

Key account: the negotiating process

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Key words

Key accounts, salespeople, client expectations, partnerships, sales effectiveness, international accounts.

Abstract

Main implication: *This research plans to evaluate the changes and evolutions from the real world of key account management compared to literature review: how decisions are taken, what processes help to be successful on tenders, how to cooperate on a world basis, what methods facilitate conclusions.*

Research question: *This work looks for a measure of evolution and changes during a negotiation process by KAM compared to existing literature research. Key account negotiators take strategic dimensions into account when starting a negotiation process. They measure the cost of negotiations, help their clients to position themselves properly and develop partnerships. In general, researchers are more interested in organization and clients than in integrated processes.*

Methodology: *The process analysis is built on an in-depth analysis of Key Account Management on three matters: an in-depth interview of 20 Key Account Managers (KAM) from such companies as Air Liquide, Matra, Alcatel, GEC Alstom, Bull, EADS, PPG, an advertising agency and Omnicom on prospecting, partnerships, client's effectiveness optimization, client's qualification, lobbies, networks, international accounts.*

Findings: *This research shows how KAM face complex situations, how training and monitoring bring solutions to difficult situations, how information is managed through transparency relationships, TV shows, press media, information from shows and fairs, competitors evaluation.*

Managerial implications: *this work conceptualizes the KAM negotiation process and permits to managers to identify the different negotiation steps from their numerous mutual professional witnesses.*

Limitations: *The number of companies could have been larger, but we interviewed each salesperson in depth.*

Future research: *Future work on key account salespeople should consider the following subjects: Influence of KAM on tenders. Which ethical steps KAM can take with client companies to improve results. Innovation perception by clients as a tool for success.*

"Key accounts: the negotiating process"

Many researchers have been interested in sales performance (Baumgartner & al, 2014), results improvement (Bradford, 2012), sales efficiency (Lacoste, 2006; Awang, 2013; Bazerman 2015) and international negotiation (Benaroya, Lagrasse, 2010). However, even if researchers such as Guesalaga (2014) have considered top management involvement with key accounts or differentiation and alignment in KAM implementation, we looked for a measure of evolution and changes during a negotiation process by KAM compared to existing literature research. Homburg & al. (2002) speaks of an active intensity explaining that the KAM does more for a key account than for average accounts. This is certainly true but does not give hints about negotiation process. The Ryal's (2012) research shows that the KAM is an organizational change, not a sales technique and gives seven steps to succeed at Key Account Management. This work appears to be the closest from our research, but remains too general. We hope to achieve and propose a better understanding of what permits success in business to KAM, based on in-depth interviews and literature analysis.

1. Literature review

1.1. Optimization of need assessment

According to researchers, the negotiation process introduces a distinction between needs assessment for traditional offers and more complex key accounts (Jouanne 2010; Page 2002). Traditional offers respond to a clear request for a product or a service (Kolb, Porter, 2015) These requests are communicated through sales calls, internet browsing (Meot 2010), catalog orders or calls to a local distributor. Complex key accounts imply much more time, coordination and organization (Ryal, 2012).

According to key account managers, they try to build a specific solution. They are required to satisfy client expectations by making competitive, unique and strategic recommendations that differentiate the firm they represent, from its competitors. Negotiators evaluate stakes, purchasing policies and strategic sales plans in decision-making processes. They also develop good relationships and try to identify significant players on decision-making teams.

The previous researches have focused more on organizations and clients than on analyzing integrated processes. The objective will involve measuring the types of relationships existing between the added value and client's expectations, as presented in the following paragraph. This will be the occasion to examine client responses and prospects, partnership creation and efficient methods of negotiation.

Client response: strategy or price ?

Price setting is critical to key accounts management (Houver, Vandoeuvre, 2006; Glavas, Mathews, 2014) as well as building specific solutions designed for better client's loyalty (Malhotra, 2016).

KAM build projects where their contributions are recognized. They underline their effective involvement in solutions, suggested by their firms, as one of the hidden dimensions of negotiation. Negotiators seem to develop and connect simple processes and solutions. The real world shows that they build links between company quality, policy and capital evaluation in order to improve their approach among company alternative purposes.

Researchers promote prices to clients as the most important tool for key account managers (Shapiro, 2016). We continue our analysis by considering prospecting management. The key account managers build a global strategy where the researchers see a question of price (Helm, Gritsch, 2014).

Prospecting management: communication or relationship ?

KAM. During the prospecting step, key accounts managers try to create a privileged relationship. They also search to gain loyalty by more partnership, more offers, where researchers prefer to speak of communication.

Researchers are interested in communication, such is Vandecappelle (2005). This researcher considers "how" people negotiate (the way they are likely to negotiate) and "why" they negotiate (the results expected). Seen as "sailing ship skippers", KAM motivate their clients ("team members") by "always offering more" (Grohman et al. 2009) or "communicating better" (Kiss & al.; 2013, Susskind, 2014).

The KAM build a special relation with their clients, where the researchers prefer communication.

Development: Partnership or composite organization ?

The development of good partnerships occurs in a long-term run. An offer considered in the context of a value chain helps to measure performance (Ittner, Larcker, 2001), accentuates understanding and adds value. The increase in value gives a wider scope on propositions and helps to build an offer sticking with the firm strategy. This dialogue between suppliers and clients contributes to differentiation and creates added value (Macquin, 1993). Van Der Feer (2010) explains this valorization through the composite organization of key accounts team management including pure salespersons, sales services, and category managers. This value is edified from a good client relationships obtained through information enrichment, serious stakes, a robust understanding of

clients needs and a strong dialogue support. A solid negotiation strategy can yield success if presented by which type of organization? The next section explores the organizational factors that influence negotiation and offers answers

1.2. organized negotiation: does organization optimize sales effectiveness?

This section will review client qualifications and the clients themselves.

Client qualifications

KAM help to increase the quality of client information and determine the influence of key actors in significant decisions, developing cognitive tools adapted to each client. KAM also use a strong marketing program or conduct cost-benefit estimation in order to build a long term program. *Researchers* seek to classify various interlocutors. Scheelen, Lévitte, (2001), Taber (2009) identify eight types of personalities: "drivers", "motivators", "appraisers", "promoters", "supporters", "organizers", "facilitators" and "coordinators". The use of these categories permits to position key actors. This framework can be visually represented by a purchase process matrix for each company or service (Goyal, Hancock, 2012).

For the KAM, the client's qualification goes through a long term marketing program adapted for each client. For the researchers, the analysis shows a tendency towards organization.

Clients

Researchers. Client satisfaction, cost control and responsiveness are important from the client's point of view. Key accounts managers must also "surprise" their clients (Stern Askenasi, 2010; Ury 2015) to succeed. To achieve success, according to the latter, they will:

Improve key processes (emphasizing the personal aspects of business efforts focuses on people and competences).

Key account managers become "coaches" or coordinators looking for more information available about prospective clients by external companies. These companies specialize in key account follow-ups (Ceddaha, 2007) identifying purchasers and deciders.

Key account managers try to get more information on track competitive efforts, sales plans, workshop coordination, access to information, purchase matrices, group practices and cost estimation.

Researchers try to find the best way to success, while key accounts managers try to coordinate their efforts.

Assumption H 1: The more surprised the client is, the more innovations he will pursue.

We now examine sales activity evaluation.

1.3. Proactive negotiation: lobbies and networks.

Lobbies

This activity requires information about competitive decision-makers, firms strategy, new contacts and legislative procedures (Selles, Testa, 2006).

The individuals interviewed in this study distinguished between two types of lobbying: maintenance lobbying (existing client management) and development lobbying (prospective client management). A communication plan will include possible enemies (people who hold unfavorable opinions of the firm) or "locked" individuals (people "held" by a firm's competitors) (Trehorel, 2010).

Lobbying controlled by KAM is based on building networks and grids at various levels (Scherrer, 2010) and using bartering as part of the marketing mix, whereas lobbying managed by CEOs involves a purposeful transmission of limited information (this strategic information is not lost by careful managers) (Belorgey, Mercier, 2009).

Assumption H2: The more key account managers develop networking, lobbying, marketing and personal relationships, the more researchers orient their researches on procedures and organizational structures.

We examine influence networks.

Influence Networks.

Researchers have shown that European networking has an enormous impact on economics and politics (Glavas, Mathews 2014). Networks are organized around the parliaments and ministries and can be useful in countervailing powers and develop projects (Houver, Vandoeuvre, 2006).

Key account managers develop other types of networks. They note that company personnel belong to a large range of associations that can be orchestrated to help key account managers with their. According to the key accounts managers interviewed, companies often miss out occasions to approach clients about unique issues. However, they invest a lot to identify deciders via organization matrices and thereby to find new allies. This issue sheds light on the nature of a business, its needs, and its mode of organization (centralized or decentralized).

Researchers view key account managers as politicians and economists, whereas these key accounts managers prefer to emphasize relationships.

Assumption H3: Key account managers focus their efforts on identifying deciders within firms, whereas researchers see them as politicians.

We will now widen our approach to include the European context.

1.4. International accounts.

Key accounts managers involve several companies grouped together under the same name or different names. It includes a significant number of interlocutors from different businesses, multiple sites and signs, local, national and multinational or multi-continental brands. Only multipurpose teams can succeed in working with such a diverse body of actors.

International account development establishes a "sales and relational intimacy" with immediately accessible contacts throughout the world. Researchers such as Rieunier (2009) indicate that firms use an array of global media techniques and prioritize local "proximity" to develop communication. The same strategy allows small companies to improve their client relationships. Their flexibility give them better chances on the market than large companies. For the latter, Kotler (2003) recommends more intensive relational networking and questions the wisdom of significant advertising expenses that yield weak returns on investment.

Assumption H4: Salespeople working on international key accounts improve their results by using more multipurpose teams and emphasize their proximity; researchers focus their work on charting relations. Following points consider salespeople acting worldwide.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample

Research on key accounts was initiated with 20 managers (from the Chairman to the sales managers and the KAM) in industries such as gas (Air Liquide), technology (Matra), telephone communications (Alcatel), railway transportation (GEC Alstom for high speed trains; e.g., the TGV), data processing (Bull), aeronautics (EADS), glass (PPG), services (advertising and promotion agency AZ Promotion affiliate of Omnicom) and mass consumer products (animal food, detergents). The objective was to develop a better understanding of negotiation by salespeople working on key accounts.

2.2. Methodology

Key account managers were asked 62 open questions. The companies represented preferred that their information be kept confidential so that they might answer honestly without fear that the answers they gave would have negative consequences for their business strategy or performance. This qualitative methodology was appropriated because we were looking for content rather than trends and quantities. The answers of KAM offered a large specter giving a whole range of explanations which permitted understand the steps in the negotiation process.

The questions asked (which were intended to determine to what degree the realities observed by key account salespeople were consistent with the theory) were as follows: *Are the needs*

that firms express consistent with their strategic axis? How is it possible to improve consistency in this regard? How can organizations optimize their sales effectiveness? What influence do salespeople have? How do you evaluate key account managers.

3. Practical study and results of interviews

3.1. Responding to client needs

Classical sales

According to telecommunications and advertising-promotional agencies, key account managers' clients do not explicitly express or even conceptualize their needs. Clients are limiting the scope of their vision to their own problems and do not take into account other possible factors or alternatives. The sales firm, however, will help its clients to frame questions more clearly.

In the field of chemistry, needs assessment is built around good transversal relations between partners involved in various stages of product design and development. These positive relationships produce strategic information. Such relationships develop around task forces that can help to identify influential organization members.

In data processing, solutions generally involve strategic partnerships that address specific needs such as visibility, information availability, software and management tools. This business knowledge on the part of KAM extends well beyond expressed needs. It offers a view of entire teams, including their leaders. This popular approach widens the variety of perspectives considered and reveals new needs (what kind of responsibility at which level to succeed with what type of prospective client?).

In all fields considered, overall, it seems that partnership is very important to identifying client requirements and that such efforts are key to the negotiation process.

- These answers confirm assumption n°1, which suggests that key account salesperson increase sales, while researchers work to develop information processes.

Complex sales: management of tender

Launching an initial investigation towards potential client helps to evaluate preparation and marketing test costs. It provides a good indication of the type of investments that should be made with this prospective client.

In the data-processing field, the company created a "sales plan" for every prospective client company. This process was essential to tender management, as was the creation of a 3-to-5 year profitability evaluation plan. One company interviewed, which had refused large industrial contracts that were not immediately profitable, has now failed even though it offered internationally recognized products.

In the field of mass consumer products, the answers provided underlined the importance of new product price. Table 1 presents these considerations and shows that financial concerns are important.

Table n° 1: Management of tenders

Companies	Verbatim on managing tenders.
Gas company	"Difficult situations can lead to simple or complex structure".
Cloud-computing, very hi speed connections	"We need to identify objective variables that can be very different from what believes the client and propose an adapted price".
Computer	"A strategic partner can have a good system, but be rejected because it is the world leader while a smaller one may be preferred by the client thanks to its solutions".
Chemical	"It is difficult to navigate through the multitude of stakeholders".
Transport and logistical	"Always complex since the price has a big influence".
Train maker	"The questions are not generally very complex but international meetings are (24 specialists in spanish and french- is not easy).
Glass maker	"The more people the more complex";
World sales and	"When we face a simple request, it often turns into a complex and

promotion	expensive operation ”.
Advertising	“Every client requires leadership postures, positioning, price, structured communication. This is not necessarily easy”.
Mass consumption	“Simple questions, but difficult answers”.

This table shows that the cost of new business development for key accounts has to be taken as an important decision factor when answering a tender project.

3.2 Preparatory project

According to key account managers (*regardless of their activity*), preparatory expenditures can be measured in millions of Euro or Dollars. An important motorway program (Highway Management Company) evaluated three companies as candidates for a preparatory work. Two were not selected. This project required adaptations, an heavy preparatory work and entailed high costs without guaranteed results. Such efforts, require managerial support, an appropriate success policy and field knowledge on the part of the manufacturers involved. They also require good upstream preparation. Indeed, the drafting of specifications during the preparation phase (with 20% of preparatory studies paid and 80% unpaid) increased the chances of success.

Key account negotiators evaluate the cost of negotiations. They help their clients to position themselves and develop partnerships. They also take part to drafting test specifications, pushing their company to identify satisfactory or even advantageous solutions.

Negotiation with added value

In the field of industry (metallurgy for example), projects orchestrated by suppliers are developed to fit better client expectations. They may not be consistent with client’s initial requests but can help to assist clients who may, sometimes, lack perspective or references.

In the field of mass consumer products, simple questions often result in complex answers.

In the services field, the design of more creative solutions increases client loyalty. When clients perceive a solution as simple, they will try to achieve it without a supplier. For this reason, key account managers will always design projects that are strongly connected to their own firm in particular and demand complex forms of organization that appear to be essential for success. Nevertheless, key account managers do not merely function to design complex projects. Table n°2 stresses the importance of the relationship between the negotiator and the client. Table n° 2: Negotiation with added value

Companies	Verbatim on solutions proposed by KAM with added value..
Gas company	“We always try to highlight the regional structure on the Peugeot Citroën site for example, and we play a former actor role throughout the negotiation”
<u>Cloud-computing</u>	A research on networks development provides new business”.
Computer company	“A perfect knowledge of our client brings answers and permits to propose a program fitting with his (her) objectives.
Chemical company	“Our solutions are always set on a contract with guaranteed supplies except cases of absolute necessity.
Transport and logistical company	“We have risks in our distribution. When we are successful we always share it with our clients”.
Train maker company	“We know our clients and our clients know us very well. The international project are not always easy to master”
Glass company	“Solutions come with quantities”.
World sales and promotion	“We set workshops and debriefing with project managers”.
Advertising company	“Our clients come with their ideas. We build a personal program”
Mass consumption company	“The solutions pass mainly by a distributor effort”

- Key account salespeople properly develop capacity strategy and engage in networking, lobbying, marketing and other efforts to develop personal relationships. Assumption n°2 is confirmed.

An organized information

In services, competition and a good knowledge of the decision-making flow at the client's firm can help to develop tests or protocols for prospective clients. They allow strategies to be evaluated over a period of 5 to 6 months or even longer. KAM will anticipate and pursue changes associated with their client management. They operate quicker than salespersons because their client requires a priority.

In industrial business, the negotiation process is organized upstream around key accounts plans and in transversal workshops, whereas in the *processing industries*, there is no particular technique or organization method used. Table 3 synthesizes these elements and displays up-to-date information; it indicates the importance of bilateral relationships.

Table n° 3: Organized information

Companies	Verbatim on information treatment.
Gas	"Lotus Notes, business news, global messaging".
Cloud-computing,	"The client-on a transparency relationship"
Computer	"We are present with the client at all levels. Our presence helps us to be accepted. We have sometimes an onsite office"
Chemical	"The more information obtained about the client enters in the bank information system".
Transport and logistical	"We receive information feedback from the client and get more information from the media".
Train maker	"Delegates and officials meet frequently".
Glass maker	"Direct sales contacts with the client or supplier and company counterpart's colleagues produce a good source of information".
World sales and promotion	"Purchases are made by the marketing Vice President and field sales manager validate the operations".
Advertising	"Decisions taken by product managers, marketing Directors, Management".
Mass consumption	"We know very well our clients in a collective partnership".

KAM offer their full competences importance to their clients and refine their actions when they intervene directly: for example, in supplying spare parts in "advanced workshops". Researchers highlight this connection.

- Key account salespeople focus their efforts on detecting the most important decision-makers. This confirms assumption n°3.

3.3. An evaluated negotiation

This evaluation is measured in time according to results.

Long-term management

KAM know quite well their clients and obtain good results. They establish long-term multipurpose team plans (extending up to 10 years in gas contracts, for example); they may propose closer proximity to the client, a capital spending program or a framework for ensuring profits and limiting operating expenses. Each project is then discussed with the firm CEO.

Results measurement

Evaluations of sales managers' activities generally involve an analysis by an external company that evaluates the manager on the following points: competitive strengths and stakes.

In the industrial field: competitive strengths, stakes

In the field of data processing: development of "second sources" (alternative strategies).

In services activities, "post operational measurement" is replaced by "in situ" actions (controls during operations).

In the field of mass consumer products, annual results are measured. Table 4 indicates the various modes of evaluation.

Table n° 4: Networking negotiation

Companies	Verbatim on evaluation procedures.
Gas	"The company sets a list of issues and checks if results are obtained on a five years program".
Cloud-computing,	"The key account is evaluated on their ability to organize a positive program".
Computer	"The same key account manager can work IBM and Sears. We deliver a complete solution.
Chemical	"We have little evaluation because we sell everything we produce".
Transport and logistical	"KAM are evaluated on clients comments set on an evaluation sheet"
Train	"No, it is informal "
Glass	"We consider our sales, the potential and realized production, over 3 years and the strategic issues for the group on a long term basis".
World sales and promotion company	"The evaluation was a "post operative" assessment. It is now "in operation. This evaluation is made during operations and not after.".
Advertising company	"Not really. Questionnaire each year to satisfy all customers".

3.4. PROACTIVE NEGOTIATION: LOBBY WITH NETWORKS.

Influence networks

According to the salespeople interviewed, companies often miss out on occasions to approach clients about unique issues. Other personal actors such as pensioners are often a source of relational capital and should be better exploited. In the opinion of the key accounts *managers* interviewed, these types of speakers are helpful because they are less expensive and more efficient than those in traditional competitive systems: clearly one single day organized by a retiree on the field analysis yields better ideas than a "one-day report" written by an external cabinet. Table 5 presents' evaluations types per field.

Table n° 5: Evaluated negotiation.

The key account managers interviewed observe that pan-European activities are increasing in importance and that company partners now have more requirements. Will the clash between market expectations and the longer procedures created because of the new European members change the work of key account managers?

Companies	Verbatim on which key accounts managers for which client.
Gas company	"Four levels of activity depending of the company. An hospital is not working the same way than a brewery, a car factory or a ship maker".
Cloud-computing c	"A wide range of key accounts managers associated to engineers".
Computer company	"The high level of lobbying is rather managed by a specialized hierarchy. Example: we were first on a tender. But lobbying indicated that there was a risk of downgrading.
Chemical company	" The managers and sales managers, with a long experience, necessarily multilingual are involved in all steps".
Transport and logistical c	"The group brings skills at all levels".
Train maker company	"Some good training during 5 years permits to manage all difficult situations". It takes 2 or 3 years to negotiate with all fields of the client's company".
Glass maker company	"Working between Rio, Australia, USA and Europe we can manage all kinds of complex situations".
World sales and pro. cny	"Multiple propositions for multiple clients.
Advertising company	"We adapt our recommendations to each type of client".

Key account managers evaluate international fields as a context in which exchanges can occur between partners at all levels. Such communication is a chance of a powerful success factor for key accounts managers. It helps companies to transmit more powerful messages.

● International key accounts managers improve their results using more multipurpose teams, confirming assumption n°4.

The literature indicates that strategic considerations, necessary precautions and sensitivities are usually associated with world business relations. A summary of our research is presented in Table 6.

Table n° 6: Syntheses comparing reports made by key accounts managers and subjects covered by authors and researchers.

	Key accounts salespersons	Authors and researchers
Need assessment	Key account negotiators help clients to position, develop partnerships, take part of specifications.	Theoretical study highlights teams responsibility and influence of people.
Added value	Key account managers show their capacity to read strategies and organize a dynamic process of sales development.	Researchers are interested by communication between people and organizations.
Customers	Key account managers show their implication and precision when they intervene directly in parts spare supply in the advanced workshops.	The researchers underline salespersons reactivity.
Evaluation	The evaluation is considering a performance management in an average long term, an analysis by competitive investigations.	Researchers cover these subjects <i>less often</i> .
Lobbying	A constant effort of lobbying to activate different networks.	Researchers are interested in interlocutors classification.
International accounts	Key account managers look for answers in terms of domestic organization.	Authors bring practical answers.

4. Findings and discussion

Interviews and comparisons between interviewee comments and research by other authors have permitted us to observe the differences between key account managers and other actors as listed below:

4.1. Strategy versus organization

Key account managers take strategic dimensions into account when starting a negotiation process. In general, *researchers* are more interested in organization and clients than in integrated processes.

4.2. Evaluation vs influence

Key account negotiators measure the cost of negotiations. They help their clients to position themselves properly and develop partnerships. They also take part in drafting specifications for tests and pushing manufacturers to develop satisfactory solutions.

Theoretical studies more often highlight team responsibilities and people's influence on the negotiation process.

4.3. Implication vs proactivity

Key account managers demonstrate to clients the importance of their firms when they directly supply spare parts to "advanced workshops".

Researchers focus on organization responsibility, communication, classification, and exchange. All assumptions have been validated. This research indicates that key account salespeople consider operational factors, whereas researchers are more functional, as is seen in Table n°7.

4.4. Cognition vs. classification

The activities of *key account managers* during negotiations appear to involve knowledge searching and coordination as appropriate for international markets. These individuals espouse an economic approach and take responsibility for different proactive networks.

Key account managers appear to be more strategic, evaluate costs, help their clients to position their offerings, view their business as dynamic, and create tools for their clients. They evaluate their competitive environment, learn new techniques, and are expected to think using broad international multimodal points of view.

Researchers are more interested in the classification of counterparts, exchanges between partners and identifying supporting actors, as suggested in assumption n°5.

Table n° 7: Assumptions validation.

Assumptions nb	Assumptions	Validation
H1	<i>The more the client is surprised, the more he will innovate.</i>	Validated.
H2	Key accounts salespersons are developing more networking, lobbying, marketing and personal relations when searchers work on procedures and organization.	Validated.
H3	Key accounts salespersons accentuate their efforts on detecting best deciders in companies, when searchers see them as politicians.	Validated.
H4	<i>International key accounts salespersons improve results with more multipurpose teams and more proximity when searchers bring their work around chart relations.</i>	Validated.
H5	<i>More international coordination from key accounts managers creates more client value.</i>	Validated.

5. Limitations

This research offers some limitations:

The number of companies could have been larger, but we interviewed each key account manager in depth.

Open ended questions do not provide quantitative results. However, open-ended questions allow researchers to review different strategies, missions, objectives and philosophies and to explore comparisons between industries. Qualitative interviews provide more variety, diversity, and cross-cultural strategies.

We conducted interviews mostly with key accounts managers. However, this constraint does not present an issue because these salespeople were working extensively throughout the world at the time.

6. Future research

Future work on key account managers should consider the following:

Influence: The influence of key account managers on tender ?

Ethics: Which ethical steps key accounts managers can take with client companies to improve results.

Support: How to help clients to perceive innovation as a tool for success ?

Assistance: The influence of human factors on key account managers ?

7. Conclusion

The art of negotiation relies on a wide set of resources including client's expectations. and a good understanding of the situation which can amplify one's effectiveness. It produces original solutions that can provide significant added value and responds to client needs. If we seek a link between the real-world activities of salespeople and research undertaken by researchers, we may wish to emphasize the following points:

Key account managers permanently seek new information about their partners, companies, and clients. They play an in-house advisory role and an external role. They detect the emergence of

innovations in complex organizations. They organize their activities using worldwide lobby support and European influence networks.

Researchers show the influence of the human element on sales functions and the significance of the associated results. They underline the influence of communication with clients and key account policies. They highlight how managers can be classified and indicate the role of European institutions. The responsibilities of key account managers are broad and require significant competences. By analyzing various sequences of sales activity, authors and researchers are helping to analyze the tasks of salespeople and disseminate more knowledge about a relatively unknown profession.

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