

Account management templates

Definition

An **account manager** is a person who works for a company and is responsible for the **management** of sales and relationships with particular customers. An **account manager** maintains the company's existing relationships with a client or group of clients, so that they will continue using the company for business.

This is a selection of account management planning tools, worksheets and templates.



Key Account Analysis

	Tick if YES	Cross if NO
Current annual spend with us is above £		
Potential spend in next 1 to 3 years is above £		
Account is in one of our target sectors		
A Decision Making Unit has been identified (DMU)		
Account appears willing to partner with us on R&D and/or merchandising and/or logistics and/or Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)		
Account would benefit from multiple contacts		
Account has other subsidiary businesses and/or parent company		
Account is the parent company of a number of subsidiaries		
Account is a leader in its sector		
Account's annual results indicate acceptable growth potential		
Account is likely to remain loyal to us if we deliver		
A well suited Key Account Manager is available to manage the account		
For this account we WOULD be prepared to modify our existing systems/processes		
Does the account have a clear strategic development plan of its own?		

Knowledge, skills and attitude of a good KAM

Key Account Professionals need the following. Under each heading list examples of skills, attitude, knowledge and abilities required. We have given you one example of each

Commercial awareness

Understanding of competitors' products/services

Attitude

Empathy

Interpreting Business performance

Analytical skills

Advanced marketing techniques

Understand the product benefits.

Business planning/strategy

Work to objectives, targets and company vision

Finance

Understand basic budgeting

Project Management

Manage project teams

Interpersonal skills

Questioning

Meeting skills: Questions and active Listening

How do you show that you are listening?

- Summarise the conversation.
- Ask questions directly related to what you have just heard
- Look at people, maintain eye contact
- Watch facial expressions; look for smiles, frowns, and grimaces.
- Acknowledge all signals you receive including negative ones.
- Do not interrupt, let people finish and wait for the afterthought.

Four Stages of Active Listening

1) Hear 2) Think 3) Decide 4) Respond

How many times do you go from 1 to 3, or even 1 to 4? Someone is halfway through what they are saying and you have already decided what your reply will be.

Important signals are often given in the last few words that are said. Pay rapt attention to every word that is spoken and concentrate hard. Centre your thinking on the other person.

The 4 stages take time; you need therefore to build in pauses and silences into your conversation to provide thinking time.

Use questions to drive the conversation, the person asking questions are in control. It is not necessary to be talking to guide a discussion.

Listening is hard work and requires lots of concentration. It is the communication skill that requires most development and most personal effort to achieve.

Listening is a life skill; there are endless opportunities to practice.

Key Account Information

What information would you ideally like to have about your Key Accounts?

Decision Making Unit (DMU)

There are four types of decision makers - one person may fulfil one or more roles

Economic buyer	controls the purse strings, signs the cheques
User buyer	frontline user of the product
Technical buyer	looks at technical side, judges relevance and investigates it for the user
Coach	approves of the solution, wants you to win the business

Each type has different motivations to buy - ensure any plans you build or strategies you employ cover as many as possible.

Economic buyer	value for money, absolute costs, discounts, a good deal, ROI
User buyer	quality, quantity, personal preference, after sales service
Technical buyer	logic, relevance, proof
Coach	service levels, personal rapport, consistency, two way relationship

All these people will also have their own personal drivers and outcomes.

Stakeholder Grid

Take a view on a client with whom you would like to conduct more business. Fit your existing contacts on to the grid.

We seek to nurture and protect those in the top right, those on the left are unlikely to be of direct use but must not be ignored.

Those in the lower half, particularly the right hand side, are those that need nurturing and time invested to understand their business and personal drivers with a view to providing the services that they seek.

You can also put a number in the box as well as a name to show the strength of the relationship you have with them e.g. 0 = weak relationship and 10 = strong

				Will recommend to others				
				Strong supporter				
				Supporter				
				Interested				
No influence at all	Hardly influences decisions	Slightly influences decisions	Strongly influences decisions		Minor decision maker	Decision maker	Major decision maker	Sole decision maker
				See us as the same as others				
				Mildly negative				
				Strongly negative				
				Will recommend others				

Individual Key Account Strategic Planning

KEY ACCOUNT STRATEGY PLAN

From:

to:

Key account name:

Sales director sales manager:

Key account manager:

Next review date:

Specific key account objectives

Objective	By whom	By when
<p>•</p>		

Individual Key Account Strategic Planning

RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS – OBJECTIVES

Consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Process Improvement • Co-development work • Information exchange • Cross organisational teams • Joint ventures
OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

POSITIONING

CURRENT RELATIONSHIP CATEGORY

EARLY ž MID ž PARTNERSHIP ž

NEXT DESIRED RELATIONSHIP CATEGORY

EARLY ž MID ž PARTNERSHIP ž

POTENTIAL RANKING (1 TO 5): 1 2 3 4 5

TRUST RANKING (1 TO 5): 1 2 3 4 5

Individual Key Account Strategic Planning

EXISTING KEY ACCOUNT INTERNAL STRUCTURE AND CONTACTS

STRUCTURE CHART HELD DATED:

The following people are our existing or targeted contacts:

NAME (Key Decision Maker in bold)	TITLE OR FUNCTION	CLASS	OUR COUNTERPART	RELATIONSHIP LEVEL
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

CLASSIFICATIONS (CLASS):

KD: Key Decision Maker - Has authority and budget

I: Influencer - No decision authority but can influence for us

O: Opponent - Currently against our involvement

SS: Strategic Supporter - Has influence/authority beyond the chosen field of play

TS: Technical Supporter- Able to support on the technical side (e.g. C.A.D. Design specialist)

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP LEVEL

0 = None 1 = Weak 5 = Strong

NEW RELATIONSHIPS TO BE BUILT

Name	Title or Function	Client Counterpart	Objective
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Individual Key Account Strategic Planning

OUR SUPPLIER CONTACTS

Our Own Contact Name	Title or Function	Supplier Contact	Title or Function
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

SUPPLIER CHAIN ACTIONS

ACTION	WHO AND WHEN

KEY ACCOUNT EXTERNAL STRUCTURE OWNERSHIP -

- Parents, Subsidiaries etc.

EXTERNAL STRUCTURE CHART HELD DATED:

Relationship development targeted at:

THE KEY ACCOUNT'S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Key drivers (csf's)	Their strategies

Individual Key Account Strategic Planning

Positioning of the key account

Strengths and actions required	Weaknesses and actions required
Opportunities and actions required	Threats and actions required

Positioning of ourselves

Strengths and actions required	Weaknesses and actions required
Opportunities and actions required	Threats and actions required

Individual Key Account Strategic Planning

THE KEY ACCOUNT'S REQUIREMENTS

Known market needs:

Known product or service needs:

Possible future product or service needs:

DISPLACING COMPETITIVE SUPPLIERS TO OUR KEY ACCOUNT

Our competitor	Competitor's activity	Our strategy

ASSISTING THE KEY ACCOUNT IN DISPLACING THEIR COMPETITION

Their competitor	Competitor's activity	Joint (?) Strategy

Key Account Development

Some questions worth considering:

- How clear am I regarding the 'total solution' that I may be aiming at?
- Is there a clear strategy for widening our exposure to each Key Account?
- Do I clearly understand each Key Account's future development needs?
- Does each Key Account recognise that I want to support the achievement of **their** strategic goals?
- Am I targeting each Key Account for a **specific** level/type of increased business?
- Do I have a **clear** shopping list of questions to gain the information I need?
- Do I understand how each Key Account would **ideally** like our relationship to develop to **its** advantage?
- Do I **really** understand the pain each of my Key Accounts suffers and therefore how I may be able to help?
- Am I too reliant on **existing** products/services? Do I **proactively** look to develop **new** products/services to meet my Key Account's needs?
- Am I reacting to external threats (ideally anticipating them)?
- Do I have appropriate prompts for meetings (a meeting planner)?
- Do I **really** use my support team to the fullest extent possible?

Strategic Planning for Key Accounts

ISSUE	ACTION
Which sector(s) first?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise any sector that is expanding • Prioritise the sectors that are the most relevant to your products and services • Prioritise sectors in which potential Key Account customers have money to spend
Which companies to contact first?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Key Accounts with needs and that want to see you • Potential new Key Accounts ('hot' referrals with needs and wanting to do something now) • Existing Key Accounts with identified needs • Existing Key Accounts with unidentified needs • Potential Key Accounts with unidentified needs

Strategic Planning For Individual Key Accounts

ISSUE	ACTION
Who to have as contacts in the company?	Create a target list of contacts to be developed.
Are other 'group' companies targeted for contact?	<p>Create a target list of other companies within the 'group' that have real potential for increased business.</p> <p>Develop Key Account contacts who can introduce you to target group companies.</p>
Corporate event and/or entertainment plan in place?	Ensure a detailed plan of professional and 'fun' entertainment is in place to cover the coming year. This should cement personal relationships.
What products/packages to prioritise?	Create a strategy to widen the sale of your product range by identifying where a broader package of products and services would be relevant. Try to think wider than merely the product(s) currently being sold and create a total solution for the Key Account if possible. This may mean considering the development of new products.
Plans for team/individual presentations?	Consider whether the next presentation to your Key Account would benefit from being a team one. It could strengthen overall contact with the Account.

Strategic Planning For Individual Key Accounts

ISSUE	ACTION
Key account short/medium/long term plans known?	If not already known, arrange a meeting with the Key Account to establish the future strategy – short and long plans. Link this into partnering with them to ensure that as they develop, you are in a good position to provide on-going support.
Do product development plans fit key account needs?	Ensure that new or amended products and services are being identified (or are in development) to meet the future requirements of your Key Account. Failure to anticipate future needs adequately could allow the competition to gain a foothold.
Personal network introductions identified?	Create a plan to introduce relevant contacts from your personal network, where these could potentially add value to your relationship with the Key Account. Some of these introductions should be with your own 'group' companies, if they exist.
Plans for development of support team involvement?	Ensure that your support team have developed appropriate contact points within the Key Account. These should be used for information gathering and development of the relationship in more general terms.

Creating a Key Account Strategy

Please find below a checklist that should assist you in determining your future strategy for each Key Account.

- Is this really a Key Account? Assess against the typical characteristics
- How would you currently classify the relationship? Assess against stages one to five
- To what stage could you potentially develop this relationship?
- What needs to be achieved to move this relationship forward? i.e. what's currently missing?
- What driving forces are affecting your Key Account?
- What strategy is your Key Account pursuing?
- What Key Account information would you ideally like to have?
- Are there product/process/service improvement issues that need addressing?
- What is your marketing strategy to strengthen this relationship and is it aligned with your own sales objectives?
- Do you have all the relevant contact points in place? If not, what is your plan to do so?
- Have you examined the whole value chain/supply chain? What needs to be addressed?
- What are your Company's weaknesses with this Key Account and are they being addressed?
- Do you have the right support team in place doing the right things?

Key Account Development – The Driving Forces

Key Account Development should effectively be driven by the needs and driving forces in the markets and Key Accounts you wish to serve. For your individual Key Accounts these drivers will usually be some of their Critical Success Factors (CSFs).

Typically, these overall drivers will include needs for:

- Reacting to changed markets and economies and size of organisations
- Responding quickly to rapid changes (short lead times, shorter product life cycles, changing customer preferences)
- Refining processes in the drive for maximum efficiency and the highest possible quality
- Re-defining the marketplace (i.e. if in a mature saturated marketplace)
- Improving product innovation differentiation
- Pleasing the customer more (faster response times more delivery channels)
- Coping with globalisation (e.g. internal restructuring)
- Improved profitability
- Improved cost efficiency
- Increased business at better margins (a combination of the last two points)
- A reduction in business risk (e.g. need guaranteed supply contracts)
- A mutually beneficial supplier buyer partnerships to keep the competition at bay
- Improved quality
- Larger market share
- Differentiation
- Cutting edge technology
- Keeping up with fashion trends
- Real time information
- Knowledge Management (CRM)
- Being able to anticipate customer demands
- A variety of delivery order channels

Knowing About Your Products and Service

Having an excellent level of product knowledge is a pre-requisite to dealing effectively with Key Accounts. After all, they will expect you to know your business backwards, because that's how they know theirs.

So what do you know about your own business and the marketplace within which you are operating?

List below the unique selling points of your product or service, together with its relevant strengths and weaknesses.

Then list the opportunities and threats that exist for you in relationship to your key account.

The Unique Selling Points of Your Product or Service

The Strengths of Your Product or Service

The Weaknesses of Your Product or Service

Key Account Opportunities for you within your Key Account

Key Account Threats to you from your Key Account