array of languages!”

Gwenola’s accounts are more focused on sustainability. “Our customers, especially in the beverage sector, are placing greater emphasis on sustainability. They have clear targets to reach and as a large industrial player we have to commit to environmental responsibility,” she explains. This shift has prompted Vetropack to explore more sustainable production methods, invest in

recycling initiatives, and adopt a more transparent approach in communicating their sustainability efforts.

Balancing internal and external demands

Both key account managers face a common challenge: balancing the demands of external customers with internal organisational requirements. Matt elaborates on the complexities of managing a globally distributed team across different time zones. “Effective communication is crucial, but it’s also one of our biggest challenges. Miscommunication or delays can lead to operational setbacks, which in our industry could mean delayed payments to crews – a situation we must avoid at all costs”.

Gwenola’s issue is more cross-function than cross-continent, she needs stronger internal alignment to support strategic account management. “We’re working to foster closer collaboration between sales teams and other departments like production, logistics, and quality control. Internal synergy is key to ensuring that we deliver a seamless customer experience,” she added. She was clear that building a cohesive internal culture where everyone understands and is committed to customer-centricity is essential for success.



Building resilience: a strategic imperative

Both key account managers needed resilience in their organisations in response to external shocks. Matt stressed the importance of flexibility in strategy and operations.

Continued page 11

Key Account Manager of the Year 2024 - is it you this time?



It's not just about this year – KAM's a long game, so tell us what you've done over the last 3 years, as a Key Account Manager.

We want to showcase KAM excellence, to give you the recognition you deserve and to inspire and encourage others. Take just a few moments to reflect what you've done, how you've worked to support your customer and your organisation. Just that's a rewarding process! Normally you don't have time to think, but you're selling yourself short.

Accept our invitation to reflect – on all the great things you've done, alone or with support.

Then just capture that in about 500 words (it's not a lot), particularly how you have delivered:

1. Depth and breadth of customer understanding
2. Creativity (of any kind – offer or support or new approach)
3. Customer value
4. Contribution to your organisation's strategic objectives.

Maybe if you know someone who's a great Key Account Manager, you can persuade them to enter? Your positive view alone would give them a boost! And a chance at winning the title this year.

Tell us in just 500 words by 1st December

There surely will be things of which you are justly proud! Recalling them gives perspective to what you have achieved and builds your personal development. Reach the shortlist and you get a video chat with the judges, which is a kind of coaching too.

**2023 Winner
Michele Carlos
Philippines**



"What started as transactional relationship evolved to value co-creation partnership with my account. Understanding the intricacies of the account's processes, providing data and purpose-driven insights, cross-functional collaboration and best practices sharing helped me to have a deeper understanding of key account management. These customer-centric initiatives led to the co-creation of innovative category management and customization of program execution pre-pandemic, during pandemic and post-pandemic approach. These created the **differentiation, impact and shape the direction of partnerships.**

I am extremely grateful for the encouragement of my mentors and nomination. I also encourage fellow key account managers to join as I took the opportunity not just for the competitive experience but to capture the thrill of sharing our value story. This challenge helped me discover more opportunities for personal and career growth.

It is truly an honor to be recognized as AKAM KAM of the year 2023. It is with continuous learning and development that will equip us and elevate us in today's competitive business landscape to drive innovative initiatives. Thank you, AKAM, and may you have more inspirational stories to showcase!"

**Join the ranks of
AKAM's Key Account
Managers of the Year**

**They did it -
so can you!**

**It could be you!
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2024**



**Michele Carlos
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2023**



**Sandro Closs
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2022**



**Thierry Josselin
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2021**



**Margaret Free
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2020**



**Amanda
Strawbrudge
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2019**



**Mark Sourd
Key Account
Manager of the
Year 2018**

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your KAM excellence**

Click here to enter

or visit a4kam.org/kam-of-the-year

Still thinking about entering? [Click here](#) to listen to a podcast all about the award!

Upcoming webinars, open to everyone!



Why KAM should embrace ABM to accelerate impact

Kate Burda and Dominique Côté introduce the integration of sales and marketing in customer value creation to create differentiation and drive effectiveness within strategic accounts.



How do mergers and acquisitions affect KAM?

At some point you are likely to be involved in a takeover or merger, partial or complete. Integrating key accounts afterwards and managing client expectations needs careful handling - processes can get broken and need to be consolidated. Be prepared! With Elodie Colin-Petit.



Radical collaboration in progressive KAM

Collaboration needs to be more than a mindset: to operate in complex organisations it requires structures and processes as well. Professor David Loseby will illuminate how collaboration works in reality and in KAM.



Customer-centric digital transformation

Dr Nima Heirati's model of technologies in customer interaction will take you through the bewildering collection available so you can see what does what, why and how. Not to be missed if you are going to thrive in this increasingly complex and digitised environment!

Webinars you shouldn't miss and don't need to!

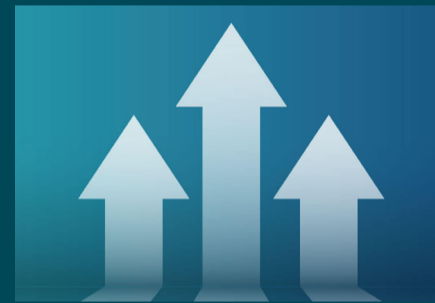
Already in Member Resources



The challenge of internal alignment.

Denise Freier, Ex CEO SAMA & Bob Sacco, ex IBM MD, USA

It's not customers who block KAM success, it's mostly a lack of internal alignment! Denise Freier ex CEO of SAMA and Bob Sacco ex IBM, give details of structure and processes to show it should work, with practical models to apply in your own organisation.



Three drivers for KAM success.

Simon Hazeldine, Mentor Group

Be mindful that "You will be delegated to people you sound like. Be a business-person not a salesperson." Which starts from a customer business-focused strategic key account development plan. Sound, practical guidance for key account managers.



Feedback and AI in KAM action planning.

Dennis Chapman, Chapman Group USA

Struggling to keep up with all the technology? How do key account managers cope with the sheer quantity of information, never mind putting it to good use? Dennis shows what some AI tools can do for key account managers to gain more, faster customer insight.

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Unlocking the SAM Journey

Through Center of Excellence, Executive Engagement, & ABM Mastery



By **Dominique Côté**, Owner and Founder, Cosawi

Disruption continues to drive innovation across industries, reshaping how businesses engage with customers.

In 2024, we're witnessing rapid changes as companies adapt to evolving market dynamics and shifting customer expectations. From advancements in technology to new consumer behaviors, organizations are rethinking their strategies to stay competitive. This evolving landscape underscores the importance of Strategic Account Management (SAM) in creating value and fostering long-term partnerships. Establishing a Center of Excellence (COE) is essential for navigating these changes and accelerating your SAM journey.

As businesses adapt to this new normal, the importance of SAM has become increasingly apparent. Organizations are now focused on enhancing their SAM practices to align with evolving customer needs and expectations. To accelerate your SAM journey, establishing a Center of Excellence (COE) is crucial. This article explores the role of a COE in transforming and sustaining

SAM efforts, focusing on three critical success factors:

1. **Creating a Center of Excellence (COE)**
2. **Securing Executive Sponsorship**
3. **Integrating Account-Based Marketing (ABM)**

Creating a Center of Excellence (COE)

A Center of Excellence (COE) is vital in guiding and sustaining strategic account management initiatives. It centralizes expertise, accelerates transformation, and ensures the sustainability of SAM efforts.

Why a COE is essential

1. **Centralized expertise:** A COE brings together SAM knowledge and best practices, serving as a hub for expertise that informs the organization's SAM strategy. This centralized approach ensures consistent application of effective SAM methodologies and tools across the organization.
2. **Accelerating transformation:** The COE plays a key role in expediting the transformation process by providing a structured framework for implementing SAM practices. It helps organizations navigate the complexities of adopting a strategic, customer-focused engagement model.

3. **Ensuring sustainability:** By establishing a COE, organizations can sustain their SAM initiatives over the long term. The COE monitors progress, addresses challenges, and adapts strategies in response to changing customer needs, ensuring that SAM practices remain effective and relevant.

Components of an effective COE

1. **Dedicated leadership:** A COE must report directly to the executive team to ensure alignment with broader organizational goals and adequate resource allocation. This reporting structure helps maintain a strategic focus on long-term partnership and customer-centric strategies.
2. **Cultural and structural shift:** The COE drives the necessary cultural change within the organization by promoting a customer-centric mindset and adapting business processes. This shift is crucial for aligning internal practices with the needs and expectations of strategic accounts.
3. **Customer-centric curricula:** The COE oversees the development and implementation of customer-centric curricula that align with the complexity and strategic importance of each account. This approach ensures that all teams are equipped to engage effectively with strategic accounts.
4. **Global coordination with local adaptation:** Balancing global strategies with local execution is essential. The COE provides a framework and support for local teams to customize their approaches while ensuring alignment with the organization's overall strategy.

Securing executive sponsorship

Executive sponsorship is crucial for the success of SAM initiatives. It ensures resource allocation, drives cultural change, and aligns SAM efforts with organizational goals.



The importance of executive sponsorship

1. **Resource allocation:** Executives play a key role in securing the necessary resources for SAM initiatives, including financial support and the commitment of key personnel. Their support is vital for the successful implementation and scaling of SAM practices
2. **Driving cultural change:** Executive sponsorship is essential for fostering a cultural shift towards a customer-centric approach. Executives influence organizational attitudes and behaviors, helping to build a culture that values long-term partnerships and strategic account management.
3. **Aligning with organizational goals:** Executives ensure that SAM initiatives are aligned with the organization's strategic objectives. This alignment is crucial for integrating SAM practices into the broader business strategy and demonstrating the value of SAM efforts to the organization.

Components of effective executive sponsorship

1. **Active Engagement:** Executives must be actively involved in SAM initiatives, not just as sponsors but as participants in key activities and decision-making processes. Their engagement helps to reinforce the importance of SAM and ensures alignment with organizational goals.

2. Championing the SAM Journey:

Executives should champion the SAM journey by advocating for its value and driving its integration into the organization's strategic priorities. This includes supporting necessary changes in processes and mindsets.

3. Monitoring and Support:

Effective executive sponsorship involves monitoring the progress of SAM initiatives and providing ongoing support. Executives should address any challenges that arise and ensure that the SAM efforts receive the attention and resources they need to succeed.

Account-Based Marketing (ABM)

Customer-Led and Team-Enabled

ABM is the R&D to the account team and the strategic account manager. It can support them with relevant insight (market and others) that will be personalized to the account.

ABM also owns the engagement plan which provides communication opportunities alongside the customer journey. It is deployed through an opti-channel versus an omni-channel plan. 'Opti-channel' focuses on having an optimised and personalised plan to execute the engagement plan, starting with the account and customer pain points, versus omnichannel plans that are too often derived from an inside-out approach.

- **Customer-centric approach** Traditional ABM often takes a marketing-first, sales-enabled approach, focusing on brand or product promotion rather than customer needs. In contrast, customer-led ABM prioritizes aligning with the customer's buying journey to deliver personalized value, fostering long-term partnerships instead of transactional relationships.
- **Integrated, outside-in thinking** Next-generation ABM emphasizes an outside-in perspective, where marketing aligns with customer needs and decision-making processes rather than pushing products. This approach differentiates the company by creating customer-focused communication strategies and leveraging insights that support both marketing and sales.
- **Breaking down silos** One of the biggest challenges in ABM is the siloed nature of marketing and sales efforts, often leading to disconnected messaging that frustrates customers. By integrating ABM into the SAM journey, companies can foster a seamless collaboration between departments, ensuring that the messaging is consistent and aligned with the customer's needs throughout their journey.
- **Optimizing communication touchpoints** Customer-led ABM focuses on optimizing communication by delivering the right message at the right time through the appropriate channel. This strategic touchpoint management enhances the relationship and accelerates decision-making by aligning with where the customer is in their buying journey.
- **Co-orchestration of account plans** Marketing and SAM should co-orchestrate the account plan, combining their expertise to drive success. The SAM offers deep customer insights, while marketing brings a broader view of organizational capabilities, helping to differentiate the company. This integrated approach leads to more relevant, personalized engagements.

- **Future-proofing with next-gen ABM** Aligning ABM with strategic account management creates agility, allowing companies to anticipate customer needs and deliver value sooner. This next-generation ABM builds a roadmap that not only meets current customer expectations but also helps anticipate future needs, making the company a more forward-thinking, customer-centric supplier.

Key Takeaways

- ABM must go beyond product promotion, focusing on customer needs and journey.
- Integrated marketing and sales teams, co-orchestrating account plans, offer greater value to the customer.
- Personalized insights delivered at the right time differentiate the company in the customer's mind.
- ABM isn't just tactical but a strategic lever that future-proofs customer relationships and aligns with broader commercial objectives.

This customer-led, integrated ABM approach aligns perfectly with the broader transformation in SAM, where cross-functional teamwork is essential to unlocking long-term success.

Conclusion

Establishing a Center of Excellence (COE), securing executive sponsorship, and integrating Account-Based Marketing (ABM) are critical steps in accelerating and sustaining your SAM journey. Each of these elements plays a vital role in enhancing SAM practices, building stronger partnerships with strategic accounts, and driving long-term growth and success.

By focusing on these key areas, organizations can navigate the complexities of modern business environments, create value for their strategic accounts, and achieve sustainable success.

Learn more about ABM on 18th October, FREE webinar with Dominique Côté and Kate Burda [Click here for more info & to register.](#)

Contact Dominique:
dcote@cosawi.com

Key Account Managers talking KAM (continued)

"We've had to rethink our approach, ensuring that we are agile enough to respond to unexpected challenges, whether it's a pandemic, a geopolitical conflict, or economic volatility," he explains. Key account managers, who have to relay and interpret the effects of shocks for customers, are the fulcrum for communicating and buffering the impact on customers.

He shared an example of how his team adjusted during the pandemic. "We pivoted to remote training for clients and introduced digital onboarding processes for new customers. That allowed us to maintain service levels despite travel restrictions," he said. This adaptability, Matt argued, is now a core competency for key account managers, who must navigate an unpredictable business environment.

Gwenola agreed and adds that resilience also involves emotional intelligence. "In times of crisis, our role extends beyond just managing accounts; we become trusted advisors and more to our clients. Understanding their concerns and being able to offer support is just as important as delivering on contracts," she remarks.



The future for KAM

Both reflected on what the future holds for key account management. Matt is fully embracing the opportunities presented by emerging technologies, especially AI.

He predicts that AI and data analytics will continue to reshape his industry, providing tools to enhance customer relationships, drive growth, and stay ahead of the competition. However, he

also acknowledges that technology is not a panacea. "While it's important, we must also remember that technology should augment, not replace, the human connections that are at the heart of our work."

Gwenola's sector has yet to reach this level of comfort and competency with AI, and agreed that it warranted more attention, but felt that, "Technology can help us be more efficient and informed, but it cannot replace the trust we build through personal interactions. Our clients still value those face-to-face meetings, the deep understanding of their business, and the customised solutions we provide".

Conclusion

The conversation between Matt and Gwenola underscores the evolving role of key account managers in today's complex and ever-faster-moving business landscape.

There's a lot that's similar, despite being such different sectors. While the essential nature of the role is the same, some elements are dialled up or dialled down in different industries.

Key account managers are required to be more strategic at the same time as becoming more adaptable and resilient than ever, from leveraging data and technology to navigating geopolitical challenges and changing customer expectations. They will have to deal with all the shocks, issues, consequences and responses that impact their own organisation and their customer.

In the future KAM will probably see an even greater blending of technology - demanding additional expertise from key account managers - with the irreplaceable human elements that build and sustain trust. Which makes the role challenging, exciting and rewarding!

Gwenola Ducamp

Key Account Manager | Vetropack
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Matt Sankary

Key Account Manager | Shipmoney
[linkedin.com/in/matthewsankary/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthewsankary/)

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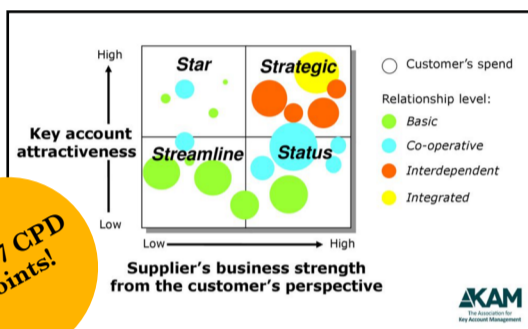
New self-driven upskilling tracks



Metrics in key account management

Metrics are fundamental to KAM, so this track is an introduction to KAM measurement, particularly to the breadth of the application, nature and objectives of the metrics. When organisations are 'knee-deep' in operational data, the ability to see what it all means is critical. The track aims to identify what you need to set up a balanced metric framework. Numbers speak louder than words in most organisations! Particularly in longer-term initiatives like KAM.

Earn 8 CPD points! [Click here](#)



Earn 7 CPD Points!

Building and using the key account matrix: selection, categorisation and management

Choosing the right portfolio of key accounts is critical, but commonly companies have used past sales as the only criterion when selecting their key customers. That just doesn't work!

Understanding how and why key accounts have been selected is important however you are involved. It can make a real difference to whether you and others endorse and align with the selection or deny and subvert it! This track will show you how the kam matrix works and how to use it productively.

Earn 7 CPD points! [Click here](#)

New resources for key account selection, categorisation and management

When is a key account not a key account? (podcast)

John Bailey (Hiab), Armelle Dupont (Vetropack) and Diana Woodburn (AKAM) talk about how and why key accounts are chosen, and why some major accounts don't make the cut. Suppliers need to recognise the limitations on their capacity to deliver KAM.

KAM-wrecking key customer picks

Including poor performers in the key account portfolio can bring down the whole KAM initiative. This article lays bare all the ways that companies get this wrong – and why getting it right matters so much!

The essence of KAM: differentiation and key account selection

Some companies think they are operating KAM while they're treating customers all the same! KAM Programme Directors recognise it's the rest of the company that delivers differentiation, but often doesn't. This report offers useful hints.

Key account selection and categorisation

A step-by-step set of instructions for building your key account matrix, firstly to select key accounts from your customer base and secondly to identify what kind of key accounts they are – because they are different, will behave differently and perform differently.

Using the key account selection/categorisation matrix (slides)

The matrix has many more uses than just choosing key accounts. The position of a customer in the portfolio should be used to drive individual strategies, plans, targets, relationship development, how much resource it gets and what kind of key account manager.

Segmenting key accounts

This is how Programme Directors see segmentation, i.e. just the beginning, leading to questions like how to treat potential 'stars' and how to gain internal engagement, top to bottom. Lots of practical examples.

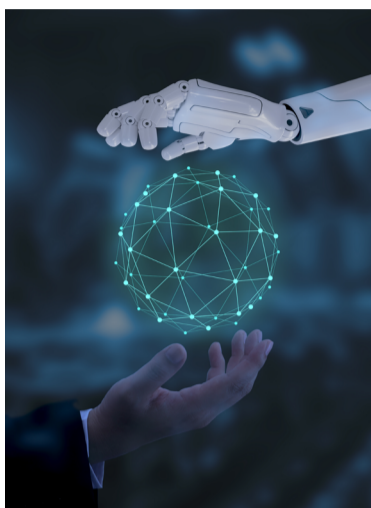
Account attractiveness criteria identification and calculation and Relative business strength calculation

Two spreadsheets with instructions designed to make the process of building the key account matrix easier. They make clear what data you need to collect and supply ready-made blank tables for inputting it.

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For those who didn't make it to the June meeting



Harnessing new technologies – The impact of emerging technologies on customer centricity

Dr Nima Heirati maps roles of new technologies in KAM. He demystifies them by showing how they contribute to the customer interface; back end of operations; purchase or usage stages of the customer journey; or customer centricity processes.



Procurement personal relationships and the danger of boundary spanner corruption

Corruption is a hard word but you will probably recognise many of the situations in Prof. Stephan Henneberg's hair-raising collection of quotes from his research. Find out how tough-to-recognise 'social cocoons' lead to the 'slippery slope'.



Emotional Intelligence

Companies are now recruiting key account managers for their emotional intelligence, seen as really important in developing and managing key customer relationships. Charlotte Bull explains the four pillars of EQ and how to develop yourself in each.



The role of emotions in KAM

Humans are still involved on both sides of KAM relationships and it's useful to acknowledge when emotions are in play in KAM, and to have some ideas of what the effects and outcomes might be. Work in progress from PhD student Filoumena Zlatanou.



What's wrong with key account manager remuneration?

KAM's 'silent killer'! Remuneration is often based on sales and horribly mismatched with the KAM role and the customer's needs and timelines. Diana Woodburn showed why many schemes are inappropriate and Paul Wilson proposed better, behaviour-based models.

290 individual resources available exclusively to AKAM members

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New articles uploaded to member resources

Key Account Manager incentive and compensation schemes

Companies often make the mistake of applying the same compensation schemes to key account managers as they do to salespeople. If short term sales are incentivized, short term sales are the output – not KAM. Paul Wilson offers a different approach.

Exercising your heart and mind for KAM

Janti Masani looks at the personal characteristics of successful key account managers, things like authenticity and collaboration, social awareness and resilience. Organisations are now realising that these 'softer skills' are the harder skills.

Alliance Management and KAM: mirror images

Mike Nevin's case studies demonstrate the value that can come from working with the ecosystem – beyond traditional, two-party buyer-seller pairings. His 52 best practices in strategic alliances is a great checklist that applies equally to KAM and SCM.

Building towers on sand

Why KAM will fail without strong sales and Account Management foundations



**By Olivier Rivière,
Managing Partner
Powering**

This article explores a common issue that often undermines the efficiency of Key Account Management (KAM) initiatives. Unfortunately, many organisations are not even aware of the real problems they face. They invest significant resources in KAM, believing it will solve their challenges, but without strong foundations in other areas than KAM, their efforts are doomed to fail or, at best, have a limited impact. This piece provides valuable insights for leaders grappling with an underperforming KAM programme or those considering launching one, helping them avoid common pitfalls and focus on what truly matters.

Introduction: When KAM goes awry

Recently, a client sought help to revive a faltering KAM initiative, running on fumes for three years. This was no small-scale operation—an industrial giant selling complex solutions to major public and private organisations around the world. After analysing data and feedback from four continents, it became apparent that the real issue was not with the KAM programme. The real issue was a general lack of

customer intimacy and of strong basic Account Management practice. The KAM team would try to convince the rest of the organization to build and implement Key Account plans for very complex customers, whereas the fundamentals of creating intimacy with customer contacts and articulating the customer value created by the vendor was missing.

This situation isn't uncommon. Many organisations mistakenly turn to KAM when they are really facing issues in Complex Sales or basic Account Management (it is often an 'and' rather than an 'or'). A KAM programme is often seen as a silver bullet, but it's not designed to fix gaps in these other capabilities.

KAM is a strategic instrument for maximising value with key clients, not a tool to resolve fundamental weaknesses in sales processes or account delivery. In this case, the focus shifted from attempting to rescue KAM to building stronger relationships with customers and better articulating value, starting with the basics. With a firm foundation in Complex Sales and Account Management, the company will eventually be better positioned to succeed with KAM.

Another example illustrates this point: after attending a prestigious KAM Executive Training programme, the leadership team of a regional market leader in online payments decided to

invest heavily in a KAM programme to fend off competition.

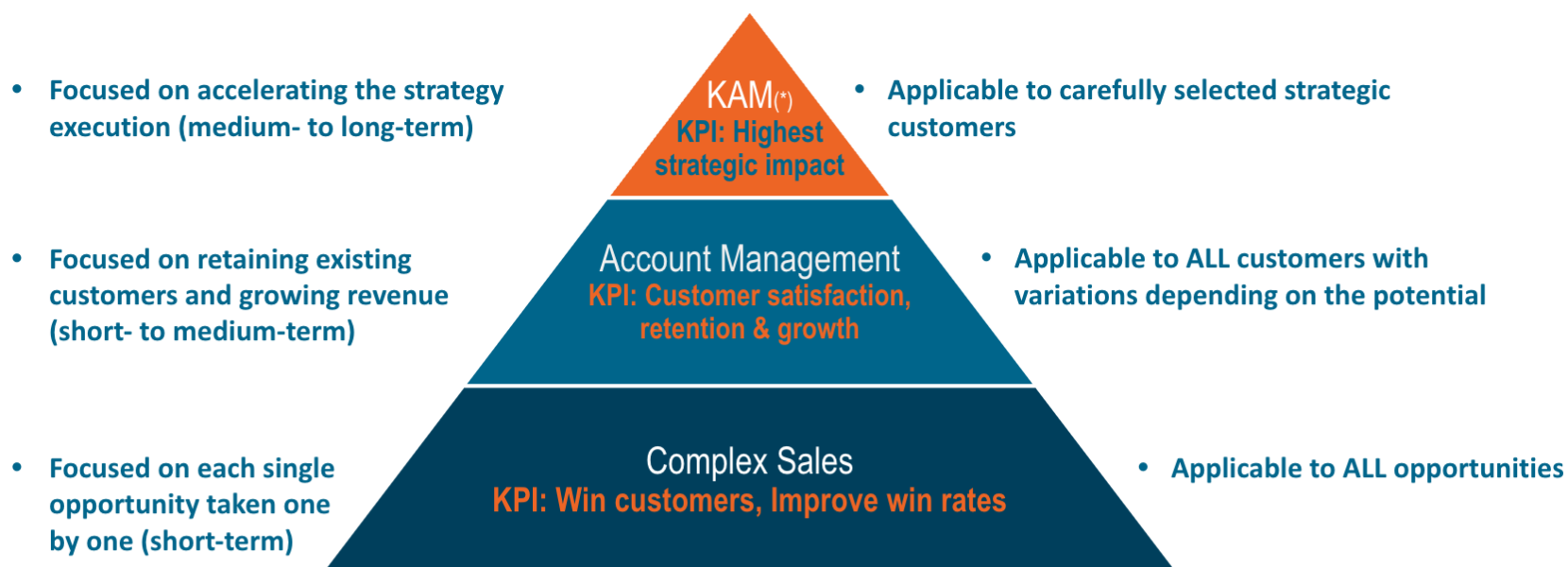
They believed KAM would solve the growing dissatisfaction among their most strategic customers. Yet the root of their problem was an over-promising sales approach and underwhelming post-sale delivery, with software product upgrades being consistently delivered very late. No amount of KAM could resolve that. What was really needed was to address issues in Account Management, product quality and product roadmap management. Only once those fundamentals were addressed could they begin to think about deploying KAM effectively.

Managing customers well: The three key capabilities

So, what's the lesson? To manage customers effectively in a complex environment, companies must develop three essential capabilities:

1. **Complex Sales**
2. **Account Management**
3. **Key Account Management (KAM)**

Each plays a distinct role, and KAM is not a substitute for Complex Sales or Account Management. Attempting to use KAM to fix problems in those areas is like using a hammer to tighten screws. Instead, the focus should be on ensuring the first two capabilities are robust before turning to KAM.



Each of these 3 capabilities requires a specific effort to be developed and maintained over time

The Complex Sales capability

Complex Sales forms the bedrock of a high-performing salesforce. It focuses on generating and closing opportunities where multiple stakeholders are involved, and the solution is co-created with the customer. The success of this capability is measured through win rates and new customer acquisitions. Complex Sales requires marketing, sales, and technical experts to work in harmony to engage customers and manage the long, high-stakes sales cycles typical in complex B2B or B2G environments.

The Account Management capability

Account Management, the second key capability, is all about delivering what was promised during the sales process to keep customers satisfied and loyal. Without a strong Account Management function, even the best sales pitches fall flat. Successful Account Management also focuses on expanding revenue from existing customers, ensuring that they remain engaged and that relationships grow over time. Effective Account Management, therefore, involves ongoing dialogue with customers, backed by KPIs such as customer satisfaction, retention, and revenue growth.

The Key Account Management (KAM) capability

And now to KAM. While KAM is a powerful strategic tool, it's not a cure-all, it shouldn't be. Properly deployed, KAM is used selectively to enhance value with an organisation's most important customers. It's a collective effort that involves deep engagement – deeper than usual with most customers – across various functions, from product development to legal and executive leadership. However, it should only be applied when Complex Sales and Account Management are functioning well. Otherwise, it's akin to putting new gears in a car with a faulty engine – adding more complexity without addressing the real issues.

KAM is not just about throwing more resources at large customers; it's a higher-level, cross-functional collaboration that drives strategic growth. If fundamental issues exist in Complex Sales or Account Management, they need to be addressed first, before any KAM programme can deliver its full potential.

Why these three capabilities matter

Returning to the earlier examples, both companies tried to use KAM to fix what were actually issues in Complex Sales and Account Management. One company was losing deals because it hadn't developed the necessary

relationships during the sales process, while the other was alienating customers by failing to deliver on technical promises. In both cases, KAM was not the right tool for the job.

These three capabilities—Complex Sales, Account Management, and KAM—each play distinct roles in acquiring, retaining, and growing customers. Misusing KAM to fix gaps in the first two areas can lead to poor decision-making and wasted resources. Ensuring that Complex Sales and Account Management are operating smoothly is a prerequisite for any successful KAM programme. Otherwise, the KAM programme is a tower built on sand.

Conclusion: Where to begin

In conclusion, organisations should first focus on building robust Complex Sales and Account Management capabilities before diving into a KAM programme. Leaders who are struggling with an ailing KAM programme or considering launching one will find this article offers valuable food for thought.

The right approach to KAM begins with solid foundations, ensuring that resources are not wasted on solving the wrong problems. A well-executed KAM programme can only thrive if the underlying sales and account management functions are healthy and aligned with strategic goals.

By **Olivier Rivière**,
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Who's on the AKAM Operations Board?



Diana Woodburn AKAM Chair

BSc, MSc, MBA, PhD & FCIM. Began researching and lecturing in KAM at Cranfield School of Management in 1997. Also became an author, consultant and company coach, dedicated to KAM since 2005. Co-author with Malcolm McDonald of 'Key Account Management: the definitive guide', and the 'Handbook of Strategic Account Management' with Kevin Wilson. A marketing practitioner in various sectors globally.



Paul Wilson AKAM Treasurer

Independent consultant in Strategic and Key Account Management. Supporting organisations & individuals to understand, apply and master the capabilities required to implement world-class Strategic Key Account Management in their business. Previously, he was Commercial Accounts Director at Pfizer UK and set up and led the Global Key Account Management Centre of Excellence at Pfizer.



John Bailey AKAM Secretary

Director International Key Accounts, Hiab AB. 40+ years in International sales and KAM. The majority of his career has been in sales and account management within Hiab AB, a global provider of on-road load handling equipment. A firm believer in the development and ever changing world of KAM and keen to share his passion and experience with individuals that want to make KAM their chosen career.



Richard Ilsley AKAM Deputy Chair

Managing Partner with the Key Account Management Group. Leads sales strategy and account management projects with major corporations around the world. Conference speaker and author of 'Best Practice – A Manager's Guide' and co-author of the PocketBooks Key Account Management. Manager of the largest global network of Account Managers.



Steve Dolan Operations Director, EMCOR UK & Lead for Collaboration and KAM

Member, Institute for Collaborative Working. Responsible for collaboration and KAM strategy, co-founder EMCOR UK's KAM programme and leader of its community of KAM best practice and corporate KAM training programme. 20+ years of KAM in Facilities Management Sector with high profile accounts. Passionate supporter of KAM and its value for customers.



Dominykas Cibulskas Partner Customer Care, Key Account Management, General Management at SIA ZB Master degree in International Trade.

Masters degree in International Trade and 20 years of practice in KAM and Sales in FMCG, Pharma & Food in the Baltic States, from Key Account Manager to General Manager. Also advising other companies as a consultant in Sales, KAM and management. Passionate KAM practitioner and supporter.



Armelle Dupont Daupeyroux Head of Strategic Accounts and Customer Experience, Vetropack Holding AG

Master's Degree Food & Beverage Engineering. 15+ years experience in packaging and machinery industry. KAM program leader and KAM practitioner for over 10 years in Tetra Laval Group, Amcor Group and Vetropack Holding AG.

Who's on the AKAM Operations Board? (continued)



Dr Anthony Buckley PhD, Assistant Head – School of Marketing, Technological University Dublin; MSc Program Director.

Research interests centre on the entrepreneurship & SME enterprise domain, particularly business growth and development strategy. 20+ years in senior business development roles with Nissan, Glen Dimplex Group, Meteor Mobile and Publicis Group.



Rafi Habibian MSc, SAM CoE Global Director at Pfizer

28+ years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Started career in sales, then regional responsibilities in marketing, account management, operations, and customer management. A true believer in the value of KAM as an organizational capability, tasked with leading the Pfizer business to build expertise and capabilities in KAM, and to ensure that all market teams are prepared to engage with their key accounts effectively.



Dr Olivier Riviere Engineer in Material Science, Dr-Ing in Physical Metallurgy, MBA

20+ years' management experience with global companies (Dassault Systems, Intel, IXOS/OpenText, Text 100). Helps organisations of all sizes drive sustainable improvement on Sales & Marketing Effectiveness, KAM and Influence-focused Sales & Marketing. Speaker and author in 3 languages. Founder of KAM with Passion, Partner, KAM practice lead at Powering.



Geoff Quinn Director Key Account Management Center of Excellence, Pfizer

With over a decade of experience in strategic marketing and account management at Pfizer, he has built and maintained long-term relationships with key accounts, delivered customer-centric solutions, and driven revenue growth. He is passionate about creating value for his customers, company, and our society through excellence, collaboration, and innovation.



Maggie Chandler Customer Experience Leader

Maggie has held senior positions in telecoms, utilities, professional services and construction. Relentless in delivering improved satisfaction at all stages of the customer journey, enabling customer acquisition, customer retention, and better bottom-line results. Passionate about cultivating customer-centric cultures and high-performing, engaged teams providing short-term results and longer-term strategic growth opportunities.



Dr Jakob Rehme Professor, Industrial Economics & Management at Linköping University

Worked in various positions before academia, in high-tech industry, e.g. marketing/sales, distribution management and project management. Research interests include the development of global value chains and sales and purchasing management. Teaches supply chain management and purchasing and sales management.



Dominique Côté Owner and founder COSAWI Srl/inc.

30+ years as an international business and commercial leader in global pharmaceutical and biotech organizations. Published author and architect of go-to-market journeys, leading customer-centric innovation and patient value. Team leader in over 36 countries, certified executive coach, board director and Visiting Professor at Cranfield Business School.