



CASE STUDY

Successfully Leading Key Accounts in a Matrix Organization



AT A GLANCE

Initial situation customer side

In a global working environment, sales organizations are increasingly offering more freedom to their key account managers in developing the customers and delivering the best possible and most comprehensive services and solutions for their clients. This is especially true for a global corporation when interfacing hardware and software while transitioning many of their services towards cloud solutions. The key account managers are responsible for fostering cross-functional and cross-national sales. They need to maneuver projects and sales cycles in a manner that considers resource planning, fiscal year agendas, individual goals for the business divisions involved, as well as individual motivations and career options of team members.

The typical challenge in a matrix setup is to motivate account members to align with an account strategy. For the individual account member it is easier and more attractive to make quick wins through focusing only on divisional performance goals.

Typical conflicts that the matrix leaders are facing include lack of motivation, lack of reliability, lack of role clarity, lack of cooperation, or lack of trust. Therefore, in order to be successful in achieving business goals, it is important for individuals to learn to use their natural authority and communicate cooperatively using appropriate methods.

Success factors

- Linking modern cooperation, sales, and leadership techniques together
- Fostering awareness of methods to generate internal motivation without actually having hierarchical means of power
- Defining lateral leadership as a lever for fostering team development processes and peer group support – while at the same time learning about their own personality and impact
- Balance of short input and practical application
- Working on real cases and business requirements and applying the principles and tools of leadership and ownership

Project result

The key account managers developed the relevant leadership skills and the mindset foundation for showing effective leadership in non-hierarchical situations. They reported concrete plans showing how to apply the learning and implement it in their daily business life for better team and sales results. It also helped them to deploy greater confidence and composure in explaining business challenges and the necessary compliance and strategy alignment to their cooperation partners and team members across the organization. They were much more aware of the levers for influencing goals and handling conflicts of interest in their sphere and how to do so in an entrepreneurial and focused manner.

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