

**Maximizing your Sales Opportunities in Global Accounts
and Creating Value for your Customer**
by Janice Hulse

Building successful global account strategies is really dependent on your sales organization approach and how you create a customer centric culture in your team. A customer centric culture is one where your sales teams deliver on the customer's expectations globally: at the headquarter level, region and local markets.

Opportunities are captured, sustained and built upon through deep customer focus. The following areas are important elements/attributes of a customer centric sales team when managing global accounts:

Customer Knowledge

- The sales team has a deep understanding of their customer, their market segment, their industry and their local environment.
- The sales team has regional and local market knowledge, and understands the economic value drivers in the respective market.
- The sales team understands the factors that influence buying decisions (does the customer have local autonomy; or does the headquarters dictate local budgets and buying decisions?)

Organizational Alignment/Dedicated or Shared Resources

- The sales organization (Global Account Managers, Pre-Sales, Post Sales Support, and Channel) is functionally designed such that it is easy for customers to do business within any given market.
- In some cases, the sales organization may appoint Global Client Directors (or Headquartered Global Account Managers) who manage the customer at the headquarter level, with dedicated or shared local account teams at the region or geographic level. These teams would have shared account revenue and customer satisfaction goals. This drives customer focus across the account globally, ultimately delivering a seamless experience for the customer of the supplier's products and services.
- The organization is cohesive and "unified" – regardless whether resources are dedicated or shared in that the whole of the team delivers products and services efficiently, effectively and is responsive to customer needs. This is particularly important in post-sales support activities that can have global impact on customer satisfaction levels.
- The organization delivers a consistent and high level of customer interaction globally - through customer quarterly business reviews; executive sponsorship programs and building inter-division relationships.

Incorporating Feedback

- Create customer satisfaction measurements that are positively incorporated to meet the customer's changing needs.

- Build a customer satisfaction lifecycle that can be measured quarterly or annually and is focused on key elements which are relevant to the customer's success factors such as:
 - Ease of doing business – an important driver of customer loyalty.
 - Responsiveness & commitment to customer's business success.
 - Creating value through perceived customer benefits that are measurable.
 - Quality of post-sales support.
- Establish Customer Advisory Boards to leverage customer participation and engagement.

Value Creation

- Create value for the customer at the headquarter, regional and local levels to derive benefits for its customers and their subsequent customers in region. Understanding your customer's customer is key to establishing the right value equation for your customer.
- Value creation for the customer reduces business risk for the customer; enhances the customer's ability to strategically plan for the longer term; and improves operational performance and efficiency.

Creation of Loyalty & Customer Advocates

- Create a company culture of "Customer Advocacy" which is a specific form of customer service in which companies focus on what is best for the customer. Policies that underpin customer advocacy include all aspects of customer contact, products, services, sales and support infrastructure.
- Create loyal and profitable customers who serve as advocates for the organization and capitalize on opportunities where customer loyalty is demonstrated.
- Move from traditional product or service selling to transformational selling that targets your unique value proposition and solves compelling problems that have long-term benefits for the customer.

Customer Centric & Partner Channel Leverage

- The primary focus of the sales organization is on external customer results rather than the internal effort expended. Are the supplier's products and services delivering the right business outcomes for the customer?
- Ensure that the supplier's partners and channels are aligned to the sales account strategy and deliver on the customer's expectations.
- Sales decisions are referenced back to what the customer impact might be.

The above customer focus areas are components that are inherent in successful global account sales teams. However, from the customer's perspective, their expectations from a "customer-centric" sales team also carries certain criteria.

While the following eight principals can be applied to any account profile, they are very relevant to global accounts or customers who have presence in more than one geographic location with multiple region and local footprint.

Customer Expectations of "Customer-centric" Sales Teams:

1. **Relationship:** The relationship between the supplier and customer should be close and trusting and be mutually beneficial. The sales team should have regular and consistent engagement with customer executives, functional business leaders and support staff.
2. **Business Relevance:** The ability to understand the customer's business challenges in their local markets and how to map the supplier's products or services to solve business issues cost effectively.
3. **Domain Expertise:** Provide the thought leadership in the industry for your products or services. Share best practices that are relevant to the customer's business in their market.
4. **Flexibility:** Demonstrate new business models; deliver creative strategies on how the customer's business can be impacted through new approaches that may not be conventional.
5. **Accountability:** Clearly identify the roles of people that interface with the customer and how the teams are aligned to provide a consistent global experience.
6. **Empowered Sales Teams:** Customers want to work with people who are empowered to make decisions that are mutually beneficial for the customer in the market or region in which they operate.
7. **Focus & Responsiveness:** Be focused on the customer's business, listen to and understand their needs, and be proactive.
8. **Post Sales Support:** Deliver on commitments made during any pre-sales cycles. Ensure there are no gaps between sales and delivery teams.

In summary, customer focused sales organizations will ultimately meet or exceed customer's expectations and create a mutually beneficial relationship for supplier and customer. For the supplier sales organization, this results in sustainable, long-term business and trusted relationships. For the customer this results in value creation and positive outcomes for their business, and their customers.

About the Author

Janice Hulse is a Global Sales Executive with over 15 years experience in international sales, channels and business development. For assistance with global sales strategy, market and channel development contact Janice. For help in aligning sales & marketing for results contact any member of the [KickStart Alliance team](#).