

# **KAM REIMAGINED:** BUILDING A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO EMPOWER KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

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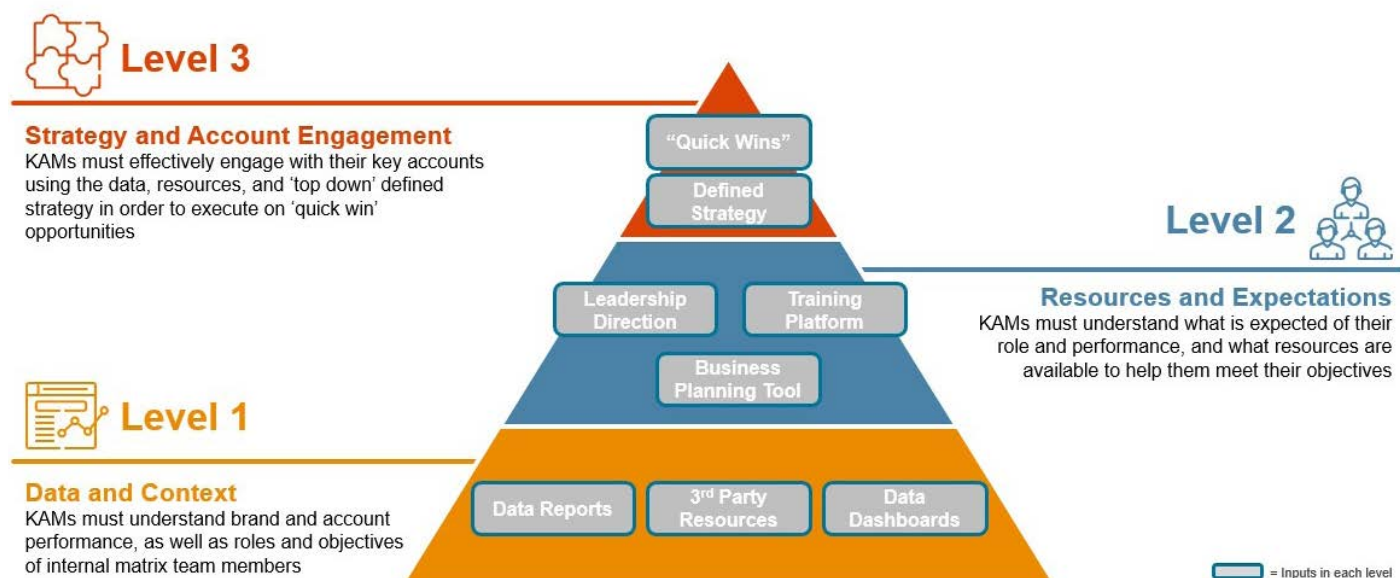
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Key account management (KAM), as a more innovative approach to pharmaceutical sales and account engagement, promises to deliver long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships between biopharmaceutical manufacturers, healthcare systems and provider practices (AKA target accounts). These partnership structures are above brand and typically involve custom programs developed and executed in collaboration between the manufacturer and the accounts. A push toward KAM is underway within healthcare, driven by three trends in particular: traditional sales representatives are losing access to individual target physicians; the power and influence of key accounts on access and utilization of branded pharmaceuticals is increasing; and the decision-drivers for key account stakeholders are evolving to prioritize evidence-based

purchasing, requiring a more strategic approach to engagement.

While the business case for a KAM model is clear, and pharmaceutical company leaders may have the enthusiasm for this innovative approach to account engagement, the KAM models set up within pharma companies often lack the right structure, buy-in and leadership guidance to be successful. Successful implementation of KAM requires a comprehensive strategic approach and an investment in new capabilities. In this white paper, we will detail the components of a KAM strategic framework that leverages data, dedicated resources, and a clearly defined strategy to set the right foundation for KAM success (Figure A).

**Fig A: KAM Strategic Framework**

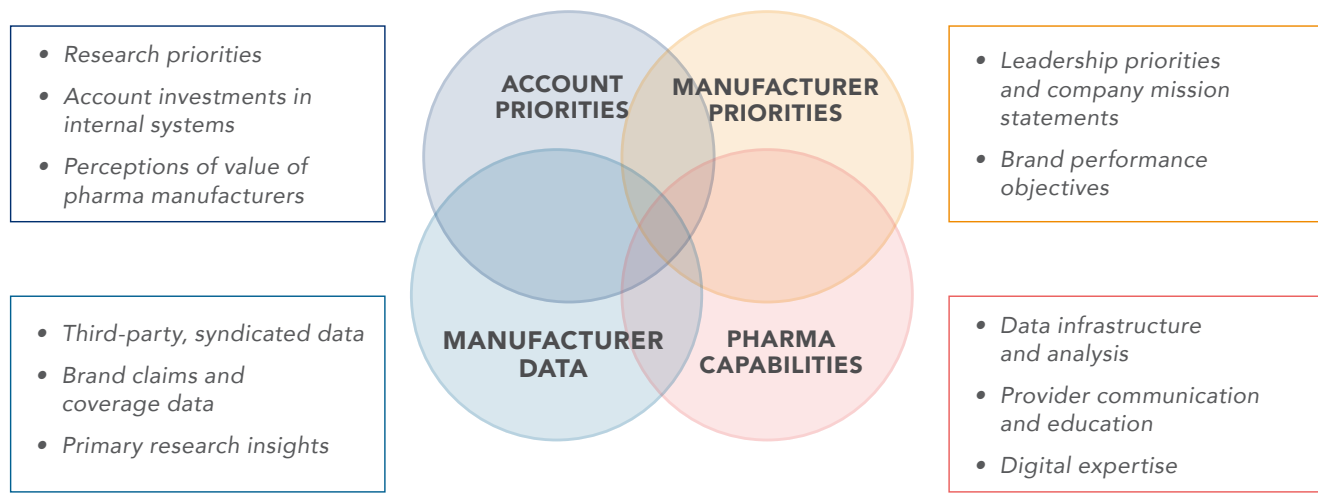


## Level 1: Data and Context

The goal of KAM engagement is to find areas where the pharmaceutical manufacturer and the account have a shared interest and where an opportunity exists for the manufacturer to offer the account a capability, data or

service that would benefit the account (Figure B). The key to taking advantage of partnership opportunities is arming key account managers with the right external data, understanding the account priorities and manufacturer priorities and available manufacturer capabilities.

**Fig B:**  
Keys to Identifying Partnership Opportunities



## 1 - Data

The fundamental question at the initial level of the KAM Strategic Framework is whether the KAM team members have enough information to become experts in their account. Companies should invest in resources and tools to provide account managers with foundational information that can lead to data-driven insights.

Key account managers require data reports and dashboards to know what is going on within the key accounts. They also need to be provided with the right data subscriptions at the right cadence, so that data can be received on a regular basis. The data they require is substantial and typically can include the following (at minimum):

- Brand performance data (brand sales at a regional level and by account, market share of category and therapeutic area by account, competitor sales and trends)
- Demographic information (locations and number of hospitals and beds, patient socioeconomic data, payer mix)

- Competitive positioning insights (competitor messaging and positioning, provider preferences within the account)
- Internal Account Dynamics (key access and utilization decision-makers, leadership positions and changes, investments, initiatives)

Additionally, key account managers will need qualitative information at an account level — often from third-party sources — including leadership initiatives, priorities, challenges, private hospital investments communicated to investors, and challenges in their community inclusive or outside of the manufacturer's areas of interest.

This information is important for these key account managers to know and understand their accounts and the unique market in which they are operating; to understand drivers for decision-making and to capture articulated needs from key accounts; and to navigate the organization in order to transform custom partnership opportunities into reality. In addition, this information helps managers add value to internal stakeholders within their pharmaceutical company and build rapport and trust within their teams.

## 2 - Context

Once key account managers understand their accounts and potential opportunities, they need to understand the remit of their role as well as the pharma company's capabilities and compliance rules. Given the breadth of what the role entails, a lack of definition can be crippling due to a fear of overstepping boundaries within their organization, or a desire not to conflict with other field roles. A triangulation of the role is required to recognize where their value lies.

Further, they need to know what capabilities and investments the pharmaceutical manufacturer is willing to make as part of a potential partnership. Understanding the depth of current capabilities today, those that may be in development, and what might constitute a "bridge too far" is critical to not waste time on unrealistic engagement opportunities.

Finally, successful key account managers need to understand the roles and objectives of their field team colleagues so they can appropriately marshal the resources of their team members to add value in multi-stakeholder engagements. Account managers must have a shared understanding of other field teams' skill sets and the willingness and initiative to utilize team members' skills where needed. They should use what they know about other field teams' responsibilities to their advantage to drive the right collaboration and "recruitment" of their field team colleagues to mutually beneficial opportunities.

## Level 2: Resources and Expectations

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At the second level of the KAM Strategic Framework, KAM requires the right training, resources, and leadership expectations to be successful. Support and buy-in from leadership are needed to recognize both what this new team is responsible for and its importance to the organization. Socialization and internal alignment across key field and brand team stakeholders will ensure that the key account manager is successful as this individual works across the functional teams within the company.

## 1 - Skill sets and training

KAM team members need different types of skills than a contract manager, sales rep, or MSL, and in many ways a combination of all three. These skills include strategic planning, financial analysis and project management. Account managers will need their own training program, assets and enduring resources to build the kind of competencies that are unique to this role. Sales rep material cannot simply be copied and reused.

Future account managers will require the ability to understand and analyze vast amounts of information as they continue to interface with EMR and data analytics platforms; a willingness and ability to learn technological skills will be mandatory. Account managers must then synthesize this information to effectively develop strategy and also manage the details of their account to drive and execute partnerships. Managers must do all of this while thinking creatively, outside the bounds of typical pharma partnerships.

In addition, account managers will have to learn how to lead without authority in order to successfully collaborate with their matrix of team members internally. This skill set further applies to engagement with the variety of stakeholders at their key accounts and the execution of custom programs. Account managers will need to be able to successfully navigate account organizations, build relationships, foster champions, and drive progress on complicated multi-stakeholder engagements with no formal authority.

## 2 - Business planning process and metrics

Account managers will require a robust business planning process and supporting tools, including guidance on how to transform information into insights, insights into opportunities, and opportunities into action.

A business planning tool will help account managers interpret all of the data they collect and shape it into an account plan by taking key inputs from dense weekly data reports and guiding them through a strategy development process that identifies key insights, customer needs and what the manufacturer can do in response. The tool will show how elements align, the

ideal initiatives and programs to undertake, and tactical next steps.

When it comes to measuring the outcomes of account planning, leadership needs to clearly define unique and specific success metrics for the key account managers. Rather than typical activity-based metrics, KAM success should be measured in outcomes-based metrics, examining levels of customer satisfaction, company perception and execution of impactful, long-term partnerships.

### 3 - Leadership direction

Account managers need to know who else in their organization they should be working with to accomplish their goals. The vision is that a singular key account manager serves as a quarterback of the team, coordinating field team members, sales reps, MSLs, payer team leads, HEOR team members, and so on, in order to develop a custom solution designed to solve problems for the various accounts.

While it is clear that key account managers need to effectively drive progress without authority, at the same time the right structure and guidance needs to come from KAM leadership. These managers need buy-in from the top to set the context for their own individual engagements with their colleagues from each of the various field teams. The KAM leader and other field leadership roles must communicate with one another to set the guardrails for interaction between their respective teams, so that, for example, the sales team leader knows what the account manager is going to ask of the sales reps and give them license to say yes. (Figure C).



**Fig C:**  
Key Account Manager Internal  
Stakeholder Alignment

## Level 3: Strategy and Account Engagement

At the third and final level of the KAM Strategic Framework, KAM requires a unique strategy for engaging with accounts. Strategy can be defined on three levels:

1. Account manager vision: Determining what the team is aiming to achieve for their organization (e.g., driving sales, creating clinical opportunities, increasing the eminence and branding of the company within their key accounts) and defining a clear vision statement and overarching objective
2. Segmentation and segment-level guidance: Building an actionable segmentation of key accounts that leads to differentiated engagement strategies, objectives and resources
3. Account-specific strategy: Determining what these managers are trying to accomplish with their specific accounts (which speaks to the outcomes of the business planning process) and aligning on the initiatives and programs the managers are trying to drive forward with their accounts

Evolving customers' wants and needs will require alignment on an account "point of attack" and segmentation strategy. Understanding of specific account priorities (for example, high priority diseases) helps in establishing the KAM value proposition and point of entry/interaction with internal customer KOLs.

Leadership must define for account managers how engagement with one IDN, standalone hospital, clinic, provider practice, etc., should differ from another on the team's target list of accounts and provide initial direction on engagement strategy. The segmentation exercise must be specific to account level engagement — it cannot simply be the same segmentation that the HCP field force might use, as the needs are different. The dimensions that inform the segmentation are also different and may include sophistication of the EMR, technological integration across sites of care, or the level of control on HCP decision-making.

Using what is learned in the segmentation and leveraging dedicated engagement resources, managers can define account-based objectives for engagement, develop an account-specific strategy, build account plans and objectives, and execute the appropriate partnership programs.

Finally account managers should identify the quick wins, ideas, or resources that are aligned to the strategy that the team can actually take into the market. “Quick Wins” are resources, programs or guidance that are shared with account managers top-down from leadership, so these account managers already have something “in their bag” that they can bring to discussions with their key account targets and stakeholders. It is much harder to have to define a new custom program from scratch with each key account vs. having one or two defined programs that they can start with (ideally targeted to accounts, based on the segmentation) and then work from and modify those assets based on their target account priorities. It is incumbent on leadership to define and invest in building these Quick Wins so key account managers are set up for success.

## Conclusion

Successful key account management requires a holistic view, and while pharma companies can often successfully execute on individual components of the KAM strategy, pharma leadership is often challenged to bring the entire strategy together in a coordinated and timely fashion. Any one aspect can be a potential source of failure. Missing information or alignment at one level of the KAM Strategic Framework may affect success of the entire account management program.

An integrated partner such as EVERSANA™ can assist with shaping the KAM Strategic Framework at each level:

- Level 1: Identify data needs and set the groundwork for robust understanding of accounts, socialize the KAM role across field leadership, develop RACI models for account engagement, and define the structure/boundaries that account managers will operate on within the organization
- Level 2: Develop business planning processes and supporting tools, and deliver necessary training (including both training strategy and execution)
- Level 3: Develop key account engagement strategy, define a key account segmentation, and delineate Quick Wins

Having an external partner can help pharma companies to identify challenges and provide an objective view into the solutions required. And because KAM requires a holistic approach, there is considerable value in having one partner that can address all of these components together, so that the data links to the business planning tool, the training platform links to the strategy, and so on.

With the components of the KAM Strategic Framework delivered by one partner, we can help accelerate decision-making and drive the insight generation, the socialization, the training, and the strategy and tactical development in an interconnected approach.



### About EVERSANA™

EVERSANA™ is the leading independent provider of global services to the life sciences industry. The company's integrated solutions are rooted in the patient experience and span all stages of the product life cycle to deliver long-term, sustainable value for patients, prescribers, channel partners and payers. The company serves more than 500 organizations, including innovative start-ups and established pharmaceutical companies, to advance life sciences solutions for a healthier world. To learn more about EVERSANA, visit [eversana.com](https://eversana.com) or connect through [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

