WHERE VALUE LIVES

Chapter 12 Companion Resource

EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP VALUE AGENDA

Turn senior presence into customer-recognised usefulness.

The question is not: “Do we have an executive sponsor?”
The question is: “Does the customer experience that sponsorship as useful?”

Use this resource with one live strategic account. The purpose is to define why executive sponsorship is needed, prepare the sponsor around the customer’s world, focus senior attention on useful contribution, and capture evidence of what changed afterwards.

Fred Mills, FCIM, MBA

Supporting Chapter 12 – Executive Sponsorship Without Theatre

1. Why Does This Account Need Executive Sponsorship?

Strategic status explains why an account matters. It does not explain what the sponsor is there to do. Define the sponsor's contribution before adding another senior person to the meeting.

Question	Evidence / answer
Why does this account need executive sponsorship?	
What can the sponsor contribute that the account team cannot create alone?	
What customer issue, opportunity or relationship need makes senior attention useful?	
What decision, access, alignment, credibility, barrier removal or perspective could the sponsor enable?	
What should the sponsor explicitly NOT own?	

Sponsor Role Statement

Complete this sentence:

The executive sponsor is involved in this account to ________________________________ so that the customer experiences ____.

The Decorative Sponsorship Test

Test	Yes / No	Evidence
The sponsor has a defined purpose beyond 'because the account is strategic'.		
The account manager and sponsor agree the role.		
The expected customer benefit is clear.		
The sponsor's involvement is connected to the account rhythm.		

2. Understand the Customer Before Entering the Room

Customers can distinguish genuine preparation and contextual understanding from confident bluffing. Before any sponsor interaction, brief the executive on the customer's world rather than merely the contract.

Customer context	What we know	Evidence source	What remains unknown
Current priorities			
Pressures / risks			
Important stakeholders			
Definition of value			
Decisions or barriers			
Future direction			
Relationship sensitivities			

Sponsor Preparation Brief

What the sponsor must know	Briefing note
Why this meeting matters	
What the customer may care about most	
What not to overclaim	
One useful question the sponsor should ask	
One issue the sponsor may be able to unlock	
Commitments already made to the customer	

3. The Executive Sponsorship Usefulness Test

Score evidence, not attendance. A sponsor who is visible but not useful is still theatre.

Usefulness question	Score 1-5	Evidence	Redesign action
1. Can we state why this account needs executive sponsorship and what the sponsor contributes?			
2. Does the sponsor understand the customer's world - priorities, risks, pressures, stakeholders and definition of value?			
3. Has the sponsor created something useful and followed through?			
4. Is the sponsor integrated with the account team and account rhythm?			
5. Would the customer notice if the sponsor disappeared?			

Suggested interpretation: 1 = no evidence / decorative; 3 = some useful contribution but inconsistent; 5 = clear, repeatable customer-recognised usefulness.

If the customer would not notice the sponsor disappeared, redesign the sponsorship. Do not simply schedule more meetings.

4. Build a Value Agenda for the Next Sponsor Interaction

A senior meeting should have a value agenda, not just an agenda. Start with the change you want the customer to experience.

Value agenda element	Decision / preparation
Customer outcome we want to support	
What the customer should understand, decide or feel differently afterwards	
Useful sponsor contribution	
Question the sponsor should ask	
Barrier the sponsor may be able to remove	
Decision or commitment that may be required	
Evidence needed before making any claim	
Account team role in the meeting	
What follow-through must happen afterwards	

Meeting Discipline

Before	During	After
Brief on customer context.	Lead with customer relevance.	Record commitments.
Clarify sponsor role.	Ask useful questions.	Assign owners.
Agree evidence and sensitivities.	Avoid generic partnership language.	Confirm follow-through.
Define desired outcome.	Do not improvise unapproved promises.	Capture customer reaction/evidence.

5. Evidence of Sponsorship Value

Attendance is not evidence. Capture what changed because the sponsor was involved, and whether the customer recognised that change.

Possible evidence	What happened?	Customer recognition / evidence	Still to verify
Access improved			
A decision was accelerated or clarified			
A barrier was removed			
Trust or credibility strengthened			
New insight was created			
Internal alignment improved			
A promise became more credible through follow-through			
Strategic conversation moved beyond the operational present			

The Follow-Through Test

Commitment / action	Owner	By when	Evidence completed	Customer informed?
Customers judge commitment by what happens afterwards, not by attendance alone.				

6. 30-Day Executive Sponsorship Redesign

Use this page where sponsorship exists but usefulness is weak, inconsistent or unclear.

Redesign decision	Current state	New approach	Owner	By when
Clarify sponsor purpose				
Improve customer-context briefing				
Integrate sponsor into account rhythm				
Define useful meeting outcomes				
Strengthen follow-through discipline				
Capture customer-recognised evidence				

Final Challenge

Would the customer notice if the sponsor disappeared?
If yes, what useful value would disappear with them?
If no, what exactly are we sponsoring?

AI Prompt - Executive Sponsorship Reviewer

Act as a sceptical Strategic Account Management executive-sponsorship reviewer.

Using only the evidence I provide, assess whether our sponsor is creating customer-recognised usefulness or merely executive presence.

Evaluate:
1. Why sponsorship is needed.
2. Whether the sponsor understands the customer's world.
3. What useful outcome the sponsor has created.
4. Whether commitments were followed through.
5. Whether the sponsor is integrated with the account team.
6. Whether the customer would notice if the sponsor disappeared.

Classify each important statement as DIRECT EVIDENCE, REASONABLE INFERENCE, ASSUMPTION or UNKNOWN.

Do not invent customer opinions, commitments, outcomes or stakeholder views.

Finish with:
- the three strongest signs of useful sponsorship;
- the three biggest signs of sponsorship theatre;
- the questions we need to ask before the next executive interaction;
- a redesigned value agenda for that interaction.