



## ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT – THE HOLY GRAIL?

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In over 20 years spent working with sales organizations of all sizes - that sell very different products and services to a variety of customers - it never ceases to amaze me how many face challenges around the art and the science of **Account Management**. Part of the problem is that the words “account management” can be used to describe wildly different things depending upon who you ask. In some organizations, it is just an up-market word for selling, while others will immediately describe the Account Planning process. My experience is that few organizations really understand the implications of implementing an Account Management initiative whose ultimate aim is to help the organization become more customer-centric. As a result, many Account Management initiatives fail to deliver the level of returns that companies originally expected from their investment.

Over the years I have developed a “Top 20” list of the most common mistakes made by companies when implementing Account Management. Irrespective of whether you are currently considering embarking on this journey, or you have already set sail (and are either lying becalmed or are fighting your way through stormy waters), I hope you find this checklist a useful tool to help plot your progress.

### Top 20 checklist of the most common mistakes in Account Management

1. Considering the Account Management initiative as purely a Sales, rather than cross-organizational, strategic initiative
2. Not approaching Account Management as a “change management” initiative
3. Making your best salespeople automatic choices for Account Manager positions
4. Having no clear definition of the role and responsibilities of Account Managers, nor of the competences (skills, knowledge, attributes) required for the role
5. Providing no specialized training provided for the Account Manager role
6. Placing no accountability on “virtual” Account Team members to deliver on the commitments made during the Account Planning process
7. Believing that Account Planning *is* Account Management, rather than an important sub-set of it
8. Defining the Sales Process (account acquisition), but not the Account Development and Retention processes
9. Not integrating the Account Planning process with your company’s annual Planning and Budgeting Process
10. Failing to involve key customers in the Account Planning process
11. Treating Account Management as just a Training initiative
12. Not including formal Account Plan approval or review process as part of Management best practice processes
13. Creating Account Plans and planning tools outside the day-to-day systems of record, causing redundant data entry
14. Not beginning with the systems or technology in place to capture Account performance data across geographies, lines of business, etc.

15. Using Account Manager compensation plans that reward only short-term revenue, rather than longer-term Account Development and Retention success
16. Instituting no element of variable team-based compensation for non-sales resources
17. Applying the same Account Management process and tools to all accounts, irrespective of size (i.e. "one size fits all" approach)
18. Not piloting the new Account Management model with just one or two selected accounts before full-scale implementation
19. Not clearly defining success measures or baseline data for the Account Management initiative in advance, therefore no "before and after" comparative data
20. Re-assigning Account Managers to different accounts each year

If you would like to use our online Account Management Assessment Tool to measure your current Account Management program, or would like to talk to the author about Account Management best practices, please contact Ian Savage at [isavage@nourgroup.com](mailto:isavage@nourgroup.com) or 1.888.339.1333 x9104.