



The
Sales
C O A C H
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Strategic Account Management

Know, grow and defend your most important client accounts





Strategic Account Management

Account Management is a critical role in high performing sales organisations, so why do so many leaders fail to ensure the wide adoption and use of account plans?

What are the differences between Key Accounts, Strategic Accounts and Global Accounts?

Speak to 10 people and you'll get 10 different answers. The terms are interchangeable to most people. For leaders in global businesses, the terms have distinct differences.

Key Accounts are those accounts that are important to the business and are likely to be managed on a national or regional basis.

Strategic Accounts are broadly similar, and the account is critical to the success of the business. It usually receives more leadership attention than a Key Account.

Global Accounts are critical to the success of the business and are managed worldwide by a senior level executive, often with their own dedicated team.

What is important to stress, and may help differentiate Strategic and Global Accounts from Key Accounts, is that these Accounts regard you as strategic too. This requires mutual understanding of the value of the relationship, and ultimately where you plan to identify and realise future value together.

Strategic Account Management has matured to a reasonable level. Global Account Management, however, is still in its infancy in many industries because of complex cultural, legal and language barriers, or market immaturity. Furthermore, many organisations (often as a result of multiple acquisitions or organisational changes) aren't organised to optimise Global Account Management as conflicting reporting and compensation structures prevent true collaboration.

Regardless of whether you use the terms Key Account Management (KAM), Strategic Account management (SAM) or Global Account management (GAM), the principles of effectiveness broadly remain the same.

We often see organisations where account planning is seen as an administrative and burdensome task, rather than a proactive way to systematically learn more and grow or defend the business.

In our experience, there are three critical factors associated with success.

1. Account plans need to be aligned with the overall sales ecosystem
2. Account managers need to receive the right training and support (mindset, skills, and tools)
3. The focus needs to be firmly on executing plans and measuring success

The Six 'Rights'

In our experience, top performing organisations focus on getting these six aspects right when it comes to strategic account management:

1. Right Accounts
2. Right Process
3. Right Plans
4. Right People
5. Right Skills
6. Right Behaviours

Let's consider each of these in more detail and we'll offer our thinking on the key drivers of improved results that enable strategic account managers to stay focused and achieve their plans. For each of the six 'rights', we invite you to quickly (and honestly) consider the following statements:

Right Accounts

- We have effective criteria to select strategic accounts and the list is reviewed annually
- The criteria include large and emerging accounts with potential for significant growth, or we are under threat
- Our strategic accounts know their importance to us and are open to close collaboration and joint planning

Right Process

- The strategic account management process is systematic, comprehensive and action-orientated with a focus on execution
- There is a rigorous process to review strategic accounts that includes clear expectations and success measures or KPIs
- The process is aligned and embedded with other key systems and processes in the sales ecosystem

Right Plans

- Plans are fit for purpose and focused firstly on understanding the account's market situation, challenges and strategy, and **then** our strategy and approach
- There is an agreed strategy to grow or defend each strategic account with success measures in place
- Plans are specific about how value will be identified and created for the client, how we broaden and deepen relationships and neutralise competitors

Right People

- Strategic Account Leads are appointed based on identified competencies of account management, not just on their sales ability
- There is a dedicated core team supported by additional subject matter experts and executives as required
- The team are appointed based on an assessment of their own behavioural/ social styles and those of key clients

Right Skills

- There is a suitably skilled team including the designated relationship lead, results driver, innovator, technical experts, collaborators and project managers
- Regular training and coaching are available to develop the right mindsets, skills and conversational frameworks
- All team members are trained and proficient in value-based consultative selling skills

Right Behaviours

- Strategic Account Managers are adept at collaborating across functions or divisions to optimise growth
- Team members understand the behaviours required to build trust and rapport at all levels to help clients identify and realise value
- Leaders set expectations, lead by example, rigorously review performance, coach effectively and demand high standards



That said, there are three factors at the core of what we repeatedly teach in strategic account management:

1. We help account managers understand the need to know more about their accounts at a strategic level before they can grow
2. We upskill teams in value-based consultative selling skills based on our Key Client Driver model
3. We provide custom tools and templates to facilitate effective planning and execution

Understand, Plan And Execute

We focus on helping account managers understand the need to know more about their accounts at a strategic level before they can grow and sustain the business.

Consider a new person taking over an account or an established account manager starting the process with a newly identified account.

In both scenarios, comprehensive research is required to understand the client's situation in their respective markets. When assessing their current situation, due diligence is required to understand the financials, key industry, customer and competitor trends, their key challenges and their strategy.

A rigorous review is required based on how the client sees you and your competitors, and how well you are positioned to add value to their strategy. Finally, you need to ensure you select the best possible multi-functional team to develop and execute an effective plan.

Plans need to be developed from a strategic perspective, not simply tactical actions, and consideration needs to be given to the core strategies to either grow, sustain or defend the business.



Ideally, plans will be developed collaboratively (internally and with the client) to identify opportunities to broaden, deepen and expand relationships, brainstorm value creation opportunities, and proactively originate new opportunities. Success measures need to be agreed and a plan of action must be implemented.

Formal reviews should be undertaken internally and with the client to identify what's going well, where we need to improve and what we might change. A way to focus our plans and reviews is to consider the Key Client Drivers model on the following page.



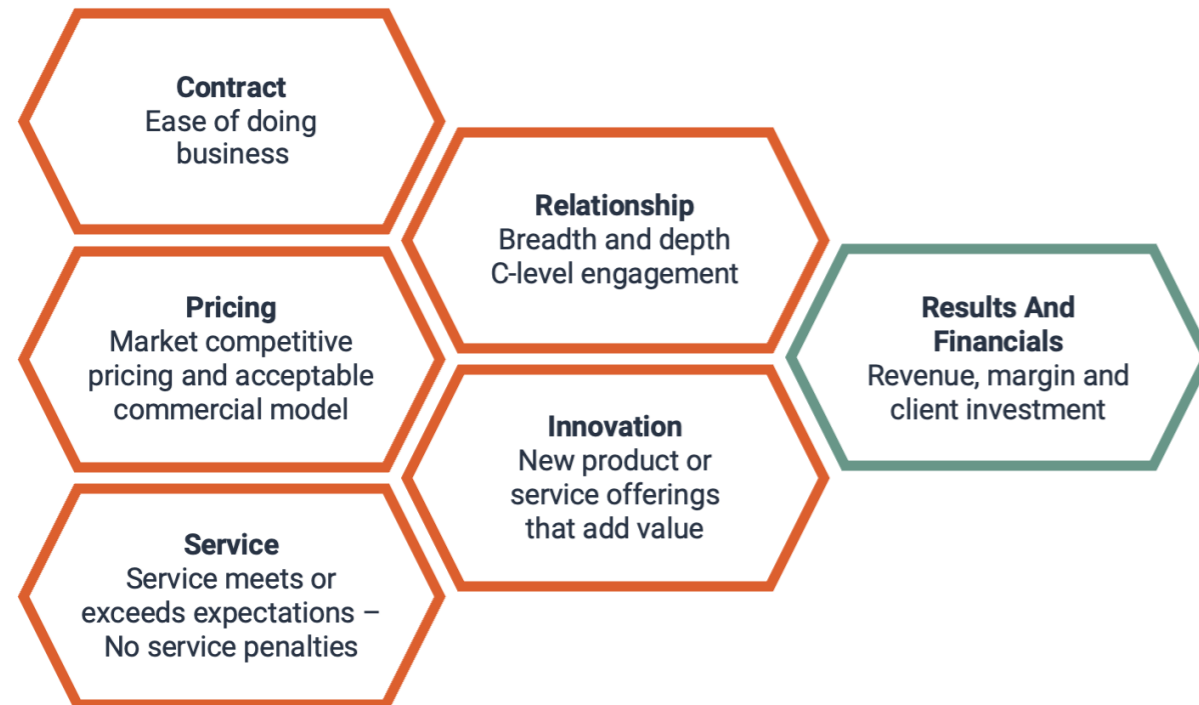
Key Client Drivers

We developed our Key Client Driver model having assessed all the actions that teams can take to drive the financial results on their strategic accounts, based on our experience working with mature global organisations. This will enhance performance across strategic accounts.

When training teams, we instil the discipline of initially viewing things from the client's perspective, and this is where we deliver value.

Contract, pricing and service are critical to establishing credibility and a base from which you can grow. Critical considerations include whether your contracting approach makes it easy for the client to do business with you, whether your pricing models are market competitive and suitable for both parties, and whether the service you are currently delivering meets or exceeds their expectations.

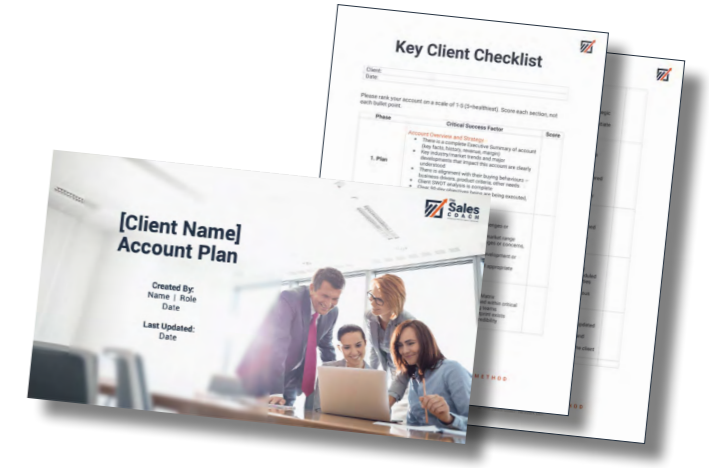
If contract, pricing and service are in good order from the client's perspective, you can explore the two growth drivers of relationship and innovation. Effective plans take account of who we know (relationship strength and power), who we need to know, and how we will take innovative new product or service ideas to them.



Methods, Tools And Templates

We use a range of methods, tools and templates that can be customised and branded to enable consistent execution of strategic account plans, including and not limited to:

- The Sales Accelerator Method
- Value Frameworks
- Revenue Qualification Model
- Account Plans
- Relationship Maps
- Power Maps
- Key Client Checklists
- Qualification Tools
- Value Analysis Tools
- Presentation Templates
- Proposal Templates
- Negotiation Plans



If your organisation needs to improve how it manages your most important strategic accounts, let's have a discussion. We'll take the time to fully understand your needs and give you a candid view of what will be required over time so that you can decide whether or not we might be a good fit.

Further Reading

Click to read more insights from The Sales Coach Network

[Crucial Conversations](#)

[Methodical Or Haphazard](#)

[Where's The Value?](#)

[Sales Management Puzzle](#)


[The Qualification Challenge](#)

[Sales Success Is Systematic](#)

Get In Touch

Is it worth us having a conversation to see whether or not we can help you and your team achieve more? [Email us today](#) and we will put you in touch with one of our experienced coaches.

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