

National

Accounts Executive

Essential Characteristics of Tomorrow's National Accounts Executive



The job of a national accounts executive isn't easy. Getting the job done right takes much more than having a specific set of skills. A successful national accounts executive possesses a finely developed character, but isn't afraid to evaluate whether certain traits need refinement.

Times are changing, and that means the way success is measured for a national accounts executive is changing as well. What worked in the past isn't going to cut it in the future, and the future is now. Here are seven essential characteristics of tomorrow's national accounts executive.

Become a trusted advisor with unquestionable integrity

1

The job of a national accounts executive boils down to building long-lasting relationships with clients both internal and external. Yes, you want to secure contracts for your supplier, but you won't secure those contracts if you don't gain the customer's trust by learning their needs and what makes them tick.

Strategic, long-term thinking will help you get contracts and keep those contracts. The focus of your energy needs to be on what the relationship between you, the supplier, and IDNs and GPOs will look like years down the line. Don't put all of your energy into immediately getting your foot in the door.



A national accounts executive isn't the same thing as a sales representative. You're not pushing products. It's not a sale you're trying to make when securing a contract, but a unique relationship you're trying to build.

Every organization is unique, which means that a different approach will have to be applied depending on an organization's different needs. There's not a single, standard approach as to how a relationship with an organization is built. Your job is to help organizations grow and thrive so that they can deliver excellent healthcare. That means you have to best understand how an organization can deliver that care based on their values.

Fostering healthy, transparent relationships with organizations that are founded on honesty and integrity will create the grounds for success. Always honoring the commitments you make and consistently working for the best interest of your customer will sustain your relationship, and thus sustain everyone's success.

Be a strong relationship manager with a win/win mission for both client and supplier

2

Part of being a successful national accounts executive means you can help manage a healthy relationship between the supplier and your customer. That means you need to take on the responsibility of ensuring that the goals of both your company and the IDN or Hospital are aligned.

No healthcare provider is going to want to do business with a supplier whose goals differ from those of the organization. If you can act as a strong relationship manager and ensure that the supplier and the provider organization are always on the same page, you can pretty much guarantee a long-lasting relationship.



Creating and sustaining fruitful relationships is the key to everyone's success. A fruitful relationship between the client and supplier is one where both sides consistently benefit from the relationship they share. If a healthcare organization and a supplier aren't able to thrive together—if they aren't able to contribute to the success of each other because there's no alignment in goals—then there's no point in continuing that relationship.

It's your responsibility as a national accounts executive to consistently keep track of everyone's goals. That means you need to make sure that everyone's goals are not only met, but that the goals are conducive to everyone's success. A win for the supplier should translate to a win for the organization and vice versa. If you always keep an eye on making sure the relationship between client and supplier is a relationship that benefits them both, then you're headed in the right direction down the path of success.

Be empowered to make decisions on behalf of the organization, and possess the emotional intelligence to navigate an IDN's departments without compromising the enterprise relationship

3

If you're going to be someone that can represent an organization and help make decisions for an organization, then you have to go beyond just knowing what's important to those in the c-suite. Of course you need to know what those in the c-suite value, but you want to understand what's important to everyone in the organization, including physicians, nurses, and the supply chain.

Possessing the emotional intelligence to grasp what's important to the ones who deliver the care will help you understand what's important to the overall organization. It's paramount to know the values of an organization based on their values collectively, and

if you don't possess the emotional intelligence to understand where everyone is coming from, you can't help that organization make any decisions when it comes to which supplies can bring the best care at the best cost.

Even though it's important to understand and respect the viewpoints of the caregivers, you must always keep the enterprise relationship intact. Learn about the different departments of the IDN, but don't let that create any sort of schism between the higherups and the ones on the floor. Don't let any clash in viewpoints get in the way of doing your job. If you notice any discrepancies in visions or values, relay those differences to the ones in executive positions.

Yes, the goal is always going to be quality care, but that care can't be provided if you don't make sure that everyone is on the same page.



Be effective at matrix management

4

As a national accounts executive, it's important to let as many people on your team as possible understand what's happening at all times; and you have to do this regardless of whomever they report to.

While it may not be part of everyone's job description to report to certain departments, you have to make it your job. Keeping everybody up to date regardless of who's talking to whom is how you ensure that the initiative at the IDN is flourishing.

This is not an easy task to handle, but it's not insurmountable by any means. As long as you keep in mind the goal of helping the IDN deliver quality care, then you'll intuitively understand when and where to engage. As overwhelming as it may sometimes seem, ensuring that everybody's on the same page is just simply part of the job.



Be a mission-minded leader

5

We can think of this characteristic as yet another branch on the emotional intelligence tree. The characteristic of being a mission-minded leader is one that is deeply rooted in self-awareness. It means that you have the self-reflective ability to step back and ask yourself if you as the supplier are doing everything you can to fulfill the mission of the healthcare organization given the services and products you provide.

While each organization has their own unique values, let's not forget that at the end of the day it's about bringing quality healthcare to the public. It's both natural and necessary to think about your own internal success, but you can't lose sight of what's going to bring that success. Your success is dependent upon an organization's ability to provide quality healthcare. Your customer is only going to be able to do that if you make sure that what you bring to the table is what the organization needs to provide that care.

Remember that the mission of the healthcare organization is your mission. The way you lead should reflect the ethos behind your customer's mission, and you should always strive to complete that mission—that's how you're going to be able to create both internal and external success.



Be a career-long learner and educator

6

Short-term success doesn't always translate to career-long success. A truly successful national accounts executive is one who finds perpetual success. The only way you're going to find continued success is through continuing your education—meaning you have to always be willing to learn about the current trends and keep up with the state of the industry.

The market is changing fast. Your job isn't to analyze numbers in order to make sales; your job is to examine the current state of affairs, and make strategic decisions both internally and externally—decisions that allow you and your customer the chance to thrive within the industry as it is today, and in the future.

Go to the meetings held and attended by your peers and by others in the industry. Learn the trends and see how others feel. When you know what's going on and how the

industry as a whole reacts to certain changes, bring that information back to your team so that you can optimize internal and external success.

This is something you have to do throughout the entirety of your career. No matter how good you are at your job, there's never going to be a time when you've reached the pinnacle of your powers. That's because there's always going to be a new way to apply your knowhow and character. Changes in the industry mean new innovations in both the industry itself, and new innovations in your approach to securing and maintaining contracts. That means that the way we provide the public with quality healthcare is always changing. You have to keep that in mind because helping to deliver quality healthcare is always the top priority.



Possess the drive and passion to create success for everyone

7

This characteristic may be last on the list, but it's arguably the most important. More than anything, you need to have the drive and passion for the job if you're going to be able to do it right. Without the passion and drive to create both internal and external success—which gives the public the healthcare they deserve—then you simply won't have what it takes to be a national accounts executive.

Yes, your job is to secure and drive contracts, but you can only do that if you put your passion into cultivating meaningful relationships with organizations. If you don't have the drive to help others succeed, it won't go unnoticed. A successful national accounts

executive doesn't go through the motions to get a contract; he or she takes the time to get to know a customer and the values that customer holds. For the successful national accounts executive, it's not just a job; it's a way of life, a value system that's upheld and practiced, an unmatched and unparalleled drive for helping others.

You also have to remember that the passion you have for your work and for your customer is grounded in respect and humility. Show your customers that you care about what they have to say and that you value what's important to them. Show your customers the respect they deserve and let them know that you're there to help them grow, and that you take their input seriously.





The characteristics a national accounts executive should possess are all closely intertwined. Always think about the needs of others—your internal clients, your customers, and the public. Those needs will be understood based on the relationships that you build.

Suppliers and IDNs aren't looking for smooth talkers and those who simply know how to make a sale. In this business you need emotional intelligence, empathy, passion, humility, and a drive fueled by the desire to give back. All of these characteristics will allow you to create the sort of long-lasting relationships with customers that are conducive to everybody's sustained success.

The healthcare supply chain isn't just about a specific skillset anymore; it's about how you apply your heart, determination, and drive to create success for your customers so that the public can get the best care at the best price.

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