

**Centring the Client Organisation in Global
Account Management Practice: A
Phenomenological Study**

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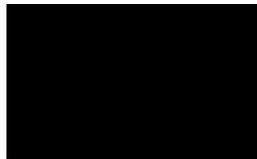
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Declaration

I declare that this Doctor of Business Administration thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of the text.

Signed...



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Mark Forret

15 June 2022

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to enhance practice and theory by exploring the key challenges and enablers within Global Account Management from the perspective of clients buying services from the outsourced service industry.

This qualitative phenomenological study explores some of the key enablers and barriers within Global Account Management today from the perspective of executives who procure such services. It contributes to an area of academic literature which is currently undeveloped, whilst concurrently guiding practice within the outsourced services industry through the development of a conceptual model.

This study explores the views and perspectives of 15 executive participants located across the UK, USA, Denmark, Germany and Australia, and considers the essential characteristics of Global Account Management, identified through rich in-depth interviews.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Four key categories emerged – Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes – which encompassed 22 themes that a supplier organisation should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management.

This study contributes to both theory and practice. The evidence gathered and subsequent findings emphasise the importance of these four new key areas being present, as they are central to Global Account Management or those considering developing such accounts. Four essential characteristics were also consistently evident

in the interviews, Partnership, Culture, Relationship and Trust, which come under the main Compatibility category. Without necessary consideration of these characteristics, the likelihood of the global account underperforming or failing is high. These findings and recommendations are presented within a conceptual model which is intended to guide best practice.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter explains why I began this doctoral research journey, which focuses on Global Account Management (GAM), along with the context and initial motivation for undertaking the journey. The chapter goes on to provide a contextual overview of Global Account Management within an Integrated Facilities Management setting. It then describes the research gap, which includes the study's aims and objectives, before moving to how the study was conducted and the implications of its results for research. The chapter concludes with an end-to-end overview of how the thesis is structured, along with a summary.

It should be noted at this point that, in places, the mode of first person is used. Throughout the thesis, I have chosen to write in the first person rather than a more impersonal form of writing, particularly as I felt it was important to emphasise that I was responsible for each stage of gathering, sorting and interpreting the data. This also accords with my choice of a phenomenological research approach, the design of which included my immersion in the semi-structured interviews with the participants, which was followed by integrating closely with the data and its analysis. This point of style implies an awareness that those other than the ones I am putting forward might be viable and feasible.

1.1 Researcher profile

I have spent most of my 30-year career in the outsourcing industry, responsible for the provision of outsourced services. Most of that time was spent in leadership roles overseeing national and global teams responsible for the provision of outsourcing services to multinational client organisations, including extensive experience in the development and delivery of Global Account Management services. Throughout my career I have enrolled in structured learning programmes, either through external educational institutions or internal organisational development. My dedication to lifelong learning has been a continued source of personal growth and great interest to me. The completion of my Master of Business Administration degree in 2010, which included the study of international business, combined with my practitioner involvement in Global Account Management, created the spark of interest which culminated in the completion of this doctoral thesis.

1.2 Context and initial ongoing motivation for the DBA journey

I find several elements of Global Account Management of great interest. These elements include the broad diversity of people and cultures, international business, variety of operating arenas, and the development of problem-solving solutions which are required to simplify an otherwise complex landscape for client organisations. This interest, combined with an underpopulated field of academic literature and a variety of differing methods in practice, led me to select Global Account Management as the topic for my doctoral research. Several areas supported the momentum along the way. In addition to my personal enthusiasm for the topic, there was a clear interest from each of the interview participants in the purpose and need for this research. My own

ongoing development of knowledge and understanding has also been essential in sustaining my interest and passion for the topic throughout my doctoral journey.

1.3 An overview of Global Account Management in Integrated Facilities Management

Over the past 30 years, Global Account Management in the Integrated Facilities Management (IFM) services industry has become a relatively new entrant to the global account environment – new that is when compared to other industries which have adopted this approach for more than twice as long. The IFM services industry can require a broad range of customisation across client organisations, and this can contribute to additional complexity when considering delivery of these services through the lens of Global Account Management.

At this stage, it is important to provide a brief initial description of Integrated Facilities Management. This umbrella heading can include the provision of food services, building and equipment maintenance, cleaning services, reception services and much more. This requires that the supplying organisation provides various specific roles, including chefs, engineers, technicians, cleaners, and receptionists, along with the necessary supervisory, managerial and leadership roles to ensure the smooth running of these operations. These services occur within far-reaching geographical locations across the globe. These regions combine at a global level, where their management interfaces with the executives who participated in this research. The Integrated Facilities Management industry provides a helpful environment in which to explore Global Account Management, where on-site operational services are provided within

the buying organisations of interest to this study, making a clear distinction between services and product-led transactions, such as manufactured items and raw materials. Accompanying this potential for complexity, it becomes extremely important to understand the common platform capable of standardisation as a foundation from which the customisation of services can take place in line with client preferences, with the clear aim of optimising efficiency and effectiveness. A Global Account Management platform can create a setting which normalises the variable elements. However, it is important to ensure that this platform is constructed with business-to-business client requirements at its centre, which is central to this research.

1.4 Research gap

Chapter 2 explores the view that research into Global Account Management is currently limited and suggests that research which reviews clients who are buying these services is even more so. This lack of literature perhaps contributes to Global Account Management itself appearing not to have a consistent and commonly held definition. This could be part of the reason for the term being used interchangeably with other disciplines, such as Strategic Account Management, Key Account Management and Global Sales.

Qymatix, a company focused on supporting companies to increase their business-to-business (B2B) profitable growth, states that one of its six criteria when selecting accounts which are eligible for Global Account Management are the size and earnings potential rather than their current size, as existing large clients may only want a global discount or a central bonus rather than an international relationship (Komor, 2020). If this growth potential is important at a global account level, it would logically follow that a high growth potential market would create an environment for such growth

potential accounts to exist. The global Integrated Facility Management market provides this environment for growth having increased from USD 74.90 billion in 2016 to USD 84.65 billion in 2020 and is projected to rise further to USD 116.2 billion by 2026. Businesswire (2021).

Having a high growth industry environment is not sufficient to ensure growth. The Strategic Account Management Association (SAMA) reports that 71% of business-to-business customers report a willingness to switch suppliers whenever necessary (SAMA, 2022). This emphasises the importance of supplier organisations serving the needs of existing customers to avoid being switched for another supplier. Gartner, a leading research and advisory company, reports that providing clients with information specifically designed to help them advance their purchase has the single biggest impact on driving deal quality that they have documented in their research since being founded in 1979 (Adamson, 2019).

This thesis sets out to explore Global Account Management from the perspective of the client at the centre of receiving such services. The aim of this academic research, and its findings and recommendations, is to contribute to both existing and future academic theory and practice surrounding Global Account Management, and to explore its key challenges and enablers from the perspective of clients who buy outsourced services, in order to develop practice. The objectives which support this study are

1. To explore relevant literature to understand evidence, gaps and key characteristics of Global Account Management within the service industry.
2. To explore from the perspective of clients through in-depth interviews what they consider to be the essential characteristics of Global Account Management.

3. To identify key areas that a supplier organisation should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management.
4. To develop a conceptual model to guide best practice.

Chapter 2 demonstrates the need to conduct this research and that a gap in current literature exists, particularly relating to an absence of research into global buying decisions within Integrated Facilities Management and research which places clients at its centre. The methodological chapter brings together the research objectives described above, the identified gaps within the literature and the development of the research questions. These are presented within Chapter 3 (Figure 6).

1.5 Research approach

In pursuit of achieving the research aim and contributing to the field of academic knowledge and practice, I will be forever grateful to the research participants for generously allocating their time to provide their valuable input. This study offers an insight into the views of these executives when considering Global Account Management using interpretative phenomenology research design. The use of this interpretivist approach created an opportunity for the participants to discuss their views and perspectives of Global Account Management in depth as recipients of such services. By selecting semi-structured interviews set against the foundation created through the literature review, the results include, in my view, surprising insights into the areas which buying organisation executives perceive to be important characteristics of Global Account Management.

This research took place during extremely unusual times created by the global Covid-19 pandemic. Each of the research participants was a senior Corporate Real Estate

services professional with overall or advisory responsibility for global portfolios which include Integrated Facilities Management. As a consequence of the pandemic, unprecedented government measures were introduced, which included national lockdowns to differing degrees across most of the world. The consequences of these measures and many other associated effects relating to the pandemic are beyond the scope of this study. However, this context is worthy of note given the impact on all industries, not least that of Corporate Real Estate services. This resulted in low building occupancy levels as employees were confined to their homes rather than going to their office workplaces. Against this backdrop, the Corporate Real Estate industry has been presented with a new set of challenges, one of which is the question of what the future holds for Global Account Management-procured services and its future prevalence when compared to alternative means of buying services on either a national or regional basis. An assessment of this is too early for this research and is therefore subject to future inquiry.

1.6 How the thesis is structured

This chapter is the first of six in the thesis, each of which contributes to the achievement of the research aim. The first chapter introduces the thesis, the reasons why I consider that this study is important, and why I decided to dedicate a considerable amount of time and focus over several years to its completion. This chapter also introduces the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 explores relevant literature to understand evidence, gaps and key characteristics of Global Account Management, which provides the theoretical underpinning for this research. Chapter 3 explores the methodological approach and the research's philosophical underpinning. My reasoning for choosing this

philosophical approach was based on my own ontological position as a constructivist interested in the lived experiences and perceptions of the actors involved, for which the reality is subjective and changing. The chapter goes on to explain the data sampling process through the study's various stages, along with the ethical considerations. Chapter 4 explores the findings through the perspective of the executives, and what they consider to be the essential characteristics of Global Account Management, through in-depth interviews. Chapter 5 identifies and discusses key areas that a supplier organisation should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management. This interpretation of the data is achieved through extensive thematic analysis of the information gathered during the semi-structured interviews. Chapter 6 marks the conclusion of the thesis, confirming whether the research aim has been achieved whilst highlighting its contribution to knowledge and practice. The chapter concludes by observing limitations within the study and any future research, followed by further recommendations, before closing with final overarching thoughts.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has described the background to the DBA research and seeks to provide an overview of how the thesis is organised, with an explanation of its aims and objectives. The thesis will now progress with Chapter 2, which includes an exploration of the relevant literature.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter follows the exploration of relevant literature on the subject of Global Account Management. Whilst the literature review has been organised in support of achieving the overall research aim, this chapter is designed to achieve the first of the four related research objectives specifically in relation to the literature – “To explore relevant literature to understand evidence, gaps and key characteristics of Global Account Management within the service industry.”

2.1 An overview of Global Account Management literature

Several writers note that little has been written about Global Account Management. Shi et al. (2009) say that not much is known about successful GAM strategies while Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) present what they considered at the time of writing to be the first attempt to integrate separate findings from three studies – the SRT/SAMA Global Account Management Study (Wilson et al., 2000), the GAM Contingency Model (Parvatiyer & Gruen, 1999) and the St. Gallen GAM study (Senn & Arnold, 1999a, 1999b; Senn 1999). Very little primary research exists across the field of Global Account Management. Shi et al. (2009) show a summary review of GAM literature within Table 1 but say that it has three important limitations – firstly, despite the importance of the GAM phenomenon, academic research on strategies is limited. Secondly, although several studies point out the need for a strategic fit between the supplier’s GAM strategies and client demand, there is little evidence of specific contingencies with performance implications. Thirdly, prior studies have focused on overall organisational performance as opposed to a specific GAM programme. From the mid-1990s, more was being written on GAM and the publication of journal articles

became more frequent. For this literature review and the research, the identified literature will draw mainly from this period onwards. Whilst there will be reference to earlier works, I will focus on a time when there was increased interest and momentum on the subject.

Table 1 – Recreation of Global Account Management literature (Shi et al., 2009)

Author	Empirical Basis	Dimensions Discussed	Main Focus/Key Statements
Yip & Bink (2007a)	A study of 165 major suppliers from the authors' consulting work.	GAM programme adoption criteria	Suggests when and how suppliers should offer GAM programme to customers
Ivens & Pardo (2007)	91 key account relationships and 206 ordinary supplier-buyer dyads	Suppliers' relational behaviour	Suggests that KAM suppliers increased value-creating activities which lead to increased commitment. However, customers are neither more satisfied, nor do they trust their suppliers more when they receive key account status.
Shi et al. (2005)	A discovery-orientated approach that integrates 20 executive interviews and 35 case studies	GAM Capability	Explores three key dynamic processes: intelligence acquisition, coordination, and reconfiguration.
Shi et al. (2004)	Drawing on executive interviews and literature review	GAM Capability	GAM performance is positively influenced by three dyadic GAM capabilities: organisational culture to support GAM, strategic fit between supplier and customer, and proper GAM programme design.
Toulan, Birkinshaw & Arnold (2002)	A survey of 106 global account managers in 16 multinationals	Inter-organisational fit	Greater fit between vendor and customer on a variety of strategies as well as structural aspects will result in higher performance of the relationships.
Homburg, Workman & Jenson (2002)	A sample of 385 firms	Activities, teams and managers, cross-functional support of key account management	Empirically classifies designs of key account management programmes, including activities, actors, resources and formalisation. Failure to achieve access to and commitment to cross-functional resources seems to play a critical role for the success of KAM programmes.

Arnold, Birkinshaw & Toulan (2001)	Stage one involved face-to-face interviews with 35 managers in ten companies. Stage two involved sending questionnaires to managers in 126 companies, resulting in 172 completed questionnaires.	GAM programme adoption criteria	Global account relationship cannot work unless the relationship is strategically important to both partners, both partners are committed to global marketing, and top executives from both partners support the relationship.
Birkinshaw, Toulan & Arnold (2001)	A total 106 global account managers from 16 companies	Bargaining power of supplier	GAM structure allows the multinational enterprise to increase its information-processing capacity as well as its bargaining power to the global account customer. The effectiveness of structures for increasing information processing is conditional upon the presence of high customer dependence.
Montgomery, Yip & Villalonga (1999)	A sample of 191 senior executives from 165 multinational companies	Globalisation drivers, customers' GAM demand, and suppliers' use of GAM	Industry globalisation drivers affect customers' potential as a global account. The tests showed a very strong relationship between customers' demand for GAM and suppliers' use of it.
McDonald, Millman & Rogers (1997)	A judgemental sample of 12 dyads representing a range of product/service contexts and stages of development	Development process of key account management relationship	The typical progression of a relationship between supplier and customer through five stages pre-KAM, early KAM, mid KAM, partnership KAM, and synergistic KAM.
Yip & Madsen (1996)	Five case studies about GAM in advertising industry, IBM, Xerox, HP, and Citibank	Globalisation drivers, GAM strategies	Industry globalisation drivers affect the opportunity to use GAM. Global strategy response to the demand of global customers includes building global market participation, global standard products and services, providing value adding activities across countries, and making competitive moves on a global basis.

A number of journal articles on the subject of Global Account Management were included within the creation of an earlier literature-based concept model (Wilson & Weilbaker, 2004) shown in Figure 3 further into this chapter.

Following from Shi et al.'s (2009) summary review of GAM literature shown in Table 1, Table 2 continues the summary review of GAM literature between 2006 and 2021.

Table 2: Global Account Management literature further to 2006

Author	Empirical Basis	Dimensions Discussed	Main Focus/Key Statements
Lautenschlager & Tzempelikos (2021)	Literature review and Content analysis	Key Account Management.	Innovation in Key Account Management.
Veasey & Lawson (2020)	Theoretical model development through secondary analysis of literature	Key Account Management.	Key Account Management from a Marketing and Business-to-Business (B2B) perspective.
Peters, Ivens & Pardo (2020)	40 semi-structured interviews with key account managers.	Key Account Management. Key Account Manager.	Identification as a challenge of Key Account Management: Conceptual foundations and a qualitative study.
Deszczynski (2019)	Propose a GAM relationship decision-making model.	Global Account Management. Relationship Management.	Analysis of factors influencing the partnership and cooperation of companies active in the global B2B market.
Pereira, Tzempelikos, Trento, Trento, Borchardt & Viegas (2019)	Case studies (12) review and interviews.	Key Accounts. Top Managers. Customer relations.	Influence of top managers' roles in Key Account Management.
Ellis & Iwasaki (2018)	Critical literature review followed by exploratory case study.	Global Key Account Management. Intra-organisational issues. Strategic implementation.	Intra-organisational contextual and cultural factors appear to influence the adoption of GAM programmes by the focal firm. Suggestion that there is not a 'one size fits all' strategic pathway to implementing GAM for some Japanese managers.
Guesalaga, Gabrielsson, Rogers, Ryals & Cuevas (2018)	Literature review based.	Key Account Management. Strategic Account Management.	Review of KAM literature to identifies the critical resources and capabilities that underpin strategic KAM.
Shi & Gao (2016)	Conceptual model development tested with a sample of 203 GAM managers of supply organisations.	Global Account Management.	The performance of GAM coordination mechanisms depends on their fit with the operating context.
Sharma, Chadee & Roxas (2016)	Survey data from 68 international service providers.	Relationship Management. International outsourcing.	Knowledge management and global mindset have positive effects on client-vendor relationship.

Lindner & Senn (2015)	Journal article.	Global Clients. Customer-centric organisation.	Successful global client businesses can take decades to become truly anchored in the entire company.
Ivens, Pardo, Niersbach & Leischnig (2016)	Case study.	Key Account Management. Trust. Capability.	Focus on KAM activities in interaction with the firm - internal network required to mobilise resources and develop activities towards key accounts.
Sharma & Evanschitzky (2016)	Data collected from a global consulting firm which recently implemented a key account program.	Buyer-Seller Relationships. Key Accounts.	Initially, key accounts perform as well or better than other types of accounts. These may be less beneficial in the long term for a firm's growth than other account types.
Wilson & Woodburn (2014)	Surveys of K/SAM communities and their LinkedIn discussions in special interest groups.	Account Management. Key Accounts.	Exploration of some contextual reasons for key or strategic account management failure.
Swoboda, Schluter, Olejnik & Morschett (2012)	172 survey questionnaires of global account manager or head of sales for German manufacturing companies.	GAM activities. Centralisation.	Research supports the argument that international retailers' activities influence the manufacturers' decisions to centralise GAM activities.
Salojarvi, Saarenketo & Puumalainen (2013)	Based on empirical survey data collected from 169 survey responses received from 97 firms of KAM practitioners.	Key Accounts. Customer Knowledge. Knowledge Management.	Intra-organisational dissemination of customer knowledge is positively related to the suppliers' KAM performance and dissemination fully mediates the relationship between esprit de corps and KAM performance.
Storbacka (2012)	Combination of literature, empirical data from interviews with nine multinational firms, firm interactions and knowledge resource base of SAMA.	Strategic Account. Customer Relationship.	Research identified four intra-organisational alignment design elements, account portfolio definition, account business planning, account-specific value proposition, account management process, as well as four intra-organisational design elements; organisational integration, support capabilities, account performance management, account team profile and skills.
Salojarvi & Saarenketo (2011)	Based on empirical survey data collected from 169 survey responses received from 97 firms of KAM practitioners.	Key Account Management.	The results reveal a higher perceived level of customer knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation, and of suppliers' key account performance in the group representing team-based KAM compared with the non-team group.
Salojarvi & Sainio (2009)	Based on empirical survey data collected from 169 survey responses received from 97 firms of KAM practitioners.	Key Account Management performance.	The purpose of the paper is to identify the dimensions of customer knowledge processing in the context of Key Account Management and to examine its relationship with the suppliers' key account performance. The degree of acquisition and utilisation were found to be significantly associated with the suppliers' KAM performance.
Shi, White, Zou & Cavusgil, (2009)	Development of conceptual model guided by existing GAM literature. Data gathered via an online cross-industry survey of 203	Global Account Management Drivers and Outcomes.	Conceptualise GAM strategies. Empirically test theoretical model which links GAM strategies to drivers and outcomes.

	completed responses of Global Account Management practitioners.		
Brehmer & Rehme (2008)	Annual and bi-annual with 50 individuals from ABB and three to 10 individuals from their customers over 10 years. Semi-structured interviews.	Key Account Management	Three different programmes are identified and analysed: the proactive programme driven by a sales opportunity. The reactive programme driven by customer demands and the organisation-based programme which is driven by the belief in customer-centric organisational units.
Toulan, Birkinshaw & Arnold (2006)	35 preliminary interviews. A questionnaire was developed and distributed to GAMs in 16 multinational enterprises with 106 surveys completed.	Global Account Management. Interorganisational fit.	Higher performance is associated with strategic importance fit, activity configuration fit, and executive support fit.

It is clear from both Table 1 (Shi et al., 2009) and Table 2 that the methodological tradition of this type of research is predominantly qualitative. This methodological tradition informed the approach to this research, as it was also clear that I was investigating a new area which required a deep understanding from a relatively small community of Executives. Therefore, to a certain extent this was a scoping exercise more suited to qualitative research rather than quantitative.

2.2 Definition of Global Account Management

It is important to define the Global Account Management sector, as this can be a loose and often misused or overused term. GAM is often used interchangeably with other terms which may have a relationship with it – however, when used on their own they do not accurately describe Global Account Management. For example, Arnold et al. (2001) state that the trend towards globalisation of the sales function is usually referred to as GAM, whilst Yip and Madsen (1996) describe GAM as a “new frontier in relationship marketing” (p. 24). Often there are overlaps between the terms – Global

Account Management, Strategic Account Management, Key Account Management and Global Sales, which merits a brief explanation below.

Whilst Global Account Management shares much in common with Key Account Management at a foundational level, the introduction of a multi-country dimension adds additional complexity. This complexity is illustrated in Figure 11 on page 153. When comparing Global Account Management to Global Sales, whilst Global Sales is likely to be focused on securing the sale before moving on to pursuing the next deal with another client, Global Account Management is less transactional and demands a long-term approach to an ongoing client relationship.

Potentially adding to the blurring between Key Account Management and sales, during their research into key account managers, Davies and Ryals (2013) found that, contrary to their expectations, managers in many customer-facing, goal-oriented and revenue-generating activities displayed similar attitudes to those in senior sales executive roles. Cheverton (2008) provides a helpful analysis, recreated in Figure 1, which illustrates the sales skills on the left side and the Global Account Management tasks on the right.

This analysis places emphasis on the skills required within GAM teams rather than necessarily on one individual. Whilst it is possible to discover or develop these skills in one individual, the author acknowledges that this has become rarer. This interpretation provides a useful addition when considering the definition of GAM.

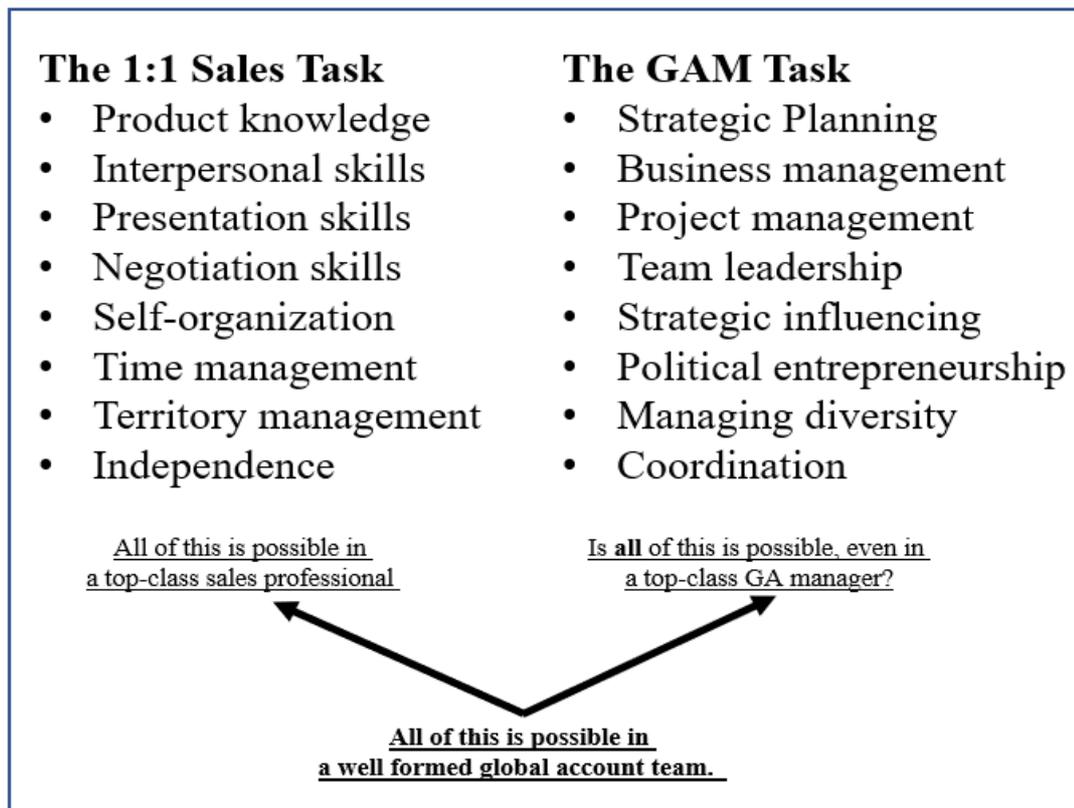


Figure 1: The skills for the task. Recreated from Cheverton (2008, p. 152).

Gosselin and Bauwen (2006) frame their research by explaining that academic interest in account management has been restricted, despite its practical importance. It can be stated that between 1975 and 2000 account management has been an under-researched area – as a consequence, the definition of fundamental concepts is still poorly defined, missing or insufficiently developed. Gosselin and Bauwen go on to state that, in practice, account management means different things to different people, in different industries, in different types of companies and in different types of functions. Academics, consultants, and managers can each use different names for the same account management concepts. These include Global Account Management, as Gosselin and Bauwen describe the confusion between local Key Account Management and GAM, which is pertinent to this research. They explain that there is a dramatic change between local or country account management and GAM, particularly if both

supplier and customer organisations are complex, international or global companies. In these cases, the role of the global account manager becomes a very complex coordination process between multiple legal companies, with multiple products, services or systems needs in multiple geographic areas (Gosselin & Bauwen, 2006).

A variety of terms are used within the research literature to describe account management within a global setting. In the main, publications which are focused on areas such as GAM, Strategic Account Management and Key Account Management, will be explored within this chapter amongst other associated literature. Wilson et al. (2000) provide a definition of a global account as “one that has strategic importance to the achievement of the supplier’s corporate objectives, pursues integrated and coordinated strategies on a worldwide basis, and demands a globally integrated product/service from its suppliers” (p. 9).

The key drivers of Global Account Management, and why client organisations make the choice to select a GAM solution rather than alternatives such as regional, country, local or a mixture of those options, are of particular interest within this thesis. Whilst client organisations may not wish to reduce each geographical territory down to an average or nondescript entity, having access to a programme which can help to understand and manage country and regional characteristics, with a view to delivering their specific organisational objectives, can provide considerable benefit and competitive advantage.

Whilst earlier papers were produced on the subject, in one of the first books dedicated to the topic of GAM, Wilson et al. (2001) describe the challenge they encountered in writing it, in particular capturing the dynamics of globalisation, and then presenting a

coherent response in the form of an approach to Global Account Management. Wilson et al. (2001) state that this was because GAM, even in 2001, was in its infancy and many companies were experimenting with their programmes at the time. As a probable result of the absence of focus on this area, there was no programme developed specifically to address GAM within the global service industry. This thesis will seek to address this theory gap whilst also adding to academic literature and contributing to practice. This contribution could feasibly result in improvements to the development of Global Account Management which has already been outsourced to global services companies through the retrospective implementation of a programmatic GAM approach.

Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) suggest that the concept of GAM, whilst it is in an early stage of development, is not a new phenomenon with organisations, tracing its roots to 40-50 years ago in companies such as Xerox and Citicorp – however, they were typically manufactured product organisations and represented more of an exception in practice. Whilst GAM has existed in practice since the 1960s, until the mid-1990s there was little written on the subject. This would indicate that, until recently, it attracted limited academic interest. A more recent development involved GAM emerging as one of the major strategic issues facing multinational companies operating in different markets and thinking globally. Consequently, whilst this stimulated some further interest among academics, along with a general increase in related topics within conferences and presentations over the past 25 years, research on the subject remains low. Within this early literature, Pardo (1997) notes that most companies have a few large customers which they dedicate their main resources to, as the stakes are often higher with these key accounts. Swoboda et al. (2012) observe that in situations where such organisations become highly dependent on a few customers, the customer

organisations can identify and potentially exploit this by placing increased demands on the supplier organisation, such as a lower price – or conversely, the customer could acknowledge the supplier’s coordinated efforts as showing greater commitment to the relationship and reward this with additional work. Either way, these are key considerations for supplier organisations assessing whether to establish or develop a GAM programme.

For the purposes of this research, the definition of Global Account Management will relate not only to the initial sales process but a longer-term viewpoint involving the nurturing and growth of the business-to-business relationship between the client and supplier organisation, one which yields longer-term benefits to both parties, while maintaining the focus on the relationship across all areas. Harvey et al. (2003) say that “in some cases suppliers perceive GAM as a means to develop long-term relationships with key global customers and, at the same time, hinder competitive inroads” (p. 103). In other words, this is what would be termed a full project life cycle, responsible for the sale and ongoing management of the account, which includes all aspects of the business. The definition of GAM which Wilson et al. (2000) use will be the starting point for this chapter. When defining a global account which would qualify as a candidate for GAM, Wilson et al. (2002) state that, whilst the client must operate internationally, this geographic reach is not necessarily enough to qualify as a global account. This is a view which Cheverton (2008) concurs with, observing that there is a significant distinction between a global and international customer, which fundamentally impacts whether a supplying organisation is capable of delivering GAM, or a customer organisation is capable of receiving GAM.

Wilson et al. (2001) offer three helpful key qualifiers to define global accounts rather than those with only an international presence – they must be strategically important to your company, they must demand and be capable of accepting a global offering from you, and they must have a centrally coordinated purchasing process. These accord with “disqualifiers” which Capon et al. (2008, p. 80) offer for consideration when contemplating a client for inclusion within GAM, in circumstances where clients cannot execute global strategies, do not make decisions globally, and are unwilling to work intimately with you on a global basis.

Further to a review of the GAM literature, in essence, the key defining characteristics of Global Account Management include scenarios whereby supply organisations take a longer view of their GAM-qualifying client relationships, with GAM characteristics comprising an element of sales as well as strategic operational management supplied to client organisations who are capable of receiving GAM services on a global basis. This includes where the customer organisation is capable of developing a relationship on a global basis with the supplying GAM organisation.

Sheth (2002) notes that Berry (1983) was the first academic in services marketing to introduce the term “relationship marketing”. Global Account Management places a far greater focus on the long-term client relationship and therefore has more in common with relationship marketing. Global Account Management was described previously by Yip and Madsen (1996) “as the new frontier of relationship marketing” (p. 24). McDonald and Rogers (1998) also highlight the importance of relationship marketing, which contrasts with traditional sales and marketing that focuses on a single sale transaction, as defined earlier within Section 2.2. Relationship marketing focuses on embracing customer retention to yield long term and ongoing sales through this

approach, one which nurtures the long-term health of the customer relationship. Sheth et al. (1988) cite macro-economic antecedents responsible for the popularity of relationship marketing in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These included economic stagflation, which resulted in excess capacity and high raw material costs – economic factors which led to global competition intensifying in regard to raw and manufactured materials, the effect being that many US industries became casualties. This environment meant that it became necessary to prioritise defensively and focus on retaining existing customers over new customer acquisition.

Whilst the research field on relationship marketing and Global Account Management is underpopulated, the existing literature describes both as having the primary purpose of nurturing the long-term health of the customer business relationship and ultimately customer retention. As such, relationship marketing is revisited in the Discussion chapter (Section 5.2.3) as the importance of relationship marketing is set within an adaptation of Vernon's (1966) Product Life Cycle Model (Figure 9), where the relationship is recast as the product.

2.3 Drivers of Global Account Management

Further to exploring the definition of Global Account Management – and what some of its characteristics would be and the reasons why supplier organisations would start to consider these – it is important to understand what the drivers are for GAM programmes and why customer organisations would choose this option.

Yip and Madsen (1996) cite globalisation as the reason why a large number of supplying organisations have established Global Account Management programmes, including well-known organisations such as Citi, Hewlett-Packard and Young &

Rubicam. The authors also provide examples from the practices of buying organisations who insist on a global offering, citing General Electric (GE), which told many of its suppliers that it expects them to be responsible for ensuring that the GE business receives uniform products around the world and that these suppliers are to respond with Global Account Management. This can encourage a race to initiate a GAM programme in order not to be left behind by competitor organisations who have positioned themselves on a nimbler footing to meet customer demand. A few years earlier, Ives et al. (1993) included the views of the then CEO of GE, Jack Welch, when he stated that “globalisation is no longer an option, it’s an imperative”, as markets and geographical barriers become increasingly blurred and irrelevant (p. 143).

Shi et al. (2009) support this view, stating that, in the context of GAM, the external forces behind globalisation make it more viable for a supplier to engage in standardisation of marketing programmes. Sanford and Maddox (1999) examine global advertising, which by its nature requires that advertising agencies adopt a global management approach and cite Eric Elinder (1961) as believing that standardisation is paramount to meet consumer needs. In contrast, Onkvisit and Shaw (1987) suggest that only culture-free products such as industrial and consumer durables may be suitable for global positioning.

Wilson et al. (2002) identified major changes driving companies to adopt GAM processes, which they group into four main categories. The first three are changes which have occurred in the latter part of the 20th century, changes in the way in which markets are structured and operate, and technological change. The authors cite the fourth as the most immediate driving factor which occurs as a result of global customers reacting to pressures from their own customers and the previous three listed

elements. This ultimately leads them to select suppliers who can provide the incremental benefits they want to derive from global relationships. These include increasing levels of service, often including bespoke solutions, which is particularly pertinent in the case of the services sector. Customer organisations also require suppliers who can map to their demand across the world. Global consolidation is also a factor as global customers demand the security of a global relationship. Ultimately, customers are looking for suppliers to support them in meeting their global challenges.

Yip and Madsen (1996) built on Yip's (1992) earlier globalisation framework, which states that its drivers include global/regional customers, global/regional channels, transferable marketing, lead countries, global economies of scale, high product development costs and fast changing technology, as well as competitors globalising. Through their study, which included gathering qualitative data from the Swedish company ABB, Brehmer and Rehme (2008) explore the proactive and reactive drivers for Key Account Management, within which they identify and analyse three different approaches – the proactive programme, driven by the new business opportunity; the reactive programme, driven by consumer demands; and an organisational-based programme, driven by the belief in customer-centric organisational units. Within their research, Brehmer and Rehme (2008) address the concept that there are differing supplier organisational views between those who proactively see the opportunity to expand through a GAM programme and those moved towards doing so through customer demands, such as the GE example cited within Yip and Madsen's (1996) research.

When specifically considering the high product development costs mentioned previously, in business, the matter of input costs is a naturally reoccurring theme, ever

present in discussions between client and supplier organisations – unless the correct balance is struck, it can lead to the client significantly overpaying or the supplier organisation achieving little profit, or worse, sustaining losses. As a consequence of the business-to-business contractual cycle described earlier, this can result in supplier organisations locking in these losses to some degree until there is a break in the contract. When describing the pitfalls of GAM, Arnold et al. (2001) caution that vendor companies should think carefully before jumping on the global customer bandwagon as unanticipated costs can outweigh the benefits, not least because client organisations can seek greater volume discounts as they seek to consolidate their expenditure in the area.

A number of writers looking at GAM identify the same cost-led drivers (Johansson & Yip, 1994; Sheth, 2002; Harvey, Myers & Novicevic, 2003; Gosselin & Bauwen, 2006), such as increased costs and/or depressed profit potential. Harvey et al. (2003) also present an important point, which is the issue of internal conflict, as operating managers can view a GAM strategy as an intrusion into their sphere of authority and this can lead to overt combative issues or potentially less obvious company political issues.

2.4 Why initiate a Global Account Management programme?

Understanding the drivers behind Global Account Management is important prior to designing a GAM programme. Wilson et al. (2002) list the challenges – which the CEOs they interviewed stated “keep them awake at night” (preface p. XVII) – as the impact of globalisation, managing information and leveraging knowledge, reducing cost and cycle time, managing global supply chains, coordinating global manufacturing operations, negotiating global agreements, forging global teams,

reconciling global/local interests, and recruiting, developing and retaining global account managers. The primary reason for numerous multinational companies adopting GAM is globalisation. In one of the earlier journals which focused on GAM, Yip and Madsen (1996) describe the competitive advantage which will either be gained or lost by organisations applying a GAM programme, including an example of AT&T's push to expand globally to keep pace with global customers whilst protecting market share from competitors such as NEC, Siemens or IBM.

Harvey et al. (2003) describe the development of a GAM relationship as having a number of attributes which appeal to a global customer organisation. These include consistency in the application of policies across the world; coordination of marketing/selling activities to increase sales volume; effective utilisation of marketing strategies and programmes in multiple locations; efficiency of management, in that there is a central contact for key accounts; and establishment of a control mechanism relative to key accounts, to reduce the probability of account turnover. Other attributes include improvement in the two-way flow of communications with key accounts, thereby increasing the knowledge base to improve the quality of goods/services to these global clients, and to use this as a means to pre-empt local/global competitors from securing business from these critical customers (Birkinshaw et al., 2001; Boles et al., 1999).

Birkinshaw et al. (2001) use two theoretical perspectives, information processing and resource dependency, within which they examined GAM through interviewing 106 global account managers in 16 multinational corporations. Furthermore, they state that the effectiveness of structures for increasing information processing is conditional on the presence of high customer dependency and examine the approaches taken by 16

large multinational organisations in developing Global Account Management structures. Their research found that vendor organisations experienced downward pressure on their prices, squeezing profits at the same time as increasing the reliance of the vendor on the account. This resulted in the vendor company having to weigh up whether the slimmer profit margins in exchange for often higher revenues were viable. Within this study, not one of the 16 organisations had developed a means for measuring account profitability on a global scale.

Arnold et al. (2001) offer a cautionary warning for vendor organisations looking to jump on the global customer bandwagon as they discovered that vendors in Europe and North America found it difficult to make GAM programmes work. Their research outlined some of the unintended consequences of GAM in creating an imbalance, almost always with the buyer benefiting at the expense of the supplying GAM organisation. They also found that there was an impact on the standards of account management, which were lowered as organisations expanded from national to global.

Whilst focusing on the GAM-associated discipline of Key Account Management (KAM), Zupancic (2008) raises an important associated issue which is arguably even more relevant when applied to GAM, namely that successful Key Account Management requires specific conditions in place at a corporate level, including that it is not a standalone activity and must be integrated within the organisation. Zupancic asserts that a company's strategy, structure and culture can often only be changed in the long term. Therefore, KAM must be aligned, highlighting that these factors are often not given enough attention by organisations and doing so can increase the chances of success.

2.5 Identifying the differences between national, international, regional and global accounts

To understand the sector, it is important to define Global Account Management, particularly in the context of other account categories, some of which can be confused with aspects of GAM. Wilson et al. (2001) provide a useful diagram which illustrates the steps from a national account to an international then regional account, before breaking through into a global account. This describes the differing thresholds, which are shown below in Figure 2.

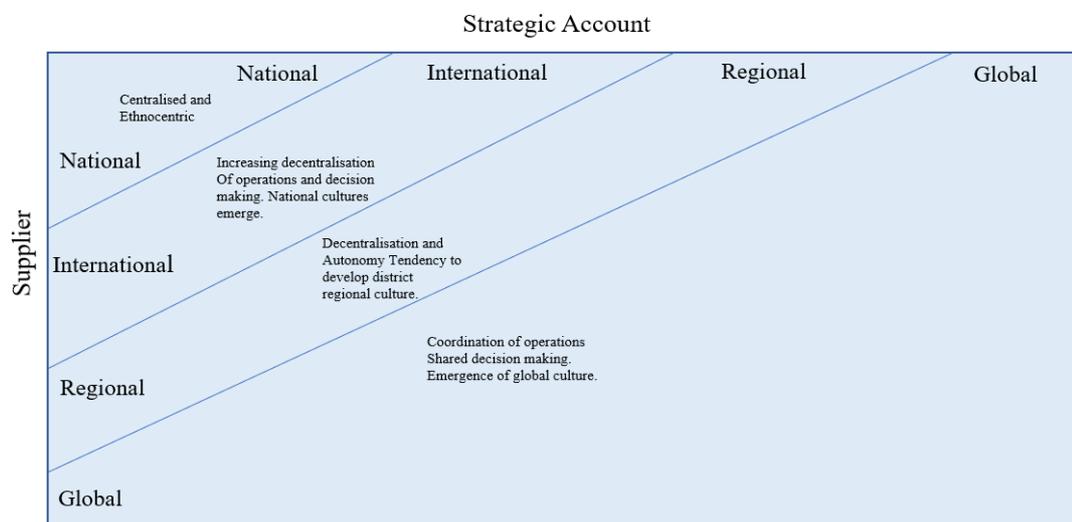


Figure 2: Recreated from Wilson et al. (2001, p. 37)

Wilson et al. (2002) distinguish between national and international accounts, explaining that national accounts refer to companies which may be well equipped to serve them, even though they do not have an international geographical footprint, which essentially precludes them from serving global customers which operate in their country. Ethnocentric in nature, these companies will tend to be centralised and simple compared to international organisations.

Shi et al. (2009) describe GAM as more like inter-country coordination on multiple levels across national borders, whereas a national account requires co-operation mainly across functions. There is also an important characteristic of GAM, which requires more senior executive involvement than the domestic account equivalent, where the supplier and client CEOs meet, which would typically occur less regularly in a domestic setting. Wilson et al. (2002) explain that international accounts refer to companies which often demonstrate a high level of coordination across manufacturing operations and often export home-grown products and services. Limitations can include geographical spread and a lack of local capability and control over primary business activities in foreign territories, which Porter (1985) describes as inbound and outbound logistics, marketing, and operations.

Lasserre (2018) proposes an alternative to globalisation in regionalisation, citing the argument put forward by Rugman (2000). This projects the end of globalisation with a move towards regionalisation, with the development of regional “fortresses”, restricting the free flow of goods, services, people and capital within a regional geography. Time will tell whether this becomes the case and how it would impact on GAM. Wilson and Weilbaker (2004) describe the opposite of this move towards regionalisation, with accounts evolving from their national and international counterparts, demonstrating increasing degrees of decentralisation. These international accounts are often staffed and controlled by executives from the company’s home country. Regional accounts could swing the other way, becoming decentralised and encouraging a lack of collaboration within the supplier organisation. This could be as extreme as to promote internal competition and the creation of silos. Companies often develop distinct regional cultures which intentionally create internal competition to drive efficiencies. This approach will not, however, foster a culture

conducive to effectively serving global consumers demanding a global approach. At the time of Wilson and Weilbaker's paper in 2004, several research initiatives on GAM had been completed. Wilson and Weilbaker identify three of interest and developed a conceptual model (Figure 3). The paper set out to summarise the results of three research initiatives which, in 2004, were relatively recent – the SRT/SAMA GAM Study, the GAM Contingency Model and the St Gallen GAM Study. From the literature which formed the basis of this conceptual model, 19 references were cited, including seven by the same lead author (Wilson). However, whilst recognising the potential limitations in this narrow field of literature, it is relatively straightforward to identify with the conceptual model overall.

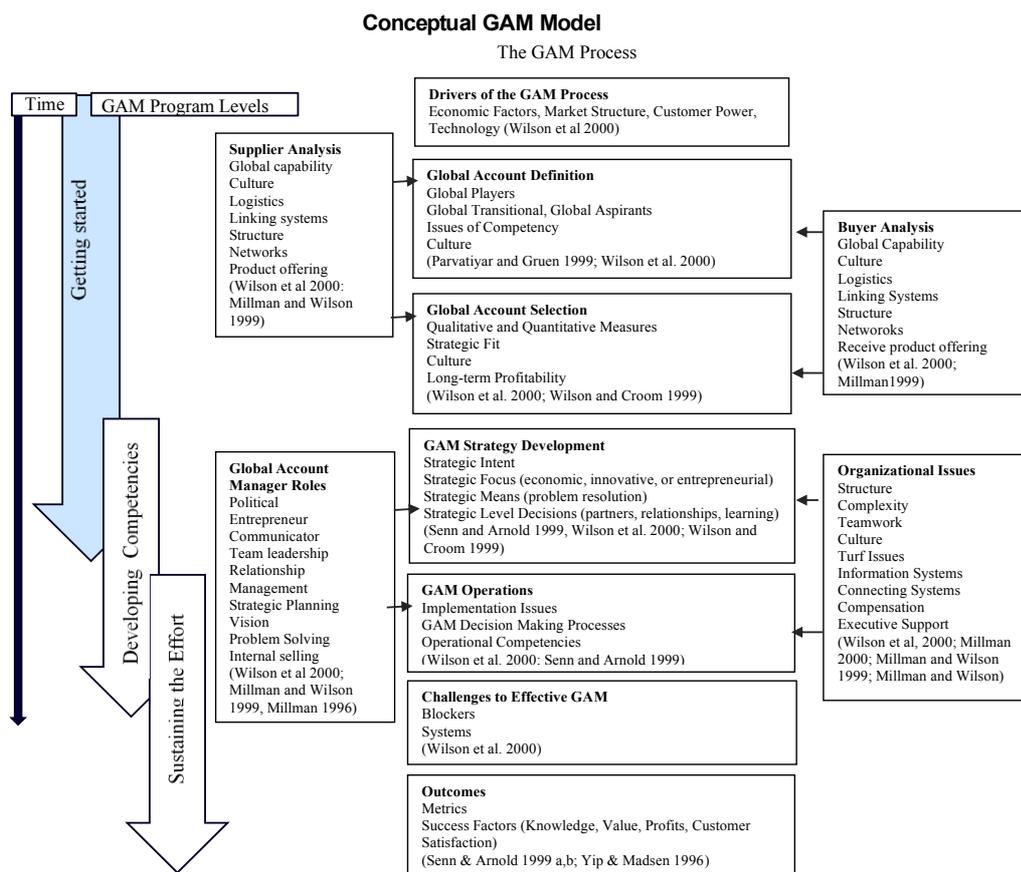


Figure 3: Adaptation of conceptual GAM model (Wilson & Weilbaker, 2004, p. 18)

2.6 Exploring effective organisational Global Account Management competencies

Whilst focusing on advertising agency management, Sanford and Maddox (1999) say that, during the 1990s, many advertisers adopted a ‘think globally, act locally’ ideology. A well-known example of this, cited by Lasserre (2018), is HSBC, which in the 1990s accompanied its rebranding from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation to HSBC by positioning itself as “the world’s local bank” (2018, p. 152). Likewise, Sanford and Maddox (1999) report that, only a few years earlier, some authors including Wind (1986) and Onkvisit and Shaw (1987) had focused on cultural differences and suggested that only culture-free products may be suitable for global positioning. This is of interest as the advertising industry was one of the first to embrace the global advertising product. Sanford and Maddox (1999) highlight the differences between domestic and international accounts and the managerial differences between both. However, such managerial differences are only part of the organisational GAM competencies which are required to establish a successful GAM programme.

This chapter will continue to explore the GAM competencies which organisations could consider implementing or examining in the development of Global Account Management. In the literature there are a number of organisational competencies which are required to increase the chances of success. Wilson et al. (2001) identify several areas which companies could use to position themselves well as a leader in their business category across the world if they are willing to spend time and energy on them. These include manufacturing and logistical capability, account planning processes, measurement issues, information systems and communications. The authors also recognise other areas, including reward and recognition systems, and the

impact on other GAM managers. This impact on managers and the reward structure could be balanced by the overall performance of the account team. Interestingly, Salojärvi and Saarenketo (2011) found that, in groups representing Key Account Management when compared to non-team groups, there were higher perceived levels of customer-knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation, and the suppliers' key account performance. This 'team' dynamic could therefore be included when considering the required GAM competencies for successful account management. Shi et al. (2005) also emphasise the importance of acquiring customer knowledge included within their framework of GAM Capability and Performance (Figure 4), which highlights three main required capabilities – Intelligence Acquisition, Coordination and Reconfiguration.

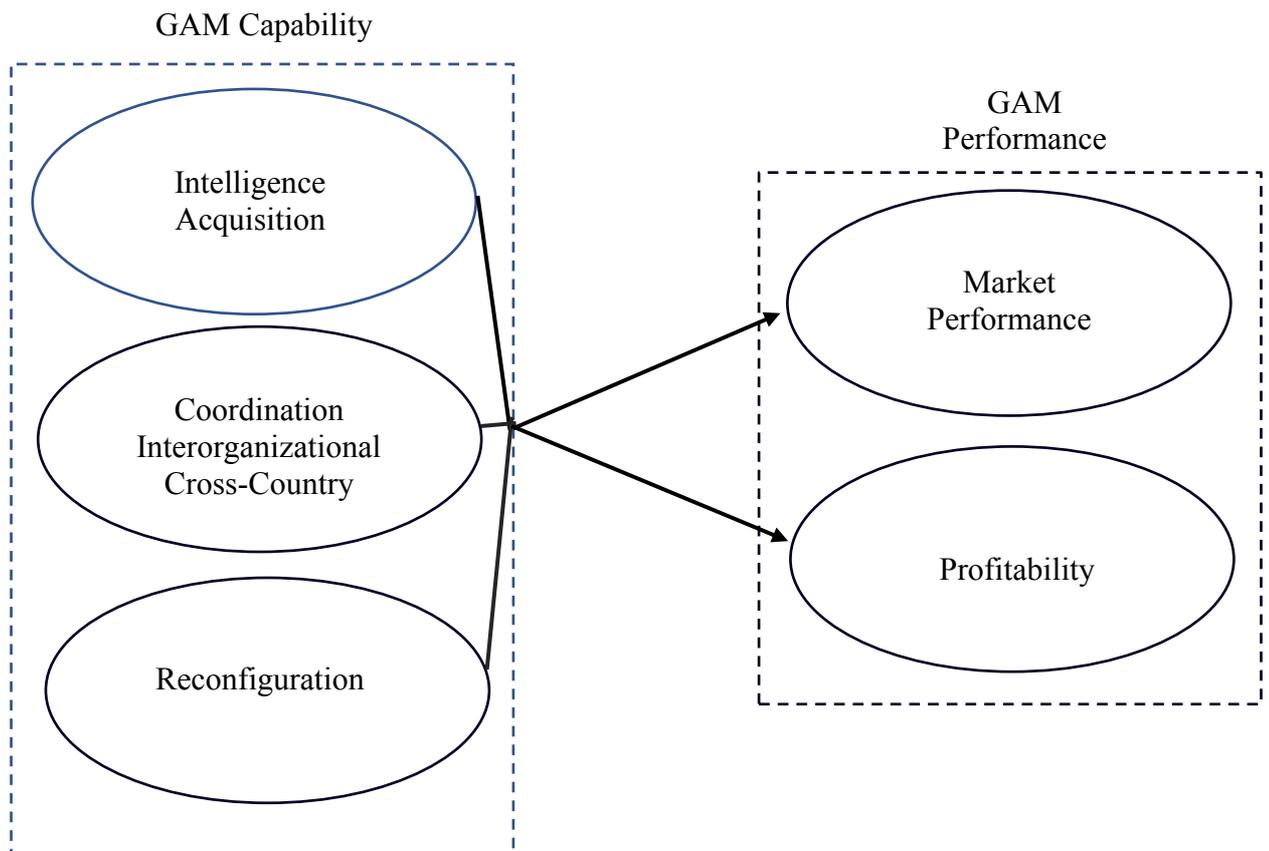


Figure 4: GAM Capability and Performance recreated from Shi et al. (2005)

One important factor highlighted in Storbacka's (2012) research is the account manager's ability to deal with conflict and influence without formal authority. Writing at length about "impact without authority", Helsing et al. (2003) address how to leverage internal resources to create customer value. They offer a helpful model in its pursuit – establish personal credibility, build internal networks, create customer advocates, determine organisation feasibility, apply influence skills, and involve senior management. Likewise, Wilson and Woodburn (2014) reflect that establishing a KAM/SAM programme could run counter to the self-interest of other functional managers, who could feel threatened by a shift in organisational focus towards an account management setting. This is one reason why KAM/SAM is likely to be the target of high levels of political activity and organisations seeking to implement or develop GAM should be aware of this. Cheverton (2008) emphasises the importance of political awareness, asserting that global account managers are dealing with an imprecise range of tasks with unknown obstacles. He describes the extent of the required skill as political entrepreneurship, which includes not only answering the questions but knowing what questions to ask in the first place. At the same time, this is not a precise role specification – it is one which they must shape themselves. To a large degree this includes the development of relationships inside the organisation as well as externally.

The importance of relationships with customer organisations is discussed by Storbacka (2012) who cites Ganesan (1994) and particularly focuses on reciprocity, to demonstrate symmetric relationships which show flexibility, and that the supply organisation is not exploiting the customer's commitment. Moreover, Workman et al. (2003) suggest that focusing on KAM relationships can have a number of relational

outcomes, such as trust and commitment, which, in turn, lead to improved performance in the market, such as revenue growth and market share.

In terms of relationship selling, Rudolph (2015) argues that it must be in place to retain customers and that price discrimination across various channels is no longer viable. The underlying logic of such an approach is again the concept of partner gratitude. Its strategic manifestation is the adoption of preferential treatment policies and tools, believed to be the most effective way of strengthening relationships (Huang, 2015). Ellis and Iwasaki (2018) say that supply organisations which intend to develop GAM must first address the need to appoint a global account manager and a corresponding team that must be committed to the global account or accounts. When considering this single point interface, organisations should carefully consider the role of the global account manager, particularly when organisations are appointing candidates for it. Supporting this perspective, Arnold et al. (2001) point out that picking the right global account manager is not merely a case of choosing a “super-salesman” (p. 18), stating that simply selecting a regional or national sales manager in a small country is misguided. Whilst this approach may succeed, the candidates require transitional development to ensure that they can take a longer-term perspective, nurturing the account through internal coordination and not milking it.

This guidance can equally be elevated to a supplier organisational level when considering GAM, highlighting the importance of long-lasting relationships – rather than securing a one-off or quick sale, the focus is on lasting relationships which provide a compound benefit over the long term.

2.7 Challenges and enablers within Global Account Management

2.7.1 Enablers

Whilst a body of work exists relating to Key Account Management, Ellis and Iwasaki (2018) observe that there is little research which outlines the problems experienced by companies during the adoption and implementation of GAM programmes. They highlight four areas which can support organisations to achieve the level of coordination required to promote GAM. Firstly, a global account manager and a corresponding team should be appointed to provide a single interface. Secondly, the necessary internal support from senior management for implementing GAM should be secured, and then motivational issues which can arise as a result of problems with incentives should be anticipated. Finally, sharing communications relating to global accounts within the company is of importance.

One of the key areas of enablement is that of securing the commitment of the supply organisation's senior management. Pereira et al. (2019) state that "top managers" (p. 977) make a valuable contribution through their informal evaluation of key account managers, persuade managers to reduce the resistance, and improve organisational conditions by inducing internal and external questioning. They also contact key customers and approve the revisions to the key customer list to develop the supply company's level of attractiveness. Moreover, Cheverton (2008) adds that unless board level understanding and support to introduce Global Account Management is secured, there seems little point in progressing. Cheverton (2008, p.139) highlights the three roles which senior management have in making GAM happen – firstly, as champions of the concept and key enablers, secondly, as leaders empowering and coaching, and, finally, as participants.

Capon et al. (2008) confirm that senior management commitment is critical. Without this the Global Account Management programme may well end in failure. Likewise, Capon et al. suggest that this is not necessarily a new concept in business as the bosses' programmes get attention and take priority. In the case of Global Account Management, Capon et al. observe that either one or more senior management members should focus on the roles of senior executive champions for GAM – as an executive sponsor deeply involved in the programme; an executive owner managing the day-to-day programme operations, as well as an executive steering committee providing additional leadership to the programme; and an executive sponsor for the account, a role which is often mirrored by some buying organisations to ensure that there is an executive-to-executive role to focus on relationship building and partnership, at the same time helping to resolve any tough customer issues. Whilst this is a senior role within the organisation, they will work for the global account manager. Time will help to resolve any tough customer issues.

2.7.2 Challenges

The advantages to organisations which implement Key Account Management programmes may come from positive association between effective implementations of a key account strategy and those better performing firms, posited by Sharma and Evanschitzky (2016). Rather than a purely positive result from implementing a key account programme, the authors recommend caution for firms considering it. This is helpful guidance for practice, whilst also creating a challenge of overarching uncertainty for those involved in the implementation of similar programmes.

The existing literature relating to Global Account Management provides an insight into the complexities involved in the field – for each highlighted enabler of GAM, the

opposite can apply in its absence. One example of this is the requirement for ensuring that senior management commitment is fully secured prior to embarking upon the implementation of a GAM programme. Capon et al. (2008) state that, without this commitment, it is simply “a deal breaker” (p. 63). They go on to say that not only should executive commitment be in place but that senior management should play an active role in the GAM process within the governance framework. Cheverton (2008) describes the three clear roles which senior management require to support a successful GAM programme – firstly, as champions of the concept and enablers of the processes and capabilities; secondly, as leaders, empowering and coaching; and thirdly, as participants. Cheverton (2008) goes on to describe that, without this, it is tantamount to be a “sure-fire killer of GAM” (p. 140). An absence of this executive level support can call into question whether the supplying organisation is serious about their GAM programme as discussed by Hennessey and Jeannet (2003, p. 155).

2.8 Identifying key questions arising from the literature review

Further to reviewing the available literature relating to Global Account Management and associated areas such as Strategic Account Management, Key Account Management and Global Sales, the findings of the literature review go some way to supporting further enquiry into the research objectives, with a view to further development of the conceptual model discussed above. The validity of this question remains – given that GAM models have been researched as part of this literature review, none relate to the service specifically. Therefore, in addition to the research objectives outlined at the beginning of this paper, other key questions which have arisen include whether the business category of the service provider makes any difference to the success of the GAM programme. A question which has reinforced the overall aim of this research project relates to how much Global Account

Management would benefit from collecting data which supports the understanding of the lived experience of the clients who have been given responsibility for procuring a GAM programme for their services.

2.8.1. Integrated Facilities Management

The primary focus of this research enquiry is Global Account Management from the perspective of a client organisation, with data collected from executives with extensive experience in Corporate Real Estate and particularly the field of Integrated Facilities Management. Therefore, it will be helpful to add context to this field through a brief definition of Integrated Facilities Management contained within the literature.

Integrated Facilities Management or Facilities Management is defined as “an integrated approach to maintaining, improving and adapting the buildings of an organisation in order to create an environment that strongly supports the primary objectives of that organisation” Barrett, & Baldry. D. (2013). Atkin and Brooks (2021) regard Facilities Management as “creating an environment that is conducive to an organisation’s primary processes and activities, taking an integrated view of its services and support infrastructure, and using them to achieve user satisfaction and best value through support for, and enhancement of, the core business” (p. 7). Bröchner et al. (2019) cite the ISO (International Organisation for Standardization) 41011 (2017) definition of Facilities Management as an “organisational function which integrates people, place and process within the built environment with the purpose of improving the quality of life of people and the productivity of the core business”.

Integrated Facilities Management provides a unique sector in which to study Global Account Management primarily, as this requires that the Global Account Management

supplier's workforce is based inside the buildings and therefore inside the client organisation can successfully provide Integrated Facilities Management services. The nature of these services – whether it be maintenance of an air conditioning unit, cleaning of bathrooms, guarding the buildings, property and people, or the preparation and serving of food and drinks – is that they are provided at a local level where the client's properties and workforce are distributed. These local constituents at a service and property level, roll up into large conurbations, countries, regions and, ultimately, a global setting. These dynamics provide a very interesting setting in which to study Global Account Management from a client's perspective, as they are likely to observe the provision of these services first-hand as a building occupant locally, as well as being responsible for the global portfolio of services.

2.9 Chapter summary

In summary, the literature has been very influential in shaping the direction of the overall research study. It has, however, reinforced the requirement to pursue the original direction, establishing further that there is a gap in the literature and practice for a GAM model specifically focused on placing the client buying organisation at the centre of the research. The pilot study will go on to explore whether or not this is a genuine requirement when this is further investigated.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

The methodology chapter will start by describing my philosophical research approach as an interpretivist. The selected ontological stance is subjective and changing – this leads to a description of the epistemological position, which is that of an interpretivist, followed by the axiological managerial stance. The chapter continues with a description of the qualitative data type which I have selected, followed by an explanation of the phenomenological research design. This is followed by an explanation of the data collection through in-depth interviews. A review of the ethical considerations is followed by a description of the selected purposive sampling process and thematic analysis of the data and concludes with a summary chapter.

3.1 Research philosophy

I recognise that I am conducting a study in my own area of practice, which places me in the position of being an inside researcher. I am aware of how my own experience and thinking might impact this study, so this chapter begins with a reflection on my own philosophical beliefs as an interpretivist.

Comte (1830) is credited with inventing the term positivism, arguing that reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of knowledge, with no feeling, purely deductive and often viewing positivism as an end point. Hasan (2016) does not go as far in asserting positivism as an end point – however, he does challenge the stereotypical belief that, because of its complexities, the social world cannot be investigated by employing a positivist approach. Hasan describes positivism in

sociology, and that few social thinkers called themselves positivist. Here he notes an overlap with Emile Durkheim's research into suicides which overlapped with positivists of his time – by taking a statistical approach Durkheim (1952) argued that society is a reality in its own right, showing evidence that there is an order of social facts, which are distinct from facts about individual people. Collis and Hussey (2014) present an opposing argument that interpretivism is an underpinned belief which is highly subjective, as it is shaped by our own beliefs. Bell et al. (2019) add that, as opposed to a positivist approach which assumes an objective stance, the study of the social world requires a different logic that reflects the distinctiveness of humans – therefore it is more suited to an interpretivist approach.

Collis and Hussey (2014) provide a helpful definition of the two research paradigms, the paradigm being the philosophical framework guiding how scientific research should be carried out. They explain that “interpretivism emerged in response to the criticism of positivism, which traces its heritage to the natural sciences and holds the assumption that social reality is singular and objective” (p. 43-5). Collis and Hussey describe interpretivism as subjective and multiple and that social reality is impacted by the act of investigating it.

It is essential to explore one's personal philosophical stance when considering any research project. Crotty (1998) posits that “interpretivism emerged in contradistinction to positivism in attempts to understand and explain human and social reality” (p. 66) while Grix (2004) claims that interpretivism can be viewed as part of the response to the over-dominance of positivism – where positivists seek objectivity in modelling their research on the natural world, interpretivists believe that there is a distinction to be made between the natural and social world. This interpretivist philosophical stance

aligns more closely to how I view the social world as an insider practitioner. It therefore informs the means of researching this world and the specific characteristics of this research.

Benton and Craib (2011) note that, historically, social research has often benefited from positivist enquiry lines and therefore positivist lines still have a role to play. There are those, including Rodwell (1987), who argue that a positivist perspective is not particularly suited to probing and understanding the complexity and variability of socio-behavioural phenomena. Many social scientists such as phenomenologists, hermeneuticists and interactionists have expressed concern at the idea of an investigation under a scientific model which can lead to the dismissal of research in understanding the rich complexity of the social world, as observed by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009).

Many, if not all of the examples of positivist methods used within social science, involve large statistical samples across a long timeframe. With this research, given the smaller size of the accessible global account community, the available sample would not allow for such a wide range of data. A great deal of rich data can potentially be missed if the sample size is not deeply researched. In his findings, Hasan agrees that Comte and Durkheim's ideas of positivism have a place in social research – however, this is largely restricted to wide ranging statistical research on a national basis for providing descriptive information on the social world. Whilst not entirely a blank canvas, this research would benefit from breaking with the potentially narrow confines of a positivist philosophy, particularly within such a complex topic with a global reach. As described by Benton and Craib (2011), tacit knowledge is both centrally important and irreplaceable.

Bell et al. (2019) observe that induction is more closely associated with an interpretivist approach, whilst a deductive approach is more typically associated with a positivist approach. They offer what they describe as a crude distinction between deduction and induction, “whereas deduction entails a process in which observations/findings are the outcome of theory, with induction the direction is reversed: theory is the outcome of observations/finding” (p. 23). Lancaster (2005) aligns with this reversal of process and explains that “with inductive research, the researcher develops hypotheses and theories with a view to explaining empirical observations of the real world” (p. 25). An inductive approach has been adopted as most suitable for this research, as the lived personal experiences of the interview participants are concerned with the subjective perceptions they have developed.

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology does not come with a clear and universal definition, as observed by Benton and Craib (2011), who claim that, unfortunately, the technical term is used in different ways in philosophical thinking, therefore varying further definitions of ontology are described within the literature. Indeed, Grix (2004, p.171) says that we all have implicit views on the social world and how it is made up – our ontological position is implicit before we even choose a topic of study. According to Bryman et al. (2019) ontology is “the assumptions we make about what it means for something to exist” (p. 26). Grix (2004, p.171) states that ontology can be better understood as the way in which we view the world and it is our starting point for research, whilst Crotty (1998) says that ontology is the study of being, concerning ‘what is’ in the nature of existence.

Meanwhile, Bryman et al. (2019) submit that the importance of ontology can be understood by considering two positions, objectivism and constructivism. They offer explanations of both which are briefly summarised as follows – objectivism is the ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors, while constructivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. This implies that social phenomena and categories are produced through social interaction and are also in a constant state of revision. Collis and Hussey (2014) add that the associated positivist position asserts that there is only one reality and everyone has the same reality. They add that associated interpretivism operates on the belief that social reality is subjective because it is socially constructed.

In conducting insider research, it was essential for me to understand my ontological position. Therefore, I adopted a constructivist position, focusing on the importance of the lived experience of the participant, for which reality is subjective and changing. This is essential to this research, which seeks to focus on the lived experiences and resultant perceptions of participants as buyers of Global Account Management.

3.1.2 Epistemology and axiology

Further to examining the constructivist ontological position of this research, the next stage is to acknowledge the epistemological stance taken within it. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) offer a definition of epistemology as a “general set of assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world” (p. 60). Like ontology, the definition of epistemology is not exact – having referred to possible epistemological stances, Crotty (1998) cautions against viewing these as watertight compartments, but rather paints a broader picture which supports the reader in recognising the importance

that epistemology has on our research. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and flows logically from ontology (Bell et al., 2019, p. 29). Lancaster (2005) suggests that an epistemological approach organises and explains knowledge in the form of theories. Moreover, Collis and Hussey (2014) add that this positivist position tries to maintain an independent and objective stance. They add that interpretivists attempt to minimise the distance between the researcher and that which is researched. Crotty (1998) refers to constructivism in which there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered. Finally, Grix (2004, p. 166) states that the epistemological considerations impact the research process and, importantly, data collection and analysis.

Axiological assumptions are concerned with the role of values in research. Positivists believe that the process of research is without values and that they as researchers are separate from the subjects being researched, leaving no lasting impression on the researcher or those researched. These assumptions are commonly found within natural sciences. Interpretivists believe that researchers have values, even if they are implicit and not commonly known (Collis & Hussey, 2014). As a practitioner within the Global Account Management field of research, it was essential that I recognised this position and the values and beliefs that I held as an insider – it was important to recognise my axiology and my own belief systems. I also needed to look at these aspects of myself and understand the way that I function in order to also examine the methodology that I would go on to select. Moving from being a practitioner to a researcher was an extremely important part of my development and it is ongoing. As a practitioner I understand the area, but I investigated it as a researcher. The purpose of this research is to develop practice in Global Account Management and the perspective of the research is approached from a managerial stance.

3.1.3 Research methodology

There are two key data types, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative is often thought of as being more scientific and objective, more suited to natural science, while qualitative relates to data that cannot be subjected to quantitative or numerical analysis, and is more suited to social science (Lancaster, 2005). Based on my own philosophical stance as an interpretivist researcher, I was interested in understanding the views of the research participants as they perceived them to be – this is a lived perspective which has not received much focus in the literature to date. Therefore, it was important to me to conduct the research from the perspective of the client to collect an in-depth understanding of their views. Following the process described above, I was able to reject a quantitative approach and select a qualitative approach – this followed on from and suited my interpretivist and ontological position.

3.1.4 Research design selection

In examining qualitative research designs I was aware that there are several options. As I was looking at people's experiences, phenomenology seemed the right design to select. Contributing to the rationale for selecting phenomenology, the literature review informed me that very little work had been done from a qualitative perspective to understand the views and perceptions of this community. Therefore, this became an exploratory study that was also suited to a phenomenological research design, which accords with the type of question I was asking. I believe that it is important to take a step back and deeply understand how people perceive Global Account Management, specifically from their perspective. Phenomenology also accords with my own philosophical stance.

3.1.5 Phenomenology – research design

Several authors, including Somekh and Lewin (2005), Benton and Craib (2011) and Crotty cite Edmund Husserl as the leading founder of phenomenology. Somekh and Lewin (1998) describe Husserl as the founder of phenomenology premised on his epistemological concerns for existing philosophical approaches at the time, the starting point of this framework being the conscious actor in a world of objects (Husserl, 1965) rather than the researcher being separate from the world which he or she is investigating. To deliver upon the aim of placing the client at the centre of Global Account Management, it is important to understand the client's perceptions and their lived experiences. This will support the formation of an understanding of how they view Global Account Management, the various constituents of it and what they believe to be positive, as well as areas for improvement. The phenomenological research design has been chosen as one of the most effective means to access this lived experience. Development of this deep understanding and analysis will contribute to the limited academic literature on Global Account Management and support practitioners within the field.

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) describe phenomenologically orientated research as the study of events from within the lifeworld of the person experiencing them. As such, phenomenological studies often use in-depth interviews to collect data. As discussed above, interviews – either structured or semi-structured – allow the researcher access to a wider knowledge set than if they were following a collection method leaning further towards positivism. This method will provide a unique set of data which, given the absence within the literature, will not have been collected previously from senior respondents, each with a responsibility for their employing organisation's global Integrated Facilities Management services.

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a method, the aim of which is to better understand life experience (Oiler, 1982). Whilst a positivist approach intentionally separates the researcher from the subject, a phenomenological approach places a significant emphasis on the importance of the researcher's reflections. Van Manen (1990) considers that a researcher's reflection is a critical methodological approach within phenomenology in an attempt to discover the essence and meaning of the experience. Lien et al. (2014) liken the role of the researcher to a bridge for the reader to travel into the interviewees' living world. They go on to describe the role of reflection as both easy and difficult – easy, because the ability to reflect is attainable to most people, but difficult in practice to uncover the essence and meaning of experience. Van Manen (1990) defines 'essence' simply as that which makes a thing what it is. Lien et al. define meaning as the manifest consciousness of experience. In addition to the justification of the research philosophy above, the importance of reflection is of long-held importance to me as the researcher.

Embree (1999) emphasises that rationality is built upon how well the researcher understands the experience and context of the interviewee while objectivity is built upon an understanding of the interviewees' experience. Embree believes that techniques of reflexivity can help a researcher to recognise, evaluate and act more responsibly when conducting research. Sokolowski (2000) says that meaning is the experience of consciousness and that meaning can help us find the truth and uncover the essence of things. He goes on to argue that meaning will only appear after reflection, which is well suited to an interpretive phenomenological approach.

3.2 Data collection techniques – in-depth interviews

In Figure 5, Morris (2015) lays out some of the strengths and weaknesses of phenomenology. In his guide to in-depth interviews, he describes the challenges relating to interviewing ‘elites’, which includes people in powerful positions within corporations and other organisations. This is a relevant dynamic to be considered within this research. Gray (2007) explains that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to probe for more detailed responses. This was an important instrument during these semi-structured interviews, particularly given the international subset of interviewees.



Strengths	Weaknesses
Allows you to access rich personal data	Interviewee could be presenting inaccurate information
Gives you the ability to understand an individual's contexts and motivations	Impossible to draw a random sample of interviewees
Allows follow up and probing of responses and examination of complexity	Data obtained cannot be generalised to the population
Allows the interviewee to talk about what they think is important	Large amount of time and effort required to set up interviews
It's an extremely versatile method	Potentially expensive; transcribing is costly
Non-verbal information can be obtained from observing body language and intonation	Transcribing is time-consuming

Figure 5: Strengths and weaknesses of in-depth interviews. Recreated from Morris (2015).

The potential weaknesses of interviews have been widely covered within literature. Williams (2015) notes that even if the interviewee does not lie, there is a potential to either give ‘clever’ or ‘correct’ answers within an interview setting. A series of

interviews and individual interviews require detailed preparation, interview design, and practice in advance to secure the most useful data. In semi-structured interviews, selecting the same research interviewer on each occasion minimises potential variables between each of the interviews. This was a helpful technique, along with recording the interviews consistently, to ensure that the full explorational benefit of the semi-structured format was gained. Morris (2015) discusses this and other strategies to optimise the interview experience and they are described further below.

Williams (2015) notes that semi-structured interviews permit flexibility yet maintain focus – this consistency could be hard to maintain with more than one interviewer. This becomes more important given the relevance of detailed reflection in unearthing meaning following interviews with participants. These factors reinforce the importance of only one researcher conducting each of the interviews. Seale (2004) discusses another important factor, that of interviewer bias. The requirement to understand and avoid this is often considered crucial by writers – the quality of the interview as a social interaction is of vital importance to the results of the research.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Identified method

The adopted research approach is grounded within an interpretivist philosophy. As the researcher, one of the most important factors is to understand the deeper views of the small number of research participants and adopt the position that reality is flexible, perhaps even complex and contradictory. Therefore, selecting a philosophy and methodological approach which reveals their perceived reality for analysis is even more important.

3.3.2 Impact of philosophical approach on results and conclusions

Punch (2014) draws from Symbolic Interactionism as well as phenomenology, hermeneutics and naturalism, saying that they see social phenomena as quite different from physical phenomena. Here, the idea is that human behaviour is based upon meanings that people attribute to and bring to a situation. Importantly, this is constantly constructed and reconstructed based on the situation in which the person is in.

By adopting a phenomenological philosophical approach, these interpretations are further subject to construction and reconstruction, as the role of the research interviewer, and their reflections, plays a significant part in the results. In contrast, the extreme opposite is stated by Pym (1993) when describing the role of a positivist researcher perspective and approach, including the denial of feelings, imagination and the human spirit, concealed assumptions, rigidity, sterility and a description of those being researched as 'subjects', which suggests a disconnection. Assuming an interpretivist approach highlights an intention to understand those being researched more deeply. Biases, contradictions, complexities and subjectivities are there to be understood and are a rich source of meaning to contribute to results.

As discussed above, Morris (2015) describes phenomenology as both a philosophy and a method and lays out some of the strengths and weaknesses captured within Figure 5. Further, in his guide to in-depth interviews, he describes the particular challenges relating to interviewing 'elites', which include people in powerful positions within corporations, and interviews with second language speakers. Both are relevant dynamics for careful consideration within this research.

Gray (2007) explains that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to ‘probe’ for more detailed responses – this is likely to be particularly important given the international subset of interviewees. Morris offers helpful advice in which to optimise data collection in this situation which would ultimately benefit the research results and conclusions.

3.3.3 Rejected data collection methods

Prior to my selection of semi-structured interviews, other qualitative methods were considered. The most appealing was focus groups, although these were ultimately discounted. Each of the participants works in increasingly highly regulated industries, including banking, which stipulates certain conditions and required standards relating to corporate officers engaging externally and specifically with other corporate officers from competitor organisations. This added another layer of complexity to the existing competitive dynamics across the participants. Even if regulatory and competitive factors could be overcome, focus groups would potentially still have a bearing, as participants could be inclined to either moderate their answers to avoid giving too much away, or could influence the thoughts and viewpoints of other participants, potentially edging towards group think. Morgan and Krueger (1993) identify the disadvantages of focus groups and recommend asking a basic question: How easy will it be to generate free-flowing and productive conversation on this topic? (p. 13). It was clear to me that the answer was that it would not be easy, nor optimal, for the other reasons stated – therefore focus groups could be discounted.

There were also practical considerations, including synchronising access to these senior executives, though it became somewhat easier as people worked remotely during the Covid-19 restrictions. However, this also meant that the focus group would

take place via a remote video platform which could weaken the method. Participants were also based across multiple time zones, another significant challenge which would make it impossible.

3.4 Ethical considerations

This research has been underpinned with strict compliance to Edinburgh Napier University's ethics and governance policies. Bell et al. (2019) draw on Diener and Crandall's earlier work (1978), which identifies four reoccurring ethical issues in business research. These include harm to participants, a lack of informed consent, an invasion of privacy, and whether deception is involved. The ethical approach I adopted carefully considered these four areas, which I have expanded upon below.

3.4.1 Do no harm to participants

The interviews were conducted between May and September 2020. Whilst these interviews were originally intended to be conducted in person, the participants were located in various countries. As a result of Covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions, this was no longer possible. Therefore, carrying out interviews brought about a contemporary meaning to doing no harm concerning physical health, as well as the broader meaning. Under the circumstances, the interviews were conducted using the Microsoft Teams video platform. Each interview was conducted on a one-to-one basis. Prior to each interview, a telephone call was made in advance to explain its structure and I made specific reference to the ethical standards which would be upheld throughout the research to ensure that each of the participants was at ease with the research approach and their involvement. During the same call, I explained that there were no right or wrong answers and, should they wish to do so, they could decline to answer any question they preferred not to. None of the interviewees took up this option

and they responded to all questions. Both the prior call and main interview were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere from our respective homes.

3.4.2 Informed consent

Further to review and approval by Edinburgh Napier University's Faculty and Ethics Governance Committee (Appendix A), each interviewee was provided with an interview participant information sheet (Appendix B) as well as a copy of the university's research participant consent form (Appendix C). As part of the information provided, it was explained to each participant that they could decide not to take part or withdraw at any time.

3.4.3 Privacy

It was essential to protect the privacy of the participants as a fundamental ethical pillar of the research. Two of the participants volunteered that they would be happy to waive anonymity and associate their names with the research. However, I explained that, in the interest of protecting the privacy of others and maintaining a consistent approach, this would not be possible, whilst thanking them for their willingness.

Whilst there are numerous well documented ethical reasons to protect individual privacy, one other characteristic of the research sample was that all of the interviewees were employed by organisations in competition with one another. I have spent my career in the outsourced services industry and I am aware of the competitive forces which exist within it, which could lead to interviewees potentially criticising competitors or, conversely, exercising caution in their responses due to being concerned at compromising the privacy of their individual position or that of their employer. Each of the research participants seemed very comfortable and relaxed and

trusted that the standards would be upheld. This seemed to be reflected in there being no evidence of any associated potential concerns during the interviews. The interviewees seldom referred to their competition and the dialogue was relaxed and free flowing.

3.4.4 Avoiding deception

I was mindful to represent the research with clarity and accuracy to ensure that the interview participants had a clear understanding of it. This was important to protect the integrity of the research and particularly important to me, as I was indebted to the interviewees for participating. In generously allocating their time and willingly sharing their perceptions, they played a key role in contributing to the academic knowledge relating to Global Account Management, in addition to influencing practice. I gratefully acknowledge this as a vital component in the quality research study.

3.5 Process of conducting the study

This section provides a detailed account of the processes which were applied when conducting the study. Topics included within the following sections include the data collection methods, detailed pilot study, sampling process and analysis.

3.5.1 Sampling

Bell et al. (2019) observe that most qualitative research incorporates some form of purposive sampling and they offer a description of what links its various kinds to the goals of the research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) say that “many qualitative researchers employ purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (p. 202), cited by Silverman (2010). In contrast, a random sample was briefly

considered and soon discounted for this research. A random approach may have been more convenient based on individual availability, but this would likely have resulted in the inclusion of participants with less relevant experience. The logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study, according to Patton (2002, p. 230) and Liamputtong (2009, p. 11).

Baker and Foy (2008) note that judgement and experience will guide the decision on purposive sampling, which has been the case in this research, with the objective of securing a precise approach to sample selection rather than a random approach. A random approach would be unlikely to yield anywhere near the rich data that a targeted approach to sample selection would. The following section describes the narrow field of available participants globally.

3.5.2 Sampling process

The process of identifying organisations which procure their services globally required background information checking beyond my existing understanding. This involved several discussions with industry stakeholders to identify multinational organisations which source non-core competency services on a global basis. Through investigation, the apparent number of organisations which procure globally is relatively low compared to the number of multinational organisations, for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, including the organisation's preparedness and willingness to do so.

Through several discussions with my supervisory team, it was agreed that a sample size of between 10 to 20 participants would be representative of what was a relatively small community of less than 100 organisations. Whilst this sample size was agreed, it was important to ensure that it reached data saturation – to this end it was important

to understand how saturation could be achieved. Saunders et al. (2018) conclude that “saturation should be operationalized in a way that is consistent with the research question(s), and the theoretical position and analytical framework adopted, but also that there should be limit to its scope, so as not to risk saturation losing its coherence and potency if its conceptualization and uses are stretched too widely” (p. 1893). Saunders et al. add that saturation can be identified based on the researcher’s sense of what they are hearing in the interviews by seeing similar instances repeatedly and they can then decide if further data collection is necessary or whether this would lead to what the authors term “informational redundancy” (p. 1899).

This is the approach I adopted within this research, specifically monitoring and checking whether the themes I was hearing by the fifteenth interview were the same themes I was hearing by the tenth interview. This was the case and it therefore became clear that it was unnecessary to continue beyond the fifteenth interview. At the time, the sample size also considered what were viewed as regular constraints and restrictions prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, such as interviewing participants in person. Therefore, the plan took account of travel to different countries and security access to the participants’ place of work. This approach changed as the magnitude of the pandemic became clear, along with its related restrictions. Part of the research process applied to discovering those client organisations which had procured globally. This involved firstly identifying organisations capable of providing these services globally. This led to extensive internet searches and discussions with the kind introduction of industry practitioners. This was extremely helpful in developing a purposive sample, by identifying the interview participants and then contacting them.

During the initial telephone call with an interview participant, I explained the background to the research, including my interest in the subject, and its overall purpose. In the interest of qualifying whether the participant was appropriate for inclusion within the purposive sample, I asked the same question: “Can you tell me your experiences of making global buying decisions for food service at your current and previous organisations?” This allowed me to assess the interview participant’s level of experience and interest in the subject of Global Account Management. Personally, this was a very encouraging stage of the research journey, as during this initial call each of the participants was positive about the need for this research. The following section provides further information relating to the research participants, approached directly via e-mail or through an industry insider to raise the potential participants’ initial interest.

3.5.3 Sample research participants

Fifteen senior executives agreed to participate in the research. Their seniority was reflected in their extensive experience within the Corporate Real Estate industry. Each had a minimum of 20 years industry experience, extending to 45 years, and this experience was reflected in their role titles, which included Chief Executive Officer, Global Head of Corporate Real Estate, Global Head of Facilities Management, Global Chief Operating Officer, Global Chief Procurement Officer, Global Portfolio Strategy Head, Senior Director, Executive Director and Partner. Table 3 provides an overview of this experience and the geographic distribution of the interview participants. Following on from the section on ethical considerations, and specifically Section 3.4.3 on privacy, it was confirmed with each of the candidates that due to the confidential nature of the study there would be no way of recognising them individually. To this end, whilst I have been able to provide information on the rough age and countries in

which the participants reside, it was not possible to provide further information on gender or specific role without a potential risk of breaching this confidentiality.

The participants worked across 12 global organisations headquartered in the UK, USA, Denmark, Germany and Australia, which included Fortune 500 companies and organisations listed on the FTSE 100, New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq Copenhagen. Each was responsible for making global buying decisions which would result in the provision of Global Account Management. Four of the participants were responsible for advising large multinational organisations, assessing the feasibility of making global buying decisions and supporting them when doing so. The consultancy and advisory experience of these director and partner-level participants provided a rich source of insight across multiple multinational organisations – those who had decided to source globally, and those who had decided against sourcing globally in favour of sourcing either regionally, nationally or in a combination of these approaches. Two of the participants had retired in the year prior to the interviews taking place. In both cases this was after extensive careers which included making global buying decisions and maintaining senior responsibility for their ongoing delivery. Nine of the participants were incumbent in senior roles, each with an extensive sphere of responsibility and a high degree of influence and decision-making authority relating to global sourcing.

Length of experience (in years)	10 – 20 years	20 – 30 years	30 – 40 years	40 – 60 years	
	0	5	7	3	
Geography	UK	USA	Denmark	Germany	Australia
	7	4	2	1	1

Table 3: Table of interview participants (Author)

3.5.4 Countries

Reflecting the global nature of the research topic, the interview participants were based in various locations around the world. Seven participants were based in the United Kingdom, including in London and Glasgow, four were based in the United States, in Houston, Chicago, Charlotte and Washington, two were based in Copenhagen, Denmark, one in Stuttgart, Germany, and one in Sydney, Australia.

3.6 Pilot study

A pilot study of one participant was completed prior to the main study taking place. The process used in the pilot study is described in this section. Prior to conducting the pilot study interview, the interviewee received an e-mailed copy of the participant information sheet and the ethical consent form authorised by Edinburgh Napier University's research integrity committee (Appendix A). This correspondence was followed by an initial telephone discussion to establish that the interviewee was willing and comfortable to proceed. The interviewee subsequently commented that receiving this initial contact and information in advance was helpful preparation for a successful interview. Critical analysis of the pilot study process and outcome confirmed that semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method of data collection in the delivery of the overall research objectives.

The interview was originally planned to be conducted face-to-face at the London headquarters of the participant's organisation. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK government's lockdown restrictions, it had to be rescheduled and then conducted via video call. By this time the interview was set against the backdrop of an ever-increasing global crisis. To provide context, at the time of the pilot study, confirmed cases of Covid-19 exceeded six million globally with 370,000

related deaths. At the time of writing in August 2021, these confirmed figures exceeded 200 million and four million respectively. Against this extremely unusual backdrop, the interviewee agreed to participate in the interview, commenting in advance that it would be enjoyable, perhaps even cathartic, to focus on something “normal” for a while. The interview lasted for 45 minutes. At the outset I again explained the purpose of the interview, that while I was an industry practitioner, I was conducting the interview purely in my capacity as an Edinburgh Napier University researcher as part of my doctoral research journey. I also explained that this was the first time in my doctoral journey that primary data had been collected and that this pilot study would inform the approach taken within the main study. The pilot study interview was valuable, in part to prepare me in becoming familiar and comfortable with the process and format – this included practising the discipline of active listening in silence, using only non-verbal responses and resisting any urge to complete sentences or lead the interviewee.

3.6.1. Pilot study – Data collection and analysis process

The interview was recorded on an Apple iPhone using an encrypted voice memo function. This was replayed after the interview and I transcribed it in approximately 5-10 second instalments, dependent on the speed and complexity of the dialogue. The transcription process took four to five hours and created an opportunity to integrate with the data in detail. When transcribed, the text extended to almost 4,649 words and more than 80% of the audio was from the interviewee. The transcription was then subjected to thematic analysis. This involved reading the text several times, as Bryman (2016) suggests, whilst making notes during the initial review and then marking the text in the second and third review. This was followed by coding each of the key areas of direction gained from the interviewee, allowing for 141 areas to then be analysed

separately. The responses and topics covered separated into six themes of information, which reoccur in the interviewee responses when discussing Global Account Management. These groups of themes collected from the answers are described below and analysed in further detail in the next section, which covers provisional findings.

Each of the questions revealed valuable information in support of the overall research aims and objectives. As a result, the originally drafted questions were subsequently included in the main study. These research questions are shown below in Figure 6. The most recent addition to the questions related to the impact of Covid-19. Whilst not core to the study, this provided a context of the time when the study was carried out. A thematic analysis seemed to be an effective approach rather than an alternative such as content analysis, which could be considered more passive. Looking for major themes as recommended by Bryman and Bell (2015) and Saunders and Lewis (2012), it seemed that accessing the lived experience, with a researcher fully immersed in the data, gave a rich understanding.

The four main research objectives are described in Chapter 1. Figure 6 lays out the relationship between the literature review, the research objectives and the interview questions. The first objective relates to the exploration of relevant literature, explored within the literature review in Chapter 2. This research review informs the research and the development of the interview questions. The second and third objectives relate to the primary research through data collected from the interviews. The relationship between these two objectives and the interview questions is clearly laid out within Figure 6. The fourth objective relates to the development of a conceptual model derived from data collected during the interview process and is compared to the previous conceptual models from existing literature.

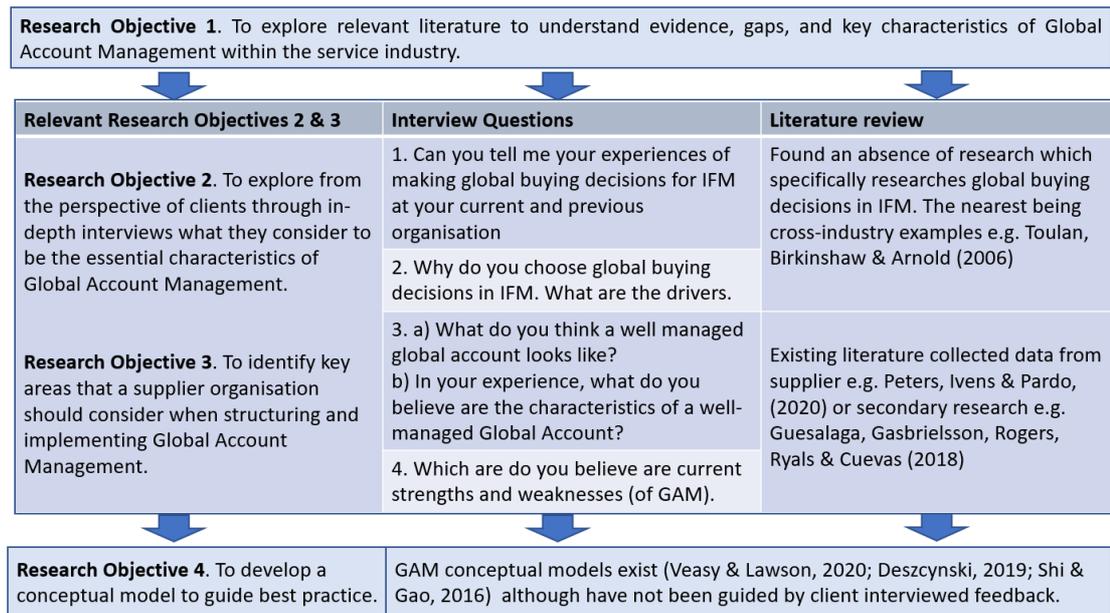


Figure 6: Relationship between the literature review, the research objectives and the interview questions (Author)

3.6.2. Pilot study findings and implications for main study

Six wider themes emerged in the interviews and subsequent analysis. These were

1. Simplification and consistency.
2. Customer service and customer satisfaction.
3. Risk and compliance (including safety, delivery and overall governance).
4. Management information, data and reporting.
5. Cost awareness and efficiency.
6. Business partnering, including supply chain competency (culture, capability and leadership).

These have not been ordered by priority and weighting – rather they have been analysed in accordance with the number of times each area was mentioned as important during the interview and placed in order accordingly. One area relating to

the importance of partnering versus viewing suppliers as mere service providers received 46 mentions, close to a third of the total. This theme went on to feature prominently in the main study. This included the importance of the client buying organisation being capable of optimising its supply chain's expertise and competency. The data reported a strong link to the importance of leadership and the supplying organisation's technical capability as well as a cultural fit between the buyer and the provider through a Global Account Management structure.

3.6.3 Content of the interview

An interesting development emerged in the initial pilot study, a theme continued in the main interviews. Global Account Management has been the primary interest within this research. Originally the sub-sector focused on food service – however, it soon became apparent that whilst the participant was procuring food services globally, and was a recipient of Global Account Management, they were also responsible for procuring other services which were included in a similar category of Integrated Facilities Management. This included services within property management, such as janitorial, maintenance and engineering, reception services, and grounds maintenance, as shown in Figure 7 below. Asked questions relating to Global Account Management, the pilot study participant answered them from this wider perspective. Whilst they dealt with food services, their focus was more widely applied to the broader range of services. What was interesting to me was their view that there is no identifiable difference between the services when considering the success and constituents of Global Account Management.

For example, when asked question one, “Why do you choose global buying decisions in food service?” the first participant said: *“If I could lift it up a level from just that*

one category for all buying categories that I am responsible for across globally integrated facilities services.” This development, which occurred in various forms in each interview, became very important in unencumbering the participants in considering the main research focus of Global Account Management, rather than unnaturally fitting their answer to a food-specific question.

The primary sector focus in this research has been that of Global Account Management, a position which has only strengthened as it has developed. Moving the focus from food services to more general services within Corporate Real Estate and within that, Integrated Facilities Management, represented a positive development as part of the research project and is shown in Figure 7. The previously narrow focus on food services within the yellow rectangle now covers the new and expanded future focus, depicted by the green oval encapsulating Integrated Facilities Management.

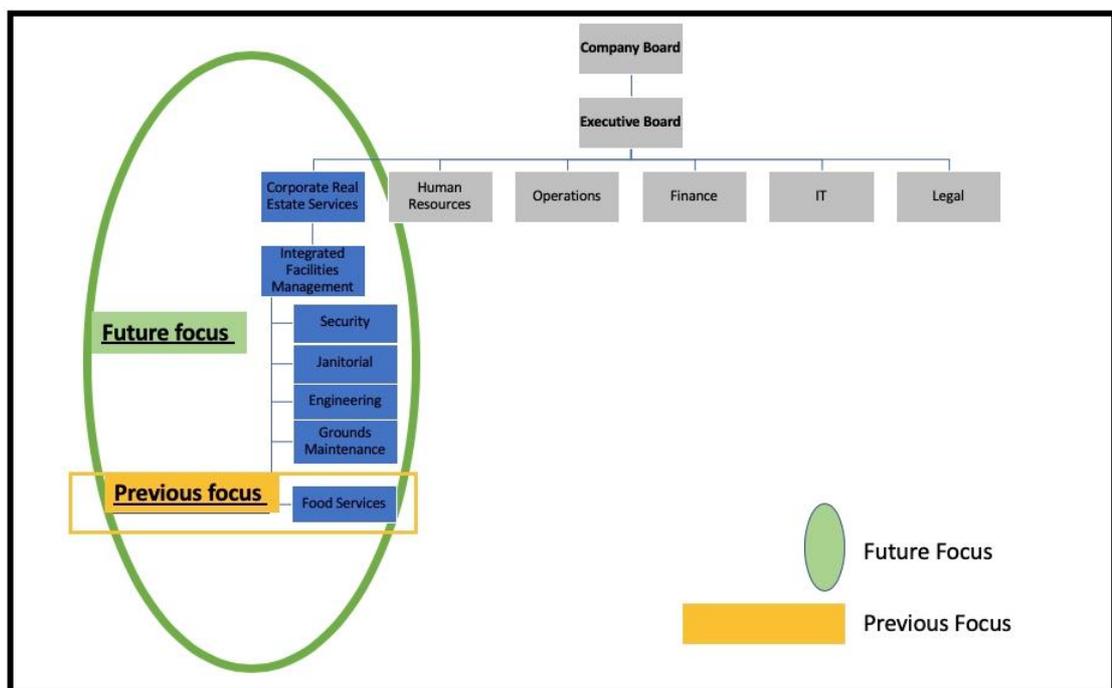


Figure 7: Development of single food service focus to wider Integrated Facilities

Management (Author)

3.7. Main study – Data collection process

The data for this research was collected using the approach described in the following five stages – Stage One, participant contact; Stage Two, initial telephone call; Stage Three, interview; Stage Four, post interview contact; Stage Five, post interview transcript.

3.7.1 Stage one – Participant contact

An initial e-mail was sent to prospective participants. This provided the background information included within the interview participant information file, making the purpose of the study clear along with other information, including why they had been asked to participate. The e-mail also included information relating to other areas of the study, including from an ethical perspective, that their participation was entirely at their discretion, what would happen if they agreed to take part, along with any possible benefits, disadvantages or risks in doing so, as well as what would happen when the study was completed. The confidential nature of the study was stressed, along with what would happen to the results, who had organised the research and why, along with who would review the study. I offered my telephone number and university e-mail address, as well as offering contact details for my supervisor, should the participant prefer to discuss the study with someone independent of it.

3.7.2 Stage two – Initial telephone call

After receiving e-mail confirmation from the individuals invited to participate, an initial telephone conversation was set up. This was arranged either directly with the participant or via the participant's personal or executive assistant. The interview was scheduled further to the initial call, with an e-mail invitation for the date and time

(adjusted for time zones) as well as the university research consent form. This was accompanied by the participant information sheet, which the recipient was requested to read again prior to providing their consent to participate. This provided the participant with time to reflect on the information prior to taking part.

3.7.3 Stage three – Interview

The interviews took place at the pre-agreed time and location. On each occasion, the interview went ahead at the scheduled time without the requirement for the participant to rearrange. This reflected the generosity of the interviewees, who kindly prioritised participation. Prior to the interview a test was completed to ensure that the technology worked and that the audio recording would be sufficiently effective for transcription purposes. I also made handwritten notes during the interview, which were often used as a prompt to clarify questions to return to later in the interview. The main recording of the interview was made digitally and I again asked whether the participant had any objections to the interview being recorded, stating that the transcription would be coded to ensure the participant's anonymity. It was also made clear that the transcription would only be made available to the participant, to myself, and to my supervisor, and that any subsequent analysis would be codified in the interest of data comparison purposes and to protect anonymity. After this preparation, the audio recording was activated and the interview commenced.

3.7.4. Stage four – Post interview contact

Shortly after each interview an e-mail was sent to the interviewee thanking them for their active participation. Each participant was offered the opportunity to follow up with any further reflections they had. Whilst there were no follow up reflections, each

of the participants said that they would be glad to offer further support and were keen to receive a copy of the findings of the final thesis.

3.7.5. Stage five – Interview transcription

At the time of the data collection in May 2020, I benefited from the opportunity to move from full-time employment and part-time researcher to research on a full-time basis, for six months in total. This allowed time to complete the end-to-end process, from data collection to data analysis. At the beginning, this appeared to be a generous amount of time – however, it became clear that the task ahead was significant. A total of 15 semi-structured interviews over 18 hours of audio recordings were collected using an Apple iPhone voice memo with encrypted functionality. Soon after the interview was completed, I was able to listen to the digital recording, which allowed me to hear the free-flowing conversation without the requirement to perform the role of interviewer or necessarily take notes. This was a useful introduction to integrating with the data.

I then transcribed each of the interviews, which amounted to more than 110,000 words, each word being manually keyed into Microsoft Word documents on a MacBook Air. The time commitment for collection of the data and accurate transcription was extensive, requiring in excess of 140 hours. The recordings were transcribed in 5-10 second instalments dependent on the speed and complexity of the dialogue. Both Apple devices were password and username protected and I had sole use and access, protecting the security of the data.

The interviews were conducted between May and mid-September 2020. The process of conducting the individual interviews, listening to the recordings, and then

transcribing each interview took place concurrently across numerous interview processes. The alternative of conducting these phases sequentially would have been less efficient from a time perspective and reinvesting what was learned into subsequent interviews as the process advanced was most useful. Transcription was completed in full for all of the interviews before moving on to the data analysis described in the following sections. Whilst the process of manual transcription was extensive and required the investment of many hours, this method proved to be an extremely effective means of integrating closely with the data, which would not have been possible to the same extent had the transcription been outsourced.

3.8. Data analysis – Thematic analysis

Coding each of the key areas of direction gained from the interviewees allowed for individual areas to be analysed separately. The responses and topics which were covered separated into six themes of information which reoccurred in the interviewee responses when discussing Global Account Management. These groups of themes are described below and analysed in further detail in the provisional findings chapter.

3.8.1. Reading and re-reading

The transcription was then subjected to thematic analysis. This involved reading the text several times as Bryman et al. (2008) suggest, whilst making notes at the end during the initial review, and then marking the text in the second and third review. Each of the individual interview transcripts were read in full as I integrated with the data. The transcript was then re-read so as to become fully immersed in the content.

3.8.2. Initial noting

As part of the reading and re-reading stage, key words and topics were highlighted in the thematic analysis. Initially, the same colour was applied to electronically highlight the Word document. The document was re-read once the noting was apparently complete to ensure that language and expression used by the participants considered the content and the intent behind the dialogue. This often involved listening again to the audio version of the interviews to detect the participant's meaning and intent more accurately. This was made easier by the Word documents being marked up with several time stamps from the outset to allow more time-efficient cross-checking.

Whilst reading, re-reading and initially noting, six headline groups – originally observed during the pilot study – continued to emerge from the data. These were

1. Simplification and consistency.
2. Customer service and customer satisfaction.
3. Risk and compliance (including safety, delivery and overall governance).
4. Management information, data and reporting.
5. Cost awareness and efficiency.
6. Business partnering, including supply chain competency (culture, capability and leadership).

3.8.3. Identifying emerging themes

Once the initial noting stage was complete, the six identified themes were transposed onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The transcripts were then read through in detail once more. The highlighted text from the original transcript was then copied to the spreadsheet within one of the six areas, according to which of the headline groups it

most closely aligned with. Fifteen vertical columns, each representing an individual interview, were structured and separated into the six headline topic groups.

During these early stages of the analysis these six headline topic groups were defined further within the main study analysis to focus on four key themes as the 22 sub-themes emerged. This was an iterative process as these areas revealed themselves during the early stages of the analysis process. These four key themes were assigned their own specific colour within a separate section to record key quotations. These key quotations were transposed to the spreadsheet and colour coded in accordance with which of the four themes the quotation related to.

3.8.4. Searching for connections across emerging themes

Once the Excel spreadsheet had been populated with the highlighted sections from each of the participant transcripts, and these had been colour-coded, the next stage of analysis was completed. Bell et al. (2019) refer to repetition being probably the most common criteria for establishing a pattern that warrants being considered a theme.

In addition to the identification of repetitive points, all the original transcripts contained within individual Word documents were merged to conduct an automated search for the key words identified within the thematic analysis, along with variations and the number of mentions, such as partnership (49), partner (56) and partnering (3). This was then checked against the analysis conducted within the spreadsheet.

3.9. Conclusion

This methodological chapter began with a description of the research philosophy, and discussed ontological, epistemological and axiological approaches. A description of research methodology was followed by an explanation of research design and the chosen research design of phenomenology. A description of the data collection techniques included the selected in-depth interview and five stages of data collection. The thematic analysis stages were described, concerning the impact of the philosophical approach on the results and the conclusions. The chapter included an explanation of the strict ethical considerations. An explanation of the sampling process was offered including the sample participants, the countries involved, description of the pilot studies, pilot study data collection and analysis process, the pilot study findings and implications for main study content of the interview, main study data collection process and five stages of data collection, followed by a description of the thematic data analysis.

The Findings chapter which follows provides a detailed examination of the data retrieved by taking the methodological approach described during this chapter.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the data within four sections. I considered placing the findings in order of question responses. However, the free-flowing semi-structured interviews gave the interviewees an opportunity to start by answering the question, but they often moved to a tangential topic. In all cases, the participants answered the questions to one extent or another, but they often did so by taking a circuitous route, which was not in sequence with which questions were asked. Because of this, and as described in the previous chapter, these data have been grouped into four sections to reflect the strength of sentiment collected within the interviews, from strong to less strong.

Section 1 reviews Compatibility and is divided into four subsections – partnership, culture, relationship and trust. Section 2 reviews Competency and is divided into six subsections – supply chain capability, leadership, leadership talent, scale, best practice and digital. Section 3 considers Corporate Governance and is divided into six subsections – data, risk, compliance, simplification, consistency and transparency. Section 4 describes the Commercial Outcomes and is separated into transition, transformation, continuous improvement, innovation, customer service satisfaction and cost.

4.1. From supplier to client – Mind the gap

Six of the participants interviewed had experience of having worked as both a client on behalf of the buying organisation and as an executive of a supplier organisation – moving from the client to the supplier and in the opposite direction, from supplier to client. Their experiences of both led them to believe that there is a substantial disconnect between these differing industry vantage points. Each participant supported the requirement for the research to place the client at the centre of Global Account Management in order to understand more deeply the areas important to the organisation buying the services. Commenting on the identification of gaps between the perspectives of client and supplier, one participant said: *“I think one of the things that the industry has lost is the ability to see things through a client’s eyes.”* (Executive 14). This reoccurring sentiment served to reinforce the requirement for this research.

An interview with one Executive, who had held both client and supplier roles, made it very clear that the gap in understanding can lead to the supplier guessing, often incorrectly, the client’s motives, and questioning whether the client genuinely wishes to see the supplier succeed. From a supplier viewpoint, there is a belief that the most important outcome to the client organisation is to drive down costs, even if this reduces the profitability of the supplier organisation. There seems a clear opportunity here to show that the opposite is true and that suppliers waste a significant amount of time and energy second guessing where the client would try and undermine the success factors of the supplier. In a high volume and low margin business, this is time and energy that could be invested elsewhere for greater benefit. One Executive said:

“Actually, as a customer you would like to see your supplier succeed, and there is a notion on the supplier side that actually the customer is trying to hold me down, they

are not easy to work with, they are difficult, they are trying to trip us up. No, we are not – in fact, quite the contrary. When I was on the supplier side, I think I was also second guessing or trying to retrospectively second guess people’s motives, that really in hindsight was stupid – 75% of the areas I spent my time on in the supplier side, I now know were not value adding” (Executive 9).

Another notable difference between a client buying organisation and that of a supplier organisation is that, for the client organisation, the services provided are part of a cost centre. The opposite is true for a supplier organisation, for which the services are viewed through the lens of a profit centre. As mentioned above, there are typically low profit ratios across the industry peer group average. This drives an increased focus on these slim margins. One Executive noted the surprising difference between managing a cost centre for his client organisation and a profit centre in the supplier organisation. He also noted that the size of the financial values which would draw attention in the supplier organisation were immaterial compared to the client organisation:

“People that actually make the move from client to service provider and ...when you sit on client side, you cannot understand, even if you say you have cost pressures it’s nowhere near the cost pressures you have when you are on the supplier side, what was shocking was the level of detail that you need and the materiality factor, in terms of money you’re down to the nearest hundreds of dollars to the nearest million and you don’t think about it ...so many people on the service provider side do not understand what a client is interested in and they get it completely around the wrong way because they are very different requirements” (Executive 10).

There are early signs of the client and supplier perspectives moving closer together over time as the recognition of this disconnect develops, as observed by one participant:

“Previously there were definite camps on the client and supplier side and what this shortage of supply and how clients are thinking in terms of how they are delivering these services, the reduction of the internal client, has meant that those camps have started to integrate. The differentiation between exceptional account director and a great client, that differentiation has been eroded significantly in the last ten years and I think that’s a healthy thing. That trend is continuing, so you are going to see senior leaders in the industry with experiences of both the client decision maker and buyer of those services as much as the supplier to and the gateway to delivering the execution as a service provider” (Executive 15).

4.2 Section 1 – Compatibility

4.2.1. Compatibility

Each of the respondents described Compatibility as essential between the client and outsourcing organisation, singling out constituents of it across areas such as partnership, culture, relationship and trust. Each of these terms were used interchangeably by the participants to highlight the importance of developing the relationship well beyond a transitional one. Each of the 15 interview participants observed that compatibility between the client organisation and the supplier organisation is key for success. It was put succinctly by Executive 4 as, *“I think compatibility is critical.”* Such is the importance of compatibility that this topic was cited more than any other individual area raised during the interviews.

4.2.2. Partnership

An ongoing theme raised by each of the participants focused on the importance of selecting both a supplier organisation capable of partnering and a client organisation they could partner with. This is an area which was reflected in the data as the most important, both in the high frequency of times it was raised and the number of participants who mentioned this as most important when globally outsourcing. Executive 15 explains that he considers partnership to be the final word in what clients are looking for in an outsourced Global Account Management supplier, saying, *“Ultimately, for me, what clients are looking for is a partnership approach”* (Executive 15).

The importance of partnering is described as “fundamental” by another participant:

“A fundamental point in the buying decision, which is not necessarily a buying decision around a widget or a service you are buying, it’s actually really a buying decision around the supplier partner you are aligning with and willing to partner with” (Executive 6).

Commercial characteristics need to be considered between the buying organisation and the supplier organisation. The buying organisation is often looking to pay a price which is acceptable to them, and to ensure that the supplier is diligently carrying out the role that they are employed to perform, whereas the supplier organisation seeks to secure an acceptable profit level from the ongoing transaction. On the face of it, seemingly opposing priorities for the two organisations could create high levels of commercial tension and form a significant obstacle. Yet, each participant highlights partnership as the most important outcome and, furthermore, mentions cost amongst

the least, which we will return to in Section 4. Executive 2 highlights the commercial realities between the buyer and the supply organisation providing the Global Account Management services, seemingly compartmentalising the procurement stages, and progressing beyond the commercial agreement stage towards partnership.

“It’s a more partnership type thing, you feel that you’re working with colleagues. That was always how I saw it, these are colleagues of mine who just happen to be on another payroll, but equally, when I was working with IT, typically they were on a different payroll, I didn’t see it as any different. I mean obviously you’re aware of the commercial realities but that was long since buried by and large – once you’ve done the deal, you’ve done the deal” (Executive 2).

The vital importance of the ability to partner was made explicitly clear during the interviews. Even the cheapest price offered to the buying organisation would seemingly not be enough to assure success in the bidding process if this was not accompanied with an ability to partner. Executive 11 notes that they would not proceed beyond the early stages in the procurement process if the organisation did not demonstrate the ability to partner and align to shared values within this essential area:

“They would not be shortlisted if they couldn’t partner, that’s a sort of given, what you’re looking at is that sort of alignment on values and the ability to move with you and work with you to get to where you need to get to. Those who can sell and deliver that will be those who are most successful” (Executive 11).

Rather than the client ignoring the commercial realities which the supply organisation is working within, interview participants often went further to state the importance of

ensuring that the partnership is equitable and fair. It is important to be clear about each other's aims and success criteria and this includes understanding what both the buying and supplying organisation require to achieve from the ongoing commercial partnership. This includes the client's willingness to accept that part of a successful partnership is one where the supplying organisation makes an acceptable profit which is agreeable to both parties, and understanding that supplier organisations which have the capability to provide Global Account Management services are large organisations listed on the Stock Exchange and therefore have a responsibility to their stakeholders and shareholders alike to deliver against certain metrics which include profitability. This is an environment and set of requirements familiar to client organisations as the majority are also listed on the same Stock Exchanges as the supplier organisations and understand the associated requirements this brings.

This viewpoint was raised during the interviews, with two such examples from Executives 12 and 13:

“How do you make sure that you have a contract where you as a supplier can actually make a profit? The worst thing that can happen is to have a supplier who doesn't make a profit” (Executive 12).

“Personally, I think that if you are on a third-party vendor side, of course you have to have some sort of sales in your bones, I understand that you are not talking with me to save some money and then say to your boss, hey, I saved so much for my client and we lost so many millions for us” (Executive 13).

4.2.3. Culture

Several dimensions of culture are important to a client organisation when selecting a global supply partner. These include the impact of geographical cultures across local countries, regional cultures and global cultural dimensions. In addition to understanding countries around the world and across the client organisation's globally distributed portfolio, there is a need to understand the client organisation. This was most frequently mentioned during the interviews in the context of culture, as was the cultural compatibility with supply partner organisations. This strength of sentiment was shared extensively and elaborated on by several participants. Executive 14 compares the supply partner selection process to being no different from hiring direct team members:

“I don't think people realise in the contracting world that the decision makers on the interview panel rarely ever read the brochures. The procurements folks' job is to get it from the 15 people to the five you interview, but you were interviewing as if you were interviewing for employees. These are the people you would see face to face, you were interested in the director and the people with accountability for that account would they be available, did they understand your business, could they flex, do they fit culturally?” (Executive 14).

Executive 3 warns that ignoring the influence and the importance of organisational cultures and cultural differences can result in the failure of both organisations:

“You may meet somewhere in the middle occasionally, but there are some core values in people's culture and in business culture that you will not change, so you have to be able to adapt and understand why events happen, what and how you then react to

those events. If you look at where businesses have failed it is down to the fact that they underestimated the cultural differences, that you have to adapt, and in most cases, you have to adapt to the culture, the culture will not adapt to you” (Executive 3).

The importance of a cultural understanding of the client organisation was cited by the interview participants. Executive 7 highlights that successful supply partners appear to be more part of the client organisation than their own supplier organisation – they become more of an ambassador of the client organisation than their own, allowing the client to benefit from outsourcing on a global basis of non-core services to outsourcing experts, but at the same time maintaining the closeness of an in-house retained organisational structure. Executives 12 and 7 support this view and cite examples of the buying and supply organisation working side by side:

“The successful ones get it 100% right, the successful ones always get that right, they are actually more part of the political and the cultural ecosystem of the client than their own organisation, they actually act as a client as opposed to acting like a supplier” (Executive 7).

“The contracts I’ve seen where it works really well, it’s actually contracts where people end up working in the same office, so you have the global account manager sitting together with the head of facilities” (Executive 12).

Cultural alignment is clearly an important area for the buying organisation. However, achieving this is not easy. The difficulty of ensuring cultural compatibility cannot be underestimated, particularly on a global basis, when such large workforces are

[constantly changing with inflows and outflows of employees, which increases the size of the challenge in maintaining culture as described by Executives 9 and 8:

“Cultural fit is undoubtedly the most important and it becomes increasingly important, which was specifically the reason for my organisation when awarding the deal, we believed that there was a good cultural fit. Culture feeds trust, but then some of it is down to individuals, which I think you can underestimate. But you’ve got to live with it, you can’t just talk about it, and again, in a people-driven business like any Facilities Management business, it’s super difficult because you have people coming and going” (Executive 9).

“I think cultural fit matters a lot and it goes to this idea around the trusted relationship with the account manager, because that’s often the person who creates the lens of the cultural fit. I also think it’s incredibly hard to establish and maintain on a global basis” (Executive 8).

When culture goes wrong, the impact of failing to achieve cultural alignment can prove costly for both parties. There are severe consequences when cultural differences are not effectively assessed at the outset, resulting either in failure to implement a new business relationship, or a failure to succeed. Several Executives were explicit in describing the pitfalls of neglecting or underestimating the time and investment required to achieve and maintain cultural alignment.

“Unless you understand the cultural nuances of the organisation and the country you are dealing with you will fail and you will fail spectacularly” (Executive 3).

“One of the things, this actually goes to a company level as well as account management level, you need to have the right cultural fit. I’ve always been fascinated by this, because perfectly good companies would fail because their character didn’t fit. You are then interested in the account manager, do they fit culturally?” (Executive 14).

Securing cultural alignment can be difficult – from the examples above it does not always prove successful and can veer off course when the cultural aspect or differences between the two organisations are underestimated by one or both parties. It is therefore important that the buying organisation assumes joint responsibility for the development of the cultural fit, as described by Executive 6:

“There are challenges that will happen and it’s about that cultural fit and that compatibility to say we are able to work together, and that compatibility I would say is the responsibility of both parties, not just the supplier” (Executive 6).

No further commentary is required to reinforce the importance placed upon the cultural dimension by buying organisations. The cultural dimension assumes a higher level of importance when set against the context of the competitive landscape of Global Account Management supplying organisations, each vying to secure the contract which is typically three to five years long with significant annual revenues. Whilst the stakes are high, participants explained that like-for-like differentiation between organisations can be slight, which elevates the importance of cultural compatibility, as explained by Executive 15:

“There is often relatively little to choose between the large-scale operators out there in terms of fundamentals, expertise, execution and capability, to some extent dots on the map geographically, and the sort of capabilities and service prospects are relatively well defined and there is little to choose between them. Therefore, outside of price, it’s really about cultural alignment and the ability to understand their business, then to really exert influence within the vendor partner in order to ensure that that client gets the very best possible talent and access to all the innovations, technology and platforms that’s available to them” (Executive 15).

4.2.4. Relationship

Whilst not a linear approach, it seems that often after the buying organisation has decided it is possible to partner with the Global Account Management supplier, and that they are culturally aligned, the attention turns to the initial and ongoing development and maintenance of their relationships at all levels within both the client and the supply partner organisation. This is an area considered highly important to the success of the two organisations in doing business together.

Various dimensions of relationships were raised by the interview participants, including the initial building of the relationship, the importance of relationship transparency, pro-activity in maintaining relationships, and how the relationships survive and thrive when things go wrong. The Global Account Management executive and their team maintaining strong relationships within their own organisation is also highly important. The initial stage of building the relationship was also highlighted by participants, including Executive 6, who places it as the most important attribute for a global account executive:

“Fundamentally, the number one attribute for a very strong global account executive is to build relationships at a senior level between both organisations” (Executive 6).

There is a general sense that ‘bad news does not age well’ and that the participants appreciate that things go wrong in business, particularly in operations. Developing relationships between the various levels of each organisation seems to establish a stronger footing when things go wrong. If they do, then these issues are typically not viewed as insurmountable as perhaps they would have been in the absence of a strong relationship. Executive 5 highlights this as an important factor:

“It was about relationship building position, if and when there is an issue, and it gets to that level, I feel like I’ve met you and have a sense of the cut of your cloth. I’ve got a sense of trust that if I call you with a problem in my institution or yours we’ll have a frank, forthright and appropriate discussion and go about dealing with it in an appropriate way, versus, I’ve been given the business card of someone I’ve never heard of before and I’m about to dump a world of pain on or ask for their help because we’re in a world of pain” (Executive 5).

“I would expect a global partner to bring us what their difficulties are with my organisation, because if I don’t know then I can’t manage it, so an open relationship I would say” (Executive 13).

The Integrated Facilities Management industry remains majority insourced with client organisations choosing to deliver these non-core services themselves. This creates a large addressable market for the supply organisations to pursue. Therefore, with this extensive commercial opportunity, supply companies will often prioritise prospective

client opportunities with the most attractive attributes. Of course, this includes financial metrics such as revenue, profit and cashflow profile. Another important factor relates to ease of doing business. This is recognised by the interview participants, who highlight the importance of developing the relationship mutually to initially attract supply companies to compete for the contract, beyond which they recognise the importance of developing the ongoing relationship, as raised by Executive 6 and 3 respectively:

“Sometimes you can be the worst buyer that no supplier wants to work with because you are so obnoxious and you’re not willing to work with them, or you have demand requirements that the suppliers can’t meet and they don’t want to partner” (Executive 6).

“If you don’t have a relationship with people, a business relationship with people, and you don’t understand the people or the people you are dealing with, and that’s a two-way street, you will not get the best out of your contracts” (Executive 3).

Maintaining ongoing development and investment in relationships at a senior level between the two organisations is viewed as critical in the interest of maintaining a longer-term relationship. This should be continuously developed rather than merely coming together for a competitive contractual event. Executive 5 highlights the contrasting approaches to servicing relationships throughout all phases of the contractual cycle:

“Then the times when there was a (competitive) event occasionally one would behave like a spoiled child, you know, why am I not getting what I deserve I should get because

you're getting all my business, and I know that I haven't spoken with you for two years, but you should know that I should get all your business, whereas others would nurture that relationship along the way, make sure their CEO met with us in Davos, make sure that their main client contact would invite us to their cocktail event in Davos, for example, where a lot of the C-Suites from different companies would attend, which is one thing I saw done really well by one or two firms” (Executive 5).

Executive 4 also raises the importance of ongoing development of relationships, that the compound benefit of the early-stage investment in the relationship becomes clearer with the passing of time:

“You'd find the relationship continued to move more and more towards autopilot, where everybody knew the capabilities of everyone else, everybody knew the boundaries of everyone else, and when situations changed and boundaries needed to change, it became relatively easy to adjust. That's when you know you're a well-managed account, when you can absorb situational changes without creating more confusion within the organisation” (Executive 4).

In addition to highlighting the importance of developing the relationship between the buying and supply organisation, the global account executive and their team maintaining strong relationships within their own organisation is highly important to successfully operating Global Account Management. This includes engaging with and facilitating senior relationships between both organisations, so that the country and functional relationships are well established. This ensures that the global account team can reach into their supply organisation and bring to bear its full capability in the

interest of the relationship between the supply and buying organisation, as observed by Executives 6, 7 and 9:

“Relationship building is critical, and I do feel that it’s a huge responsibility of the account executive to build the relationship, but the account executive should also facilitate top to top connections within the client organisations and the supplier organisation. The C-Suite of those companies should know each other, should pick up the phone and should call each other, should speak regularly I think. The account executive needs to be able to navigate their own company, the supplier, senior executives as well, to me that element of relationship building is absolutely critical” (Executive 6).

“Having well-established networks within their own organisation, but also within the client organisation, and having expansive relationships, are really important to facilitate at a higher level, so, getting CEOs together to make sure that all the relationships are serviced” (Executive 7).

“There’s an even more important area, which is, what support do you get from the global head office or the global leads? So, you can put an account lead in who has all the capabilities and all the human characteristics we just talked about, that would make you successful but if you’re not getting any help, you can’t, you’re not a one-man army” (Executive 9).

4.2.5. Trust

Establishing a trusting relationship is considered an essential component of compatibility and the importance of trust was raised several times by interview

participants. At a fundamental level it is important that the client organisation trusts that the Global Account Management supply partner can execute the services they have been engaged to deliver. This requires that the client organisation trusts that the supply partner can deliver these services to the agreed service specification, focusing on the ‘outcome’ areas rather than the ‘input’, as brought to the foreground by Executives 2, 7, 8 and 12:

“You’ve got to let the experts run it, otherwise why else would you pay for it, the more you aggregate things, whether it’s global or regional, the more important that becomes. The impact of meddling just becomes so much greater” (Executive 2).

“Another thing that I would say is trust, general trust, but underneath trust – you can actually be more specific about that – is the delivery of promises. Maybe it’s sometimes promise less and deliver more is a better tactic, than promising more and delivering less, but delivering on the promises is so important, on both sides. The supplier, but the client side as well, they both need to deliver on their promises” (Executive 7).

“I think they need to be trustworthy or trusted by the client, that is, trusted to bring the best of their firm and their organisation to that client organisation and they have to have shown a flexibility” (Executive 8).

“I would say it’s someone you know you can work with, the most important thing is chemistry, it’s a person you know you can trust, it’s a person who doesn’t betray your trust. It’s a person who doesn’t hide stuff, it’s a person who understands that you are both senior and you have to make decisions but you also information each other about if something happens, its only 3% of the time I am going to suggest something else, so

just go ahead and try it. So, to actually have that trust, that you are both allowed to try and make a mistake, but also know that people will tell you about that mistake or if something happens” (Executive 12).

The rhythm of business across such large global organisations and their countries, business units, and other constituent parts, can often be hectic. This can create an environment where each organisation could potentially ‘point score’, keeping a tally of events to lesser or greater levels of severity. Whilst this can take substantial resources to log and maintain, these events and who is to ‘blame’ are rarely ever clear cut. Developing a trusting relationship in this context is considered important, as observed by Executive 4:

“If you believe that you can develop a trust relationship with a service partner, everything else you can work out. Our client used to call it ‘you win some, you lose some’, really saying that there was compatibility and trust, so if I have to prevail on this point today you’ll probably prevail on the next point but you have to trust that it is going to be that way other than the client will prevail every day. There’s no trust in that, so, yes, cost is there, risk is there, service improvement is there, but trust is what drives the train in a real relationship. I differentiate that from just a vendor, there’s no trust in a vendor relationship, but it’s not designed to be a trust relationship and everybody knows it, versus an attempt to be a partner is founded on trust” (Executive 4).

Of course, this is not to suggest that the relationship will sail through without friction or points of disagreement. This would not be healthy for the relationship, or in the

interest of progress. These relationships can continue to develop and prosper from this foundation of trust, as observed by Executives 6, 2 and 11:

“I think it’s fundamental that there’s trust in the relationship between the global account executive and the supplier, as well as the client-side number one, because trust means that you are able to have very open communications. A strong relationship and a trusting relationship allows you the freedom and the space to have very open conversations. I think, to me, that trust is number one” (Executive 6).

“Partners never shaft each other for a start, so you can have robust conversations about things, but when it comes to it you don’t stitch each other up ever” (Executive 2).

“Having those partners alongside them who are trusted advisers as well, I think there is work to do there” (Executive 11).

For client organisations having outsourced non-core services to a supply partner, in most examples the client will be outsourcing to a supply partner with far greater expertise in the service line. In this instance, Executives 9 and 10 refer to the ultimate importance of achieving trusted adviser status with their supply partners:

“I think the biggest mistake that organisations make is to rely on a platform. That is easy to do, I guess that the whole Facilities Management industry thought that innovation and technology would be the thing of the future, I mean it’s just a hygiene factor, all global suppliers are trying to build a platform. I don’t care about the platform, the platform is something that is ever evolving, but your people and your

culture and the trust is essential. If I don't trust you, why would I care about your platform?" (Executive 9).

"It's a two-way thing, and if they are worth his or her salt, no manager should ever think they know everything, because they don't know anything to be honest, you need access to all the experts as quickly as possible, trusted advisors" (Executive 10).

4.3 Section 2 – Competency

4.3.1. Competency

This section focuses on the area of Competency and is broken in to six subsections – supply chain capability, leadership, leadership talent, scale, best practice and digital.

4.3.2. Supply chain capability

Over time, client organisations have increasingly prioritized their focus on activities which are core to their organisation and have moved towards reducing their own subject matter expertise within non-core areas. Consequently, this delayering and deskilling of their organisations, by reducing headcount and in some cases entire departments, has led to an increased requirement to engage with supply partner organisations who specialize in these non-core activities for the client organisation, but are core for the supply partner organisation. The Executives interviewed consistently raised the reduction in this competency within their own organisation as part of their intention when moving to a globally managed account, citing the importance of securing a supply partner with the required level of expertise and capability to provide these services effectively:

“The world has shifted significantly in the last decade, where there were thicker client internal teams sometimes executing non-core services themselves, because of the pressure on cost, the fact that these services are not core to most of the client’s businesses has increased the propensity to outsource” (Executive 15).

“I would like that person to be more knowledgeable than myself because that’s why I normally do outsource, because I normally have more knowledgeable people than myself leading it or driving it or managing it, because then I know that there will be continual growth and development in the area” (Executive 12).

“Certainly, from the centre, the more parties you’ve got to manage, the harder it is. But even within our client FM community, they were not really experts, they were very experienced through time and getting involved in this stuff, but they weren’t experts, so we quickly realised that we were not going to have anyone on our side to really drive it, create vision very much. Not at a technical level, so we actually needed other people to do it” (Executive 2).

“There has been this trend towards outsourcing, this explosion of outsourcing really in the last 10-20 years, and with that the client teams are becoming thinner and thinner and the reliance even on subject matter expertise within clients is becoming a luxury. As a consequence of that they need to partner more and more with these organisations and ensure alignment from a cultural point of view because these are becoming synthetic or virtual teams, rather than old money terms contracted vendors” (Executive 15).

‘If you are my strategic partner and I’ve outsourced most of my team to you, I’m reliant on you to bring the industry to me, not just your company’s slice of the industry. When you go out there to the biggest strategic relationships, you’ve got to bring the industry to me, not just your organisation’ (Executive 5).

When considering the global element of Global Account Management and supply partner capability, it is acknowledged by the participants that any individual supply partner cannot be considered truly global. Therefore, their capability would have to be gained by extension through other partners, otherwise known as sub-suppliers, and contained within the Global Account Management model as observed by Executives 4 and 6:

“In any organisation, it became a question of balance – what was the trade-off between selecting an organisation that had a very strong global management structure and could be expected to manage partners, versus who had the largest global reach, and you minimise the number of partners that you had to take on” (Executive 4).

“Global doesn’t mean that you are the same level globally, it just means that you have a global footprint, just having a global footprint doesn’t make you the best in every country” (Executive 6).

The interview participants acknowledged that supply organisations possess capability and competency which, whilst non-core to the buying organisation, are core to them, whilst also being realistic that the global reach of each supply organisation was not completely global in any case. In addition to these observations, the participants also believed that supplying organisations selling beyond their existing capabilities is a

frequent occurrence, in other words supply companies can sell better than they can execute. Despite there being a large market opportunity for Facilities Management services companies to expand their business, with many client organisations continuing to deliver non-core services, the marketplace continues to be a highly competitive environment despite being a low margin industry, particularly where client contracts are in their third or fourth generation. These factors are in-part potentially responsible for supply companies involved in the highly competitive bid process committing beyond their current capabilities, a characteristic observed by participants 11 and 6:

“I think they are pretty good at selling this type of stuff, although I’ve never seen one of these global sales ever come through to full fruition, they don’t deliver as well as they sell, it would be great to be able to say, you know what, you sold this and that is what you actually delivered on the ground” (Executive 11).

“Commission is based on selling and winning the deal and they will do whatever it takes to create a sales construct that can help them win the deal. Then operations or the platform comes in and says, ‘We can’t deliver that for that price’, ‘Who sold this capability?’ – now this is not doable. I feel that many times in my experience what was sold was never delivered” (Executive 6).

4.3.3. Leadership

The leadership capabilities of a global outsourcing supply partner are key – specifically that of the global account leadership team responsible for interfacing with both the client organisation and the supply partner organisation. This area of

importance was frequently raised during the interviews, especially the competency of the global account executive leadership:

“I would pick leadership over specialist any day of the week” (Executive 9).

“You go from commodity to your engineered products and then you get into services which really comes down to people. It’s the people, their capability, it’s their ability to perform, it’s the leadership” (Executive 6).

Several interview participants offered their thoughts on what makes up successful leadership characteristics in a global account manager. These include advanced relationship building ability, that they are highly analytical as well as possessing the ability to simplify and communicate the complex while also having the ability to leverage a broad range of skills across extensive and diverse teams with empathy.

“I would say that it all depends on the people. I think it is general leadership styles of those people, especially the service industry leadership, that really matters, with high talent, impactful personal skills, they are almost like the CEOs of the company. The people who can lead operations teams and also manage clients and clients’ expectations, they are excellent at building relationships and relations, the successful ones are highly analytical besides being extremely good at communicating complex things to people on the street, so their communication skills are extremely advanced” (Executive 7).

“I think a good global account team is able to leverage the skills within the team from across the world and learn from the different cultures. A great team actually has lots

of different people, cultures, types of personas, who all bring a broad vision of what they can do and bring everything to the table” (Executive 1).

“I think the most important characteristic is empathy. It is massively important and to be successful at that role you’ve got to be empathetic, that’s the first one, because this is a people-driven business” (Executive 9).

4.3.4. Leadership talent

The aggregation of service lines across a globally distributed account supports the attraction of talent which otherwise may not have been available had the client organisation gone to market in smaller contractual lots either by country or regionally. Going global and making it “*big and interesting*” is an advantage to attracting leadership talent to Global Account Management, as observed by Executives 12 and 5:

“If you make it big and interesting, you normally also get the talent and the talent more focused on working together with you. If you want to get the best knowledge into your organisation you really want to get the A-Team and you normally only get the A-Team if you make yourself relevant for the global companies. That’s why, of course, when you bundle something you get better leverage and you get better buying power and all of that, but you also get access to the A-Team and that’s why I think it becomes really relevant and really exciting” (Executive 12).

“I think if you can get access to the best talent – or are you getting the average talent put into those relationships” (Executive 5).

The Executives state that, if they were asked to place in order of importance, they would rank people over the platform. This was a recurring theme raised throughout the interviews and stated explicitly by Executives 9 and 15:

“I would undoubtedly take team over platform any day of the week, and I would say that the team, if not tenfold, then maybe even 100-fold, is more important than the platform” (Executive 9).

“There is a very small group of vendors that can really deliver the Global Account Management services to these organisations. Most have a platform, there’s not a great deal of differentiation between the platforms and all have invested significantly and continue to invest significantly in those platforms. The reality is, each of these organisations has levels of sophistication which become less of a differentiator in my opinion, and genuinely, that increasingly the delta is access to talent, and the confidence that they are going to have the right talent, the best talent on their account, so I would argue that people are more important than platform” (Executive 15).

The importance of experienced people with the requisite expertise who are engaged to deliver Global Account Management services was a recurring theme throughout the data, as described within Section 1 of this chapter. This is an essential area, reinforced through the lens of leadership talent, when describing that the right leadership and people can actually overcome challenges in the face of poor contracts and systems. Conversely, good systems and contracts have been observed to fail by Executives 11 and 14 when the leadership talent has not been sufficient:

“I see really poor contracts get dealt with well because they have the right people on the account. Vice versa, I’ve seen really good contracts delivered really badly because they haven’t had the right leadership on the account team” (Executive 11).

“I think clients want both, but if they had to choose between them, they want the people more than they want the system. A good, experienced person can overcome a poor system but a good system can’t overcome bad people” (Executive 14).

A recurring theme within the research data is the necessity for the globally managed accounts to be delivered through competent leadership talent and teams. However, the Executives reported that this creates a challenge for the industry, with a scarcity of leadership talent available in the marketplace, leading to issues in sourcing and retention.

“You can’t have one without the other, you would be stuffed from a buying point of view with a sophisticated corporate, but I think the limiting factor is people. There are still relatively few extremely competent account directors out there and experienced account directors, its very difficult for clients to hold onto the, when they get them. I would say a criticism that a number of clients become very frustrated, having procured a partner vendor, it may have been promised the very best talent and either that’s there, but only in the short term, or there are changes that are forced upon them which they hadn’t expected, or indeed they find themselves not being able to attract the talent that they were promised because big accounts come along or the next big thing, which distracts the particular vendor and talent gets moved around accordingly” (Executive 15).

“I’ve struggled with finding generally good ADs (Account Directors), I think that’s partly because investment hasn’t been put into them by their companies, they tend to come from an operating background, so they tend to only know operations” (Executive 11).

4.3.5. Scale

The benefits of scale were mentioned throughout the interview process and are therefore cited in the various sections of this chapter, including the strength of balance sheets, as observed by Executive 6:

“Probably the biggest differentiator, and the assumption that you make, is that bigger companies have stronger balance sheets and can invest more in technology than smaller players because they don’t have the same access to capital that they can deploy towards technology” (Executive 6).

In addition to the economic benefit, including access to capital to fund investments, which may be out of reach for smaller companies if the client organisation were to source on a country-by-country basis rather than a globally managed account, a number of participants referred to this scale benefit in areas such as innovation and talent, as referred to by Executive 7:

“Global scale brings a lot of progressive services, progressive processes, progressive thinking and even leadership into how things need to be. Resources also include technology and digital processes and processes that can be leveraged, even things like R&D budgets – a local company may not have things like an R&D budget that they

can leverage and contribute to the dissemination of knowledge across the service”
(Executive 7).

One participant highlighted the scale dynamics between the client organisation and the supplying Global Account Management organisation. The scale difference between the two organisations were often incomparable, with the client organisation often being considerably larger at an enterprise level. This is a relevant dynamic when considering the importance of partnership highlighted throughout the data – partnership can imply equality within the relationship.

Executive 2 highlights the scale difference that would always create an imbalance through that lens:

“Actually, they (the supply organisation) were not that big from our perspective at all. That was probably the one thing where we were never going to get alignment with, in that the value of the numbers was different from the different partners, you talk about being a partnership of equals, on that ultimate financial level we were never going to get there just because they were different sizes” (Executive 2).

4.3.6. Best practice

Access to best practice is cited as a key feature of Global Account Management over an in-house and in-sourced alternative, through access to a wider pool of industry knowledge as mentioned by Executive 5 (Section 4.3.2) as well as the ease of sharing best practice from one country to another. As demonstrated by the quotes below, several Executives express a firmly-held view of the important benefits which Global

Account Management can bring to accessing best practice, wider industry learning and the intangible best in class knowledge:

“One of the big benefits of this role is that you can bring in learning from other global clients into an account and spread them, or you can bring in learning from one country and spread them across the globe into other countries as well. That, to me, is a great characteristic of a global account and a global account executive, a key is to share those learnings” (Executive 6).

This is not to say that the transfer of best practice is necessarily automatic. As noted by the participants, it is an area of importance and, at the same time, an area which would benefit from significant improvement. This was one of the main sources of frustration expressed by the interview participants. As they reflected on their experience with Integrated Facilities Management global accounts, they made it clear that this area of best practice sharing was often deficient and one which has some way to go to reach an acceptable level.

“It never ceases to amaze me how long it takes just to get to the level where supply partners, who already have best practice at X, Y and Z customer, are not able to transfer that knowledge or not even tell you” (Executive 11).

“One potential weakness is that we may not always have the same support outside of the account with everything built within the account. I don’t see the strength that I see from some of our other strategic suppliers of what they have on other accounts, and how they share best practice, they’ve got the tools, we can do external benchmarking with other clients” (Executive 1).

4.3.7. Digital

Technological advances have created an opportunity to drive innovation and efficiencies amongst other benefits achieved through procuring services on a global basis, as opposed to selecting a variety of suppliers with different approaches and IT systems. Access to capital for the investment in such a digital platform is also considered far more likely from larger multinational companies. The Executives referred to the benefits of a digital approach on numerous occasions during the interviews, creating a platform which provides consistent digital access at a lower unit cost, particularly for those smaller country businesses which otherwise could not afford to make investment:

“Technology – and put it in a place where the price does not matter anymore, because the people in India and China are not going to be willing to pay the same price for the technology as the people in the UK and US, so that is something I think people need to think about. For me, one of the biggest benefits of global suppliers could be this element around technology as well as data and insight from the data” (Executive 6).

“I think there are a lot of companies that have grasped the technology aspect and are spending more and more dollars, and I think that was overdue, it was behind as an industry in terms of serving its customer but I think that’s changing” (Executive 11).

In addition to the efficiency benefits of a global digital platform, there is also a recognised benefit of the consistent approach which digital provides, with several Executives referring to this as one of the key benefits of a global account approach:

“Focusing on compliance and regulation management, technology enables me to do that. I would rather go with a global partner than 10 different partners with 10 different technology platforms so, to me, perhaps that element” (Executive 6).

“There is very often little enforcement of the global objectives which is, we want the out the box product so it makes it very easy and we get the power of that. We can end up with mass customisation which dilutes the power, that is something we are trying to scale back, but clients are very persuasive and that does happen” (Executive 10).

One participant highlighted some of the benefits of receiving a digital platform from a Global Account Management organisation. Some also observed the benefit to the supply organisation of driving efficiency improvements through a digital platform in addition to the benefits to the client organisation:

“You make a lot more money for your shareholders, and pay people better bonuses, if you actually make what you currently do a heck of a lot more efficient and digital. But to make it digital you’ve got to completely change your business model, you can no longer make so many decisions locally” (Executive 5).

As previously discussed (Section 5.2.1), participants commented that, whilst Global Account Management companies provide services to a global portfolio, none of these companies possess a footprint across all of the countries in the world. Therefore, there will be a requirement for these countries to partner with other providers, in which case Executive 8 refers to the benefit which a digital platform provides:

“I think this whole idea of marketplaces and mission platforms is founded on their capacity for digital to help with that, so if I am going to deliver in hundreds or thousands of locations around the world but can’t reasonably have my own footprint as an account management organisation there, digital allows me to essentially take processes which can be routinised” (Executive 8).

Globally listed companies often possess greater balance sheet resources, particularly when compared to smaller country-specific organisations. These capital resources create investment options including technology and digital platform development and maintenance. Executive 7 says:

“Global accounts would bring more resources, are able to leverage more resources, including technology, so a local company wouldn’t have their computer-aided facility management (CAFM) system, but a global account would have full access to the licensing and all their licences and they can equip their people, the chefs, the maintenance or service personnel, with mobiles, handhelds, apps, tools, gadgets and everything. Local companies may not be able to afford that or produce that Management Information (MI), whereas the global companies can” (Executive 7).

A globally managed approach highlights the benefit of available capital compared to the local multi-supplier approach. A symptom of the low margin profile of the industry, as discussed previously, can mean that available funding for this investment in such digital assets has been scarce within the property industry at large and even within the larger global organisations, with Facilities Management further behind relative to other property areas, as expressed by one of the Executives:

“This industry has really struggled, as they have traditionally been a low margin business, proving to be extremely difficult as they don’t have the cash to invest. Manufacturing was 10 to 15 years ahead of the property industry. Over that last five and six years, we’ve begun to see companies make some investment. If I look at the other two areas of property, construction and property transactions, they are high margin, they have had more money and you actually can see far more digitisation within their spheres of influence” (Executive 14).

With the short supply of funding for digital investments in the outsourcing industry resulting from the low margin profile of the business, participants observed that there remains further opportunity to access scale benefits by drawing from the resources of the Global Account Management organisation – particularly when compared to the client organisation either developing the software for non-core activity for their single use, or by paying a premium for an off the shelf product, making this purchase without the greater purchasing power of an outsourcing organisation. This is described by Executives 10 and 12:

“Digital and technological factors are huge because what we found was, increasingly, it was difficult to get the budget and the focus internally. Then you’ve got service providers who I can actually get the things that I need and I don’t have to go through my IT organisation that is stretched and also doesn’t really understand what FM does, here are the experts that do understand what I do and they have got some toys and they will give them to me for free” (Executive 10).

“Everyone is talking about digitisation, and we have to do it, and we have some cool maps about locations and where we are but it’s, how do we get this into Facilities

Management? From my point of view, we are the cost centre and it's difficult to get that funding, I think it's easier for the profit centre to say, okay, we do this investment and then we work with this client, how do we combine all of this into the bricks, bits and brains” (Executive 12).

4.4 Section 3 – Corporate Governance

4.4.1. Corporate Governance

Section 3 consists of areas associated with Corporate Governance and is divided into six subsections out of the total of 22 – data, risk, compliance, simplification, consistency and transparency.

4.4.2. Data

Participants discussed the importance of access to globally consistent data which supports their organisations in multiple areas, including decision making and governance. The consistent tracking of such data through a globally managed account provides increased transparency and visibility of the client's property portfolio, the alternative of contracting with multiple country and national contracts became more difficult to gain consistent data. It was viewed that by adopting a global buying position that the consistent data unlocks further business benefits, including accurate forecasting, benchmarking and fact-based management, the importance of which Executive 15 refers to:

“Having one central source of data through one partner rather than multiple partners” (Executive 15).

This is a highly important area for clients and data within the Facilities Management industry has risen steeply in importance over recent years with Executive 14 observing a significant change in focus during the working week:

“I spend two-thirds of my week dealing with data management. I think I spent practically no time at all three or four years before, it was Excel spreadsheets, people holding data on centralised laptops and all sorts of things. That’s okay, but as the technical solutions became more sophisticated and the demands from the other areas of the company became more sophisticated, then the property departments began to be forced to look at what your data quality is, how you make best use of that data”
(Executive 14).

Access to data on a global basis is a powerful tool utilised by clients to engage with other departments within their organisations through the creation of transparency. Transparency created by accessing data in a consistent format allows clients to provide perspective relative to other countries and regions in their global organisations, as well as monitoring and forecasting performance across cost and non-financial areas, as Executives 1 and 2 observe:

“The bank is very much driven by tracking its costs, so being able to provide us with clear transparent data on what we’re spending on Corporate Real Estate and Facilities Management is really important, so that we know exactly how to forecast what our costs are going to be. We can then basically manage the business expectations, so the data and Management Information are extremely important”
(Executive 1).

“We were looking for something that was easy to manage, that had good data and data at lots of levels. One of the greatest benefits for global accounts by the way was a globally consistent financial ledger. Globally consistent financial data, but also data on other metrics, particularly on critical facilities, uptime, downtime, inside, outside, you know, a whole ton of stuff, so you would have data and it would be credible and decently presented in a way that you can use with your internal stakeholders” (Executive 2).

The importance of trust was previously discussed (Section 4.2.5). This also applies to the provision of data between both supply and client organisations, as client organisations often must trust that the information contained within the data is accurately invested, as the basis to create balanced insights capable of shaping the management perspective:

“There’s so many ways to filter data, that’s where the trust comes back in, in that one has to trust their partner that only appropriate filters have been applied and therefore the data is what the data is. I’ve seen cases where inappropriate filters get applied, I’d use an example like leaving out a country from a survey. There’s also knowing the data and then there’s putting a management perspective around the data, instead of you just flinging numbers at us and saying here’s the data, it’s being able to offer a practical perspective gained from the data” (Executive 4).

Participants said that they find the insight gained helpful when making management decisions across their wider enterprise, particularly as it involves benchmarking comparisons which help set their organisational data in the context of both-country comparisons across the client’s global portfolio. This benchmarking extends to other

industry comparisons, providing a wider perspective on the performance of the global client portfolio, which would not be as readily available through a multi-supplier approach:

“We also collected data in every location differently, we compared apples with oranges, we didn’t know what we were comparing it to, so we said that if we create this one platform with this one vendor, we also create a platform where we can see what we are doing and can create a benchmark where we can see what we are doing, Italy with Spain or wherever” (Executive 13).

Participants also commented that, whilst consistent data is closer towards their ideal position, a significant area for improvement remains and the industry has some way to go to improve the quality of its ability to benchmark data itself:

“One of the things that frustrates me the most about FM is the industry is not very good at benchmarking itself right. Players in the industry are not very good at benchmarking themselves in the industry in some respects” (Executive 9).

Data will continue to be a valued component within Global Account Management in support of both the client organisation and the supply partner being able to take management decisions based on the current and future performance of the Facilities Management portfolio. Several Executives refer to the part which this aspect plays in management of global accounts:

“The interplay between data, process and risk is inherent within those decisions, and I imagine that if you strip out a particular line of service such as food, that would be

true on a global basis, but I would think it's even more the case when you are talking about IFM” (Executive 15).

“I think that technology is helping that change a little bit for me, that's one of the big benefits of going to a single supply chain solution, you get consistency of data if nothing else. I think that's really important for corporations who had good local service providers, they were not able to aggregate the data real time in a meaningful format, and actually, one of the big things that was done as part of the whole transformation to a global account was to get the data to a level where it was good quality so the future decisions could be made” (Executive 11).

“You cannot manage a global account without data. What is the right data to measure the performance of the contract, even if it's a subjective contract – so, for instance, it's a subjective service, how do you feel about the quality of it, even if it's a subjective measurement, how do you put your finger on the pulse in order to have the data to manage that client account and spot the issues?” (Executive 3).

4.4.3. Risk

As described earlier in this chapter, transparency is an essential constituent to the client organisation selecting Global Account Management. A significant factor behind the importance of transparency is the visibility of risk, which otherwise would likely remain undetected and therefore left unmitigated. In the case of Integrated Facilities Management services being delivered through a number of different providers across multiple platforms, it would most likely make this far more difficult to identify and manage. Most of the Executives raise this as a key benefit and requirement of Global Account Management:

“Companies can bring in, I think, the level of consistency in operations, consistency in processes, and now especially consistency in technology, which helps mitigate the risk burden” (Executive 6).

“Regulations that a client focuses on are normally about their core business – banking, manufacturing quality, health and safety – all of those are core to that client’s business, you’re outsourcing what is non-core, so in this case, food services or cleaning services or mechanical maintenance is not a core service for you, you’ll have your risk around financial transparency” (Executive 3).

“Clients were basically outsourcing to manage the sites effectively from a health and safety risk point of view, that’s our way to get that under control” (Executive 5).

“No longer having to deal with multiple interfaces, multiple interactions and multiple levels of risk that they need to deal with. But they could manage those risks more jointly with their own relationships which I think should open a different area and subject about GAM deals, because risk management really is an important part of setting up a GAM structure” (Executive 7).

4.4.4. Compliance

Closely associated with the topic of risk, client organisations are subject to strict industry regulatory compliance requirements which vary depending on where the organisation is headquartered and the jurisdiction is listed. Additionally, as multi-national organisations, they are also subject to legal and compliance requirements in each of the country jurisdictions where they operate.

A good example is banking and financial services clients, for which regulatory compliance standards have increased since the 2008 global financial crisis, requiring banking and financial organisations to comply with standards within individual countries and regions where they operate, as well as global industry compliance standards. There are clear links with other topics raised by the interview participants, for example, the importance of data which is required by the client organisation to then be in a position to share this with regulators. Compliance with these regulatory requirements is a strict governance issue:

“I think compliance is an absolute must and one of the reasons why we went to a global solution” (Executive 11).

“It’s not only about relationships, but the structure of the global account, where the compliance can be managed by more competent personnel sitting in functional excellence in a supplier organisation, whose only job day in and day out is providing those compliance services” (Executive 7).

4.4.5. Simplification

For client organisations selecting a global account sourcing solution, a significant element of simplification is achieved by this route, which also makes way for resource efficiencies within the client organisation as the complexity is simplified:

“They should have to put the management structure in place as part of the bid, which means that you have to have a leaner management team on your side of the fence. I end up managing one contract through a single point of contact who can then feed out

to his 20 people, and I don't have to try and get 20 different contracts on the call to explain why one is or is not performing” (Executive 3).

“If you outsource a large percentage, but you have multiple providers, it becomes a management headache in-house” (Executive 14).

The simplification benefits to clients receiving a globally managed account are illustrated in a simple analogy, according to one Executive:

“Basically, it looks like a big red telephone on your desk. If you've got any issue at any time, you can pick up the phone to a single person and they will resolve and understand this and get you to where you need to be. That's what it looks like, it's the easy, simple button, it takes care of your problems” (Executive 10).

4.4.6. Consistency

Appropriate levels of consistency are viewed as important by the participants, who recognise that buying through a Global Account Management model can increase consistency and consequently reduce the level of risk to the client organisation. The benefit of consistency is referenced across numerous areas relating to this study, as this consistency can support normalisation in associated areas of importance, including cost, risk, data, reporting, Management Information, governance, service and quality:

“Consistency of process, consistency of knowing how my risks are being mitigated by the company, that the company feels that this is one way we're doing it and it's the best” (Executive 6).

“Consistency of service, if you look at management of a global service, if you take it across 20 countries then that’s 20 contracts that you have to manage as a beginning, so therefore you need to have a management structure for 20 contracts in there and then you are herding sheep and cattle for want of a better term, to try and maintain that global standard which potentially you are contracted to deliver through your contract as a provider” (Executive 3).

The majority of data reports that consistency is viewed as a wide-ranging benefit to the client organisation. Some of the participants comment that, whilst this consistency is highly useful, discretion should be applied. In areas where consistency attracted a cautionary note by two of the participants, for example, quality level standards being consistent across countries, the same quality can be delivered through differing service specifications:

“I think there is also a danger in being too inflexible and overly enthusiastic on standards, things that perhaps don’t matter, I had a sense in – not my area of expertise at all, so I don’t really stray into it – I had a sense of that in some of the engineering world, for example” (Executive 2).

“I think about global buying decisions, it’s really about decisions to partner with global suppliers who can meet your needs in the environment, where you know your needs are not the same in every environment which you operate in” (Executive 6).

4.4.7. Transparency

A theme running through the topics raised by the research participants covered within this section – data, risk, compliance, simplification and consistency – is that they each

require transparency if they are to benefit the client organisation. This theme features repeatedly within quotes in this chapter. The data suggests that maintaining transparency across the client organisation's geographies is a beneficial strength of Global Account Management for clients. Several executives submitted this as an area which provides visibility across their span of organisational control. One participant explains the importance of transparency at length:

“A big strength of a global account is that you have the people, the teams, the processes all in place, and actually make your risks transparent so you don't have those sleepless nights. It is so much easier to see what's going on at a country level, it's one person that you can go to and it's very quick. If you had multiple suppliers, you would first need to figure out what it was, who is delivering that service, who's my point of contact, they would have different types of reporting, different systems, different MI, you've got to learn what that's all about. Having a single supplier and a single account does make it so much easier to understand what is going on around the world, it's consistent reporting so that everyone is comparing apples with apples. If you have multiple suppliers, you've got apples being compared with pears that have been bought on a Thursday, not on a Wednesday” (Executive 1).

A lack of transparency can become a source of frustration for the participants who have experienced it. Given that this transparency crosses each of the areas noted in previous sections, and is therefore extensive, a significant blind spot can be created for the client organisation, whilst at the same time leaving a key buying criterion of Global Account Management unfulfilled:

“The biggest learning I’ve taken away, and the biggest issue that I’ve got with my supplier at the moment, is a lack of transparency and honesty. That is not because they are trying to be dishonest, it’s a lack of openness” (Executive 9).

“I’ve come across a number of cases – both at my current and previous firm – where the local management team were very unhappy with the supplier’s performance, and you learn about it too late in the Global Account Management. You’ve learned it through the wrong channels, that the performance was pretty bad, and by the time you intervene it’s too late” (Executive 6).

4.5 Section 4 – Commercial Outcomes

4.5.1 Commercial Outcomes

Section 4 describes Commercial Outcomes and is separated into transition, transformation, continuous improvement, innovation, customer service satisfaction and cost.

4.5.2. Transition

The theme of initially transitioning to a globally managed account was acknowledged by two of the participants, who reflected on the numerous complex characteristics across a geographically distributed portfolio, highlighting the stages of maturity which an account moves through. Two participants describe a situation where lots of data and information is unknown, whilst at the same time the partnership between the buying and supplier organisation is at the early stages of development:

“A well-managed account rarely starts out as well managed. Inevitably there are growing pains associated with learning who the client is, who your own organisation

is, and then who your new partners are and what that does is that creates an environment where easily the first six months, maybe longer, one has to accept an element of confusion and an element of uncertainty. It will not be well managed from day one, there are too many unknowns that have to be understood” (Executive 4).

“You need to go through the maturity journey and it really matters a lot if you go for first generation outsourcing” (Executive 12).

4.5.3. Transformation

Further to the transition of a global services estate to a globally managed account, the notion of transforming the account rather than maintaining a steady ongoing position was conveyed as an important element of Global Account Management. This includes guiding the global account portfolio to a transformative improved position, rather than if it otherwise remained as a selection of country by country or regional accounts:

“It needs to be transformative, so you know that if you stand still you are going to go backwards. It’s got to be able to help paint the picture and show me insights into the future and what the decisions are that I need to be making now that will put us in a good place” (Executive 10).

“The platform needs to keep evolving as the needs keep evolving, that we learned in Covid” (Executive 6).

Transforming the account is considered key to the continuous development of the global model through the Global Account Management stages, a point raised on several occasions. One Executive considers this to be one of the main priority areas of

Global Account Management, partly as the client organisation core services portfolio is required to transform in step with the core organisational requirements and market forces. Therefore, the Facilities Management services, as part of the real estate organisation, should transform at the same pace:

“You’re often buying the expertise around the capability of transforming what you have and I’ve seen that in many contracts. It’s quite interesting that many of the people that come into the account structure are what I’d call BAU (business as usual) people, these are people that are used to delivering Facilities Management services on a day-to-day basis, but for me that’s almost a given, you’ve got to do that, but what is lacking often is the ability to transform this account from ‘here to there’ ” (Executive 11).

Focus on the transformative nature of the service lines within the Global Account Management model essentially moves the global service line further up the value curve. This results in a higher-level contribution to the overall success of the client organisation, as Executive 11 observes:

“Where part of the remit is to reduce the portfolio by 50% over the next three or four years, that takes a lot of thinking about how to do that over that time period, because a lot of that legacy space, particularly the large campuses, and the ability, you’re sort of buying in the ability to do that. So, all the senior guys got together and my team got together to monitor the progress against the transformation goal, because this is the stuff that delivers the big bucks” (Executive 11).

4.5.4. Continuous improvement

Ongoing continuous improvement as a characteristic of Global Account Management is viewed as important – nurturing the account and its service lines for the longer term, rather than seeking short term successes which are perhaps not in the long-term interest. This longer-range view becomes possible when the sum of the country parts is combined to create a far larger material account on a global basis:

“Taking a longer-term view for GAM, so it’s not just about this quarter’s earnings or the next month’s earnings, it’s looking at decades” (Executive 5).

Furthermore, in addition to continuous improvement as a beneficial constituent of Global Account Management, it is recognised that the client organisation can move closer towards optimising the benefit of outsourcing globally when the supplying organisation proactively progresses continuous improvement:

“Continuous improvement is a great characteristic and if you do this without your client knocking on the door and asking for it, you are proactively managing that and taking the client to the next level without the client even realising that there is a need or a gap” (Executive 6).

“Then the real icing on the cake is that its proactivity comes and rings for you and says, hey, I’ve got something really exciting, so it mitigates, and it also innovates” (Executive 10).

4.5.5. Innovation

Innovation as part of ongoing continuous improvement is an important factor for clients, as a product of aggregating the country lots into a considerably larger global portfolio. As previously discussed, the scale benefit can also apply to innovation, as the larger global accounts are higher profile and hold a greater material importance to the supply organisation, attaining a higher prioritisation in the queue when either co-creating or deploying innovation:

“I would add that, in addition to efficiency and consistent experience, you are trying to get and harness the best innovation. If you are a large partner to top quality companies and have a broad geographic remit, you should be able to get to a place where you are seeing the best innovation, the best technology, the latest thinking out of those organisations, versus, you are in their bronze tier of clients, therefore it will get to you in two years’ time” (Executive 5).

“Ability to drive innovation, so contracting with a global organisation should allow you to drive innovation as opposed to contracting with four regional – even splitting the model and saying, okay, I’ll go with the one company in one region and two others in the other regions. Well, in terms of the management of those suppliers, that would just be difficult, three suppliers who have a different culture, a culture which perhaps doesn’t fit with our company culture, having to manage that” (Executive 9).

Innovation can occur as a result of gaining the transparency mentioned earlier in this chapter. Before inventing something new, the process of gaining transparency of ideas and practices already taking place within countries would not have been identified for scalable potential without creating links within a globally managed account:

“Innovation matters, for that new, neat and more progressive service is more important, it doesn’t need to be new, but it does need to be progressive. Multi-site innovation across and going a couple of layers up in scale, then suddenly at a global level you start to see practice across different countries, different techniques, methodologies, methods in delivery of services, the innovation of technology and the processes start getting quite comparable one site to another site. Continual improvement and continually challenging how things work” (Executive 7).

4.5.6. Customer service and satisfaction

Throughout the data collection process of this study, participants referred to the client as the customer – in other words, the corporate officer representing the client organisation. The term customer was also used to refer to the end user within the building or the building occupant, in other words, these are the employees of the client organisation. Typically, this population was referred to in relation to their satisfaction with services within the buildings which the services were designed around, the focus being on their satisfaction levels. One Executive provides insight into the detailed level of analysis which would be undertaken within a globally managed account to correlate the key drivers influencing overall satisfaction. He explains that, on the surface, the causal impact of apparent satisfaction or dissatisfaction could go undiagnosed, in addition to the analysis of satisfaction data detecting patterns across countries in support of the overall improvements:

“That point I’m sure is still lost on many people, and they’ll say, ‘Good grief, the food satisfaction was only 50%, what are you doing about food, get in there and do something better’, except that you’re never going to get above X% and actually, if you

fix the air conditioning and clean the toilets twice per day, for your extra money that you spend doing that, you would have a far greater impact on the global satisfaction of your staff (building occupants). Those sorts of, that was a learning for me, the analysis you could do to drive that, did it really show that sort of stuff? I understand that – here’s some money to go and clean the toilets more often” (Executive 2).

One Executive describes the relationship between a well-run globally managed account and the level of the customer and end user satisfaction:

“Bad news doesn’t age well, and no surprises, if you look at it from that viewpoint, that’s what you want out of a global account, the bad news is managed promptly and quickly, there are no surprises and customer satisfaction as well, end user satisfaction, is high” (Executive 3).

4.5.7. Cost

The Executives said that cost benefits would come from aggregating their spend through a globally managed account rather than taking a national or regional procurement approach. Cost benefits were seemingly almost taken for granted by the participants, with more focus placed on the value of the services as was discussed in previous sections. One Executive describes an example from the pharmaceuticals industry, which in isolation would appear to be a costly decision yet would return a great value to the client organisation:

“We’ve done some work on measuring labs, labs by default are inefficient, labs have a lot of space with very little going on at any one time, with lots of equipment, millions of dollars doing nothing, as well as often what we call write-up space – scientists do

an experiment and go off into the write-up space and some would say they can do what they want because they are the life blood of the company, anyone that delivers a top selling drug that's worth billions, what's a little bit of real estate, but it comes back to this productivity, doesn't it? If you could make the R&D one per cent more productive, that equates to zillions of dollars' worth of more sales" (Executive 11).

One Executive describes a symptom of the high-volume low margin nature of the Facilities Management industry, believing that rather than reduce margins further, investment should be made to gradually increase the level of service, resulting in margin accretion for the supply company:

"I think one of the upsides of going to a global single source solution is that technology as well goes with that. I think the Global Account Management company has always been good at basic execution, the weakness behind that is the race to the bottom, the undercutting, undercutting, undercutting, the whole need to bring technology, to enable you to do that very efficiently and effectively, but use that as the stepping board to then introducing a higher percentage and higher margin business" (Executive 10).

4.6 Findings summary

The Findings chapter presents the data which has been organised into 22 headings, presented within four themed sections. Section 1 reviewed Compatibility and was divided into four subsections – partnership, culture, relationship and trust. Section 2 reviewed Competency and was divided into six subsections – supply chain capability, leadership, leadership talent, scale, best practice and digital. Section 3 considered Corporate Governance and was divided into six associated subsections – data, risk, compliance, simplification, consistency and transparency. Section 4 described the

Commercial Outcomes and was separated into transition, transformation, continuous improvement, innovation, customer service satisfaction and cost.

These findings, and the emerging themes, form the basis for the following discussion chapter, where they are developed further.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Introduction

This discussion chapter follows on from the research findings in Chapter 4 and is presented in eight sections.

Further to this introduction, Section 1, there are seven further sections. Section 2 describes the purpose of this research. Sections 3-6 discuss the 22 key findings which have been grouped into four main research themes – Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes. Section 3 describes the theme of Compatibility which is made up of four sub-themes – partnership, culture, relationship and trust. In Section 4, Competency is presented along with its six sub-themes, supply chain capability, leadership, leadership talent, scale, best practice and digital. This leads to Section 5, which explores Corporate Governance and its sub-themes of data, risk, compliance, simplification, consistency and transparency. Section 6 discusses Commercial Outcomes and its six sub-themes, transition, transformation, continuous improvement, innovation, customer service and satisfaction, and cost. The outcomes of the study are presented in a conceptual model in Section 7, based on the four Cs of Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes and forms the basis for recommendations in practice. The conceptual model will start to develop in layers within Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 before being presented in full within Section 7. Section 8 concludes with a summary of the chapter.

5.1 Purpose of the research

The aim of this research is to explore the key challenges and enablers within Global Account Management from the perspective of clients within the outsourced services industry in order to develop practice. However, there is a paucity of existing literature where the focus is on the lived experience of executives from the client organisation. Previous studies have focused on those providing Global Account Management services, including Shi et al. (2005) and Peters et al. (2020). Therefore, whilst these previous studies sought to understand Global Account Management from a practitioner's viewpoint, this research, for apparently the first time, uses the lens of interpretive phenomenological analysis to understand the experiences and perceptions of senior procuring executives of Global Account Management services within the setting of Integrated Facilities Management to inform both academic knowledge and practice.

5.2 Theme 1 – Compatibility

The most significant finding revealed within the research is the critical importance of Compatibility and its four constituents of partnership, culture, relationship and trust. The Executives consistently agreed that these constituents of compatibility were essential at a minimum to allow the buying and supplying organisations to exist without conflict with each other. This supports the general findings of a previous study by Toulou et al. (2006), who report the importance of 'fit' between the supplier and customer organisations. In the context of the Corporate Real Estate and Facilities Management services industry, this seems particularly important given that when the buying organisations decide to outsource, they are inviting supplier organisation employees into their buildings – often in their thousands – to work side by side with

their own employees. This includes all levels of employees, from the front line to managerial and leadership roles, including those responsible for the provision of Global Account Management.

This dynamic is different to outsourcing the provision of either raw materials or manufactured goods, for example, computer hardware, where the product is delivered to the buyer's property, is installed, and then the supplier leaves the premises. Corporate Real Estate services include Integrated Facilities Management, which can embrace food, engineering, cleaning, reception services and much more. Here, the supplying organisation provides various roles, including chefs, engineers, technicians, cleaners and receptionists, as well as supervisory, managerial and leadership roles to ensure the smooth running of these operations. These services occur within numerous individual properties within a country, and several countries within a geographical region, such as Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America. These regions combine at a global level, where the management of these services interfaces with the Executives who participated in this research.

The Global Account Management organisational workforce is integrated within the buying organisation at a deep level, with access to many of the inner workings of the customer organisation. This reliance on an external organisation is fundamental to the success of the buying organisation. Therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, executives responsible for procuring and operating these services place a high level of importance on both organisations being compatible and capable of partnering, on developing a trusted relationship, and that they are culturally in tune with each other. This position is supported by Lok et al. (2021) study on sustainable development in Facilities Management outsourcing services, further to surveying both clients and service

providers they state that good relationship management, collaboration and trust-building activities are as important as delivering the FM services successfully.

Figure 8 shows the four constituents of Compatibility, which are partnership, culture, relationship and trust. These form the foundation of the conceptual model which starts to build during this section and will be added to in the next three sections, before the conceptual model is presented in full in Section 7.



Figure 8: ‘Four Cs’ conceptual model of essential characteristics and key areas for consideration in structuring and implementing Global Account Management. Part 1 of 5. Source: (Author)

5.2.1. Partnering

Part of the motivation which led to this study followed years in practice listening to industry stakeholders’ views of clients’ supposed motivations and assumedly ‘real’ drivers when it came to defining their business relationships with outsourcing companies. These were most often viewed as relating to cost reduction by the supplying companies, even if this came at the cost of the supplier’s profit. This may have been true in the earlier stages of outsourcing in previous decades – however, the outsourcing industry has matured and the organisational structure of client companies has been redeveloped to outsource their non-core areas more regularly. This study sets out to, in part, address the perception gap between the buying client and the supply partner by understanding the views of buying organisation executives. This is an area of research which has previously received little attention within literature. This

research has revealed that, rather than trying to ‘hold suppliers back’ and undermine their ability to earn profit, where cost is a driver and generally accepted as important, perhaps even the hygiene factor, it is not the dominant driver for executives when selecting a Global Account Management supply company.

During this research, it became clear that buying executives believe that it is increasingly important to select a supplying organisation which is capable of partnering with them. This foundation can then deliver business outcomes which include cost efficiencies and cost reductions amongst other commercial outcomes discussed towards the end of this chapter. Deszczyński’s (2019) study findings support this and discovered that a foundation built on a long-term partnership is required to achieve competitive advantage on a global scale. Lasserre (2018, p. 222) offers a helpful partner analysis in support of both buying and supplying organisations to assess the partner fit across four areas, strategic, capabilities, organisational and cultural.

An important economic aspect which can affect the dynamics between the client and the buying organisation is where the buying organisation typically views the service line as a cost centre within their organisation’s profit and loss accounts, whereas the supplying organisation is predominantly a profit centre based on selling their services to the buyer. This can create a tug-of-war between the buying organisation and the supplying organisation, as they each attempt to pull the money towards themselves, either to achieve or improve cost budgets within the client organisation or to reach or exceed profit targets within the supply organisation, both of which often form part of each of the buyer and supplier’s individual annual success criteria. These buying and supplying objectives potentially seem diametrically opposed to one another, which can

create a significant impediment to unlocking other areas of value which are important to listed global organisations. This dynamic was recognised by each of the research participants, who included six interviewees who had been employed by both supplier and client organisations, as well as nine participants who had spent their careers solely within client organisations. Perhaps understandably, the apparently competing dynamic was more greatly appreciated by those who had experience of both organisational types.

After deciding to develop a partnering approach, rather than adopting more of a transactional relationship, the buying organisation initially selects a supply organisation to work with. A large part of the selection process depends upon whether they believe the supplying company can partner and align with their values and vice versa. Whilst the client organisation has the final say on who to partner with, which often comes after a competitive tendering process, both organisations must be willing to receive and supply Global Account Management services respectfully and enter into business together. Interview participants expressed that, to achieve their desired outcomes across these service lines, they believe – as reflected in the data – that by partnering they can achieve improved outcomes when compared to either self-delivery of non-core services or by selecting a different buying option, such as numerous country or regional buying groups, rather than global.

As discussed previously, supply employees work side by side with the buyers, becoming more akin to the mindset of working with colleagues than being a supplier. This raises an interesting feature, as within conventional workplace settings power dynamics and office politics exist which can create tension. Introducing commercial characteristics has the potential to create even further disequilibrium if both parties are

not explicitly clear on what partnership means, and the agreed associated boundaries, aims and success criteria.

One business model developed to take outsourcing business partnerships to another level is that of Vested Outsourcing, developed out of research by the University of Tennessee led by Kate Vitasek (Vitasek et al., 2011), this model places client and supplier partnership approach as central to the outsourcing model. This model was mentioned by three interview participants as one way of cementing the business partnership by developing strategic and collaborative relationships focused on key outcomes, including innovation, risk mitigation and value creation. The five Vested Outsourcing ‘rules’ form the basis of a framework for agreements to be adopted by the supplying and buying organisations, with the aim of providing clarity in an area which could otherwise be open to interpretation and therefore misalignment between the parties, and even within the individual business organisations.

5.2.2. Culture

It perhaps seems obvious that cultural influence is considered important by buying Executives – when considering Global Account Management, the literature examines the geographical influence on culture. Perhaps surprisingly, cultural compatibility between two enterprises was raised more frequently than the supplier’s ability to understand cultures across geographies. This finding emphasises the importance of organisations achieving cultural compatibility as one of the foundations of successful Global Account Management. Lasserre (2017, p. 226), while considering partnering fit assessment, looks specifically at cultural compatibility, including how well organisations communicate and share the same business logic. Given the importance placed on cultural compatibility by the participants in this research, such an assessment

would be a useful addition to the early stages of due diligence when companies are considering whether to work with each other or not.

Cultural alignment was cited as an important foundation – however, despite possible similarities, it is unlikely that two corporate cultures will be exactly alike. Achievement of cultural alignment will require both organisations to flex within their cultural norms. This responsibility on both parties to achieve a cultural fit was raised within the findings and becomes an important factor in the interest of the partnership, rather than one party having to considerably modify their culture to accommodate the other, which could create imbalance and possible resentment.

A somewhat contradictory view expressed during the interviews was that successful Global Account Management supply partners appear to be more part of the client's political ecosystem than their own. This position is perhaps understandable, as the client organisation may have many Global Account Management supplier relationships for different services at any one time – therefore, they cannot move too far from their cultural base without becoming unrecognisable. The supply organisation workforce is typically located within the client premises, where much of the client culture is present. It therefore seems incumbent on the supply organisation to adapt to the client culture, assuming an ambassadorial role for the client organisation within both organisations. The role of the Global Account Manager is identified as a particularly influential cultural barometer of alignment. This requires the Global Account Management organisation to develop a deep understanding of the client organisation during the very early bidding stage of the competitive selection process, as this can make the difference between gaining the contractual award or not.

Ultimately, the client organisation can benefit from outsourcing service lines to experts whilst retaining a close cultural relationship with the teams responsible for their delivery. The consequence of not doing so was highlighted on several occasions by the interviewees, who explained that any inability or unwillingness to adapt can lead to failure, which serves to emphasise the importance of this cultural factor.

5.2.3. Relationship

Yip and Madsen (1996) describe Global Account Management as the new frontier in relationship marketing. My research findings posit, a quarter of a century on, that relationship marketing in the context of GAM is not a temporary trend. It is worth considering relationship marketing within the context of Global Account Management products and services. In support of this, Figure 9 adapts Vernon's (1966) product life cycle to illustrate the relationship life cycle as part of Global Account Management. The remainder of this section describes the parts comprised within the model.

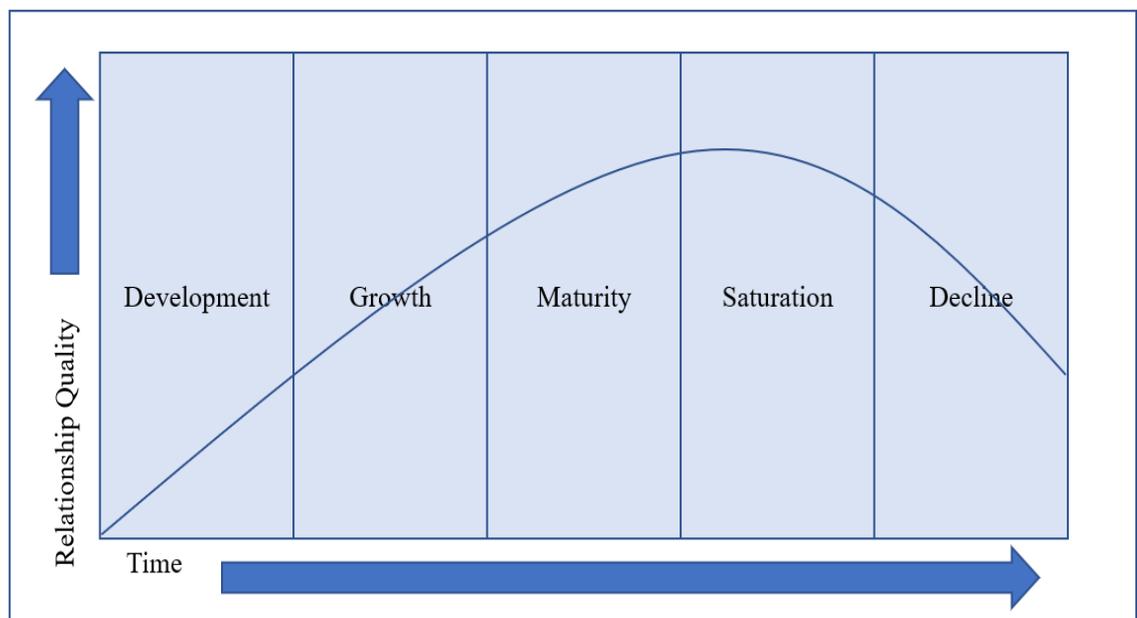


Figure 9: Adapted Product Life Cycle Model from Vernon (1966). (Author)

Firstly, development reflects the introduction stage of the relationship – described by one participant as similar to a job interview when hiring for a team member. At this stage in the contractual process there may be a pre-existing relationship formed as part of a speculative sales process ahead of a competitive event or a starting position where no relationship exists.

Secondly, the growth stage is where the global account executive and their teams would seek to invest in building and growing relationships throughout the various organisational levels during this intense period. Thirdly, as the relationship matures, then it is sufficiently robust to withstand the challenges which inevitably come in an operationally led business. Participants identified that turbulent times are not the moment to be establishing new relationships, particularly when responding to a crisis, which can be at any point in the world. Examples provided were hurricanes, criminal activity or compliance issues. The data suggests a preference to raise these issues early rather than have them go unreported, essentially moving towards a trusted relationship.

The fourth stage describes a saturation point, where the relationship is deep and all parties should have well established and close connections. This was described by one research participant as a two-way street, where both parties should be getting the most from the relationship, and by another as “*auto-pilot*”. It is essential at this stage to be servicing the relationship at all levels to prevent moving into the decline stage. This is particularly relevant outside of commercial events. The fifth stage highlights the decline of the relationship, a stage which both parties often try to prevent. However, it becomes inevitable at some point for most Global Account Management relationships. There are numerous reasons for the relationship to enter decline, such as the Global

Account Management team no longer satisfying any or all of the 22 areas which are considered most important to the particular buying organisation. As one participant explained, it could be that sometimes the buyer organisation has changed the demand to a specification which can no longer be met by the supplier. Whilst this stage can be diligently held off for decades with the focus of both parties, the average contractual life cycle is three to five years. Even after two, three, four or five successful contractual renewals, in a highly competitive market it is very possible that, even after several decades, the relationship will enter the decline phase.

Several participants emphasised that during each of these stages, the global account manager and their team must continue to grow and build deep relationships with their own supply organisation. One participant described this as “*critical*” – reach back into the supply organisation is viewed as highly important to client organisations, essentially allowing access to the depth of products and their ongoing development, procured during the business-to-business contractual award. Recommendations for practice would include consideration of a client retention system which aims to ensure that there is an ongoing close match between the buying organisation’s aims and the outsourcing organisation’s delivery.

5.2.4. Trust

In his book *The Speed of Trust* (2006), Stephen Covey describes trust as “the one thing that changes everything” (p. 1). Covey says that trust is the one thing common to every group, including corporate organisations. If removed, it will destroy the most successful business. On the other hand, if trust is developed and leveraged it can create unparalleled success in every dimension of life. The development of such a relationship was identified as highly important within the research findings, trusting

the supply partner to deliver the services which they had been appointed for. The findings of this research support those of Yip and Bink (2007b) who cite the importance of trust between the supplier and customer although Ivens and Pardo (2007) find that a buying organisation does not trust a supplier any more by merely receiving Key Account Status alone. The area of trust is, however, one which requires much attention in practice according to this research – whether the client trusts the supplying organisation, and whether the supplying organisation trusts the buying organisation. This distrust can come with a cost and lead to the relationship decline stage described in the previous section. The buying organisation hosts the initial selection process and during this evaluation it is a requirement of shortlisted supply organisations, and the eventual award to the winning bid, that the buying organisation gains trust in the supply company's ability to deliver the technical services which are being procured. The technical competency is described in the section below. Suppliers in competition who fail to develop trust will be discounted from the earlier stages of the bid process and will ultimately prove unsuccessful in winning the contract.

Once the award is made, clients believe that they should allow the Global Account Management company to operate the services as the chosen experts in their field. Beyond the level of trust in their capability to achieve operational results and the delivery of technical services, buying clients focus on the next level of trust – this is a level with less tangible outcomes, relating more towards integrity and behaviours. This includes the importance of close and continuous communication – it is not enough to simply 'not lie'. What is required is a level of straight talking which is honest and open, one which has each other's interest at its centre. Development of this trust is closely intertwined with the development of trusting relationships and partnerships. Global Account Management practitioners would benefit from keeping in mind that

this important commodity is gained by the droplet and lost by the bucketload, and they should spend time establishing the importance of trust, including areas such as delivery of promises.

Practitioners should also be wary of potential pitfalls in focusing on other technical capability development at the cost of neglecting trust and the other areas of compatibility. This should sound a note of caution in practice, particularly in an industry such as Integrated Facilities Management, as many of the practitioners have walked a technical skills route. Ensuring the development of a ‘softer’ skillset, including trusted relationship development, is an important area for practitioners. This is not to underplay the importance of technical capabilities – it is worthy of note that technical skills development is absolutely essential and plays a key role in the development of credibility, which is a main component of trusted relationship development and partnership. Without these technical capabilities, buying organisations would not consider awarding responsibility for their non-core services to supply organisations who could not demonstrate the required capabilities as a basic requirement. In order to differentiate and make a higher-level contribution to the buying organisation and the business relationship, this capability must be at least matched by the ability to develop and grow this area of trust and compatibility.

5.3. Theme 2 – Competency

There are often several reasons why client organisations outsource certain activities they regard as non-core. Whilst non-core to them, these are core services to the outsourcing companies competing to provide them. In the case of Facilities Management, Ikediashi et al. (2014) find that the top three rated factors for outsourcing are to improve the company’s focus, to make the cost transparent and to improve

stakeholder satisfaction, which places the emphasis on the supplier’s competency and ability to deliver against these key areas. The conclusion of this research supports the findings of this research concerning transparency and stakeholder satisfaction, discussed further within this chapter in Section 5.3.6, which focuses on Transparency, and Section 5.4.5 on Customer Service and Satisfaction.

Figure 10 illustrates the six constituents of Competency, which are best practice, leadership, leadership talent, scale, supply chain capability and digital. This addition of a second layer strengthens the conceptual model and will continue to be built upon during the next two sections before it is presented in full in Section 5.6.



Figure 10: ‘Four Cs’ Conceptual model of essential characteristics and key areas for consideration in structuring and implementing Global Account Management. Part 2 of 5. Source: (Author)

5.3.1. Supply chain capability

It is perhaps unsurprising that when a buying organisation chooses to outsource Global Account Management services for Integrated Facilities Management, an important part of the buying criteria is that the outsourcing company has the competency to deliver the services. This is particularly important where the buying organisation has reduced or eliminated this competency, a prevailing trend towards the end of the

previous century. However, whilst these are non-core services, it is not suggested that they are non-critical to the successful operation of the company. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that when a buying organisation selects an outsourcing company, it follows a diligent selection process which provides the assurance of capability and its development into the future. This development into the future is important, as the buying organisation must ensure that its capability levels keep pace with industry developments in best practice or innovation resulting from legislative and regulatory changes, areas which are discussed in the Commercial Outcomes section. It is important that practitioners are well positioned to seize these opportunities by ensuring that they can, as one Executive put it, *“bring the industry to me, not just your company’s slice of the industry”*.

The findings acknowledge that any company bidding to provide Global Account Management services will not always have the same geographical footprint and coverage as the buying organisation. At most, any outsourcing company will be able to provide for half of the countries on the global map. This is a factor which supplying organisations should consider by placing themselves in the shoes of the buying organisation to look at how to best to comply with their requirements within structural limitations. Given the importance of developing a trusting relationship between the two organisations, it is vital that these assessments are factual.

Continuing this theme of trust, it is important that the supplying organisation can deliver the solution proposed during the sales process. Supplying organisations should closely match their capabilities and ability to deliver the services, an observation made several times within the findings.

5.3.2. Leadership

The importance of leadership across all walks of life, and within business specifically, has been the subject of extensive academic interest, resulting in a significant volume of literature in the field of leadership and the sub-category of international leadership. The services contained within Global Account Management comprise of teams based across properties, cities, countries and regions. Such a broadly distributed workforce across many operating and cultural environments further highlights the importance of leadership competency. Pereira et al. (2019) support the importance of the leadership role of top managers in Key Account Management while Sharma and Evanschitzky (2016) reinforce this, arguing that knowledge management itself has only limited effects on the client-vendor relationship. It is the ability of top management to evaluate and utilise this knowledge which allows global firms to develop and maintain superior client-vendor relationships. The importance of leadership accords with the findings of this research – that specific leadership areas highlighted as important include the ability to build and foster trusting relationships, that leaders are analytical, have the ability to communicate complex topics in a simple way, and the ability to leverage skills and abilities across an extensive and broad portfolio. Often a leadership career within this sector follows a technical route into a managerial role, with leadership skills learned in the work environment rather than always through more formal development.

In considering the importance of leadership within Global Account Management, it is worth considering its additional complexity compared to national Key Account Management. Figure 11 shows the additional complexity which outsourcing organisations should consider when implementing Global Account Management specifically from a leadership perspective. Figure 11 illustrates that, whilst Global Account Management has much in common with Key Account Management at a

foundational level, the top right box highlights additional characteristics which must be overcome when dealing with global accounts across multiple countries. This adds significant complexity when comparing Key Account Management and Global Account Management. Ferraro et al. (2016) offer a helpful process designed to initially select and then develop global leaders in areas including language training and cross-cultural training, amongst others. Lane and Maznevski (2014, p. 177) also offer useful methods of selection and development of global leaders. They note that most companies do not assess the suitability of candidates for international roles, saying it is typically limited to whether or not the candidate has performed well in a similar role domestically. This was raised as important by participants – it would seem to be a sensible recommendation for supplier organisations to adopt this in practice.

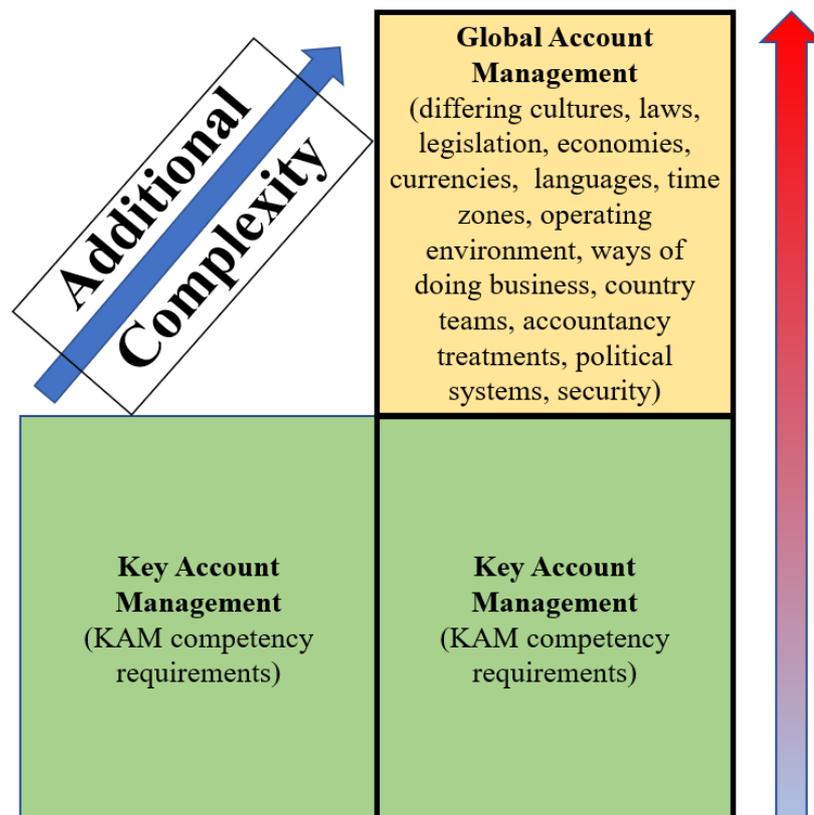


Figure 11: Differences between Global Account Management and Key Account Management, considerations for leadership. Source: (Author).

5.3.3. Leadership talent

Further to raising the importance of leadership competency, it perhaps naturally follows the importance of attracting leadership talent. One Executive observed that making it “*big and interesting*” attracts the talent, which is recognised as being in scarce supply. The composition of Global Account Management involves the aggregation of multiple service lines, across multiple geographies and numerous characteristics. Buying organisations expect their supplying organisations to create an environment which attracts leadership talent to their accounts, seeing this as a benefit of moving to globally outsource, rather than in smaller lots, such as country by country. This would be unlikely to attract the best candidates from a smaller and differing talent pool but this pool will, of course, grow because of expansion to a global scale.

When it comes to comparing importance between the Global Account Management platform and its people and leadership talent, one Executive ranked attracting the right people and talent as “*100-fold greater importance*”, with another describing talent as the “*key differentiator*”. A third Executive said that the right talent can overcome deficiencies in a platform. However, the reverse is not true – a platform cannot overcome weaknesses in people or an absence of talent. It emerged that this area cannot be ignored by supplying organisations who set their sights on triumphing on the Global Account Management stage. Therefore, a key recommendation for practitioners is to create an environment which attracts and develops talent and, by doing so, develops a leadership competency which has been highlighted as important.

5.3.4. Scale

Observers may assume that the importance of scale may mainly relate to cost and price benefits. Whilst this is true, one Executive observed that when examining the procurement, there are scale benefits when buying large volumes of raw materials and, to a lesser extent, when procuring manufactured products. Whilst scale benefits when procuring services are worthwhile, the largest input costs relate to people providing the service, these costs being regulated by the local labour markets, resulting in fewer extensive scale benefits in this service category. Scale benefits do present themselves in many other areas. A good example relates to the balance sheet strength of the supply companies capable of providing Global Account Management services. These companies are mostly listed on the Stock Exchange, which creates a regulated transparency on balance sheet strength and visibility of investment in areas such as research and development, technology and digital platforms. This creates an opportunity to invest in a digital platform which provides consistency across the global portfolio, rather than in a country procurement model, where research and development and technological investment may be inconsistent and potentially less stable across countries.

Another identified scale benefit relates to intellectual capital and best practice, which would favour companies capable of identifying and leveraging this knowledge, and systems, tools, services and processes in the interest of efficiency, continuous improvement and other business benefits. The topic of talent is relevant when considering scale, as it allows the client organisation to access a greater scale of talent from a deeper pool. This scale benefit relates to the volume of particular job families – for example, a client organisation choosing not to outsource would have a relatively small team of, say, engineers or chefs. Outsourcing to specialist providers can offer

the opportunity to access very large collective teams of engineers and chefs across multiple accounts. This volume benefit should deepen the competency and support continuous professional development. Recommendations for practitioners include analysing the scale opportunities which increase their value to the buying organisation whilst concurrently differentiating them from their competition.

5.3.5. Best practice

The potential to recognise and share best practice across a Global Account Management setting was identified within the research findings, creating the opportunity to leverage best in class practice on a wider scale between accounts and throughout the global supply organisation. Whilst sharing of best practice is recognised as important and a characteristic of a great global account and global account executive, in practice this is viewed both as a weakness and an area of opportunity within Global Account Management.

One Executive found it amazing that global IFM outsourcing companies are unable to transfer the benefit of knowledge, essentially creating pockets of mixed levels of systems, products, services and processes. A key recommendation for consideration involves the exploration of methods to identify best practice and develop a means to cross-pollinate and transfer this throughout the global account to elevate the standards of delivery, moving more closely to optimising performance – in other words, a rising tide lifts all boats.

5.3.6. Digital

Predictably, in this technological age, the potential for technological advancement within Global Account Management services was identified throughout the findings as a key competency area, being viewed as an enabler of multi-layer business benefits, including the promotion of innovation across all areas of the global business. The possibilities of driving pan-global efficiencies across a low margin business have significant potential to drive profit and shareholder value for the outsourcing organisation, as well as lowering the unit cost for the customer through development of scale benefits. Technology has the potential to raise levels of consistency and access to standardised data, information which can be used to produce insight to unlock performance improvements across a global property portfolio. This allows access to systems and business benefits to some countries which otherwise would have not been well positioned to support such technological advancement.

One identified benefit of Global Account Management is the potential to normalise various economic conditions and spending power relating to digital products. A comparison offered by one Executive is that people in India and China may not be willing to spend to the same levels on digital products as countries in the Western world, such as the USA and in Europe. Therefore, Global Account Management provides a platform to apply consistent technology in a way that is affordable and accessible. The IFM industry was viewed as behind in technological investment, particularly when compared to other segments of the property industry such as construction and property transactions. Buying Executives viewed it as having improved, but there remains significant opportunity for those outsourcing companies which are prepared to direct capital to their digital platforms. The Executives stated that it is often challenging for Corporate Real Estate departments to be granted funding

for such technological investments within their own organisations, with CFOs prioritising capital investment towards core business objectives over non-core peripheral areas. For Global Account Management services companies which choose to invest in digital, an opportunity exists to provide technological solutions and address a requirement identified within this research.

5.4 Theme 3 – Corporate Governance

I now move to cover areas relating to Corporate Governance, the system by which companies are directed and controlled. This section does not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of all areas of corporate governance, rather it seeks to describe the areas raised by participants which would, in part, support good corporate governance and governance within a Globally Managed Account across the areas of data, risk, compliance, simplification, consistency and transparency.

Figure 12 illustrates the six constituents within the Corporate Governance group, which include transparency, simplification, consistency, data, risk and compliance. This addition of the third layer of the conceptual model builds on the Compatibility and Competency layers and will continue to be built upon during the next section before the conceptual model is presented in full in Section 5.6.



Figure 12: ‘Four Cs’ conceptual model of essential characteristics and key areas for consideration in structuring and implementing Global Account Management. Part 3 of 5. Source: (Author)

5.4.1. Data

Access to data was essential to the success of this research. Data was seen to be important to the research participants interviewed and it is the case that data informs us that it is essential. Humby (2021), as an industry commentator, says that “data is the new oil” in terms of its modern age importance. The participants’ perception was that having access to one source of accurate data is increasingly important and a key part of Global Account Management. The participants viewed it as impossible to operate a global account without access to data. The ability to access data on a common platform heralds a new level of sophistication within the Integrated Facilities Management industry in general and through the lens of Global Account Management, where client organisations have one rather than multiple partners, increasing access to this single source data. The participants believed that being able to analyse data across their portfolio by property, city, country, region and globally provides a powerful and increasingly necessary instrument with which to manage their portfolios, which is required to be flexible with the changing requirements of their enterprises. Being able

to access consistent data allows comparisons with internal and external industry benchmarks to assess whether assets and operations are performing or underperforming. As Haynes et al. (2017, p. 261) put it, “Who is better than us? How are they better? Why are they better?”.

As well as identifying improvement opportunities, data supports communications with internal stakeholders from other parts of the business, including budgetary forecasting, which improves the support they can provide to their internal business ‘customers’. Participants said that this area of industry benchmarking requires improvement to support moving closer to an ‘apples for apples’ comparison of standardised data points. This creates an external perspective, allowing client organisations to view how their Integrated Facilities Management business is performing relative to other industry comparators and move towards validating and supporting their business decisions. The importance of trust was raised in the context that client organisations must rely on the data provided by the Global Account Management organisations, trusting that it is being reflected fairly and accurately to allow for these business decisions to be taken.

5.4.2. Risk

Visibility of risk is an area which participants perceived as a key part of Global Account Management. Each of the areas included within this Corporate Governance section can positively contribute to the identification of risk. Each of these areas was raised in some way in this context, as well as the requirement for planned mitigation. This accords with Dorfman and Cather (2013), who explain that interest in risk management has been growing within corporations since the turn of the century because of high-profile catastrophic loss events and large corporate financial failures. The authors highlight numerous risk categories within which they include risk to

tangible property assets, liability risks, human resource risk and indirect losses. Skipper and Kwon (2007) also highlight the risk of damage or destruction to property specifically, all of which are of interest to the Executives interviewed. As such, a constituent of successful Global Account Management includes the importance of transparency in key areas of the global client operations to support the identification of risks which can then be mitigated. The risks within Integrated Facilities Management cross a broad range of items, including poor health and safety in working practices, bribery and corruption, and a lack of resilience in critical facilities such as data centres, to regulatory and legislative compliance. All of these can create significant exposure to the client organisation's core business.

The vast range of risks included within Integrated Facilities Management are extensive when extrapolated across wide global portfolios with multiple operating environments in geographies with varying levels of maturity. The part that technology can play in risk control is increasingly viewed as important by the research participants, particularly from the viewpoint of creating consistency in process across the platform rather than through multiple interfaces with varying approaches and ability to manage risk. Strengthening the approach to risk as a key competency is a core requirement for outsourcing companies aiming for success across Global Account Management, one which requires detailed planning and maintenance.

5.4.3. Compliance

Outsourcing companies which are engaged to provide Global Account Management services to client organisations will enter into a contractual agreement. This can consist of a master services agreement at a global level and local contractual agreements at a country level. These master and local agreements typically contain substantial clauses

dedicated to compliance. This legal framework includes an obligation for the outsourcing organisation to comply with strict legislative, statutory and regulatory requirements in addition to other criteria contained within the contract and associated documentation. This contractual framework therefore includes mandatory requirements to operate across the jurisdictions as written into law by local governments and industry regulation, as well as how the client organisation wishes the services to be carried out. Global Account Management organisations found not to have complied with these requirements, either through audit findings or following a non-compliance event, can face severe consequences and substantial penalties.

The research participants viewed Global Account Management as an important instrument with which to ensure that they meet their compliance obligations as an organisation whilst setting their own. By structuring this and passing the responsibility to the Global Account Management company, they demonstrate diligence by appointing experts in the areas which need to be complied with, while passing the risk to another party best suited to meet that compliance through competent personnel and systems, which could be penalised for any non-compliance.

5.4.4. Simplification

Global Account Management was perceived by participants as a means to reduce complexity by moving to one operating platform under the responsibility of a single management team. The contrasting multi-supplier approach was described as requiring many different agreements. Adopting a multi-supplier approach across a portfolio distributed throughout various countries and continents, with each of the suppliers having their own operating system and possibly differing success criteria, data points, measurement tools and other variable operating model constituents, contributes to

differing performance levels. This places the responsibility on the client organisation to manage them, described by one participant as creating an “*in-house headache*” which would likely require an increase in the organisational headcount and cost. Participants viewed the extent of variables as adding complexity and creating issues.

Conversely, the associated benefits of investing in a single point of contact globally, along with their accompanying management team, was viewed as a simple route to understand and resolve issues which could otherwise add complexity. The importance of simplification supports a number of other research findings, particularly in areas such as risk and compliance. Global Account Management organisations need to ensure that they are structuring their programmes in a way which satisfies the client organisation’s expectations of simplification.

5.4.5. Consistency

Consistency is a key area of Global Account Management. Consistent standards were viewed favourably by the research participants, however, that does not suggest that they believed that all areas should be identical across the global estate and that everything should look the same. Rather, participants believed that appropriate consistency is desirable when related to standards of delivery. For example, if there is a consistent requirement for employees across the world to be treated fairly and in accordance with local employment regulations, there are numerous associated variables between countries in minimum wage rates, minimum employment age, employee rights and conditions of employment. The consistent global expectation is that each country’s legislation will be complied with. Where a country’s employment law is underdeveloped, then an acceptable standard would be agreed between the client organisation and the outsourcing organisation in order to attain a level of consistency

on the treatment of employees around the world. There would be other areas where consistency standards would be more specifically set, where the company believes that there is one best way – for example, standardised data points where country by country comparisons of building occupant productivity would be a useful metric which client organisations could introduce to their benchmarking data to compare the performance of their property portfolios. This information would be useful when assessing existing operational performance levels or portfolio planning for the future.

The research participants also perceived that Global Account Management providers should be well positioned to achieve approaches to consistency across multiple areas concurrently. When considering recommendations, one means of describing the requirement would be to achieve freedom within a framework to ensure that required levels of flexibility are maintained, on the basis that exact needs are not always the same in every environment in which the outsourcing company operates, at the same time maintaining consistent standards on a case-by-case basis within the business.

5.4.6. Transparency

Transparency was a consistent theme throughout the research findings. This certainly applies to the Corporate Governance section of this chapter and the areas of data, risk, compliance, simplification and consistency, all of which require a transparent approach to increase visibility. The research participants believed that a globally managed account through one supply partner increases the transparency of these areas across the global portfolio when compared to the alternative of perhaps 20 providers, particularly when those suppliers have different reporting, operating systems and management information. There are also cultural tendencies which influence the levels of transparency which local suppliers would normally provide. This inconsistent

approach to transparency can lead to global clients being unsure about the accuracy of information which is being shared and consequently always having to validate it. There are also practical considerations which affect the levels of transparency, such as time zones. This would be particularly relevant when an unexpected event requires an immediate response. The global client organisation needs to understand their position in response to such a sudden event, which could affect multiple countries across one region or more. Having a global account manager in the same time zone as the client organisation can make it easier to access their global account network. It does not always follow that in having a global account structure in place, transparency is automatically also in place. The interviewees observed that there was an opportunity for improvement where their global suppliers were concerned, recognising that even with a global account structure, transparency levels can fall short of expectations.

Recommendations for practice include the importance of developing structured transparency levels across the global portfolio, delivering the area of transparency which participants have made clear is valuable to them.

5.5 Theme 4 – Commercial Outcomes

It is not a straightforward process to suggest that by following the three sections of Compatibility, Competency and Corporate Governance that the outcomes of transition, transformation, continuous improvement, innovation, customer service and satisfaction, and cost will manifest in sequence. It is worth considering, however, that by developing these foundations – which have been identified as important characteristics of Global Account Management by the research participants – there would be an increased probability of delivering the desired outcomes. Figure 13 illustrates the six constituents within the Commercial Outcomes group which include

transition, innovation, continuous improvement, transformation, customer service satisfaction and cost. The final layer of the conceptual model is presented in full in Section 5.6.

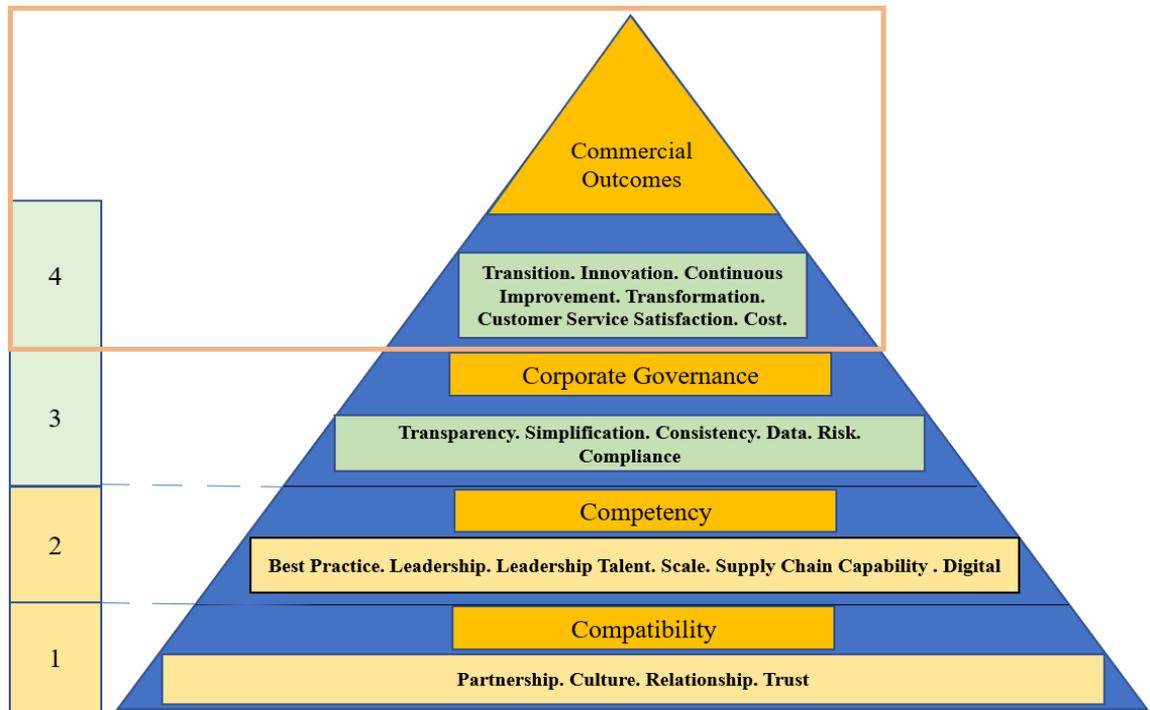


Figure 13: ‘Four Cs’ Conceptual model of essential characteristics and key areas for consideration in structuring and implementing Global Account Management. Part 4 of 5. Source: (Author)

5.5.1. Transition

When there is a period of change, such as a multi-supplier solution to a globally managed account, transitioning to a ‘first-generation’ global account, or alternatively moving from one global provider to another, it is important that disruption to the client organisation’s core business is kept to a minimum. This can be intense for both the client and the supplier organisation as both companies come together to deliver the plan which, up until the point of transition, will have been largely at the planning and

conceptual phase. This transition represents a significant learning curve for both organisations. During this phase stakeholders can expect an element of ambiguity as information is revealed, relationships are formed, and the transitioning plan materialises.

Recommendations for practitioners include ensuring that appropriate and sufficient resources have been allocated to the transition and that these resources possess the characteristics described in the Compatibility section, including managers who are capable of partnering and developing trusting relationships, and who understand the culture of the client organisation. The effective planning stage is also important for practitioners to consider. One analogy to describe this stage would be that of a space rocket preparing for launch. If it were a couple of centimetres off target upon launch, it could end up miles away from its intended destination.

5.5.2. Transformation

The importance of Transformation as a constituent of Global Account Management is clearly evident within the research. Participants expected their global account providers to focus on the delivery of transformative change, recognising that to stand still is tantamount to stepping backwards. This can carry the risk of failing to even keep pace with the client organisation's marketplace, disadvantaging the company's ability to thrive and compete successfully. It is important, perhaps obviously, to perform effectively on a daily basis. Participants explained that a key consideration when deciding to move to a globally managed account included viewing Global Account Management as a catalyst for transformational change, which would otherwise not have been possible had the services been delivered either by the client

organisation, or through another outsourcing model – for example, on a country-by-country basis.

Recommendations include creating an environment with the necessary resources capable of identifying the transformational change opportunities while at the same time delivering daily. This progressive approach can move services provided by the Global Account Management team, such as Integrated Facilities Management, further up the value curve. This creates a position where the non-core service line can become a greater strategic instrument, making a higher-level contribution within the client organisation.

5.5.3. Continuous Improvement

The notion of Continuous Improvement within the context of Global Account Management follows from the previous transformation section. It is perhaps helpful to make a distinction between the two. Whereas transformation is focused on frame-breaking change capable of making substantial leaps forward and transcending paradigms, continuous improvement is focused on making ongoing improvements to all areas contained within Global Account Management, including systems, processes, methodologies, techniques, services and products. Continuous improvement on an ongoing basis is not intended to replace the requirement for transformative change, but there is potentially less of a need to conduct reactionary transformational change by encouraging a culture of continuous improvement – one which keeps pace with industry developments, best practice and developing trends. For those companies focused on developing a competitive advantage, it is paramount to stay ahead of or at the front of these developments. This is particularly relevant across a global account

as countries have differing starting points and differing countries may have a varying propensity to continuously improve.

Recommendations for practitioners include the cultivation of a continuously improving system. Central to this approach is that it is proactive, rather than relying on the demands of client organisations. Within a globally managed account setting there is potential to promote the transference of these continuous improvements, which can elevate the overall power of the globally managed account, where the total exceeds the sum of the parts.

5.5.4. Innovation

Whereas continuous improvement, described in the previous section, focuses on things which currently exist, this section looks at Innovation relating to the creation of something new. Innovation can, and most often does, occur in smaller settings within countries at a small start-up level. There is also an expectation among buying organisations that, by creating a larger estate on a global basis, they will receive the best of the innovation rather than being included in either the second, third or fourth wave of the roll out. There will also be more of an opportunity to co-create innovation between the two organisations through partnering collaboratively.

A scale benefit of bringing together the constituent parts of a client organisation's estate should also become evident as it relates to innovation. A partnership between the buying and supplying organisations can create an increased opportunity to develop and apply innovation across the geographic portfolio. The transparency described earlier also makes visible areas of the global account which would benefit most from innovation. This increasing need for coordination is an area observed by Dodgson et

al. (2014, p. 551), who state that as a consequence of rising absolute R&D costs and increased dispersal of R&D activities globally, multinational organisations are under increasing pressure to optimise their global innovation through stronger coordination, collaboration and more information exchanges.

5.5.5. Customer service and satisfaction

Integrated Facilities Management is responsible for understanding whether building occupants are too hot or too cold, whether the bathrooms are sufficiently cleaned and maintained, even down to access to a cappuccino from the deli bar. These are just a few of the many examples of services involved when operating buildings, all of which can affect customer satisfaction levels. Moving to a globally managed account presents an opportunity to widen the sample size of the building occupants employed by the client organisation. This workforce can also be referred to as customers and increasing the visibility of their experience through a global platform creates an opportunity to benchmark their satisfaction levels between properties and countries.

The research findings show that this wider perspective can also improve decision making when considering the areas which most improve customer satisfaction. These may not always correlate with the lowest performing areas – one interviewee explained that improving a lower performing area such as food by 10% may not be a key driver of overall satisfaction as much as improving building temperature control by 2%. This wider perspective can allow large client organisations to narrow their focus and decision making to the most influential areas, particularly where they influence increases in customer satisfaction, which can affect overall productivity measurement.

Recommendations for practice would include consideration of a global customer satisfaction measurement tool capable of adding a benchmarked perspective to the results to help detect areas which most require management attention.

5.5.6. Cost

A surprising finding within this research concerns the relatively few occasions in which cost was mentioned compared to other areas. It is surprising because, in practice, cost is assumed to be the number one factor which a client organisation focuses on. This is not to suggest that cost is not important, and at times that this is not THE most important factor. That would be misleading. It became clear that cost is important during the stage of agreeing terms, however, this seems to become less of a priority further into the successful operation of the global account compared to other areas talked of earlier, not least Compatibility, which was mentioned most often.

Another point made by two of the participants – who had experience of first generation outsourcing – was where moving from individual country deals to a globally managed account can create increased visibility of the collective cost within the client organisation. This could include transferring budget values from countries where it would have been less of an obviously large value, to a larger and globally aggregated value which, as a result, attracts greater attention from their executive leadership and other business functions. All of this creates an increased focus on the area rather than the country alternative.

Whilst cost tends to refer to the price of providing services within the globally managed account, participants also focused on reframing these costs as revenue drivers for the client organisation, either through workforce productivity or, in the example of

the pharmaceuticals company, creating an environment within the writing up space in pursuit of the next successful drug, revenues for which could eclipse the cost of operating the property portfolio. This perspective adopts more of a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) approach. Aggregating the expenditure at a global level should allow for the impact assessment of these investment decisions to be more easily calculated. This TCO approach does require a particular mindset – McDonald et al. (2001) observe that further cost savings become possible when the buying and selling organisations collaborate to create an interdependent relationship. Adopting the partnering approach described earlier in this chapter creates an environment where further cost reductions as well as quality improvements are achieved.

Another aspect raised related to the relatively low margin business of Integrated Facilities Management, which can lead to a scarcity of available funds for infrastructure investments. Investment in areas like technology can cut costs through efficiencies, thereby creating a double-edged sword for outsourcing companies accessing capital in order to make investment in these areas, which in turn could drive higher profit returns. This is important, as observed by one participant, who said that the worst thing that can happen is to have a supplier which does not make a profit.

Recommendations for practice include considering taking cost extremely seriously. This is one of the benefits of client organisations outsourcing on a global account management basis. However, beyond a certain phase in the contractual cycle, and when a price has been agreed, this becomes less important than the earlier stage when other areas such as Compatibility and Competency grow further in importance.

5.6 Development of a conceptual model

A conceptual model developed from the understanding of the interview participants is shown in Figure 14. This conceptual model has been developed to guide best practice and reflects the strength of perception shared within the semi-structured interviews. These are shown in four overarching groups which collectively contain 22 research findings. These are:

- **Compatibility:** Partnership, Culture, Relationship, Trust.
- **Competency:** Supply Chain Capability, Leadership, Leadership Talent, Scale, Best Practice, Digital.
- **Corporate Governance:** Data, Risk, Compliance, Simplification, Consistency, Transparency.
- **Commercial Outcomes:** Transition, Transformation, Continuous Improvement, Innovation, Customer Service and Satisfaction, Cost.

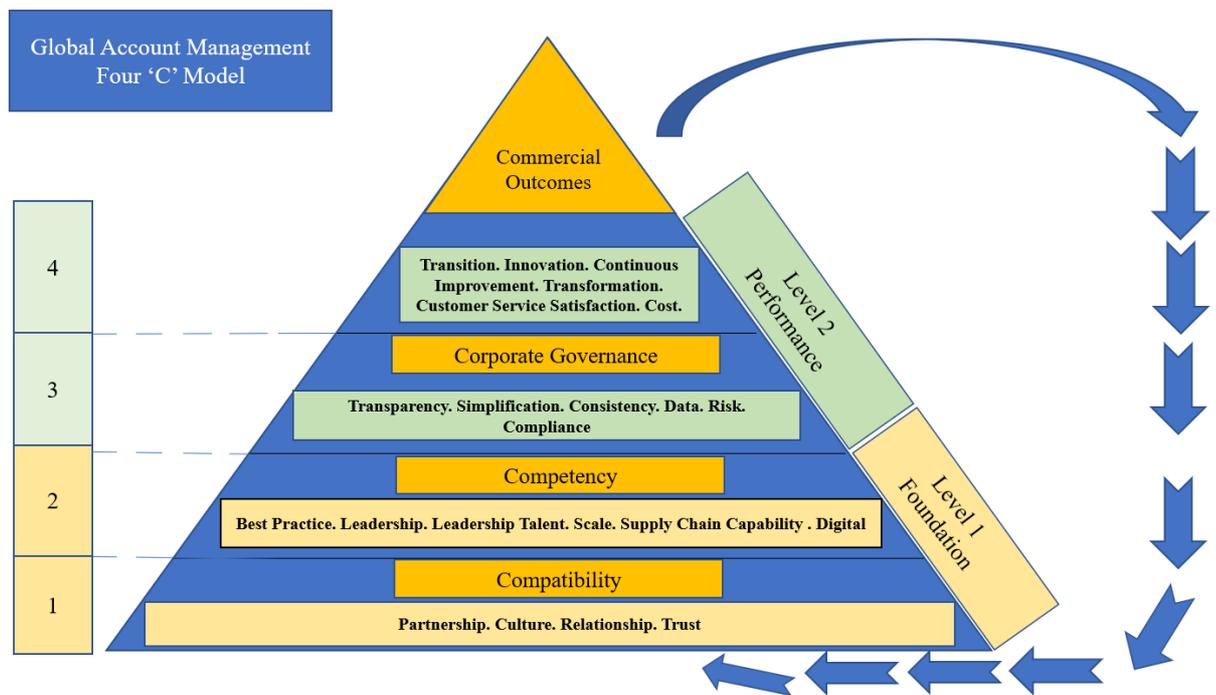


Figure 14: ‘Four Cs’ Conceptual model of essential characteristics and key areas for consideration in structuring and implementing Global Account Management. Part 5 of 5. Source: (Author)

It is suggested that each of these characteristics has a role to play in Global Account Management. The conceptual model forms the basis of the recommendations for practice and puts forward the 22 key areas contained within four main groups. Global Account Management has not been defined in this way previously and this model seeks to define the characteristics which are of most importance to client organisations. The model is set within a triangle and this shape was selected to illustrate the areas which received the most focus and strength of sentiment and which form the essential basis of Global Account Management; therefore, these main areas form the structural base of the model, which supports each of the other areas to develop. The four main groups are represented by the four Cs – Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes – and the areas within each of these groups have been numbered within the model. The two main groups of Compatibility and Competency

are bracketed within the Level 1 foundation. This is the foundation required to successfully move to the following two groups within the performance level and it reflects the strength of sentiment expressed during the data collection process. Level 2 represents the performance phase, with the delivery of Corporate Governance activities and Commercial Outcomes. The arrows depict the benefit created within the performance phase when it is reinvested in the foundation stage to strengthen the Compatibility and Competency groups.

5.7 Contribution to conceptual models – A new client perspective

Research into Global Account Management is an underpopulated field to date and there are a limited number of conceptual models available. Whilst several academics have developed such models, there do not appear to be any which have been developed based on the views of clients from the buying organisation. These alternative views are predominantly from the viewpoint of the supplying organisations. Therefore, in addition to this existing literature, this research contributes an alternative perspective from the point of view of the client organisation, which is new to the literature in this area. Of the existing models and frameworks which have been previously developed, the following are among those worthy of mention because they too have made a contribution to this area of theory and practice and were helpful in both the design and analysis of this study.

Yip and Madsen (1996) offer a globalisation framework as a guide, which was an adaption of Yip's (1992) earlier globalisation framework. Birkinshaw et al. (2001) propose a global account performance model based on the responses of supplier global account managers and global programme executives. Shi et al. (2004) propose a conceptual framework of Global Account Management capabilities and firm

performance developed from literature. Shi et al. (2005) created a discovery-orientated theoretical framework from existing literature and supply executive interviews. The executives were from six Fortune 500 companies and were responsible for different aspects of the supply of GAM. Salojärvi and Sainio (2009) propose a conceptual model for customer knowledge processing in relation to key account performance where they put forward a three-dimensional conceptual model focused on the acquisition, dissemination and utilisation of customer knowledge processing. The primary data was collected through survey questionnaires from Finnish industrial firms, targeting key account managers or corresponding positions. As part of their research in exploring whether centralising GAM activities in response to international retailers pays off, Swoboda et al. (2012) offer a conceptual framework based on a review of theory and data collection from supplying manufacturers.

The Compatibility group contains the four key themes of partnership, culture, relationship and trust. Relationship and culture are two themes which have been subjects in previous literature as important constituents of Global Account Management. The importance of relationships highlighted in this research both supports and adds to that of other researchers such as Capon et al. (2008), Toulan et al. (2014), McDonald et al. (2001), Cheverton (2008), Yip et al. (1996) and Gosselin and Bauwen (2006). McDonald et al. (2001) cite Barbara Jackson, as quoted by Kotler (1997, p. 28), who argues that the investment in relational marketing is worthwhile in industries where customers have high switching costs (such as buying capital equipment) and longer-term time horizons. Harvey et al. (2003) highlight the emergence of relationship marketing from the 1980s and 1990s, predicting at the time of writing that this would continue customer relationship marketing, although it would

become more of a hybrid model with a blend of marketing approaches, including relational marketing.

Toulan et al. (2006) state that there is a large but fragmented body of literature concerned with the relationship between vendors and customers. This study has addressed some of that gap and, like Veasey and Lawson (2020), places relationship management as a central theme. In their paper, which develops KAM to KARMA (Key Account Relationship Management Approach), Veasey and Lawson's review of 30 years of KAM literature identifies relationships as a dominant theme. The importance of relationships and associated findings prevalent in this research also concerns the absolute importance of a client buying organisation being able to trust the supplying organisation. Veasey and Lawson (2020) emphasise trust as an important element of KAM while Deszczyński (2019) says that "long-term buyer-supplier partnership is a philosophy of trust and cooperation" (p. 237).

It is perhaps unsurprising that cultural importance would feature in literature and the findings of this research given the global nature of GAM. It has been included within a number of published research journals, including those of Wilson et al. (2001), Lautenschlager and Tzempelikos (2021), Wilson and Woodburn (2013), and Larsen et al. (2000). The aspect, however, of culture, which is less well covered in the literature, concerns the dimension of supplier organisations being culturally attuned to the buying organisation. Whilst not absent from current literature, in this research the cultural aspect between the supplying and buying organisations provides a new perspective on the level of importance which client organisations place on their ability to partner with a GAM supplying organisation.

Whilst this theme has featured within previous literature, including Capon et al. (2008), Wilson et al. (2001), Johnson and Sohi (2001), Lautenschlager and Tzempelikos (2021), and Sheth (2002), and whilst partnering and partnership have featured in literature previously, it does not seem to have been raised as the most important key theme as is the case within this research. The level of importance of partnership which was expressed in this research offers a new and valuable perspective to literature and practice.

5.8 Summary

The discussion chapter presented research undertaken as the basis for this DBA thesis and findings based on the perspectives of the buying organisation executives interviewed. This chapter offers a new conceptual model which presents the essential characteristics for the development and structuring of Global Account Management. These are intended for consideration in the field.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Implications for research and practice

The research within this thesis set out to achieve the aims and objectives described earlier within the Methodological chapter. These aims and objectives are restated below.

The overall aim of this research was to enhance practice and theory by exploring the key challenges and enablers within Global Account Management from the perspective of clients buying services from the outsourced service industry.

Objective Achievement: The thesis contains the evidence required to show that the aims of this research have been met in full. The four research objectives form the constituent parts of this thesis. These are described below, along with a description of evidence of the achievement of these objectives in full.

1. *To explore relevant literature to understand evidence, gaps and key characteristics of Global Account Management within the service industry.*

Objective Achievement: The literature review within Chapter 2 explores the relevant literature to understand evidence, gaps and key characteristics of Global Account Management. This literature enquiry provides the theoretical underpinning for this research.

2. *To explore from the perspective of clients through in-depth interviews what they consider to be the essential characteristics of Global Account Management.*

Objective Achievement: Chapter 3 explains the entire methodological approach throughout the various phases of the exploration from the philosophical approach selected, my ontological position being as a constructivist interested in the lived experiences and perceptions of the client actors involved, for which the reality is subjective and changing. The chapter explains the data sampling process through the study's various stages, along with ethical considerations.

3. *To identify key areas that a supplier organisation should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management.*

Objective Achievement: Chapter 4 explores the findings through the perspective of the executives and what they consider to be the essential characteristics of Global Account Management.

4. *To develop a conceptual model to guide best practice.*

Objective Achievement: Chapter 5 identifies and discusses key findings that a supplier organisation should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management. These findings are set against a conceptual model which builds throughout the chapter. The conceptual model has already been introduced into a multi-national organisation to guide best practice.

At the heart of this DBA is a contribution to academic theory and practice and I propose that there are several implications for both in this research. The main benefit of this research relates to the future structuring, implementation and ongoing development of Global Account Management.

The review of existing literature highlighted the gap in knowledge which specifically focuses on placing the client buying organisation at the centre of research into Global Account Management. Building on the work of Shi et al. (2009), who highlight the existing literature at the time of writing, Table 2 brings this work up to recent times. This table provides an overview of the paucity of existing literature which focuses on the lived experience of executives from client organisations. Apparently for the first time, this research has sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of client executives responsible for procuring Global Account Management within an Integrated Facilities Management setting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, due to the limited existing research in Global Account Management, there are very few conceptual models and there do not appear to be any developed from the views of the buying client. The conceptual model presented within the discussion chapter has been developed from the findings of this research and includes the key findings across four overarching groups, Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes, each of which contain the 22 sub-themes identified within the findings.

The contribution to knowledge can be further defined and supported by Figure 15 below, which shows the research objectives and interview questions from the literature review shown previously. The figure goes on to include the findings set within the conceptual model and includes the groupings which emerged from the findings – Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes. These encompassed 22 key areas which a supplier organisation should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management. Compatibility focuses closely on the most important areas of partnership, culture, relationship and trust, which are likely to create value to both the buying organisation and the supplying

organisation. The research also draws attention to difficulties experienced by the interviewed participants, which were associated with several of the areas which they identified as key. The implications for practice add to the existing literature in a way which does not seem to have been undertaken in previous research – placing the buying organisation client at the centre and exploring their perspective. The outcomes of this research have been set in a conceptual model for the first time, thereby contributing to practice by aiming to guide practitioners through the important characteristics of Global Account Management most valued by the buying executives. This is achieved by setting the areas of greatest value within a framework in a way which seeks to clearly communicate and simplify the key areas.

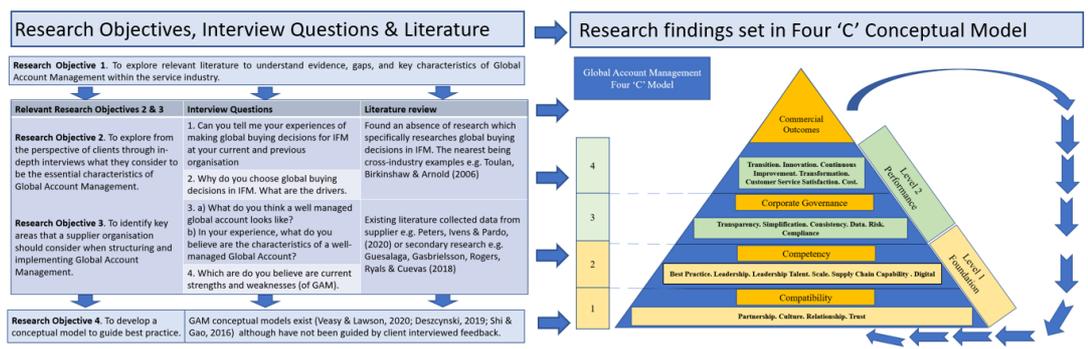


Figure 15: Research Methodology, Research Findings and Conceptual Model

6.3 Recommendations for practice and academia

Research at doctoral level involves an extensive investment of resources on the part of everyone involved in the fulfilment of its aims. Such a significant social scientific undertaking could certainly not have taken place without the valuable contribution and involvement of all participants, not least that made by the researcher and supervisory team, both of whom made a substantial investment in time – therefore, this is an inbuilt motivation to ensure that the research findings are of maximum use.

Given the complexities and the varying degrees of importance of the research findings, it is important that they are presented in a way which can be easily understood and useful to both practice and academia. An attempt has been made to simplify these findings and make them accessible with the creation of the conceptual model. Four recommendations have been developed in the interest of both practice and future research and these have been outlined below.

6.3.1. Recommendation One: Develop compatibility in practice

One of the key recommendations for practice arising from this research concerns those organisations seeking to structure and implement a Global Account Management competency. Organisations should consider the 22 key areas which have been identified and organised into the four main groups as presented within the Four Cs model – Compatibility, Competency, Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes. Particular attention should be given to the foundational area of Compatibility, which the interview participants cited as most important. Important areas which comprise Compatibility include partnership, culture, relationship and trust. Organisations should consider improving leadership and management within their companies to ensure that they develop an increased awareness of the importance of these areas, ensuring that their development is central to organisational leadership development and training for existing and future leaders. This will help to create an understanding of how to advance the partnership between GAM supplying and buying organisations, how to develop a cultural understanding between both organisations, and how to grow relationships based on trust between the organisations. It is recommended that this receives sufficient focus during the early stages of due diligence when the companies are considering working together – this resource and

focus should continue throughout the transition and beyond. An evaluation checklist has been created to support practitioners, examining these key focus areas and considering the managerial implications. The checklist allows the manager to enter a sentiment rating between 1 and 5 which rates each of the individual areas from weak to strong. The checklist tool then calculates the sentiment score for each of the main four groups, which then combine to calculate an overall evaluation score. The checklist automatically colours the individual areas with either red, amber or green based on thresholds set within automated formulas. Figure 16 shows an example of the checklist tool which has been populated with example data. Focusing on these areas should create a greater probability of developing stronger relationships with clients and more closely satisfying the areas highlighted as important within this research.

Global Account Management Health Check Evaluation				
Account 				
No	Theme	Rating (1-5)	Comments	Score
COMPABILITY				● 21%
1	Partnership	5		6.25%
2	Culture	4		5.00%
3	Relationship	3		3.75%
4	Trust	5		6.25%
COMPETENCY				● 16%
5	Best Practice	2		1.67%
6	Leadership	4		3.34%
7	Leadership Talent	5		4.17%
8	Scale	3		2.50%
9	Supply Chain Capability	2		1.67%
10	Digital	3		2.50%
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE				● 13%
11	Transparency	3		2.50%
12	Simplification	1		0.83%
13	Consistency	2		1.67%
14	Data	3		2.50%
15	Risk	3		2.50%
16	Compliance	4		3.34%
COMMERCIAL OUTCOMES				● 18%
17	Transition	2		1.67%
18	Innovation	5		4.17%
19	Continuous Improvement	3		2.50%
20	Transformation	5		4.17%
21	Customer Satisfaction	4		3.34%
22	Cost	3		2.50%
THE TOTAL SCORE				69%

Figure 16: ‘Four Cs’ Evaluation Checklist for Practitioners. Source: (Author)

6.3.2. Recommendation Two: Global Account Management system development

This research identified that, whilst there are recognisable elements of national Key Account Management evident in Global Account Management, GAM operating in multiple countries and multiple regions contains characteristics which create a level of complexity which is not present to nearly the same degree when focusing on account management in a single country. Identification of the 22 key areas which have been presented within the conceptual model should be considered by organisations when developing systems and processes which support their Global Account Management programme. These 22 key areas have been presented in four groups to allow

practitioners to identify more easily those which have been pinpointed as important within this research.

6.3.3. Recommendation Three: Potential for compatibility to be influenced by competency

Four of the main key areas identified within this research – partnership, culture, relationship and trust – are grouped within Compatibility and presented within the conceptual model. These areas were mentioned during the interviews as more important than the other 18 of the 22 areas which fall within the conceptual model. A potential limitation of the research arises as it cannot be explicitly understood whether Compatibility is prioritised in the data based on a set of assumptions by the interview participants – including perhaps an assumption that next foundational level competency and best practice, leadership, leadership talent, scale, supply chain capability and digital are already in place, which therefore allows Compatibility to be prioritised as important above all others.

The same logic could be applied to the other areas within the conceptual model such as Corporate Governance and Commercial Outcomes and the key areas contained within those groups. Understanding the linkages between the identified areas, and whether such interdependencies exist which require to be prioritised in sequence to create a hierarchy of importance in the minds of the interview participants, outlines the background to a recommendation for future research.

6.3.4. Recommendation Four: Conceptual model evaluation and development

The findings of this research are presented within the conceptual model in Chapter 5. This model reflects the strength of perception shared by the interview participants

during the semi-structured interviews and has been created with the intention of guiding best practice. An opportunity exists to develop and test the conceptual model through further research and evaluation. The results of this evaluation will form the basis for further development of the model to contribute to knowledge in addition to guiding practice. Contribution to knowledge and practice is at the heart of this DBA.

6.4 Final thoughts

The aim of this research was to develop practice by exploring the key challenges and enablers within Global Account Management from the perspective of clients buying services from the outsourced service industry. I suggest that the research aim has been fulfilled through the steps explored throughout this thesis – exploration of relevant literature to understand evidence, gaps and key characteristics of Global Account Management within the service industry; exploration through in-depth interviews of the perspectives of clients and what they consider to be the essential characteristics of Global Account Management; identification of key areas that a supplier should consider when structuring and implementing Global Account Management; and the development of a conceptual model to guide best practice.

Finally, it is hoped that the research findings, the conceptual model, proposed recommendations, and any subsequent research, will contribute to the field of Global Account Management both within knowledge and in practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Approval by Edinburgh Napier University Faculty and Ethics Governance Committee

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

The Business School
Edinburgh Napier University
Craiglockhart Campus
219 Colinton Road
Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ
SCOTLAND

13 May 2020

Application reference: ENBS-2019-20-041

Title of proposed research: Centring the client organisation in a Global Account Management Programme: Identifying key challenges for managers in the food services industry.

Dear Mark,

The application you submitted to the Research Integrity Committee has been approved.

Please use the above application reference if you need to demonstrate that you have received ethical approval from the Business School Research Integrity Committee.

Good luck with your research.

Regards,



Matthew Dutton
Convener, Research Integrity Committee



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Appendix B – Interview participant information sheet

Phase 1 Interview participant information sheet

Research Aim - Centering the client organization in a Global Account Management Programme: Identifying key challenges for managers in the food services industry.

Global Account Management is the main research focus area. The sub-sector to the research is the foodservice industry. It is worth observing that beyond the base field of International Business literature there is a paucity of literature relating to both GAM and perhaps less on the foodservice industry and seemingly an absence of any literature combining both these sectors. The extent of this literature will be examined as far as practically possible within the scope of the subsequent literature review.

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of those responsible for making global buying decisions for Food Services. This insight will then inform the overall research and how managers within the Food Service industry should respond.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part because:

- Your experience and expertise gained in advising organizations and procuring Global Account Management services is highly relevant to this research.
- Your experience and expertise in advising global buying decisions for the Food Services which are being evaluated.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Deciding not to take part or withdrawing from the study will have no impact.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher, this is likely to last for around 1 hour.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may not get a direct benefit from taking part in the study. The findings will support the future development of Global Account Management in Academia and Practice. It will however create space to consider this topic deeply which could inform the way you consider GAM in the future.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is not thought that there are any disadvantages. However, if you agree to participate, being a part of the research study will take up some of your time of around 1 hour.

What happens when the study is finished?

All data will be recorded and transcribed and stored in a password protected location. At the end of the research the data you have provided will be destroyed once the findings of the study have been completed.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All the information I collect during the course of the research will be kept confidential and there are strict laws, which safeguard your privacy at every stage. Your name will be removed from the data so that you cannot be recognised from it.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The study will be included within a research thesis. Some of the findings may be published in an education journal.

Who is organising the research and why?

The study has been organized by Mark Forret at Edinburgh Napier University.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty and Ethics Governance Committee at Edinburgh Napier University.

If you have further questions about the study please contact:

Mark Forret on [redacted] or e mail on mark.forret@napier.ac.uk.

If you would like to discuss this study with someone independent of the study, please contact:

Dr Gerri Matthews-Smith on [redacted] or e mail on g.matthews-smith@napier.ac.uk.

An inquiry into centering the client organization in a Global Account Management Programme leading to the identification of key challenges for managers in the food services industry.

You are invited to take part in a research study that will explore your experience of Global Account Management (GAM) from a client's perspective. We are interested in your views about what makes successful GAM, why organizations make these global buying decisions and tapping into current themes such as what difference you expect the current COVID pandemic will have on future global buying decisions.

You will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher, this is likely to last for around 1 hour.

I would appreciate if you would consider participating in the research study. However, before you decide to take part it is important that you understand what they study is about and what you will be asked to do. Please read the **Participant Information Sheet** (enclosed). Feel free to contact me if anything is unclear or you want further information. My contact details are below.

Your participation would be gratefully appreciated.

Thanks in anticipation,

Mark Forret
Research Student
Edinburgh Napier University Business School
Edinburgh Napier University
Craiglockart Campus
219 Colinton Road,
Edinburgh EH14 1DJ

Or mark.forret@napier.ac.uk

Appendix C – Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

An inquiry into centering the client organization in a Global Account Management Programme leading to the identification of key challenges for managers in the food services industry.

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet and this consent form.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact details of the researcher

Name of researcher: Mark Forret
Research Student
Edinburgh Napier University Business School
Address: Edinburgh Napier University
Craiglockart Campus
219 Colinton Road,
Edinburgh EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone: _____ or mark.forret@napier.ac.uk