
WHERE VALUE LIVES

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TOOL

SAM Leadership Attention Checklist

A practical test of what leaders ask, reward, protect, challenge, stop and make visible in a Strategic Account Management organisation.

SUPPORTING CHAPTER 23

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Resource code	WVL-EIT-23-v1.0
Series	Where Value Lives Companion Resources

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How to Use This Checklist

Use this checklist with the leadership team, SAM leader or executive sponsors. Assess leadership behaviour rather than leadership intention. Complete the ten-question attention test using evidence, identify contradictions between doctrine and consequences, and turn the highest-priority gaps into visible leadership commitments.

CORE DOCTRINE

Managers inspect account activity. Leaders shape organisational attention.

Rating scale

1 — ABSENT	Rarely seen; behaviour contradicts SAM.
2 — INCONSISTENT	Depends on the person, pressure or account.
3 — EMERGING	Defined and sometimes visible, but not sustained.
4 — REPEATABLE	Regularly demonstrated and reinforced.
5 — EMBEDDED	Evidenced, customer-visible and improved over time.

Evidence discipline

Use meeting questions, decisions, resource choices, measures, reward patterns, customer evidence and observed behaviour. Leadership enthusiasm is not evidence of leadership discipline.

The Ten-Question Leadership Attention Test

Rate each dimension before exploring it in detail. The pattern reveals what the organisation is actually being taught to notice.

Leadership test	Score 1–5	Evidence	Customer effect	Priority
What do leaders ask about?				
What do leaders reward?				
What do leaders protect?				
Where do leaders spend time?				
What do leaders challenge?				
What do leaders stop?				
How do leaders use executive sponsorship?				
How do leaders respond to short-term pressure?				
What customer evidence reaches the leadership table?				
Would the customer notice leadership commitment?				
READ THE PATTERN People prepare for the questions leaders ask, follow the rewards leaders create and learn from what leaders tolerate.				

1. What Leaders Ask

Leadership questions should deepen commercial discipline by connecting results to customer context, recognised value, stakeholder depth, mutuality, risk and future relevance.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

What questions create the organisation's noticing system?

Observed question	What it teaches	Evidence	Change

Questions asked in account reviews

Questions asked informally

What teams prepare because leaders ask

Important questions rarely asked

Customer-world question to add

Question that should be retired

LEADERSHIP TEST

Do our questions direct attention towards the causes of sustainable value, not only the next number?

2. What Leaders Reward

If the reward system contradicts the SAM doctrine, the reward system wins. Examine both formal incentives and informal recognition.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Which behaviours gain money, praise, promotion, visibility, resource or status?

Reward / signal	Behaviour produced	Customer effect	Decision

Behaviours currently rewarded

Heroic firefighting versus prevention

Revenue quality and mutual value

Cross-functional ownership recognised

Value evidence and risk reduction recognised

Reward creating the wrong behaviour

LEADERSHIP TEST

Would a sensible person following our rewards behave strategically?

3. What Leaders Protect

Strategic account teams need protected time for customer understanding, planning, stakeholder development, value evidence and orchestration.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

What valuable work survives urgent noise and internal demand?

Work to protect	Threat	Leadership action	Owner

Strategic work repeatedly displaced

Internal reporting burden

Protected thinking and customer time

Unplanned senior requests

Attention fragments to remove

Boundary leadership must enforce

LEADERSHIP TEST

Does the work that creates strategic value survive when the organisation becomes busy?

4. Where Leaders Spend Time

Time is the most honest leadership currency. Useful presence matters more than ceremonial attendance.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Where can scarce senior attention create access, insight, confidence, momentum or barrier removal?

Senior attention	Purpose	Evidence of usefulness	Next choice

Accounts receiving senior time
Purpose of that attention
Customer or internal outcome
Accounts over- or under-attended
Crisis/renewal-only behaviour
Time commitment to change
LEADERSHIP TEST
Would the customer describe senior attention as useful?

5. What Leaders Challenge

Challenge supplier wish lists, weak evidence, low mutuality, decorative sponsorship, unsupported optimism and famous-logo gravity.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Where must leadership protect strategic clarity?

Claim / practice	Evidence	Challenge question	Decision

Assumptions leaders challenge

Account classification challenged

Value claims tested

Internal barriers confronted

Weak thinking currently tolerated

Respectful challenge required now

LEADERSHIP TEST

Are leaders making weak thinking visible before it consumes strategic attention?

6. What Leaders Stop

Leadership is not only starting initiatives. Every yes contains a hidden no. Stopping protects the choices that matter.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

What should end so scarce attention can work?

Stop / simplify	Reason	Attention released	Owner / date

Accounts to remove from strategic status

Meetings creating no decisions

Reports nobody uses

Measures teaching the wrong behaviour

Customer demands weakening mutuality

Internal activity consuming SAM attention

LEADERSHIP TEST

Have we stopped enough to make our strategic choices credible?

7. Executive Sponsorship

Sponsors need a clear role, briefing, purposeful access, barrier-removal responsibility, follow-through and review.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Is sponsorship governed as usefulness rather than status?

Sponsor behaviour	Evidence	Customer effect	Action

Sponsor-account match

Purpose and expected outcome

Briefing quality

Access or barrier removed

Promises and follow-through

Customer evidence of usefulness

LEADERSHIP TEST

Would the customer notice if the sponsor disappeared?

8. Short-Term Pressure

Leadership is tested when pressure rises. Disciplined patience tracks leading evidence without allowing short-term extraction to destroy future value.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

How do leaders hold the number and the relationship together?

Pressure / choice	Immediate effect	Future-value effect	Decision

Current quarterly pressure

Behaviour pressure creates

Trust or relationship risk

Leading indicators of progress

Non-negotiable boundary

Decision balancing short and long term

LEADERSHIP TEST

Can we pursue the number without damaging the relationship that creates future value?

9. Customer Evidence

Leadership needs disciplined evidence beyond revenue, margin, pipeline and internal stories.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

What customer evidence reaches leadership decisions?

Evidence	Source	Decision it informs	Gap / action

Customer-recognised value

Stakeholder feedback

Trust and relationship indicators

Mutual investment

Innovation or co-creation evidence

Risk and future opportunity

Missing customer voice

LEADERSHIP TEST

Is the customer’s voice strong enough to challenge our internal story?

10. Customer-Visible Commitment

Commitment becomes real through useful senior attention, removed barriers, coherent behaviour and consistency between account-team promises and organisational action.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Would the customer notice what leadership says it believes?

Customer experience	Evidence / voice	Leadership cause	Next action

Useful senior attention experienced

Barrier removed

Cross-functional ownership visible

Long-term value protected

Promise honoured under pressure

Leadership commitment not yet visible

LEADERSHIP TEST

If the customer cannot see the commitment, is it more than internal theatre?

SAM Leadership Meeting Discipline

A leadership review should improve the organisation’s ability to act. Replace upward presentation and confidence theatre with a working session built around evidence, challenge, decisions and support.

Before the meeting

Customer context and material changes
Customer-recognised value and evidence
Stakeholder depth and gaps
Risks, internal barriers and mutuality
Specific leadership decisions required

Decision record

Issue	Evidence	Decision	Owner	By when	Customer effect
MEETING STANDARD If the account team leaves only with more reporting to do, the leadership meeting has failed.					

Leadership Contradiction Audit

Culture is repeated leadership behaviour. Use this page to expose where language and intent are contradicted by measures, incentives, resource choices or conduct under pressure.

We say...	But people observe...	Behaviour produced	Customer consequence	Leadership change

Courage to say no

Account that is important but not strategic
Sponsorship without a clear role
Innovation without mutual commitment
Account plan that is only an opportunity list
Value claim the customer has not recognised
Governance meeting producing no decision
CHOICE No protects the yes. If everything receives strategic attention, strategic attention ceases to exist.

Mutuality and Cross-Functional Ownership

Strategic investment should be matched by strategic engagement, and customer value must be owned across functions rather than treated as Sales' problem.

Customer-side mutuality

Customer contribution	Evidence	Sufficient?	Leadership decision

Cross-functional ownership

Customer outcome / barrier	Function owner	Commitment	Leadership support	Review date

OWNERSHIP

A conductor without an orchestra is just someone waving their arms.

AI Leadership Guardrails for SAM

Leaders should judge AI by whether it improves customer understanding, recognised value and organisational attention—not by tool adoption or output volume.

Expected use	Human accountability	Control / boundary	Success evidence

Non-negotiables

- ☐ AI improves customer understanding rather than generic output.
- ☐ Confidential customer data is handled only through approved tools and policy.
- ☐ Human judgement validates customer-facing claims and recommendations.
- ☐ AI does not automate false intimacy or manipulative influence.
- ☐ AI reduces administrative drag and creates time for human work.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

How has AI helped the team notice earlier, prepare better, evidence value more clearly or improve follow-through?

90-Day Leadership Commitment Plan

The leadership behaviour we most need to change				
The customer or organisational evidence behind the choice				
What leaders will ask differently				
What leaders will reward or protect				
What leaders will challenge or stop				
How the customer should experience the change				
Leadership action	Owner	First step	By when	Evidence at 30/60/90 days
FINAL STANDARD Leading SAM is leading attention. The customer will know whether the commitment is real.				