

Strategic Marketing Case Studies: Key Accounts Management

By Malcolm McDonald, Emeritus Professor at Cranfield School of Management, Professor at Warwick, Henley, Aston, Bradford Business Schools and the Sino-British College USST Shanghai, and Chairman of Malcolm McDonald Consulting

Each of these mini-cases is based on real cases, but the names and some of the circumstances have been changed. Any name similarity with existing companies or people is entirely accidental and unintended.

The following mini-cases are offered to readers as a way of considering just some of the complex issues which face all organisations who are serious in their intentions to build profitable and lasting relationships with customers.

This selection of mini-cases has presented just a small part of the myriad of problems that result from an organisation's efforts to become more customer focused. We hope that you will enjoy thinking about these problems, and will be better prepared as a result for dealing with the challenges inherent in your key account relationships.

We have also included some case studies from the customer's point of view, which may be used as training scenarios for "boundary spanning".

Please "role-play" the characters in the mini-cases, but also consider what would happen in your company if it were faced with the situation described, and how you think your customer would react.

We have included a brief discussion at the end of each mini-case. We stress that these are not answers, as there is never a perfect answer to any problem in life. Please compare our thoughts with your own, and please discuss them with colleagues, as this is the best way to learn.

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Case Study: The power of persistence

Jeanne Étoile, General Manager of Étoile Consulting, has just awarded the trophies in the annual Étoile & Clients' doubles tennis tournament. She has been extremely proud to see the Étoile/customer doubles teams playing together - a mirror of the way her company works together with clients. It was particularly pleasing this year to see 26 nationalities represented in the tournament.

She spends her next day in the office thinking deeply. Étoile is recognised as the best practitioner of key account management in its sector. The company could be finished if it lost that accolade.

How can Étoile keep up the momentum?

Case Study: The power of persistence (continued)

Discussion: Étoile needs to keep abreast of developments in their industry, and continuously to seek to provide solutions which provide superior value to their clients. Apart from this, however, Étoile could join a Best Practice Key Account Management Benchmarking Club at one of the leading postgraduate business schools, such as Cranfield. This way Étoile will always be at the leading edge of key account management best practice.

The company will also invest effort in the following activities:

- ✓ process integration;
- ✓ continuous communication with clients in-between projects;
- ✓ recruiting specialist skills;
- ✓ strong marketing communications and promotion.

About Malcolm McDonald Consulting

Malcolm McDonald Consulting Ltd. is a strategic sales and marketing consulting business.

With our end-to-end interactions, from Board level to internal project team, we help companies create value through getting the fundamentals right in strategic sales and marketing, all within budget and the agreed deadline.

Professor McDonald and his team of consultants work with the Boards and internal teams of executives from a number of the world's leading multi-nationals on all continents.

Malcolm McDonald is Emeritus Professor of Marketing at Cranfield University, and Visiting Professor at Henley, Warwick, Aston and Bradford Business Schools. He authored over 40 books on marketing and key account management.

Coming from a background in business which included a number of years as Marketing Director of Canada Dry, Malcolm has successfully maintained a close link between academic rigour and commercial application. He has consulted to major companies from the UK, Europe, USA, Far East, South-East Asia, and Africa, in the areas of strategic marketing and marketing planning, market segmentation, key account management, international marketing and marketing accountability.

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