

KAM ACADEMY

**KEY ACCOUNT PLANNING & CORE KNOWLEDGE
SELF-STUDY MODULE**

ACCOUNT MANAGER'S WORKBOOK

Contents

Introduction to the Module

How to use the Module

Preparation for this Module

Unit 1 – Introduction to Key Account Planning

Unit 2 – Information gathering - Walk through the basic knowledge required

Unit 3 – Initial data gathering for your Key Account

Unit 4 – Initial view of the opportunities for growth



Introduction to the module

Welcome to this **Key Account Academy customer knowledge Module**.

Whilst there are many things the Key Account Manager should know, at its heart Key Account Management is all about depth client knowledge.

Growing the business profitably depends upon your ability to add value to the customer and it is the customer who decides just what this value is. If your value is not unique then you can't leverage it and it soon becomes part of the expectation from all credible suppliers. So you need to be able to use your knowledge and experience to figure out how you will bring unique and ideally measurable value to this particular customer and this particular customer's different managers. You can't rely on the customer managers to work this out – they are not experts in your business.

In this Module, we will set out a simple framework to help you collect the core knowledge about the customer and its market as well as thinking about the history of the relationship. This is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to ensure you have a basic working knowledge as a precursor to depth thinking.

This basic knowledge will form the foundations for thinking about business growth opportunities with the customer and will be essential to the face to face growth and value development sessions.



How to use the module

The Module focuses on the basic customer knowledge. This is the core knowledge you need to begin to think about value. To do this we will firstly discuss the growth planning approach so that we are all familiar with the idea of knowledge to insight to action. Then we will help you to think about what you need to know. The approach is generic; it is not aimed at one industry or market or customer type. This means you may want to put more less or less emphasis on what you collect and you may want to collect information not specified. This is not aiming to present a comprehensive view but rather to ensure you have the basic knowledge before we start depth thinking. Inevitably you will then decide you need more information which you can gain later.

We have prepared a set of templates with prompt questions. The prompt questions and points are not comprehensive and aim to support your data gathering not control it – you have to decide what you need for this particular customer.

This module focuses on data gathering and as such you will find that most of the time is spent actually collecting information and considering what this means for your growth. You should work through Units 1 and 2 quickly and then spend time working through the data collection templates (Unit 3). By the end you will have a good working knowledge from which you can start to consider opportunities for growth (Unit 4).

This will allow you then to participate in more detailed growth and value creating development programs and thinking



Preparation for this module

This Module is the second of the suite of key account development modules aimed at preparing the Account Manager to participate in the growth planning and value creation workshops - it follows directly from the initial module Key Account Management Foundations.

The modules are intended to be sequential, so although it is not essential that you have already worked through Module 1, it would be very beneficial.

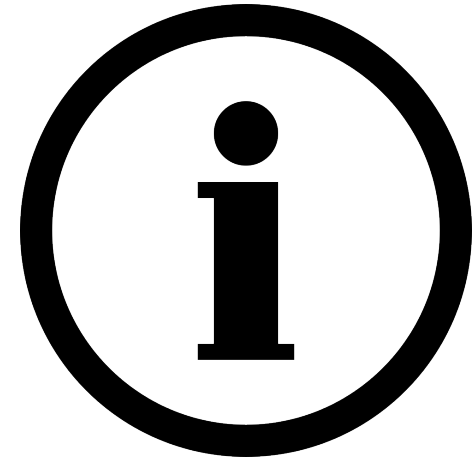
Many of the core points made in Module 1 will be reinforced here as we begin the journey to move towards a closer working partnership with the key customer



UNIT 1

Introduction to Key Account Planning

Unit 1 – introduction to Key Account planning



The importance of deriving insight from data leading to action

We focus heavily in key account management on acquiring depth customer knowledge. However this is not the full picture. Simply knowing is not enough; we have to know what the knowledge itself means for us – we have to have insight.

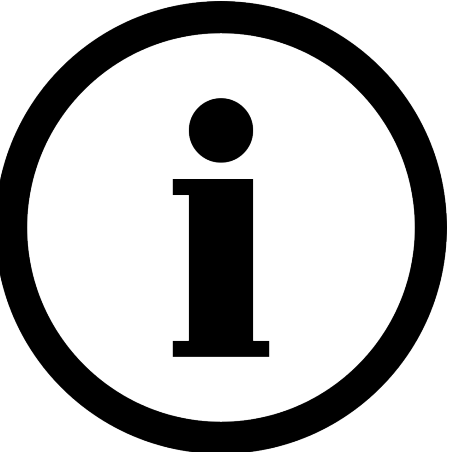
For example, knowing that the customer's business is growing faster than the market is useful but you need to know why and then you need to know what it means to you and your desire for growth.

Knowing the customer's corporate objectives is very useful but you need to identify how we can support the customer to achieve their objectives - we want to know what you should do next.

We can summarise this need to move from knowledge to insight to action as a virtuous circle...

Unit 1 – introduction to Key Account planning

The virtuous circle of knowledge acquisition



Which generally leads to us gaining more knowledge

We collect data and gain knowledge about the client

What have I learned?

Knowledge/Data

Action

Which in turn leads to action

What should I do?

We ask ourselves – “so what?” – what does this mean for us?

So what?

Insight

This leads to insight – in other words this is what the knowledge and data mean for us



Introduction to Key Account planning

Exercise 1

The trick is to be able to filter all the knowledge you have in order to extract the very few (probably) critical insights which will lead to growth and action – to do this simply ask yourself ‘so what?’



To practice this idea, note down any knowledge you currently have about the customer(a few points for practice) – then ask yourself what it might mean for your growth and what action you might consider

What do I know?

So what for my growth?

What should I do?

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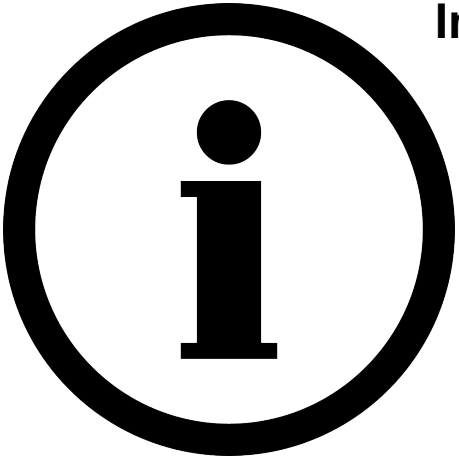
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UNIT 2

Information Gathering – walk through the basic knowledge required

Information gathering

Introduction to the data gathering prompt sheets



All key account planning starts with collecting knowledge about the customer. We could simply ask you to go out and collect knowledge but this is not helpful – we need to define the more important information at the start. To help you to focus on the main points, we have produced a set of basic data collection prompt sheets. The content is generic which means you should use it more as a guide – inevitably some information will be more important and some elements will be missing which are important in your industry - you will know this and should add these.

It is important to note that the sheets are not trying to be comprehensive and different sections will be more or less important for different customers. Which means you have to exercise some judgement when you come to complete them.

The aim is not to provide you with an academic form filling exercise but rather to provide guidance on what you should ideally know at the start. You must use the prompts as guidance and use your judgement to add more information where it is. This is just the start!

Don't worry if you don't know some of the information right now - data gathering is not a one-off event and you will constantly be adding to your knowledge over the process

Your aim initially is to collect as much of the relevant data as is practical within the next eight weeks and then to review what this tells you – this will prepare you for the growth planning thinking process

Data gathering summary sheets

The data gathering sheets are not templates but rather a series of prompts to help you gather the right information to enable you to think more deeply about the key account value and your growth opportunities – this will be the focus of your development workshop – use them as prompts

	Purpose of the section	Contents of the section
Key Account summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand KA's business, performance , recent trends, strategy, specific goals and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Company description, performance, trendsCoverage and obvious white space analysisCompetitive analysis and share of wallet
Key Account objectives and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand what is driving their thinking and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Corporate objectivesCorporate plansImplications for you
Key Account people map	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand all the people involved in decisions which might interest us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who are theyHow are they measured/KPIsWhy are you interesting?
Growth opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify any growth opportunities you have found already	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Define the opportunityEstimate its worthEstimate value for the key account



Where does the information come from?

You will find that the information you seek comes from a number of sources. The list below is will not be comprehensive but it is designed to give you a good start and to point you in the right direction. Your current good contacts within the key account will of course be a very good source of information as well as...



What

Likely source in addition to your own knowledge

KA background, coverage
KA corporate objectives & strategy

KA web site,
KA web site, annual report, CEO briefing

Competitive analysis and share of wallet

KA contacts, your knowledge

People map

KA contacts, your colleagues, Linked In

Growth opportunities

KA contacts, web site, your current analysis

Remember – this is just a basic start. You may want to add more. As we develop the growth planning and value process, you will identify more data and information you need



Review of the DATA COLLECTION PROMPT SHEETS

Aim to collect as much of the following information as possible before the growth planning and value development seminar

Key Account – Overview

Customer's Business Overview

Description	Summary description of what the company does, where it operates, where is its HQ, which sectors does it operate in and how many employees does it have.		
Ownership		Sector	Primary market Sectors for the customer
Performance	Summarise the customer financial performance over last three years	What is the customer financial projection?	What are the implications?

Customer's Market overview

History	List the main external influencers and market which have/will impact the growth / decline of this customer? Prompt - Consider PESTLE – political, economic, social, technical, legal , environmental
Implication	What are the implications for this customer?



Key Account and your coverage

How are they organized, where do you serve them - highlight the white space or the obvious opportunities for growth

Key Account structure and your coverage

Prompt – consider geography, sector, product type as ways of thinking about the structure

What else is important about the structure?

Obvious growth opportunities

Highlight the whitespaces or the obvious opportunities to fill gaps



Competitive analysis and share of the customer's business

Who are your main competitors for this customer and who hold what share?

Key Account structure and your coverage

Prompt – break this analysis down into categories right for your industry and company – for example by geography, sector, product type, Estimate the total spend for each category by the key account
Aim to list the shares of the suppliers (you and your competitors) for each of the categories – this is often referred to as the 'share of wallet' – show current trends
It may also be useful to summarise your last three years business with this key account to assess the trends in more detail

In some cases you may want to provide more information about the current business – for example if you run projects or very significant ad hoc work or perhaps design initiatives

What else is important about the structure?

Highlight the main perceived strengths/weaknesses of the competitors

Obvious growth opportunities

Highlight the whitespaces or the obvious opportunities to fill gaps



Key Account – corporate/strategic objectives and plans

This information is likely to come from the CEO review, the Annual Report or the web site

1-3 year Strategic objectives of your customer		Specific plans and initiatives under the objective	Implications for you
Objective 1	Objective 1	• Initiative 1	• ?
		• Initiative 2	
		• Initiatives 3	
		• Initiative 4	
Objective 2	Objective 2	• Initiative 1	
		• Initiatives 2	
		• Initiatives 3	
Objective 3	Objective 3	• Initiative 1	
		• Initiative 2	
Objective 4	Objective 4	• Initiative 1	
		• Initiative 2	



Key Account – Defined growth opportunities (pipeline)

List those growth opportunities currently identified which are named and valued

#	Name and Description		Total worth to you	Value to the KA	Why should you win this?			Status	Next step



UNIT 3

Complete the data gathering for your selected Key Account

Complete the data gathering

It is now time to complete the data gathering.

We normally suggest eight weeks is a good time period to complete this – long enough to get the job done but not so long that you lose focus. It is worth noting down a simple plan so that you can ensure that you get everything you need within the time period



Info source - Where or who?

What do I need to do?

When?

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UNIT 4

Initial view of the opportunities

Initial view of the growth opportunities

Having collected the initial tranche of data and information we should be ready to think about what it all means for our growth. Almost inevitably there will be gaps or areas where you recognise you need to learn more and no doubt you will have planned to address this.



We have prepared a set of prompt questions to start the thinking about where the opportunities may lie – just focus on those questions which are most relevant for you – think about growth potential over the next 24 months – in each case you should aim to summarise the possible opportunity to be investigated, its possible value and your action

What short term opportunities (next 12 weeks)? Should you be taking immediate action to chase business?

What opportunities to sell additional services? Are you underselling some services in some markets?

What opportunities to sell into different regions? Are you underselling in some regions?

What opportunities to engage with senior customer managers? Who else should you be talking with?

What opportunities to support the customer or senior managers' objectives? How can you help them?

What opportunities for joint working to create value together? What could you do together?

Initial view of the growth opportunities

Prompt questions

What short term opportunities (next 12 weeks)? Should you be taking immediate action to chase business?

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What opportunities for joint working to create value together? What could you do together?

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NEXT STEP

Having completed the knowledge gathering the next step is to attend the first growth and value planning workshops