Scale-Up Toolkits

Effective Account Management for Scale-Ups

This toolkit includes:

- How to maintain a culture of Service Delivery and Relationship Management
- The flaws in the ‘Hunters & Farmers’ concept, and an alternative way to think
- A recommended method for mastering account development planning

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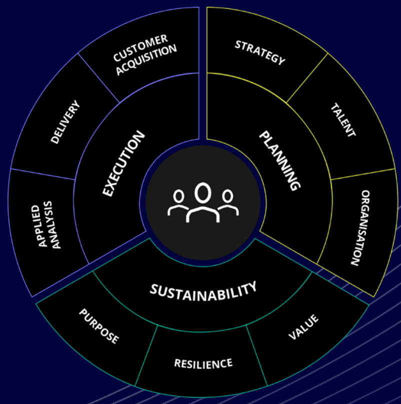
Effective Account Management



Maintaining a Culture of Service Delivery and Relationship Management

If you keep in regular contact with your clients and ensure that they are happy, you will be able to anticipate their needs long before anyone else.

If your client was in anyway dissatisfied with your product/service, your terms, or your customer service after their first purchase, you could call them every day and they would not purchase from you again.

Effective relationship management is simply not possible if you have over-promised and/or under-delivered. Aside from regular, candid contact, when it comes to customer satisfaction, providing a platform for objective feedback makes complete sense.

This can be achieved in three ways.

- **Appoint an executive sponsor.** This will be useful for the account planning process.
- **Fund customer-led user groups.** Allow customers to set the agenda, influence the product roadmap or beta programmes, and report back to non-salespeople. They may find it easier to reveal their dissatisfaction to staff from outside the sales team, especially if they previously experienced any issues with the salesperson.
- **Implement a measurable way of measuring client satisfaction.** The most common is Net Promoter Scores (NPS). NPS can be used very effectively in B2B as well as B2C businesses. Never forget: *happy customers are your best salespeople*.

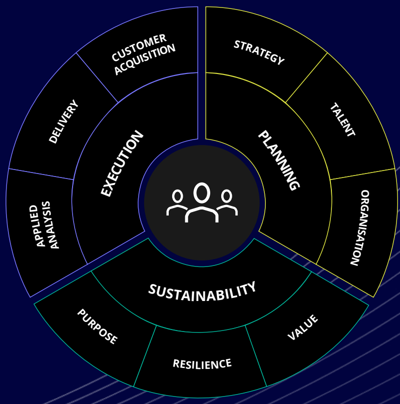
Sales Personalities: Hunters & Farmers?

When it comes to salespeople, the CEO needs to think through what kind of professional profile best suits managing accounts. Senior management frequently debate the *hunter/farmer* hypothesis; hunters being independent salespeople entirely focused on closing as many new deals as quickly as possible; farmers being collaborative salespeople who deliver by nurturing long-term relationships.

For the premise to hold though, one must believe that both skillsets are somehow mutually exclusive; you can only be one or the other. Instead, building a detailed understanding of your customer's needs is what is really critical to success, regardless of whether it is new or existing business.

Sales should be viewed as the same as any other profession, in that acquiring experience and furthering skills are key to a sales team's improvement and ultimately to their success. Avoid the trap of pigeonholing your people based on inferred characteristics and instead focus on creating an environment where they can succeed.

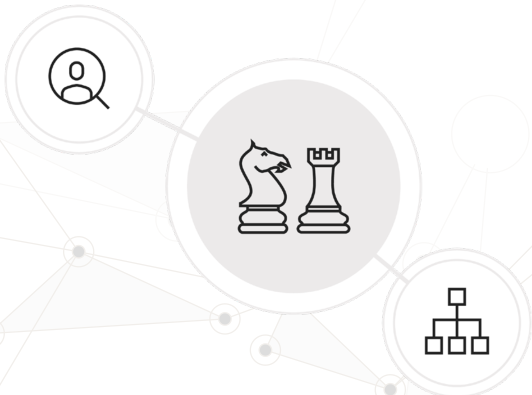
Mastering Account Development Planning



Let's assume that you do have a happy customer who you think could be influenced to make a repeat purchase or simply grow their existing spend with you. How do you ensure that that happens in a controlled way with a high level of certainty? Regardless of the format you use, populating the account plan is often the first step towards developing your overall opportunity with an existing customer. The requirement to subject yourself and your team to a series of challenging enquiries about your client is fundamental to that precious commodity: ***understanding the customer***.

Step #1
Ask the key questions

- What does their organisation actually do?
- Where are they going?
- When do they need to get there?
- What's their strategic ambition?
- What are their key risks and challenges?
- How can we help?
- Who are the key people?
- How do they like to buy?
- What's the competition doing?



Step #2
Set out the activities

As Eisenhower once said, "Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable". By applying rigour in your approach, especially initially, you can drive out a clear set of activities across several disciplines:

- Contact management
- Marketing communications
- Business planning and forecasting
- Pricing strategy
- Product development
- Competitive intelligence

Step #3
Distinguish decision makers from influencers

To make your account plan effective, ensure you include extremely honest appraisals of the individual relationships you have with the people who hold decision-making or influencing roles. A simple RAG (red, amber, green) status will work as long as it's honest. Try and get the customer themselves to review it and even sign it off!

Frog have worked with a number of very smart organisations that have combined key account management training for salespeople, with an existing account plan format.

Your Final Checklist

Whilst not a revelatory concept, it's often worth reminding yourself of the criticality of customer business, especially if you're tight for numbers at the end of the quarter. Here's a checklist of things to consider:

- Is the customer truly happy with what you're providing them? If in doubt, ask.
- Do you have an objective way of measuring satisfaction?
- What is the quality of the individual relationships across both organisations?
- Do they have access to seniors on your side?
- Do you really understand their organisation and would an account plan help here?
- Are you easy to do business with?

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