

VELOCITY

KNOWLEDGE TO SPEED PAST THE COMPETITION

TRANSFORMATION



TRANSACTION

(it's that simple)



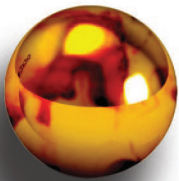


THE RAREST ADVANTAGE

Co-create value with your customers
by tapping into the power of

Strategic Customer Advisory Boards

- » Elevate executive engagement
- » Reduce internal alignment friction
- » Solidify and deepen long-term customer relationships



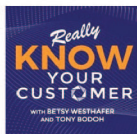
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NEW SAMA MEMBER BENEFIT DRIVES INTERNAL ALIGNMENT AND EXECUTIVE SUPPORT TO ELEVATE STRATEGIC CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT



By Betsy Westhafer
CEO
The Congruity Group

A recurring sentiment consistently expressed by strategic account managers (SAMs) is that they spend more time selling internally than they spend with their customers. In fact, SAMA research finds that SAMs spend 70% of their time selling internally and only 30% of their time with customers. Imagine the impact of reversing those percentages.

Furthermore, challenges in gaining executive support for engagement, product enhancements, and process improvements that impact the customer experience are often cited by SAMs regarding the barriers they experience in optimizing success in retaining and expanding their key accounts.

Helping members solve both of these challenges is a committed focus area for SAMA leadership, and as a result, SAMA is offering a new solution to identify and overcome the gaps that lead to misalignment, ineffective use of time, and competitive pressure.

The Customer Engagement Assessment™ and Customer Engagement Score™ are customized tools that accurately identify and measure areas in which organizations can improve their strategic engagement with customers, while also aligning internal teams and advancing executive support. The Customer Engagement Assessment is a methodical and

measurable approach that spotlights the current state of eight key areas that are critical to successful customer engagement:

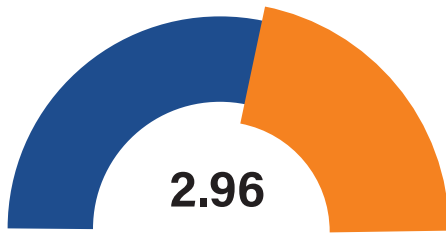
- Customer-centric culture
- Commitment to customer engagement
- Customer engagement strategy
- Internal team alignment and engagement
- Co-innovation with customers
- Value add from customer engagement
- Customer engagement programs
- Customer advocacy

The Assessment is offered as an annual complimentary benefit for up to five senior leaders within SAMA's corporate member organizations, and for up to three senior leaders from individual member companies. By taking the Assessment annually, participants have a consistent approach with benchmarks, ensuring progress is being made and collecting data to identify and mitigate any red flags that may appear on the horizon.

The importance of customer engagement metrics

Until now, it has been difficult to measure and monitor improvement with regard to strategic customer engagement. The Customer

THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT METRICS



Engagement Assessment provides a comprehensive Customer Engagement Score that serves as a baseline from which to build a more robust, strategic, and consistent approach to elevating customer engagement throughout an organization.

In addition, a score is provided for each of the eight focus areas (Figure 1), giving participants a micro view of where the current approach is working well and where improvement is most needed.

An in-depth, customized Report of Findings is included and outlines observations and recommendations for elevating the effectiveness within the eight focus areas.

SAMA has partnered with The Congruity Group, providers of strategic customer engagement programs, to offer this proprietary tool as a complimentary benefit of SAMA membership. Upon completion of the Assessment and delivery of the Report of Findings, The Congruity Group will schedule an executive briefing with participating organizations to review the report, answer questions, and offer strategic recommendations and next steps.

Marge Murphy, President of Acadia Lead Management Services, points to multiple benefits of taking the Assessment.

“As a service organization, customer retention is extremely important. We were looking for a tool that would challenge us to rethink and/or validate our strategy. The Assessment defined areas of strength but more importantly, opportunities for improvement. The results clearly stated observations and recommendations which enabled our team to align around the action plan.”

How the Assessment drives internal alignment

A key feature of the Customer Engagement Assessment is that all individual responses are kept confidential and shared only with the person completing it. This allows for participants to be open, honest, and transparent with their responses.

When multiple senior leaders within an organization complete the Assessment, the responses are aggregated to illustrate underlying trends and patterns across the participating organization. A graphical view is provided to quickly and easily identify areas in which there is alignment and misalignment among the participants. This visually illustrates the opportunities to focus conversations on areas that will help leadership teams better align and develop action plans that will elevate strategic customer engagement for greater impact, including retention and expansion of key accounts.

In the real-life example that follows, four senior leaders of an organization participated in the Assessment. In this illustration, the following statements were posed and participants were asked to rank their responses:

- We provide a forum for our key customer executives to see our long-term product roadmaps and provide perspectives so that we make accurate strategy decisions.
- We regularly engage our customers with regard to their future needs from our company so that we deliver what they want, how they want it, and when they want it.

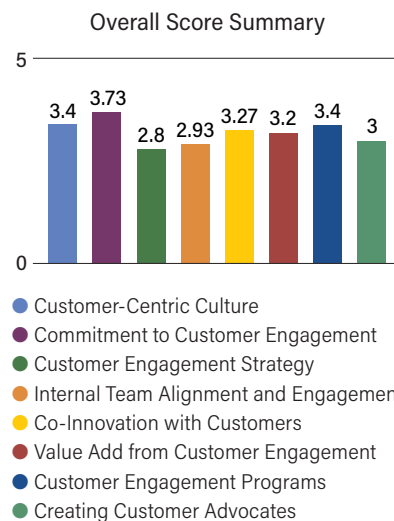
There are three specific perspectives the Assessment is looking for

within each statement:

1. Our organization has or does this.
2. Our organization does this consistently.
3. Our organization does this effectively.

As Figures 2 and 3 illustrate, there are some areas in which the majority of the participants are aligned, and some areas where no two participants answered in the same way. For example, when asked how effectively the organization regularly engages customers with regard to future needs, there is a definite disconnect among respondents. This presents

FIGURE 1. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT SCORE SUMMARY



the opportunity to have an internal discussion to gain deeper insights into how the company can more effectively engage customers with regard to their future needs.

Who should take the Customer Engagement Assessment?

For maximum impact and to provide the greatest opportunity for executive support and internal alignment, the following roles are best positioned to participate in the Assessment:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Marketing Officer
- Chief Revenue Officer
- Product Leader
- Highest-producing SAM

Having this cross-functional approach helps ensure that various perspectives are considered. For example, helping the C-suite align around what the SAMs are hearing directly from customers while at the same time helping SAMs understand the strategic impact with regard to the CEO’s priorities and investments is the holy grail when it comes to organizational alignment. It will also help identify blind spots that are impacting the customer experience and bring those to light for the C-level as well as the new business and retention sales leaders.

CEOs who have mastered customer engagement are referred to as Growth Champions in research conducted by Noel Capon and Christoph Senn. Their research notes that these executives are deeply engaged at the strategic level with their key accounts and commit to a regular cadence of meetings that are marked by in-depth business discussions. Capon and Senn note that this type of strategic engagement requires a robust investment and is not feasible for all customers.

Relative to other levels of executive engagement (Figure 4 on page 18),

Growth Champions have the highest five-year compound annual growth rates for sales and profitability. They live by the mantra “We love long-term customer success.”

The C-suite is ultimately responsible for growing the organization. Bringing this Assessment to your executive leaders helps them identify how they can best engage with customers

FIGURE 2. CO-INNOVATION WITH CUSTOMERS

Our organization has/does this: We regularly engage our customers with regard to their future needs from our company so that we deliver what they want, how they want it, when they want it.

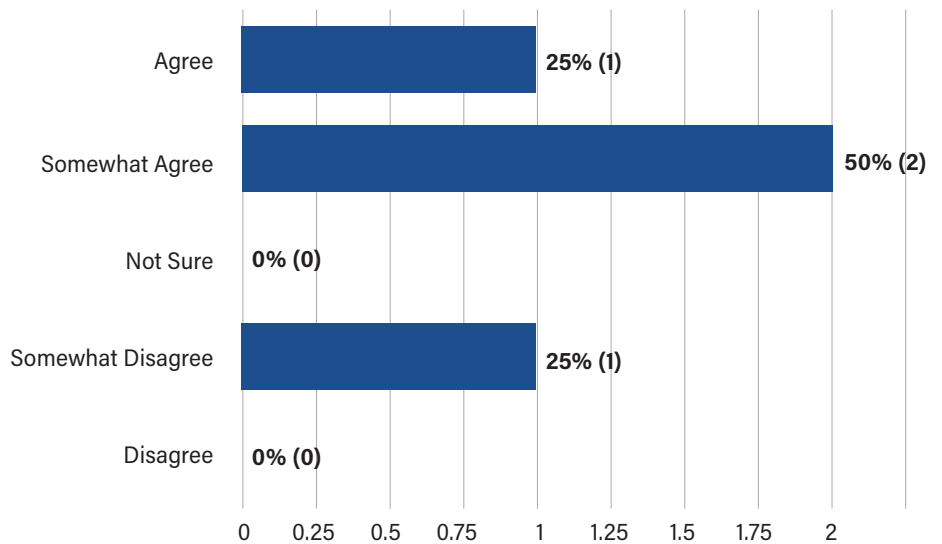


FIGURE 3. CO-INNOVATION WITH CUSTOMERS

Our organization has/does this: We provide a forum for our key customer executives to see our long-term product roadmaps and provide perspectives so that we make accurate strategy decisions.

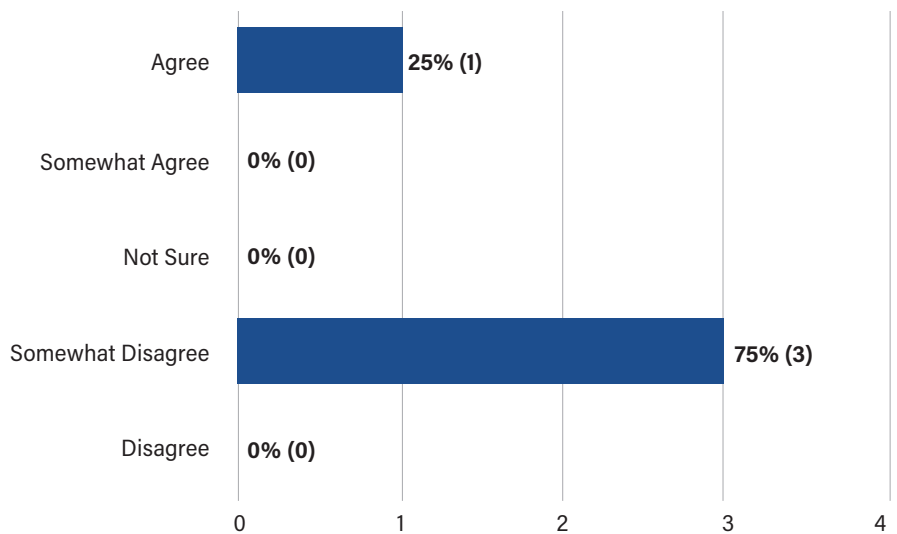
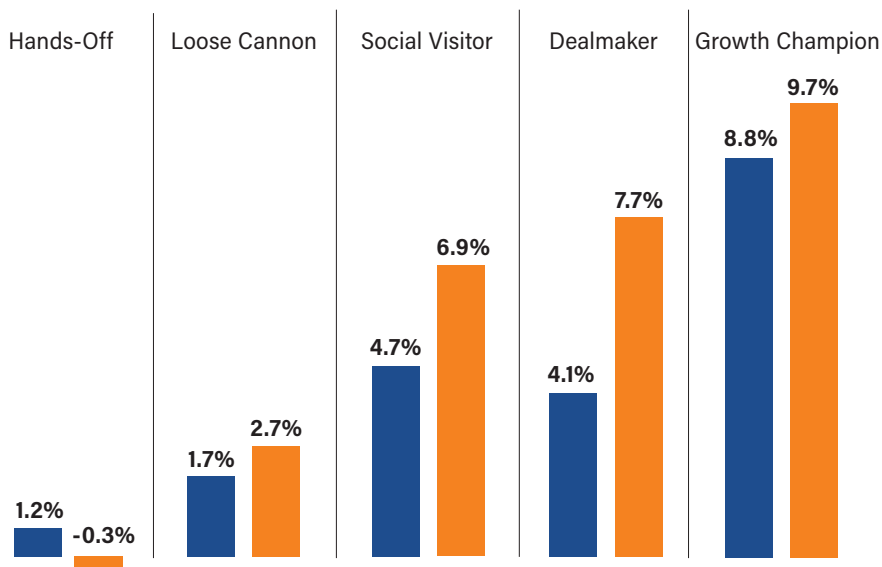


FIGURE 4. REAPING THE REWARDS

Comparing the five-year compound annual growth rates for sales and profits at the 515 companies in a study by Capon and Senn shows the gains realized by Social Visitors, Dealmakers, and especially Growth Champions.



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to accelerate sales and profitability, while at the same time supporting the efforts of the SAM responsible for the account.

How the Customer Engagement Assessment creates competitive advantage

Strategic account management works best when the teams are aligned and customers are properly engaged. It's just that simple. Having a tool to ensure that your organization is flying in formation and functioning at the most strategic levels of engagement is the best insurance against competitive forces. This is best performed with consistent monitoring of key performance indicators that the Customer Engagement Assessment and Score provide. It's a unique and valuable approach that is a benefit to you as a SAMA member that

likely is not being leveraged or used by your competitors.

How to take the Customer Engagement Assessment

To get started, go to thecongruitygroup.com/SAMA/assessment to learn more and to register the participating members of your organization. SAMA is excited to offer this new membership benefit and strongly encourages you and your colleagues to take advantage of this impactful tool.

COMING SOON!

In addition to being able to obtain a 180° view of your internal strategic customer engagement performance, you will also have the opportunity to increase that view to 360° by soliciting similar feedback directly from your strategic accounts. This will allow your team to align around

how your customers view your engagement with them in the same eight focus areas. Customized reports will be generated, delivering a market-validated roadmap for strategic customer engagement as well as a powerful competitive advantage. ■

Betsy Westhafer is the CEO of The Congruity Group, a consultancy that focuses exclusively on strategic customer engagement programs. Betsy is the co-author of the #1 bestseller, "The Rarest Advantage: How to Co-Create Strategic Value to Retain and Grow Your Key Customer Accounts." She is also the co-host of the REALLY Know Your Customer podcast, named one of the "Top 15 Customer Retention Podcasts on the Web" by Feedspot. Betsy can be reached at 937-550-1701 or at betsy@thecongruitygroup.com.



INCLUDED IN THE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT:

- ✓ Comprehensive customer engagement score
- ✓ Engagement scores for each of the 8 focus areas
- ✓ Customized Report of Findings, including observations and recommendations
- ✓ 30-minute review of your report and results with a Congruity Engagement Strategist