STRATEGIC ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT: CONCEPTUALIZING, INTEGRATING, AND EXTENDING THE DOMAIN FROM FLUID TO DEDICATED ACCOUNTS

Kevin D. Bradford, Goutam N. Challagalla, Gary K. Hunter, and William C. Moncrief, III

This paper proposes a conceptualization of strategic account management that integrates and builds upon several related literatures (e.g., key account management, national account management, major account management, large account management). It proposes that the extant literature is myopic in defining strategic accounts—almost exclusively emphasizing account teams with dedicated members (i.e., "dedicated" teams). However, in practice, there are several examples of strategic account teams that are formed with dynamic membership. This paper refers to such teams as "fluid accounts" and proposes that dedicated and fluid accounts can be viewed as a continuum. Two dominant factors driving the success of such accounts are proposed—the nature of the account's needs and the pattern of economic returns—to serve as a simple heuristic to help advance scholarship in the area. Finally, this research provides general guidelines on how to evaluate the performance of strategic account teams.

The practice of organizing to sell to strategically important customers is grounded in a logic labeled and popularized as the "Pareto principle." This well-accepted rule of thumb—"the vital few and the trivial many" or the "80/20 rule"—is interpreted as a large portion of business results (sales, profits, etc.) are caused by a small portion of contributors (customers, products, people, etc.) (Stevenson and Page 1979). The firm's management of its strategically important accounts warrants considerable attention from scholars and managers.

Strategic accounts are of vital importance to the selling firm as its long-term viability often hinges upon its ability to identify, establish, develop, and maintain relationships with such accounts. Salespeople are often charged with the difficult task of managing such accounts (Bradford et al. 2010). Moreover, as the needs of such accounts differ, so too does the task of integrating, developing, and proposing mutually beneficial solutions consisting of appropriate combinations of goods and services tailored to the account's needs (Hunter and Perreault 2007; Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj 2007). These realities help explain why traditional views of the sales organization as an implementation element of the marketing promotional mix are increasingly outdated oversimplifications (Hunter and Perreault 2007; Piercy 2006).

The purpose of this research is to propose a broader conceptualization for strategic account management. The literature tends to portray strategic accounts as those that are critical to a firm and are hence served by dedicated sales teams. We argue that strategic accounts served by "dedicated" members are relatively scarce because few customers require a high level of dedicated resources. At the same time, the most common manner in which firms serve strategic accounts is by utilizing "fluid" teams, which tend to have dynamic membership rather than dedicated members. Surprisingly, while fluid teams are by far the most prevalent structure for serving strategic accounts, little research exists on such teams (e.g., see Moon and Armstrong 1994). We bridge this gap in the

Kevin D. Bradford (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame), Associate Professional Specialist of Marketing, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, kevin.bradford.11@nd.edu.

Goutam N. Challagalla (Ph.D., University of Texas), Associate Professor of Marketing, College of Management, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, goutam.challagalla@mgt.gatech.edu.

Gary K. Hunter (Ph.D., University of North Carolina), Assistant Professor of Marketing, Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, gary.hunter@case.edu.

William C. Moncrief, III (Ph.D., Louisiana State University), Senior Associate Dean and Bedford Professor of International Business, M.J. Neeley School of Business, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, b.moncrief@tcu.edu.

Authors are listed alphabetically and all authors contributed equally to the paper. The authors appreciate the helpful insights from the special issue editors and the anonymous reviewers. They are particularly appreciative of the special issue editors for envisioning and implementing an extremely intellectually rewarding experience from the symposium, through the Academy of Marketing Science pre-conference, to its final publication. They also appreciate early insights shared by fellow participants at the Baylor Sales Center Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Research Symposium.

Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, vol. XXXII, no. 1 (winter 2012), pp. 41–56.

ISSN 0885-3134 / 2012 $9.50 + 0.00.
DOI 10.2753/PSS0885-3134320105

literature and propose that fluid and dedicated teams lie on a continuum. We propose that each type of team has distinct goals, processes, structure, resources, and metrics. Further, we propose a parsimonious framework of the key drivers for structuring strategic account teams.

In the sections that follow, we review literature and provide direction toward developing a definition of strategic account management. We then follow that conceptualization by describing fluid and dedicated teams through a strategic design framework (e.g., goals, processes, structures, resources, and evaluation metrics). The paper then proposes a framework of the key drivers for structuring strategic account teams. Next, we outline the evaluation metrics for individuals and teams. This is followed by a conclusion and suggestions for future research in this domain.

CONCEPTUALIZING STRATEGIC ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

The current strategic account literature reflects diversity in its basic terminology, thereby making it less coherent and accessible to researchers and practitioners. An objective of this research is to develop a conceptualization that is broad enough to encompass extant contributions in the literature. In reviewing existing conceptualizations and relevant literature, we discovered points of agreement and points of contention. For example, one common view across many previous definitions is the idea that the primary objective of strategic account management is to create and develop enduring relationships between the buying and the selling organization (e.g., Wotruba and Castleberry 1993).

While existing inquiry in strategic account management provides clarity on a number of important issues, this area is still evolving from a conceptual perspective. For instance, some researchers conceptualize strategic accounts based on size of the customer and geographic presence. This research refers to strategic accounts as large accounts (Miller, Heiman, and Tuleja 1991), major accounts (Colletti and Tubridy 1987), national accounts (Dishman and Nitse 1998; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984), key accounts (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002; Pardo 1997; Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003), global accounts (Yip and Bink 2007), corporate house accounts (Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri 2000), and strategic accounts (Napolitano 1997). Other conceptualizations of strategic account management are driven by the selling approach. These approaches include a list of conceptually similar selling approaches such as national account management, large account selling, key account selling, major account selling, global account selling, national account marketing (Stevenson 1981), parent account management, international account management, worldwide account management, and global account management (e.g., Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002; Montgomery, Yip, and Villalonga 1998; Weilbaker and Weeks 1997; Yip and Bink 2007).

Synthesizing across definitions of related conceptualizations, strategic account management can be defined as the *selection, establishment, and maintenance of close institutional relationships with a firm's most important customers* (Ivens and Pardo 2008; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984; Wotruba and Castleberry 1993). Central to this conceptualization of strategic account management is that a person (or group of people) is responsible for coordinating and leading the effort (Guenzi, Pardo, and Georges 2007). The person or "strategic account manager" (SAM) develops and maintains institutional relationships with customers. This requires the SAM to engage in interorganizational, multifunctional, and multilevel interaction, coordination, and support. To facilitate the SAM's efforts, an organizational structure and culture must co-occur so as to provide the best support for satisfying strategic customer wants and needs. Thus, to support the role of strategic account management within the firm, most firms clearly distinguish this role within their organizations as separate from the regular sales organization (Colletti and Tubridy 1987; Shapiro and Moriarty 1984).

Most salespeople have a customer or core group of customers that is viewed as most important at some level of abstraction. A salesperson's ability to internally sell the importance of that customer—so as to garner the firm's allocation of resources—has driven many determinations of which customers are ultimately deemed strategically important from the firm's perspective. It should be noted that a "strategic" customer embodies a fundamental focus and direction for an organization. These realities underlie relationship marketing strategy in business-to-business (B2B) contexts as such relationships offer critical benefits, such as profit enhancement, for both buyers and sellers (McDonald, Millman, and Rogers 1997). Thus, the selection of a customer for strategic account focus is a significant organizational decision, and the firm views the development and maintenance of the relationship as a potential strategic asset.

A Continuum of Strategic Accounts: From Fluid to Dedicated Teams

A significant portion of the current work and debate on key account management is based on ways in which firms organize their selling efforts and the resulting effects on performance (Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003). Strategic account relationships can be managed by different team structures (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). The team structures can consist of a mix of dedicated and temporary or ad hoc members (e.g., Jones et al. 2005). On one end of the spectrum are *dedicated teams,* which serve strategic accounts using a team of dedicated members (Boles, Johnston, and Gardner

1999; Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002; Pegram 1972). At the other end of the spectrum are team structures comprised of an individual as the SAM and ad hoc team members who may float in and out of the strategic relationship. The SAM serves as the focal point of the strategic account with support from an ad hoc team (Moon and Armstrong 1994). We refer to such teams as *fluid teams.* While some accounts warrant dedicated resources and formalized processes, many accounts are served by account managers who seek the assistance of their organization's resources on an as needed basis (Moon and Armstrong 1994).

To illustrate how fluid teams work, consider a situation where a health care strategic account makes two requests of a supplier—one for a network technology and the other for a new digital printer. The supplier's sales representative, who is the SAM, manages the strategic account. To fulfill the strategic account's network technology request, the account manager may utilize the assistance of a network solutions engineer and a health care technical solutions specialist. However, for the digital printer the account manager utilizes the assistance of a digital printer product specialist. Thus, the use of ad hoc team members is driven by the customer opportunity (see Moon and Armstrong 1994). Importantly, fluid teams are dynamic in that team members can change for different opportunities. Indeed, ad hoc team members in a fluid team are assembled and disbanded as soon as an opportunity is fulfilled.

The preceding example illustrates the potential fluidity in team members involved in working with a *single* customer. Indeed, a *single* strategic account team often consists of *both* dedicated and temporary members. Homburg, Workman, and Jensen (2002) suggest that strategic account teams can be described based on actors, activities, resources, and formalization. Based on these four factors, they identify seven types of key account teams. We argue that the seven types of key account teams are variations of fluid and dedicated teams.

A Framework for Designing and Managing Strategic Account Teams

Fundamentally, successful strategic accounts teams are essential ingredients of buyer–seller relationships that provide both firms with competitive advantage over their rivals—and that success is rewarded through financial returns (Hunt, Lambe, and Wittmann 2002). The essence of "cooperating to compete" (Morgan and Hunt 1994) lies in gains in efficiency or effectiveness afforded through the strategic alliance that increases competitive advantage (Arnett, Macy, and Wilcox 2005; Perry, Pearce, and Slims 1999; Rangarajan et al. 2004). Figure 1 outlines the general framework we propose for designing and managing strategic account management teams and depicts examples of both dedicated and fluid account teams. Before discussing the specific structures, we first focus on the framework for strategic account management decisions.

Given the importance of strategic accounts, firms often set goals and design processes that are idiosyncratic to each strategic account. Davenport defines a business process as "a structured, measured set of activities designed to produce a specific output for a particular customer or market" (1993, p. 5). While sales scholars have long recognized diversity in processes performed in business markets (Moncrief 1986) and complexities with matching management controls with desired results (Challagalla and Shervani 1996), this research proposes that firms should integrate goals, processes, structure, resources, and evaluation metrics in developing strategic account management programs. Table 1 shows the differences in goals, processes, structure, resources, and evaluation metrics for fluid teams and dedicated teams.

FLUID TEAMS AND DEDICATED TEAMS

Goals

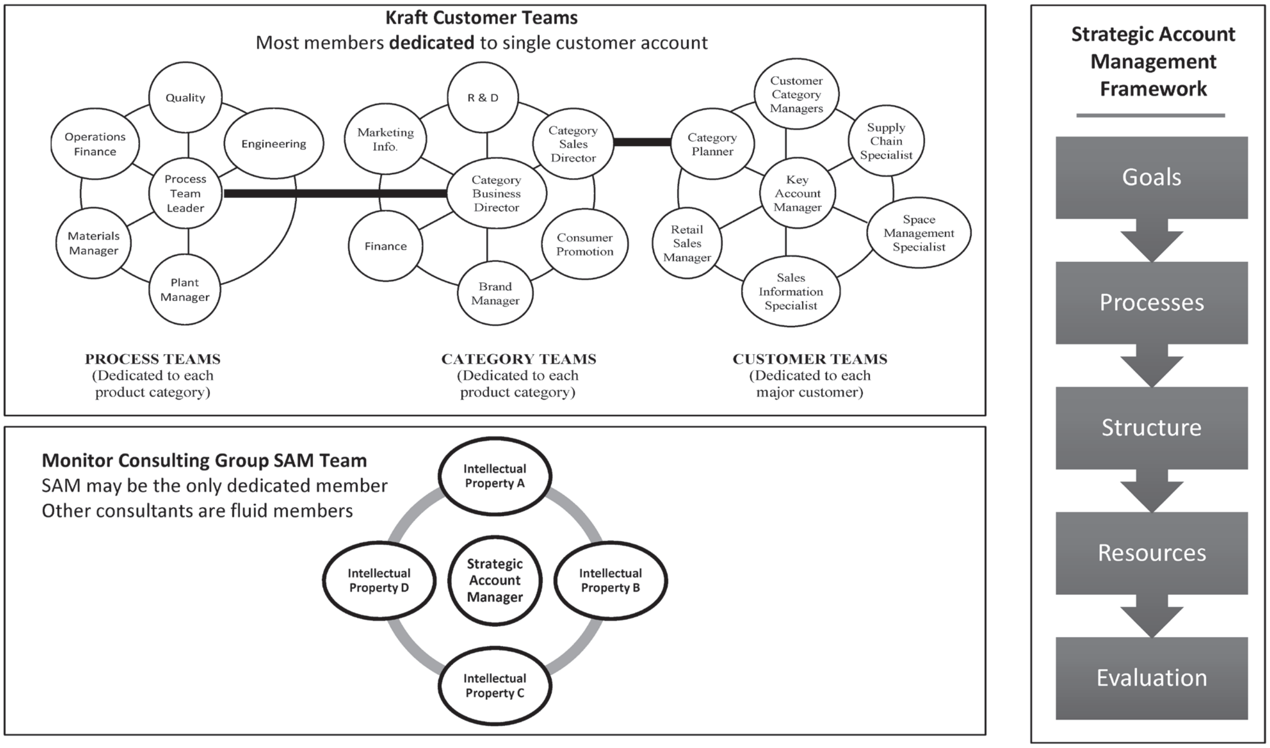
Fluid teams are commonplace when a customer's current potential (short-term projected customer lifetime value or CLV) for the firm may be marginal but the future potential (long-term projected CLV) may be large. A key goal for SAMs with such customers is to nurture the relationship, deepen the bonds between the firms, and to identify the barriers to recognizing the potential of the account. These goals are common for relationships that are in the early phases of development (Boles, Barksdale, and Johnson 1997; Lambe and Spekman 1997). If an account's potential is not realized, the firm may consider the customer to be a key account rather than a strategic account. Key accounts are those where the account is critical for the account manager, but less than strategic for the firm.

In contrast, dedicated teams are developed when a customer current CLV is extremely large and is crucial to an organization's revenue and/or profits. For instance, consider the case of Kraft Foods as a supplier to grocery chains. Kraft's 2009 revenues were just over $40 billion. Its top 5 customers account for 27 percent of this revenue. Wal-Mart alone accounts for 16 percent of revenue, while the rest of its top 5 customers are all in excess of $500 million in revenue. Kraft sells multiple product lines to these customers, including well-established brands such as Kraft, Oreo, Maxwell House, Nabisco, Trident, and Oscar Meyer. As shown in Figure 1, given the large revenue potential of these grocery chains, Kraft has dedicated teams serving them (George, Freeling, and Court 1994).

Processes

After establishing goals, it is critical that the firm implements processes applicable to accomplishing their customer

Figure 1
Strategic Account Team Structure and Decision-Making Framework



Note: Kraft customer team structure is from George, Freeling, and Court (1994).

relationship management goals (Dickson et al. 2009). In fluid teams, the lead salesperson, who serves as the SAM, is the key link between the supplier and customer. The supplier and the customer will tend to have limited dedicated commitments to each other. It is the task of the fluid team's SAM to engage in relationship building and forge favorable customer perceptions (Boles, Barksdale, and Johnson 1997). The SAM also attempts to expand the relationship and reduce distance between his or her firm and the members of the customer's buying center (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992). Over time, personal relationships can help ease tensions in the business relationship by reducing perceived distance (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992). Thus, an SAM, skilled in process thinking with requisite social skills, is the critical link to ensuring that personal relationships evolve to help forge more effective business relationships.

Unlike fluid teams where the focus is on individual relationships, the primary activity of a dedicated team is to develop institutional relationships with buyers that cut across organizational levels and functions (Arnett, Macy, and Wilcox 2005; Moon and Armstrong 1994). Central to this activity is the customer and supplier making long-term commitments to the partnership and engaging in joint planning. Thus, a primary activity is to cultivate relationships that can provide them access to a variety of resources and information that aid in the development of a position of competitive advantage (e.g., Morgan and Hunt 1994). Research suggests that dedicated teams, particularly those that are cross-functional in nature, improve coordination, enhance the speed of learning, and improve implementation (Arnett and Badrinarayanan 2005; Dougherty and Heller 1994; Morgan and Piercy 1998; Peters and Fletcher 2004).

Supplier firms may provide customers with resources, such as customized product offerings and tailored promotions, which enable them to compete more successfully with rivals. For example, Procter & Gamble's (P&G) dedicated strategic account teams for very large customers often include promotional specialists who develop copromotions that are tailored to the marketing objectives of its major retail customers. In addition, it is common for P&G to collocate shelf space technology specialists at their retailers' buying centers to help retailers execute category management strategies, particularly when such buying centers have designated P&G as "category captain" for categories critical to their success. In this manner, P&G is not only tailoring its product mix to the specific solutions its retailers seek, but it is also helping them to develop and implement its chosen strategies.

Table 1
Continuum of Strategic Account Teams

	Fluid Teams	Dedicated teams
Goals		
Account objective	Nurture relationship; grow revenue to justify a dedicated team	Vital to organization; achieve strategic organizational goals; competitive advantage
Relationship		
Exchange between organizations	Ad hoc, determined by situation	Formal rules of engagement; often based on norms
Relationship basis	Each entity seeking to optimize	Joint optimization
Relationship management	Primarily by key account management (KAM) with occasional sales manager or senior executive involvement	Senior management deeply involved in relationship building
Solutions	None to little customization	Highly customized
KAM's account focus	Typically part time	Dedicated to account
Organizational Commitment		
Resource commitment	Low to moderate	High—team could have its own profit and loss and be considered its own business unit Dedicated resources
Resource access	Low to moderate	High access to all organizational resources (e.g., people, processes)
Team Characteristics and Authority		
Membership	Fluid, no dedicated members; support from specialists	Relatively stable with dedicated team members, supported by specialists
Team composition	Based on sales opportunity	Based on buying organization and strategic goals
Reporting structure	Dotted line, at best, from specialists to KAM	Dedicated team members report to KAM; specialists will be held to high level of accountability
Budget authority	Limited	Budget for creating customer solutions
Pricing authority	Limited, defined boundaries	Structure creative deals, including profit based
KAM Characteristics		
KAM position	Salesperson	Executive rank
KAM compensation	Moderate to high, commission and bonus opportunities	High, bonus opportunities

Structure

Central to the conceptualization of fluid teams is that an individual (or small group of dedicated individuals) is responsible for coordinating and leading the effort (Guenzi, Pardo, and Georges 2007; Pegram 1972). Typically, it is the SAM, a sales executive, who plays the coordination role, which is one reason such teams are viewed as "sales" teams. The implementation of an SAM helps explain why sales management is becoming better characterized as general management (e.g., managing multiple functions within the organization). To facilitate the SAM's efforts, an organizational structure co-occurs so as to provide the best support for meeting customer needs. Implicit in this organizational structure is the formal and informal coordination of internal (supplier firm) resources to coordinate opportunity and relationship development and maintenance with the customer's employees (Guenzi, Pardo, and Georges 2007).

It is also worth noting that even when the functional expertise of fluid team members is in areas such as finance, operations, or accounting, the central purpose of the team is to *execute the sales function with its assigned account.* Moreover, account management itself is often defined as part of the "sales function" (Rouziès et al. 2005). Therefore, the team, irrespective of its functional expertise, can still be considered as the sales force performing the sales function by representing the seller in the buyer–seller relationship. Finally, while some fluid team members spend considerable time with the customer, it does not mean that they serve this customer exclusively. These members can be considered as "quasi-dedicated" members who share their skills with other accounts. For example, an account manager selling a complex information technology solution to a customer may rely on the information technology specialist for his or her assistance. This specialist will often support multiple account managers and is called upon when an opportunity arises. In practice, such specialists are commonly referred to as a "shared resource"—that is, their expertise is shared across accounts. It is also common to associate a "shared resource" with his or her level within the organizational hierarchy (e.g., corporate, global, or divisional resource). This is consistent with empirical evidence that suggests that strategic account teams are often served by nondedicated account managers (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002).

Dedicated teams, however, have a significant number of dedicated members *and* are primarily cross-functional in nature (Moon and Armstrong 1994; Wotruba and Castleberry 1993). Such teams are "dedicated" because of having a core group of members whose full-time job is to serve this one account. Since the dedicated members of the team represent multiple functions, they are not viewed as a sales team but, rather, as a customer team within the organization. Indeed, these teams are often referred to by the customer name—that is, the P&G team serving Wal-Mart is referred to as the "Wal-Mart team."

Forming dedicated strategic accounts teams is more complex than simply assigning individuals to work in groups (Arnett and Badrinarayanan 2005), as it entails significant changes in organizational structure (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). Figure 1 provides an example of a team at Kraft that represents a dedicated team (George, Freeling, and Court 1994) and, for contrast, a team at Monitor Consulting Group representing a fluid team (which is discussed later). A Kraft team serving Kroger, the second-largest grocery chain and a Fortune 25 firm, is led by a customer business manager. This individual is supported by a team of dedicated resources that could include space management specialists, sales information specialists, retail sales managers, category planners, customer category managers, supply chain specialists, information technology specialists, accountants, and lawyers. This team can have as many as a few hundred individuals who are dedicated to the account. Of course, this team may engage with specialists on an as-needed basis as markets change and evolve. However, if the need looks like it will recur, dedicated members may be attached to the team for assisting with that need.

Sellers can use insights about their buyer's organizational procurement processes to develop their sales team and processes (Hunter, Bunn, and Perreault 2006). In practice, sellers often consider the decision-making authority of the buying organization when structuring their sales team with the objective of matching and mirroring that decision-making hierarchy with appropriately skilled personnel at the vital points of influence (e.g., Arnett and Badrinarayanan 2005). For example, the supplier of raw materials to Colgate-Palmolive might assign personnel to its team and adopt processes consistent with the procurement processes of the five major strategic business units of its buyer: oral care, personal care, household care, fabric care, and pet nutrition. Such structuring of teams around customers rather than products may provide several benefits, including reduced risks and costs, faster development cycles, and better forecasting (Kashani 2004). Thus, by using "mirror" alignments, strategic account teams can dedicate employees to better meet or exceed the mutual needs of both the buyer and the seller by permitting better interaction that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the relational exchanges (Arnett, Macy, and Wilcox 2005).

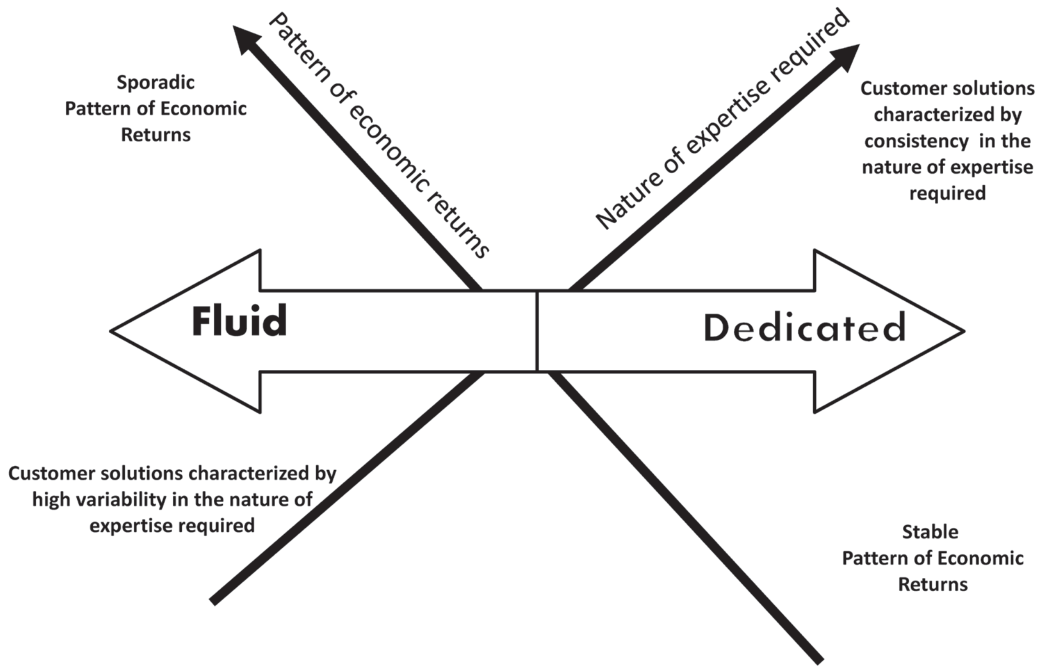
Resources

Strategic account management requires a commitment from the organization that emanates from top management. The communication and support of the clarity of vision about which customers are strategic and how these customers should be treated are essential for the requisite focus of the organization. Top management customer involvement, development of a culture that can support strategic customers, successful implementation of organizational structure, and the development and implementation of appropriate systems (such as compensation, evaluation, and motivation systems) are essential elements of effective strategic account management. Top management must not only support but also lead in the development of resources to achieve successful implementation of fluid accounts.

One specific and instrumental resource pertinent to the successful implementation of fluid strategic accounts is an information system to support the systematic solicitation, rational allocation, current inventory management, and instrumental evaluation of firm resources for assignment to fluid strategic account opportunities. To manage fluid accounts effectively, a system must be employed to support the organization. The fluidity of opportunities necessitates the nimble assignment of resources and the systematic management of these resources so as to maximize effectiveness and to match the appropriate resources to the opportunities.

Dedicated teams that serve large accounts (e.g., Wal-Mart team) often have their own profit and loss statement associated with the account. As such, there is a high-level customization for such accounts, including customized products and services, creation of new services, development of new information systems, and dedicated work flows (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen 2002). Firms often extend their organization's boundaries to satisfy these customers. For instance, if a global customer enters new market areas, suppliers tend to follow and find ways to meet the needs of this customer even if means entering into partnership with local suppliers. Customization for customers served by fluid teams is done on the margin, whereas customization for customers served by dedicated teams represents a strategic direction for the organization serving the strategic customer (see Capon and Senn 2010, p. 40).

Figure 2
Key Drivers of Strategic Account Team Structure



A Parsimonious Framework to Help Guide Strategic Account Management Decisions

Jones et al. (2005) provide a comprehensive review of several factors relevant to executive decisions and influences on strategic accounts, including multiple dimensions that drive team success. Building on their research and the literature, we propose that two factors emerge as dominant influences in the planning, implementing, and controlling of strategic accounts—namely, the *patterns of economic returns* and the *nature of the solutions required* to achieve the unique goals associated with a strategic account (see Figure 2). We elaborate on the rationale for each factor.

Pattern of Economic Returns

Perhaps the most common criterion for deciding on strategic account management decisions is sales volume. We argue that using sales volume alone is a misleading criterion. As an example, let us consider two strategic accounts for Kraft: (1) Kroger, a high-low pricing retail grocer with operations in the United States generating $82 billion in annual revenues in 2010 and (2) Wal-Mart, a multinational mass merchandiser generating $419 billion annual revenues in 2010. Using minimal industry insight, Kraft represents a larger portion of Kroger's sales than it does Wal-Mart's sales, yet Kraft generates more sales through Wal-Mart than it does through Kroger. Thus, basic sales volume alone signals little about what goals Kraft should pursue with either of these two accounts—only by applying negotiations theory could we uncover that it has more leverage for negotiations with Kroger than it has with Wal-Mart.

Another overarching concept that influences decision-making is fundamentally about the economics of the relationship with the strategic account. A unifying approach that weights the importance of a range of economic variables is CLV. CLV can serve as a useful metric for prioritizing customer management decisions (Payne and Frow 2005). Essentially, sophisticated CLV models calculate the discounted cash flows anticipated from sustained a relationship with customers over time. The models are robust enough to handle specifications that account for most of the commonly considered factors. However, one factor that is more complex to consider with CLV models deals with the nature of the recurring cash flows attained from an account.

Customers generate different levels of returns that are dependent on the seller's provision of different solutions that require varying levels of expertise. Estimates on the patterns of returns from specific accounts should thus be calculated for the alternative levels of expertise associated with different strategic account team compositions. When a *pattern of returns* is stable, over time, the opportunity to provide dedicated team members increases as such stable returns are more likely to cover the steady costs associated with maintaining such expertise. As the pattern of returns oscillates over time, sellers can better utilize its expertise by allocating members fluidly according to the transaction-specific needs of its customer base. Thus, the pattern of returns is an important consideration in guiding strategic account management decisions.

Nature of Solutions

Customer needs represent a critical factor for the seller in determining how to allocate its resources to the account. For example, in the aforementioned Kraft example (see Figure 1), if Kroger's expectations include presentations on anticipated market demands for all categories in all regions in which it sells (e.g., sophisticated sales forecasting models for different sales proposals), then Kraft knows it must staff its team with analytically competent members who can model the proposals they make. Indeed, Kraft may have different strategic goals with different accounts, and the accounts may have different expectations (goals) from its relationship with Kraft. While the goals may differ from customer account to customer account, we argue what is most important is whether an account's needs generate a recurring pattern of customer expectations—that is, whether the *nature of the solutions required by a customer is stable.* Therefore, when structuring its account team, Kraft considers the functional skills needed to address the strategic accounts' recurring needs.

At the same time, there are customers for whom the solutions required each year change considerably—that is, the needs of these customers change frequently, thereby making it difficult to dedicate permanent resources to such customers. These customers tend to be served by fluid teams. For example, consider a hypothetical strategic account for Monitor, a consulting firm that focuses its services on "exceptionally deep expertise, know-how and competence in the full range of business issues" (*Monitor* 2011). Its strategic accounts often have extreme variance in the nature of their needs. In a given year, the client might seek consultative guidance with developing an overall strategy for growth. The following year, the same client might seek expertise with improving its operational efficiencies, that is, the expertise needed to address the needs in one year is quite different from that needed in other years. In addition, the costs for acquiring personnel with the requisite expertise may be quite high—as quality expectations for such professional services can be extremely high.

As one of two dominant factors proposed herein, the nature of the account's demands refers to the breadth and depth of expertise required to provide solutions that meets the account's needs. There are likely multiple ways to operationalize this construct. For example, these factors contribute to task complexity, but the complexity of the task is relative to the solution provider's expertise and the type of the task(s) associated with accomplishing the firm's goals with a specific account. Depth of expertise could be operationalized as one's degree of expertise (Chi, Glaser, and Rees 1981), which positively affects performance when tasks require such expertise, as individuals with different expertise may literally see the same task differently (Haerem and Rau 2007). Since the expertise required for solving customer problems comes at a cost to the firm, firms practicing profit-maximizing behavior should balance the costs of required expertise against the expected revenues an account might generate through the seller's acquisition, retention, or maintenance of such expertise.

In sum, the aforementioned examples illustrate some of the issues associated with designing strategic account teams. It is worth noting that revenue potential for an account warranting dedicated team members is often sizable. For example, the level of economic activity generated by a single dedicated strategic account team in the consumer packaged goods industry can exceed $1 billion per year in annual sales to large sellers, such as P&G, Kraft, and Unilever. Although the industry is known for operating with thin margins, the revenue level must be significant enough to cover the costs associated with dedicating full-time employees to the account.

As shown in Figure 2, the *nature of the account's demands* and the *pattern of economic returns* it yields are primary drivers throughout the design framework (goals, processes, structure, resources, and evaluation metrics). In essence, these factors create what Zoltners, Sinha, and Lorimer (2004) refer to as the "essential work" that the seller needs to conduct to meet the needs of its customer accounts. Good market-sensing capabilities (Day 1994) can help firms better understand the nature of a prospective or existing account's needs.

Evaluating Strategic Account Performance

Firm outcomes have typically been measured through behavioral outcomes such as sales volume, turnover, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, self-reported perceptions of performance, and customer retention (Jones et al. 2005). Table 2 outlines our examination of outcomes and issues associated with both fluid and dedicated strategic account teams. The outcomes are divided into firm level, SAM level, and strategic account management team outcome, environmental factors, and internal organizational factors.

Performance has always been one of the more difficult variables to measure, and most studies have examined performance from an individual's perspective (Behrman and Perreault 1982; Churchill et al. 1985). SAMs must be evaluated for their individual performance, but their performance may also directly or indirectly be affected by the team members assigned to help them with the account. Understanding team performance becomes more difficult as one attempts to determine the role and contributions of the individuals within the team (Moon and Armstrong 1994). As such, this evaluation context is well-suited for applications of multilevel model specifications to control for such hierarchical effects.

Table 2
Performance Outcomes—Fluid Versus Dedicated Strategic Account Teams: Direct Outcomes, Results, and Issues

	Fluid Teams	Dedicated Teams
Firm Level		
1. Customer Lifetime Value	Dependent on relationship with SAM. Increased effort on account.	Team provides some continuity over time CLV increased.
2. Sales Volume	Increased for organization. Customers tend to be high volume.	Increased for organization. Customers will be high volume.
3. Profit	Higher than dedicated. Expenses are decreased due to fluid nature of team.	Increased because of focus on key account—less than fluid because of permanent expense.
4. Market Share	Increased because of more focus on key account.	Increased because of more focus on key account.
5. Innovations	Slight increase because of team expertise but dependent on SAM.	Increased because of team expertise and diversity.
6. Efficiency	Not as efficient because of team members entering and existing the team.	Permanency of team provides more efficiency.
7. Effectiveness	Team members added as specific skills are needed.	Highly effective because team is routinely working together.
8. Increased Productivity	SAM becomes much more productive with added team skills.	Permanency of team produces high-level productivity.
9. Improved Quality	Quality increases with added resources.	Permanency of team produces high-level quality.
SAM Individual Level		
1. Compensation	How do we compensate team. SAM may be commission/bonus.	Most likely salaried because of permanency of team.
2. Quota	Individual quota.	(SAM) Team quota.
3. Sales Volume	Typically not key performance measure—more interested in relationship.	Typically not key performance measure—more interested in relationship.
SAM Team Outcome		
1. Compensation	Team members salaried. SAM salaried or commission.	Bonuses for team.
2. Effectiveness	Interaction problems.	Well-oiled machine,
Environmental Factors		
1. Client Climate	More appropriate for rapidly changing customer needs.	More appropriate for stable customer needs.
2. Industry Effect	More effective for technology customers—bring in expertise as needed.	More appropriate for consumer goods.
3. Market Effects	More appropriate for emergent or growth markets.	More appropriate for growth or mature markets.
Internal Organizational Factors		
1. Conflict	Creates more conflict because of lack of permanence of team.	Permanency minimizes conflict.
2. Collaboration	Must be created.	Built in.
3. Cohesiveness	Individual teammates have differing motivations.	One team mentality.
4. Communication		
Internal	Dependent on SAM.	Built-in channels.
External	Maintained by SAM.	Multiple sources of communication.
5. Proximity	Potentially scattered across company.	Tend to be more closely aligned physically.
6. Social Integration	Very little.	Permanent teammates.

Some team members may be long-term dedicated contributors to the strategic account working directly with the SAM, and thus their roles are potentially more determinable. However, in strategic fluid account scenarios, assigned expertise may contribute on a very short-term basis and may not even be a part of the sales or marketing departments (Moon and Armstrong 1994). In addition, the intraorganizational evaluative processes are clearly complex due to the multiple people, departments, and even strategic business units that may be brought into the selling or relationship maintenance of the strategic account (e.g., Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003). The contributions of team members to the strategic account may be exceedingly difficult to measure or even verbalize. In both dedicated teams and fluid teams there are variables such as organizational culture, esprit de corps, and sales organization that can be significant drivers of overall performance by those responsible for the key account (Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003).

While these factors contribute to a need for sophisticated model specifications, considering the current lack of research and understanding of fluid accounts, qualitative insights and theoretical models would be helpful to advancing this increasingly important stream of research and to close the gap between academic research and contemporary strategic account management practices. Moreover, consideration of how few accounts rise to a level of strategic importance combined with an understanding of how small membership in such strategic teams are (except for very large dedicated accounts) suggests that the theoretical constraints imposed by some statistical models may render them irrelevant to advancing this field of inquiry. This becomes even more apparent as one considers higher levels of hierarchical inquiry (e.g., firm, industry) and for studies investing phenomenon, such as individual attitudes and behaviors or firm- or customer-specific processes, that require primary data collection.

The strategic account individual-level outcomes could include a number of variables but for purposes of this study we focus on three common variables: compensation, quota, and sales volume. The strategic account team outcomes focused on are compensation and effectiveness. The environmental factors include client climate, industry effects, and market effects. Last, the internal organizational factors include conflict, collaboration, cohesiveness, communication, proximity, and social integration.

Firm-Level Factors

Jones et al. (2005) provides a description of firm-level outcome variables that include CLV, sales volume and profit, market share, innovations, efficiency, effectiveness, increased productivity, and improved quality. The following sections examine similarities and differences of dedicated versus fluid strategic account teams based on these firm level variables.

Customer Lifetime Value

One purpose of strategic account management is to understand the urgency of retaining customers that have strategic importance to the firm (Leigh and Marshall 2001). Because of the desire to maintain and build an enduring relationship with the customer, the SAM in both a fluid and a dedicated team format should provide the customer more lifetime value. An SAM in a dedicated team has the advantage of firm personnel that are more consistent over time. Even if the SAM turns over, there are members of the dedicated team are known to the customer. The fluid team is designed to support the SAM as needed, resulting in the relationship between firm and customer based around the SAM. Thus, turnover of the SAM can be problematic for long-term value for both the customer and firm if the relationship is more individually driven and reliant on the SAM.

Sales Volume and Profit

The SAM in both the fluid and dedicated team environments should provide higher levels of sales volume and profit over a given time period. Although sales volume is typically not a primary performance variable in a strategic account format, the reality is that its sales volume should be far greater than that for a nonstrategic account because of the long-term emphasis being provided by the selling firm. More firm resources should result in a higher level of sales from the strategic account. Profits should be higher with either strategic team design, but the expense of staffing a dedicated team is going to be far higher than that for a more fluid team with firm members entering and exiting the sales relationship.

Innovations

The innovations that occur within a strategic account should be greater because of the increase in resources that the firm is providing. The dedicated team should be the most innovative because of the permanency and focus of the team on the customer needs. The fluid team will provide innovation as the SAM seeks out temporary expertise from the firm resources. Innovations in a fluid team setting will be highly dependent on the capability and experience of the SAM.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The efficiency and effectiveness of the strategic account team becomes dependent on the team that surrounds the SAM. A team that is accustomed to working together and has built interdependencies is going to be much more efficient and thus effective than a team that is temporary constructed and enters and exists from the team assignment.

An SAM should be more productive and with higher levels of quality in a team setting. Arguably, a dedicated team in support of the SAM should result in a higher level of productivity and quality. An SAM with a fluid team can be more productive as he or she seeks out needed skills or functions from firm resources. By adding expertise from various levels of the firm, the quality of customer service should increase.

Strategic Account Manager Factors

Dimensions of Performance

Assessing individual performance for members of strategic account teams is necessarily more complex than was the case for measuring sales performance for sales reps assigned to individual territories with more control over the outcomes produced. The basic intent of forming a strategic account management team is to structure an organization that creates interdependencies across the specialized skills represented by its team members to improve the seller's capacity to forge better relationships or improve the administrative efficiency of the buyer–seller relationship. At the individual level, this may not result in an objective defined by an easily quantifiable measure like sales volume. Such measures are quantitative, but not objective, as they may represent a measure biased, either positively or negatively, by factors outside the control of the individual salesperson (Behrman and Perreault 1982). In the case of an individual on a strategic account management team, beyond traditional biases in quantitative measures such as goal congruity with account, there is another potential level of biases created by the strategic account management team itself. Of course, this group level is a commonly accepted notion in the social science that serves as a major catalyst driving the increased use of multilevel models. These factors may be more relevant to dedicated teams, but might also play a role on each project team formed in fluid account environment. Several major sellers have recognized that such special factors affect individual performance of strategic account management team members—and have incorporated dimensions of salesperson performance that help sales managers to be more objective (e.g., fair, or closer to a "true score") in assessing performance.

For example, P&G has employed strategic account management teams for a couple of decades or more, and has used a set of criteria commonly referred to as "what counts" factors. The primary outcomes they expect consist of two key components: building the business and building organizational capacity. Building the business refers to delivering results (depending on the role assigned, these outcome might include things such as sales volume or selling new products into distribution). One of the practical insights from the use of sales volume goals is that such goals can incent short terming the relationship, so results are not simple quotas that emphasize short-term over long-term results. Building organizational capacity focuses on the individual's contributions to improving the organization's ability to deliver solutions to its business customers (e.g., improving the team's capacity to employ the latest sales technology innovations, conducting training to help new hires refine cooperative negotiation skills, advancing one's own skills by completing advanced business education through part-time MBA programs). P&G has developed a set of factors that specifically contribute to building the business or building organizational capacity. These "what counts" factors, which are considered antecedent to the primary results factors, include priority setting, thinking/problem solving, initiative and follow-through, leadership, working effectively with others, communications, creativity and innovations, and technical mastery. With such diversity in dimensions of performance, research will need to stay beyond using simple sales quotas to measure sales performance and may need to continue to develop measures consistent with the context being investigated (for an example, see two broad dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency represented by relationship-forging tasks and administrative performance in Hunter and Perrault 2007).

Strategic Account Team Factors

There are a number of issues affecting SAM in dedicated or fluid teams. This section examines compensation, quotas, sales volume, and team effectiveness.

Compensation and Quota

The compensation and quota fulfillment of the SAM can certainly be enhanced by a highly supportive team. Strategic accounts are obviously important to the organization and the organization tends to reward SAMs with high salaries or some form of bonus or commission to be representative of the importance of the account. However, compensating members of a team can be more problematic. A dedicated team tends to be salaried but frequently shares the bonus rewarded for successful performance. The members in a fluid team are much more difficult to reward for performance due to the temporary contribution that is made by the assigned expertise to the fluid team (anywhere from very little time to significant time spent on the account). Most of the fluid team is compensated through salary. Quota shares a similar fate with compensation. The dedicated team might have a quota as a group, but in a fluid organization team members do not tend to be a part of the quota designation for the strategic account team.

Sales Volume

SAMs and their teams, regardless of dedicated or fluid, typically are not driven by the level of sales volume. The advent of the strategic account management typically meant a reliance on relationship selling and thus less of a reliance on transactional selling. An emphasis on sales volume can damage a long-term relationship and so both dedicated and fluid teams are going to be less concerned with sheer volume of sales.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is measured both by internal (executives and managers) and external perceptions (customer, suppliers, other stakeholders) (see Cohen and Bailey 1997). The effectiveness of the team is partially dependent on the nature of the team. A dedicated team tends to run effectively because team members have prescribed functional positions within the strategic account team and in specific account situations. Moreover, there is a history of situational experiences to draw from so as to better match styles with strategic customer situations. A fluid team is highly dependent on the effectiveness of the SAM and his or her ability to incorporate members throughout the organization as they are needed.

Environmental Factors

The output from strategic account management is readily affected by the client climate, the industry, and the effects of the marketplace. This section briefly examines the issues associated with the strategic account team and the environment.

Client Climate

The needs of the customer rapidly change as global and domestic business evolves. The economy, new levels of competition, technology, and a changing consumer base have created business conditions that are ever-changing, and as such, the needs of the organization's customer base are evolving to reflect the environmental changes. A fluid strategic account team can more rapidly confront a changing customer base as the SAM develops a network of assigned expertise on the given and current needs of the strategic customer. The dedicated team is going to be much more strategic when the customer base is stable and less effected by the environmental changes of the twenty-first century.

Industry Effect

Industries differ in their level of environmental turbulence and the resulting needs from suppliers (Cohen and Bailey 1997). Industries that are experiencing rapid change, particularly if technologically driven, are going to be better served by a fluid strategic account management organization. A dedicated strategic team is more appropriate for industries such as consumer goods where the customer base is relatively consistent over time. For example, if the strategic account management organization is canned foods and the strategic account is Wal-Mart, then the SAM most likely will employ a dedicated team. The industry (food in this case) dictates the type of structure that is going to be more efficient in delivering needed service and relationship.

Markets have been characterized as emergent, growth, or mature (Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven 1990). Markets (customers) that are entering an emergent or growth stage may be better served by a fluid strategic account team. Customers in the emergent and early growth stages are less likely to have consistent needs from their supplier base. The SAM is going to be more involved with helping these companies build their business and for the SAM, the team that is needed will be much more fluid until the customer enters a more mature market stage. As the customer evolves into late growth and then maturity, its specific needs should be more consistent, requiring similar needs from the SAM and the dedicated team.

Internal Organizational Factors

There are a number of internal organizational factors that can determine the type of strategic account management team that is most appropriate for the given organization. This section briefly examines the following concepts: conflict, collaboration, cohesiveness, internal communication, team proximity, and social integration.

Team Conflict

The extant literature establishes the critical importance of managing conflict on sales teams, including highly successful teams (Dixon, Gassenheimer, and Barr 2002). Team conflict can be divided into two categories: relationship conflict (interpersonal incompatibilities, tension, and annoyance) and task conflict (disagreement among team members about task responsibilities) (Jehn 1995). The levels of conflict increase for both conflict categories the more fluid the team. As teammates enter and depart, the responsibilities and relationships among team members are less pronounced and can lead to more tension and confusion. The dedicated team experiences less conflict because of the consistency of the working environment.

Team Collaboration and Cohesiveness

Cohen and Bailey (1997) report that a team's performance is higher if the team has healthy internal processes (i.e., collaboration). A dedicated team is more likely to possess stronger internal organizational factors because of the relative permanence of the team structure. A team that is well versed with one another should be much more collaborative and at the same time cohesive. A fluid team can develop some of these internal traits if they come together often enough. Interdependency of the team can increase the overall performance for the account.

Communication

Communication includes communication within the team (internal) and communication to the customer and suppliers (external). Communication within the strategic account team can be problematic in a fluid team because of a lack of permanent structure. The communication becomes truly dependent on the skills of the SAM. The dedicated strategic account team tends to have communication lines built into the team, minimizing confusion and customer mistakes. External communication is typically dependent on the SAM regardless of structure with most customer contact initiated by the SAM.

Proximity

A fluid strategic account management team may have team members dispersed over more than one office or even region, which can be problematic. However, the increases in technology have minimized the levels of issues caused by a lack of proximity. The dedicated team tends to more often be housed in the same location since all members are working on the same account.

Social Integration

Social integration is a measure of team cooperation and cohesiveness. Hambrick (1995) in a study of chief executive officers found that a lack of "teamness" was the key obstacle to team effectiveness. A dedicated team is more likely to be socially integrated because of the proximity of the team and daily working activities. The fluid team is only a temporary structure, and as before, the reliance on team members that freely enter and exit the team makes social integration at best difficult to maintain.

DISCUSSION

Managing strategic accounts effectively is central to the firm. A common observation in practice is the development of a continuum of account structures to address the business goals associated with these accounts. At one end of the continuum is a fluid account that has a leader or SAM. The SAM in fluid accounts is responsible for profitable sales, to identify existing and future selling opportunities for the firm within the strategic customer and to manage company assets and resources for maximum effectiveness with the customer. The SAM is also a relationship manager and should have multiple individual relationships with central members of the strategic account buying center.

As a trusted business partner, the SAM in fluid accounts is also an advocate for the strategic customer to the selling firm. The SAM is the central resource for the customer for obtaining firm-level resources (e.g., assigned expertise, access to company knowledge, future product and service directions). As the key advocate for the strategic account, it is imperative that the SAM work to manage the expectations of the strategic customer so that revenues can be generated effectively and efficiently.

The SAM, as the key contact and person ultimately responsible for the customer from the firm's perspective and as the key advocate for the customer, is faced with an almost innate conflict. At its most basic, both the buyer and seller want the most profitable business partner, which is ultimately conflicting. Moreover, the likelihood of managing personnel and conflict between the customer and assigned expertise conflict increases as more expertise is assigned to the strategic customer. Thus, implicit in the discussion and description of fluid strategic account management is conflict and its management.

Managing strategic accounts in a fluid manner is cost effective. Firms having the flexibility to assign a variety of expertise across a multitude of accounts can leverage intellectual property where it is needed instead of limiting the applicability of the valued resource.

Dedicated strategic accounts, at the other end of the continuum, are ideal for economically justified mature strategic customers. As mentioned previously, dedicated strategic accounts have an expected pattern of needs and wants established on experience. Thus, effectively matching firm expertise and resources to the expected pattern of needs and wants is a key goal of the firm.

Dedicated strategic accounts expand as the opportunity with the strategic customer expands often developing into business units with dedicated corporate infrastructure. Fundamental to these accounts is remaining the focal vendor to strategic customers. Oftentimes, the mere introduction of a secondary source to compete can drastically affect the cost/benefit rationale for the dedicated account. Thus, the continued focus on strengthening the relationship through the creation of value for the customer has to remain the priority. The unyielding pressures to create value and the constant battle to thwart competitive attempts are key for SAMs on dedicated accounts because at risk in dedicated accounts oftentimes is an entire organization tasked with developing and maintaining business with the strategic dedicated account.

Dedicated strategic accounts are becoming more common as the need to foster close relationships with strategic customers increases. Although dedicated strategic accounts can be large teams (i.e., separate business units), oftentimes they are smaller teams tailored to cater exactly to each customer's needs for each selling opportunity (with fluid teams). Fluid teams are an efficient and effective manner to address strategic customer needs and wants.

Table 3
Propositional Inventory: Implications for Research and Management of Strategic Account Teams

1. **Goals**: Sales organizations can use strategic account management structures to improve relationship-building performance while improving the firm's overall efficiencies.
   a. In assessing whether an account will be categorized and served as a strategic account, two considerations should be dominant: the nature of solutions the account will require and a projection of economic returns expected from the strategic relationship.
   b. This work proposes two generic types of strategic accounts: fluid and dedicated. Fluid account teams work best when projected economic returns and solutions are more sporadic, whereas dedicated accounts work best when both the nature of the projected economic returns and the solutions required by the account are less variable.
2. **Processes:** After establishing goals specific to each strategic account, the set of processes required to accomplish those goals can be outlined—and the outcomes associated with the performance of those processes can be assessed.
   a. After outlining activities, roles should be formed by clustering associated activities and estimates of the amount of associated time and prospective returns.
   b. Determination of whether a specific role manifests itself as a "dedicated" or "fluid" member should be driven, in part, by the same aforementioned factors influencing the account type decision. More specifically, primary considerations involve whether a dedicated member has both the capacity to generate stable economic returns and the intellectual property associated with the required solutions.
3. **Structure**: Consistent with the tenants of a customer-centric theory of the firm, the unique needs of each account should provide the primary determinant of the horizontal structure of a strategic account team (e.g., dedicated and fluid members).
   a. Shared resources should be made available for strategic account team leaders.
   b. The vertical structure governing strategic accounts should be necessarily minimal.
   c. An implication of minimal vertical governance is that the sales leader of such an account will require relatively strong general management skills.
   d. The function served by such accounts continues to be most proximate to the firm's traditional selling function, including both relational and transactional orientations.
4. **Resources:** Strategic account teams need resources commensurately driven by the unique value proposition associated with the strategic account.
   a. Consistent with the resource-based view, to optimize performance a strategic account management team's resources should compare favorably to best competitors on four dimensions: value, rarity, inimitability, and nonsubstitutability.
   b. Blending people, processes, and technology in ways that support salespeople (account team members) will help strategic account teams build better relationships.
5. **Evaluation metrics:** Four critical dimension evaluation metrics include compensation, quotas, sales volume, and team effectiveness.

Directions for Future Research and Summary of Managerial Implications

Table 3 provides a propositional inventory of this paper's essential proposals, concepts, and frameworks intended to aid managerial decision making and to help advance and consolidate research on strategic account management.

This paper proposes a new conceptualization of strategic account management that integrates and builds upon several related literatures. The paper proposes that the extant literature is myopic in defining strategic accounts—almost exclusively emphasizing account teams with dedicated members, while, in practice, numerous strategic account teams are formed using dynamic membership. This paper refers to such teams as "fluid accounts" and to dynamic members as "fluid members," and proposes that dedicated and fluid strategic accounts can be viewed along a continuum. The axes defining the continuum consists of two critically important factors—the nature of the account's needs and the pattern of economic returns. As such, the paper provides frameworks, concepts, and new ideas that can help advance scholarship and managerial thinking in this increasingly important domain of research.

REFERENCES

Arnett, Dennis B., and Vishag Badrinarayanan (2005), "Enhancing Customer Needs–Driven CRM Strategies: Core Selling Teams, Knowledge Management Competence, and Relationship Marketing Competence," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 25, 4 (Fall), 329–343.

———, Barry A. Macy, and James B. Wilcox (2005), "The Role of Core Selling Teams in Supplier–Buyer Relationships," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 25, 1 (Winter), 27–42.

Behrman, Douglas N., and William D. Perreault, Jr. (1982), "Measuring the Performance of Industrial Salespersons," *Journal of Business Research,* 10 (3), 355–370.

Boles, James S., Hiram C. Barksdale, and Julie T. Johnson (1997), "Business Relationships: An Examination of the Effects of Buyer–Salesperson Relationships on Customer Retention and Willingness to Refer and Recommend," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,* 12 (3–4), 253–263.

———, Wesley Johnston, and Alston Gardner (1999), "The Selection and Organization of National Accounts: A North American Perspective," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,* 14 (4), 264–282.

Bradford, Kevin, Steven Brown, Shankar Ganesan, Gary Hunter, Vincent Onyemah, Robert Palmatier, Dominique Rouziès, Rosann Spiro, Harish Sujan, and Barton Weitz (2010), "The Embedded Sales Force: Connecting Buying and Selling Organizations," *Marketing Letters,* 21 (3), 239–253.

Capon, Noel, and Christoph Senn (2010), "Global Customer Management Programs: How to Make Them Really Work," *California Management Review,* 52 (2), 32–55.

Challagalla, Goutam N., and Tasadduq A. Shervani (1996), "Dimensions and Types of Supervisory Control: Effects on Salesperson Performance and Satisfaction," *Journal of Marketing,* 60 (1), 89–105.

Chi, Michelene T.H., Robert Glaser, and Ernest Rees (1981), "Expertise in Problem Solving," Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.

Churchill, Gilbert A., Jr., Neil M. Ford, Steven W. Hartley, and Orville C. Walker, Jr. (1985), "The Determinants of Salesperson Performance: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 22 (2), 103–118.

Cohen, Susan G. and Diane E. Bailey (1997), "What Makes Teams Work: Group Effectiveness Research from the Shop Floor to the Executive Suite," *Journal of Management,* 23 (3), 239–290.

Colletti, Jerome A., and Gary S. Tubridy (1987), "Effective Major Account Sales Management," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 7 (2), 1–10.

Davenport, Thomas H. (1993), *Process Innovation: Reengineering Work Through Information Technology,* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Day, George S. (1994), "The Capabilities of Market-Driven Organizations," *Journal of Marketing,* 58 (4), 37–52.

Dickson, Peter R., Walfried M. Lassar, Gary K. Hunter, and Samit Chakravorti (2009), "The Pursuit of Excellence in Process Thinking and Customer Relationship Management," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 29, 2 (Spring), 111–124.

Dishman, Paul, and Philip S. Nitse (1998), "National Accounts Revisited," *Industrial Marketing Management,* 27 (1), 1–9.

Dixon, Andrea L., Jule B. Gassenheimer, and Terri Feldman Barr (2002), "Bridging the Distance Between Us: How Initial Responses to Sales Team Conflict Help Share Core Selling Team Outcomes," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 22, 4 (Fall), 247–257.

Dougherty, Deborah, and Trudy Heller (1994), "The Illegitimacy of Successful Product Innovation in Established Firms," *Organization Science,* 5 (2), 200–218.

Dwyer, F. Robert, Paul H. Schurr, and Sejo Oh (1987), "Developing Buyer–Seller Relationships," *Journal of Marketing,* 51 (2), 11–27.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M., and Claudia Bird Schoonhoven (1990), "Organizational Growth: Linking Founding Team, Strategy, Environment, and Growth Among U.S. Semiconductor Ventures, 1978–1988," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 35 (3), 504–529.

George, Michael, Anthony Freeling, and David Court (1994), "Reinventing the Marketing Organization," *McKinsey Quarterly,* 4 (November), 43–62.

Guenzi, Paolo, Catherine Pardo, and Laurent Georges (2007), "Relational Selling Strategy and Key Account Managers' Relational Behaviors: An Exploratory Study," *Industrial Marketing Management,* 36 (1), 121–133.

Haerem, Thorvald, and Devaki Rau (2007), "The Influence of Degree of Expertise and Objective Task Complexity on Perceived Task Complexity and Performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 92 (5), 1320–1331.

Hambrick, Donald C. (1995), "Fragmentation and the Other Problems CEOs Have with Their Top Management Teams," *California Management Review,* 37 (3), 110–127.

Homburg, Christian, John P. Workman, Jr., and Ove Jensen (2002), "A Configurational Perspective on Key Account Management," *Journal of Marketing,* 66 (2), 38–60.

Hunt, Shelby D., C. Jay Lambe, and C. Michael Wittmann (2002), "A Theory and Model of Business Alliance Success," *Journal of Relationship Marketing,* 1 (1), 17–35.

Hunter, Gary K., and William D. Perreault, Jr. (2007), "Making Sales Technology Effective," *Journal of Marketing,* 71 (1), 16–34.

———, Michele D. Bunn, and William D. Perreault, Jr. (2006), "Interrelations Among Key Aspects of the Organizational Procurement Process," *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* 23 (June), 155–170.

Ivens, Bjourn Sven, and Catherine Pardo (2008), "Key-Account-Management in Business Markets: An Empirical Test of Common Assumptions," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,* 23 (5), 301–310.

Jehn, Karen A. (1995), "A Multimethod Examination of the Benefits and Detriments of Intragroup Conflict," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 40 (2), 256–282.

Jones, Eli, Andrea L. Dixon, Lawrence B. Chonko, and Joseph P. Cannon (2005), "Key Accounts and Team Selling: A Review, Framework, and Research Agenda," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 25, 2 (Spring), 182–198.

Kashani, Kamran (2004), "Marketing Through Collaboration: How Seller and Buyer Can Benefit," *European Business Forum,* 17 (Spring), 37–43.

Lambe, C. Jay, and Robert E. Spekman (1997), "National Account Management: Large Account Selling or Buyer–Supplier Alliance?" *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 17, 4 (Fall), 61–74.

Leigh, Thomas W., and Greg W. Marshall (2001), "Research Priorities in Sales Strategy and Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 20 (4), 83–93.

McDonald, Malcolm, Tony Millman, and Beth Rogers (1997), "Key Account Management: Theory, Practice and Challenges," *Journal of Marketing Management,* 13 (8), 737–757.

Miller, Robert B., Stephen E. Heiman, and Tad Tuleja (1991), *Successful Large Account Management,* London: Kogan Page.

Moncrief, William C. (1986), "Ten Key Activities of Industrial Salespeople," *Industrial Marketing Management,* 15 (4), 309–317.

Monitor (2011), "Expertise: Business Issues" (available at www.monitor.com/AboutUs/GlobalOffices/India/tabid/132/L/en-us/Default.aspx).

Montgomery, David B., George S. Yip, and Belen Villalonga (1998), "Demand for and Use of Global Account Management," Working paper, Cambridge, MA (available at www.msi.org/publications/publication.cfm?pub=529/).

Moon, Mark A., and Gary M. Armstrong (1994), "Selling Teams: A Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 14, 1 (Winter), 17–34.

Moorman, Christine, Gerald Zaltman, and Rohit Deshpande (1992), "Relationships Between Providers and Users of Market Research: The Dynamics of Trust Within and Between Organizations," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 29 (3), 314–328.

Morgan, Neil A., and Nigel F. Piercy (1998), "Interactions Between Marketing and Quality at the SBU Level: Influences and Outcomes," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 26 (3), 190–208.

Morgan, Robert M., and Shelby D. Hunt (1994), "The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing," *Journal of Marketing,* 58 (3), 20–38.

Napolitano, Lisa (1997), "Customer–Supplier Partnering: A Strategy Whose Time Has Come," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 17, 4 (Fall), 1–8.

Pardo, Catherine (1997), "Key Account Management in the Business to Business Field: The Key Account's Point of View," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 17, 4 (Fall), 17–26.

Payne, Adrian, and Pennie Frow (2005), "A Strategic Framework for Customer Relationship Management," *Journal of Marketing,* 69 (4), 167–176.

Pegram, Roger M. (1972), "Selling and Servicing the National Account," Report no. 557, Conference Board, New York.

Perry, Monica L., Craig Pearce, Jr., and Henry P. Slims (1999), "Empowering Selling Teams: How Shared Leadership Can Contribute to Selling Team Outcomes," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 19, 3 (Summer), 35–52.

Peters, Linda D., and Keith P. Fletcher (2004), "A Market-Based Approach to Understanding Communication and Teamworking: A Multi-Disciplinary Literature Review," *Academy of Marketing Science Review,* 2 (1), 1–37.

Piercy, Nigel F. (2006), "The Strategic Sales Organization," *Marketing Review,* 6 (1), 3–28.

Rangarajan, Deva, Lawrence B. Chonko, Eli Jones, and James A. Roberts (2004), "Organizational Variables, Sales Force Perceptions of Readiness for Change, Learning, and Performance Among Boundary-Spanning Teams: A Conceptual Framework and Propositions for Research," *Industrial Marketing Management,* 33 (4), 289–305.

Rouziès, Dominique, Erin Anderson, Ajay K. Kohli, Ronald E. Michaels, Barton A. Weitz, and Andris A. Zoltners (2005), "Sales and Marketing Integration: A Proposed Framework," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 25, 2 (Spring), 113–122.

Sengupta, Sanjit, Robert K. Krapfel, and Michael A. Pusateri (2000), "An Empirical Investigation of Key Account Salesperson Effectiveness," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 20 (4), 253–261.

Shapiro, Benson P., and Rowland T. Moriarty (1984), "Organizing the National Account Force," Working Paper no. 84-101, Marketing Science Institute, Cambridge, MA.

Stevenson, Thomas H. (1981), "Payoffs from National Account Management," *Industrial Marketing Management,* 10 (2), 119–124.

———, and Albert L. Page (1979), "The Adoption of National Account Marketing by Industrial Firms," *Industrial Marketing Management,* 8 (1), 94–100.

Tuli, Kapil R., Ajay K. Kohli, and Sundar G. Bharadwaj (2007), "Rethinking Customer Solutions: From Product Bundles to Relational Processes," *Journal of Marketing,* 71 (3), 1–17.

Weilbaker, Dan C., and William A. Weeks (1997), "The Evolution of National Account Management: A Literature Perspective," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 17, 4 (Fall), 49–59.

Workman, John P., Christian Homburg, and Ove Jensen (2003), "Intraorganizational Determinants of Key Account Management Effectiveness," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 31 (1), 3–21.

Wotruba, Thomas R., and Stephen B. Castleberry (1993), "Job Analysis and Hiring Practices for National Account Marketing Positions," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 13, 3 (Summer), 49–65.

Yip, George S., and Audrey J.M. Bink (2007), "Managing Global Accounts," *Harvard Business Review,* 85 (9), 102–111.

Zoltners, Andris A., Prabhakant Sinha, and Sally E. Lorimer (2004), *Sales Force Design for Strategic Advantage,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.