CLARITYES1 PODCAST

CLARITYES1 PODCAST #11: THREE WAYS TO BOOST KAM CAPABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE

Welcome back to the ClarityES1 podcast series. I'm your host, Chris Deren and after a couple of decades of helping field teams develop into their full potential, we've learned a lot, especially about key account management and how to get it right.

If you have a POA or National Sales Meeting coming up and your KAM teams need a boost, either in the way they plan and execute account strategies or in the way they deliver value and impact with customer stakeholders, (or both), then you have a great opportunity in front of you.

And if you've listened to any of the previous podcasts in this series, you've heard me say that I'm a bit "old school" when it comes to all things KAM development. I **have** been keeping a watchful eye on AI/ChatGPT and Omnichannel developments with a key account management lens. And while pockets of applicability for these advancements certainly do exist and deserve to be on your radar, I think many Pharma organizations are coming around to the realization that adherence to the fundamentals of KAM, those related to both process and capability/skill building, remain at the core of any good L & D game plan. After all, if you have a KAM who is calling on the CMO of a large health system or leading a cross-functional team for the first time, there's only a limited number of ways these digital strategies can assist.

In the spirit “sticking with the fundamentals” then, here are 3 ways you can boost the capabilities and performance of your KAM teams:

As with all effective KAM development initiatives, it starts with a strong sense of where the gaps are and what direction the teams need to head in.

Assuming you have a good sense of that, I’ve organized the following according to common scenarios that may match what you’re observing ……

1. **A lack of a unified, consistent, repeatable account approach** – What to look for………
   - Are KAM teams using a common language or set of terminology when account strategies and tactics are discussed internally?
   - Does it seem like each account strategy is established on the go, one-at-a-time with no repeatability?
   - Is the approach your most tenured and successful KAMs use to align with account decision makers easily replicated by others?
   - Do the various roles on the customer-facing account team including market access, medical, field reimbursement, etc., have a framework of best practices to share and leverage when coordinating account activities?

If these are the type of issues you are seeing, your KAM teams may be ready for a more formalized process that gives them that consistent, unified way to plan and engage with customer-facing teams in key accounts.

The good news here is that you don't have to introduce a whole new way of doing things. You can take the best of what they already do in researching accounts, preparing for stakeholder conversations, qualifying opportunities and creating differentiated solution value and overlay it with a framework of industry best practices that are easy and straightforward to follow but still provide the missing consistency and guidance they can benefit from.

And these process frameworks can and should be tailored by both role and the customer environments they are calling into.

If you need help building an internal business case to roll out a more contemporary customer engagement process, check out our podcast #9 on the topic or click the following link in this transcript:

https://clarityes1.com/cep-compelling-busines-case/

2. **Specific skill gaps that are holding teams back** – What to look for………
    - Is the overall account strategy approach working for your KAM teams, but they struggle to overcome certain parts of the process?

- Are the strategies and tactics they are using to gain access to the right decision makers working?
- Do they have the right insights and confidence to drive the discovery conversation with customer stakeholders?
- Does the building of differentiated solution value come naturally to them, especially when they need to coordinate with others?
- Can they accurately assess the viability of each opportunity, the strength of competition and probability of winning?

These more specific KAM competency and skill gaps are quite common and are best addressed in a more tactical way. For instance, you may want to consider sponsoring a small series of "Application Clinics" where best practices, success stories and Voice-of-Customer relationship survey data are combined (and co-presented by their peers), to provide better direction, strategies and tactics for moving forward. A top 10 Pharmaceutical company recently ran a series of these "AppClinics" with outside support, to increase the effectiveness of impact statements being developed by their account management teams to gain access to decision makers in Integrated Delivery Networks.

These can be as short as one to one and a half hours in length and can be conducted at POA's or virtually, any time. They take a bit of prep since the examples and success stories used need to be well tailored, but they have immediate applicability and impact. And again, they can be done in such a way where it's the existing internal domain expertise that's being leveraged within a L & D offering that's highly usable.

3. **KAM leadership that needs support for more effective coaching** – What to look for………
    - Does the common end-of-quarter dynamic play out where KAM leadership only has time to assist in a limited number of accounts and opportunities?
    - Can leadership benefit from deeper institutional KAM knowledge when conducting coaching conversations?
    - Are there readily available and usable methods and tools for them to assess KAM competencies and conduct just-in-time continuous improvement discussions?

This issue is best addressed with the rollout of a KAM Manager Coaching Playbook that typically contains:

1. An index and descriptions of available manager coaching tools
2. A set of KAM "coaching scenarios" to quickly help managers identify the best coaching "mode" to be in
3. A roadmap or framework of best practices for the optimal way to engage in key account activity to refer to in coaching sessions
4. A skills and competency assessment to make it faster and easier to pinpoint gaps at both the individual and team level
5. A set of JIT one-page Coaching Cards for the most common coaching scenarios and recommended coaching advice

6. A Diagnostic Coaching Guide that includes the best questions for managers to ask to more rapidly identify the source of an issue when it's not immediately apparent

With everything KAM leadership has on their plate, they'll appreciate having everything in one place when they want to offer coaching support to get KAMs to the next level.

So, the 3 solutions being suggested here are:

1. A unified, consistent framework of best practices and common language to get everyone on the same page
2. Conducting short duration "Application Clinics" to target specific skills and competency gaps
3. A KAM manager's coaching guide to consolidate all tools and coaching advice in one place. (And one that takes more off their plate).

If you would like to discuss how we can help in these efforts to drive more impact with your KAM teams, drop us a note at info@clarityes1.com and we'll get right back to you.

Thank you for listening to the ClarityES1 Podcast Series. Until next time…….