

[PEOPLE POWER]

“Account” ability = success

Account managers can make or break your business. BY **BRUCE WILSON**

THERE ARE FIVE things that are somewhat consistent in successful account managers (AMs):

1 The ability to communicate with customers in a way that builds trust. The key factor here is honesty in communication and behavior. A team that can deliver the expected service in support of the AM helps the AM to earn trust.

2 The ability to avoid things that are traditionally known as “trust busters.” (See “Common Trust Busters” below.)

3 The ability to bring value to the customer proactively. Successful AMs know what value the customer places on the service. The proactive AM brings things to the attention of the client that are important before the client brings the issue to him or her. The AM makes the client look good. The AM does not waste the client’s time.

5 The ability to build a relationship that goes beyond the job. Effective AMs understand that clients have a hard time firing someone they like or respect. These AMs earn respect and business friendships by building relationships that go beyond the day-to-day business transactions. Good AMs know about their customers’ hobbies, interests and family life. They connect in a personal way.

If an AM works at honing the above five traits, they are certain to be more successful. **LM**

COMMON TRUST BUSTERS

- ▶ **Over-promising:** Sometimes, in an attempt to keep the customer happy, an account manager (AM) overpromises and then cannot deliver.
- ▶ **Being reactive:** Usually when a customer has to bring something problematic in nature to the AM’s attention, the tendency is for the AM to either get defensive or make a lame excuse.
- ▶ **Failing to check their work:** This often inadvertently leads to the AM telling a customer that something has been taken care of when, in fact, it has not.
- ▶ **Not accepting responsibility:** A team member made the mistake, but the customer sees it as a company error, not an individual error. The AM must approach it in this way and realize the entire company’s reputation is on the line.

4 The ability to manage time wisely. AMs that fall into “firefighting mode” instead of working proactively are prevented from doing things on a timely basis. They get themselves into situations where they lose trust. Clients see them as reactive, and commitments are often not met. Successful AMs are usually very organized and keep lists, which allow them to prioritize the importance of their tasks.

All too often, AMs end up doing menial tasks that are within their comfort zone, while really important things that are not in that zone are put off. These issues then mushroom into larger problems.

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\$ GROWTH GOALS 1. Look for account managers who are good communicators and enjoy building relationships with people.
2. Make sure account managers are proactive, follow-through and accept responsibility for their customers.