
10-Step Strategic Account Alignment

Getting the stakeholder buy-in you need to capture more business



Global Partners **Inc.**

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Introduction

Managing an organization's key customers, whether called Strategic Account Management (SAM), Key account Management (KAM) or Global account Management (GAM) is one of the most important strategic processes any organization can undertake. It is surprising, therefore that many organizations today, including global, multi-billion dollar [companies do not execute this process effectively](#) and some do almost no systematic account management at all.

We have found four major barriers that prevent organizations from implementing successful account planning and management systems:

1. Account management is considered to be a sales initiative, rather than a strategic organizational capability
2. The account planning process is not integrated with the organization's strategic planning and implementation processes
3. The account management process focuses too much on completing forms and not enough on the careful analysis and strategic thinking required to drive business with the organization's most important customers
4. Account management processes do not create sufficient value for the customers and the suppliers such that both parties proactively collaborate in maximizing value for their own business as well as that of their counterpart's

Our intention is to enable clients to address these and other barriers through the application of the tools and techniques mentioned in this Strategic Account Alignment (SAA) Guide.

This SAA Guide is organized around four stages, which together comprise a comprehensive [Strategic Account Alignment](#) capability. Each successive stage builds from the stage before and therefore we typically recommend that the 4 stages and 10 steps be implemented sequentially. However, we recognize that many organizations have elements of an account management capability that work well, while other areas need significant improvement. Therefore, it is also possible to prioritize and implement different stages based on the specific requirements and situation of the customer.



Paul Hesselschwerdt
President
Global Partners, Inc.
phesselschwerdt@globalpartnersinc.com
Ph. 781-352-2460

Stage 1

Customer Profile – Know Your Customer



Step 1. Develop Customer Profile

Knowing your customer is fundamental for all strategic account management activities. Of course the SAM needs to have a thorough understanding of the history of the account in terms of revenue and profit from the account, share of spending and results of key performance indicators (KPIs). However, tracking these metrics does not, by itself, contribute to future success in the account. The SAM and the account team need to also interpret these results, looking for future opportunities to [expand business and capture new opportunities](#). Creating a strategic profile of the customer, which identifies the customer's most urgent business challenges and opportunities, as well as the executives charged with implementing strategies to address them, is the other important element of the Customer Profile. The combination of these 2 elements, examining the history of the business with the account and looking forward to how the supplier can help the customer in the future is the starting point for strategic account management.

Tools from Step 1

- Account Data, Metrics & KPIs
- Our Position in the Account
- Opportunity Prioritization Matrix
- Customer Profile

Step 2. Build and Leverage Relationships

The ultimate objective here is to understand the customer organization and the prime contacts. How long has this relationship existed? What type of relationship has it been? What have been its strengths and weaknesses? Have there been any major problems? What have the competitors done to impact the relationship? What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis) within the account? And, how can your company's resources best be used to improve your position?

Tool from Step 2

- Customer Relationship Analysis

Step 3. Identify and Address Customer Needs

The final step in Stage I, Know Your Customer is to [identify the needs of all key customer contacts](#). These needs include rational, business-oriented needs but also the emotional and motivational needs of decision makers and key influencers. The Customer Needs Analysis enables account managers to systematically identify all of the business results that executives are responsible for, as well as their more personal needs. The KANO analysis enables them to drill deeply into these needs to determine what the supplier could do more of to differentiate themselves and delight the customer.

Tools from Step 3

- Customer Needs Analysis
- KANO Analysis

[Request a Consultation](#)

Stage 2

Define, Position, and Sell Unique Value



Step 4. Define and Position Unique Value

Creating customer value means contributing to the customer's business success in a significant way. Creating unique value simply means doing this in a way that is different and better than your competitors. Knowing how to contribute to the customer's business success requires an understanding of how the customer's business operates, how it generates revenue and profits and how it identifies and addresses strategic challenges and opportunities (Step 1). [Value creation](#) is also different for different people within the customer's operations, i.e. improving business success for the marketing director is different from creating value for the VP of production. Therefore, you need to build relationships in order to understand the needs and value drivers of the individual value buyers at the customer (Steps 2 and 3).

Tools from Step 4

- Value Opportunity Plan
- Competitor Analysis

Step 5. Sell Value

Defining and positioning unique value is often not enough to enable suppliers to then capture that value in the form of prices that reflect the value created for the customer. This step of Selling Value requires the account manager to leverage their knowledge and relationships with the true value buyers at the customer to [negotiate contracts and prices based on value creation](#). This is particularly challenging today as negotiators in procurement are increasingly effective at avoiding value selling arguments and commoditizing suppliers' offers.

Tool from Step 5

- Value Buyer Checklist

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Stage 3

Ensuring Global Alignment



Step 6. Establish Account Objectives and Strategies

Account Objectives describe WHAT the account manager and account team believe can be accomplished in the next 1-3 years. Account Objectives are not simply the forecasted revenues from the account. They should also describe what the team can accomplish in at least the following areas:

- Establishing and leveraging relationships with CXOs and Value Buyers
- Defining and positioning quantified value
- Improving competitive positioning within the account
- Capturing major opportunities
- Improving organizational alignment and commitment to the account

For each Objective, the team should determine the most effective strategies for achieving the Objectives. Strategies describe HOW the team will achieve the Objectives. Strategies are high-level actions and approaches.

Step 7. Define Action Plans

Action Plans describe the detailed, step-by-step actions that the team will follow to implement the Strategies and achieve the Objectives. Action Plans are organized in a series of actions such that when one action is successfully executed the follow-on action has already been identified. By creating this series of Action Playbooks, the team can systematically execute each action and drive implementation of the Strategy.

Tool from Step 7

- Action Plan

Step 8. Create Internal Alignment

It is well-known to Strategic Account Managers that [achieving alignment and support](#) from their own internal organization is often more difficult than managing the external customer. It is essential, therefore that the account manager plan and execute strategies and actions to gain the internal alignment and support necessary to achieve the account objectives.

Tool from Step 8

- Internal Stakeholder Analysis

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Stage 4

Capture Planning



Step 9. Capture Customer Opportunities

Account Planning and Management can be thought of in 2 dimensions:

1. Planning and implementing the long-term strategies and actions to drive greater share and profits from the account
2. Planning and implementing strategies to [capture major opportunities](#) in the account

All of the steps that the account manager goes through in developing the long-term planning will contribute significantly to their success in capturing short-term opportunities. Capture Planning is, in effect, a subset of account planning. In this stage, the account manager and team understand how the opportunity links with the customer's strategy (from Step 1); use their relationships developed in Step 2; identify specific customer needs for this opportunity (Step 3); determine the unique value they can provide, quantify and sell (Steps 4 and 5); and determine Objectives, Strategies and Action Plans for this specific opportunity.

Tools from Step 9

- Capture Opportunity Analysis
- Capture Team Challenge Guidelines

Step 10. Continuously Develop the Account

Account Management is a never-ending, multi-level process. There are always changes in the organizational and power structures within institutions. Therefore, to [achieve real partnership](#) with the account, the Strategic Account Manager must be committed to ongoing customer satisfaction feedback and continuous improvement. As one technology sales manager stated, "I must develop a partnership internally with the service engineers. They are my best eyes and ears about the customer and the competition, and they help me assure that the account is satisfied with our performance."

[Request a Consultation](#)

Strategic Account Alignment Demonstration

This webinar covers Global Partners' 10-Step Strategic Account Alignment Process. By viewing this webinar, you will:

- See the 10-step account planning and implementation process using real-world examples;
- Focus on 3 of the biggest challenges facing strategic account management programs; and
- Learn the unique approach that Global Partners uses for the account planning and management process.



Download Now

Strategic Account Alignment Demonstration: <http://bit.ly/SAAdemo>

Meet the Global Partners Team

Global Partners, Inc. is an international Consulting and Management Development firm that focuses on helping client organizations to grow their businesses worldwide.

Since our founding in 1990, our programs have been implemented in more than 40 countries and have been translated and adapted for multiple languages and cultures.

Global Partners helps clients differentiate in the field by developing Trusted Business Partner relationships with their customers. This means that their customers will see them as part of the team, resulting in unrivaled customer loyalty.

There are 3 conditions that need to be in place for this special Trusted Business Partner relationship to exist:

- Secure a **Trusted** position, because the customer will believe their success is the focus of the salesperson;
- Talk to the customer about their real **Business** challenges and bring something new to the discussion; and
- Propose solutions that address the customer's real issues – just as a **Partner** does.

If you are interested in learning more about transforming your organization through improving relationships with your clients, learn more about [Trusted Business Partners](#).



PAUL HESSELSCHWERDT
President

Paul has been a senior executive in consulting and industry for more than 20 years. He has worked with companies in the Americas, Europe and Asia. Together with the Global Partners team, he has designed and implemented programs in leadership, management development, sales and marketing, and project management across a range of industries, including pharmaceuticals, biotech, retail, chemicals, consumer products, electronics and high technology. Paul's career began in finance and accounting and half of his professional life has been as a Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer for industrial, life sciences and global media companies.

Based in the US, Europe and Asia, the Global Partners team is comprised of:



**FABRIZIO
BATTAGLIA**



**JAY
GRONLUND**



**CHARLES
KELLOGG**



**BOON CHYE
LIM**



**DAVID
SANDERSON**



**MICHAEL
WOLF**