WHERE VALUE LIVES

Chapter 3 Companion Resource

SAM vs SALES DIAGNOSTIC

Test whether your account activity is genuinely strategic - or simply sophisticated selling.

"Being liked is useful. Being useful is better. Being strategically useful is better still."

Fred Mills, Where Value Lives

Chapter 3 separates ordinary selling from Strategic Account Management. Selling remains essential, but SAM asks a wider question: are we creating the conditions in which sustainable mutual value can grow? Use this diagnostic with one real account to see where your current activity sits.

Fred Mills, FCIM, MBA

1. The Script vs the Customer Test

The double-glazing story in Chapter 3 shows the danger of recognising the category, pressing play on the script and selling an assumption. Use this page to test whether your account team is doing the same thing.

What we usually say	What we assume the customer needs	What evidence supports that assumption?	What we still need to ask

Assumption check

• Where are we using a standard supplier story because it is familiar?

• What customer motivation may be different from the one we have assumed?

• Which live opportunity could we misunderstand because we moved too quickly into selling?

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2. Sales Activity or Strategic Activity?

Sales and SAM overlap, but they are not the same. Classify your current account activity honestly.

Activity	Mostly Sales	Mostly SAM	Evidence / comment
Winning the next opportunity			
Understanding the customer's changing world			
Building multi-year mutual value			
Coordinating internal functions around the account			
Creating evidence of customer-recognised value			
Strengthening trust across multiple stakeholders			
Shaping future opportunities before a brief exists			
Protecting long-term relevance, not only current revenue			

Interpretation: A healthy strategic account still contains selling. The warning sign is when almost everything is opportunity-led, supplier-led or short-term.

3. The Strategic Usefulness Test

A customer can like us and still leave. Rate the relationship from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) against the forms of usefulness that make a relationship strategically relevant.

Strategic usefulness statement	Score 1-5	Evidence
We understand the customer's priorities beyond current purchases.		
The customer involves us before requirements are fully formed.		
We bring useful insight, not just product information.		
We can mobilise the right internal functions when needed.		
We have relationships across a meaningful stakeholder system.		
We can demonstrate value the customer recognises.		
The relationship creates value for both sides.		
We have a credible view of future value, not only current pipeline.		

Which low score represents the greatest strategic risk?

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4. The Sustainable Mutual Value Test

Chapter 3 defines SAM as the disciplined organisational capability to understand, create, evidence and sustain mutual value with the customers that matter most. Test your account against each word.

SAM test	Question	Current evidence / gap
Disciplined	Do we have a repeatable way of managing the relationship, or does success depend on individual heroics?	
Organisational	Does the wider organisation contribute, or is the account manager carrying the relationship alone?	
Understand	Do we understand the customer's world well enough to challenge our assumptions?	
Create	Are we doing anything that creates new customer value, or only responding to opportunities?	
Evidence	Can the customer see and explain the value we have created?	
Sustain	Are we building capability and trust that survive beyond one transaction or one person?	
Mutual value	Is the relationship economically and strategically worthwhile for both sides?	

5. Move One Account from Selling to SAM

Choose one account where the relationship is commercially important but still too dependent on selling activity. Turn the diagnosis into action.

The account activity we currently over-emphasise is:

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The customer understanding we most need to improve is:

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The internal function or capability we need to bring into the relationship is:

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The piece of customer-recognised value we need to evidence is:

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The stakeholder relationship we need to strengthen is:

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The long-term mutual-value opportunity we should explore is:

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The one sales habit we should stop using as a substitute for SAM is:

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Final question: If there were no immediate sales opportunity in this account, would we still know how to be strategically useful?

Companion resource for Chapter 3 of Where Value Lives

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