

TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY

By Jerry Alderman



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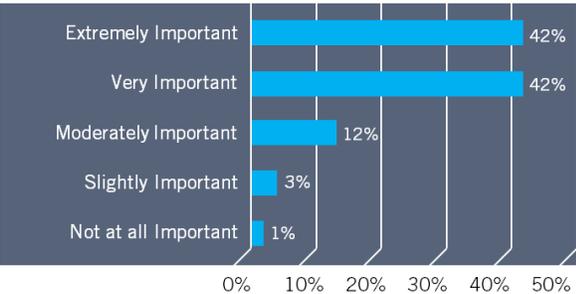
By Jerry Alderman

If you're responsible for the success of your SAM (Strategic Account Management) program, you are probably struggling with understanding how you can make better use of technology. You're not alone! Technology is a top focus among the SAM community with nearly 9 out of 10 respondents expressing very high importance in a recent SAMA (Strategic Account Management Association) study, which also indicated the top need is for tools that enable Value Creation and Communication.

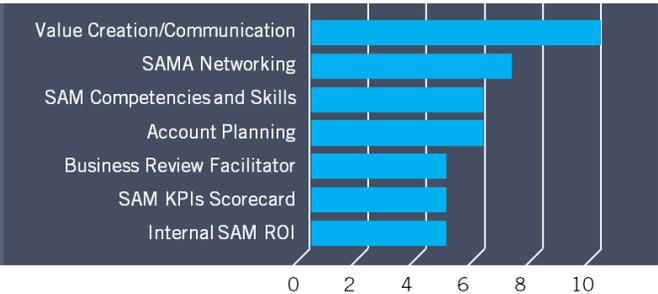
TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

<p>Nearly 85% of respondents indicate that it is Very or Extremely important for SAMA to deliver tools that support SAMs and the SAO</p>	<p>Leading the suggestions for Tool creation is "Value Creation/Communication and "SAMA Networking"</p>
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How important is it for SAMA to deliver tools?



Top suggested areas for tool development



TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY

A few years ago we, Valkre, started a collaboration with SAMA on the idea of 'SAM Enablement™'. Our collective view was that SAMs needed to be better enabled with technology and that technology needed to be better aligned with the actual strategy of SAM. We saw 'SAM Enablement™' as being different than traditional approaches such as 'Sales Enablement' or 'Account Planning'. The difference being that Enabling SAM is a customer-facing, corporate strategy that requires enablement of many Roles internally and externally across the entire Customer Journey. Yes, the Strategic Account Manager is at the center of it all...but without the collaboration of Key Customer Stakeholders, Sales, Marketing, and Executives then the value creation and growth promise of Strategic or Key Accounts can be difficult to realize. So, we set out in 2016 with the SAMA community to co-create a next-gen 'SAM Enablement™' solution.

Through our journey of innovation with the SAMA community, these five areas have risen to the top as being critical to success and requiring better tech enablement to support customer value creation and growth.

- 1. Customer Facing Experience:** So much of SAM is customer-facing. Co-Discovery, Co-Creation, Co-Execution. The 'Co' means the customer is involved. This means if we are going to use a tool to enable SAM, then it better work well in front of Customers. Internal documents, CRM, Apps in a CRM that do not allow seamless, real-time collaboration with Key Customer Stakeholders will have SAM Programs painted in a corner.
- 2. Enable SAM Playbook:** SAMA's research (and what we teach in the SAMA Academy) suggests that the work involved must focus on developing and executing a plan with a Customer around how you can create more value for them. This is fundamentally different than developing a plan focused solely on selling the Customer more stuff. This results in a different kind of tool that is more focused on understanding and solving customer challenges rather than an upgrade of CRM Opportunity Management.
- 3. Quantify Customer Value:** A critical component in achieving 'Trusted Partner' status is proving the value created for a Key or Strategic Account. This requires math on how much you have improved their KPIs and making sure you are rewarded for those efforts. Without some tech help, it can become extremely labor intensive to structure, track, roll-up, and report on all of these numbers.
- 4. Integrate with Marketing:** Understanding customer challenges, potential solutions and quantifying potential customer outcomes can be hard! A critical linkage needs to be made here with Marketing,

TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY

practical Account Based Marketing, to help the SAM by supplying value propositions and value calculators that can easily be downloaded to an Account Plan for personalization.

- 5. Create Organizational Alignment:** The SAM does not operate as an individual ‘user’ working in isolation but as the orchestrator of a cross-functional team whose purpose is to help the company work with and grow their most important customers. Visibility to the strategy, accountability to get work done, and constant, purposeful communication are critical to success at an enterprise level. Tech platforms can create alignment across disparate teams very quickly by sharing data (instead of documents) with every SAM support role including Marketing, Product Management, Sales Ops, Executives and Customers.

And like any customer-related tech these days there needs to be a complimentary connection to CRM. It needs to be mobile enabled and pass world class security standards. And, on top of all that it needs to be easy and dare we say, fun to use.

So we’ve been building it. Testing it. Improving it with the SAMA Community. And in the spirit of ‘Community’, we thought to incorporate the perspective of 5 SAMA community companies currently solving these challenges with Valkre tech.

CHALLENGE 1: CUSTOMER FACING EXPERIENCE

AMERISOURCEBERGEN

Like most companies, we have a long history of business reviews with customers. Despite all the best intentions, we struggled to get everyone on the same page both internally and with the customer -- what is the right structure for a business review? Right cadence? Right content? As we started to explore tools to help, we quickly became interested in the customer-facing nature of Valkre. It just seemed right:

- The work with customers takes on a more agile, real time feel
- It saves everyone time by eliminating the endless cycles of status reporting
- Eliminates confusion on what’s being worked on, status, owners and latest news



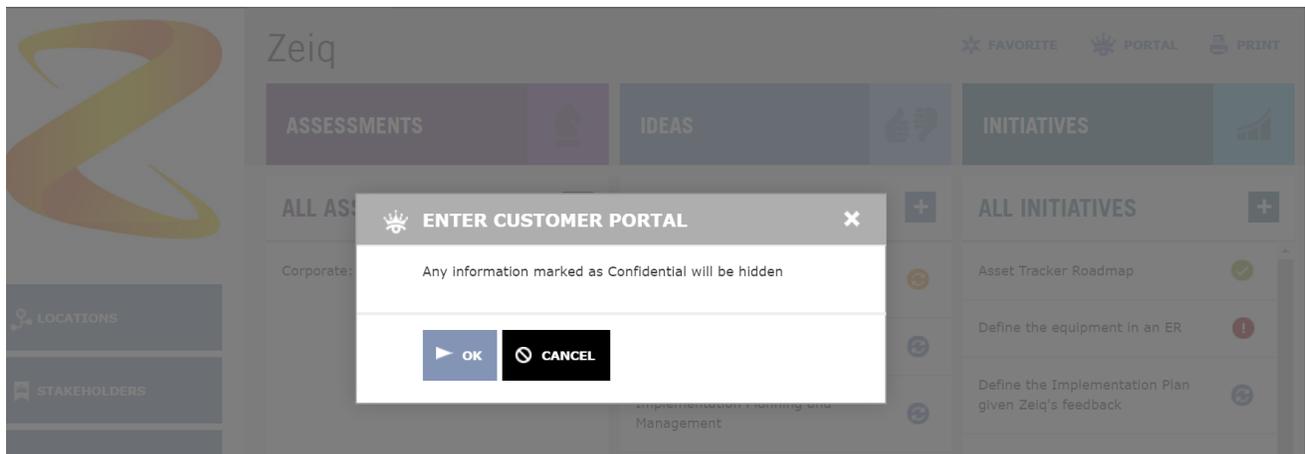
Blake Jarrell
Vice President
National Accounts



Jon Murray
Sr. Director Commercial
Learning and Development

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- Increases the level of commitment and importance of the customer plan to internal teams and customers
- Fundamentally serves as an “always on” assistant for the SAM in keeping a large number of stakeholders on both sides aligned and on task
- Has the potential to fundamentally change the pace and nature of our approach to working with customers



Customer Facing: from Valkre Demo Environment

We previewed the tool with key customers and explored the idea of giving them direct access. In this way they would have a real-time connection to our collective Ideas and the Initiatives we have in flight to execute on the challenges we've jointly identified. They loved it!

We are in early days of using Valkre as a customer-facing tool, but we see the application of these resources as a fundamental game-changer. In so many ways, this single concept sets the stage for the future of our SAM Program. And even more intriguing, the future of how our customers work with us.

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CHALLENGE 2: ENABLE SAM PLAYBOOK

SUEZ – WATER TECHNOLOGIES & SOLUTIONS

Our challenge has been to ensure our SAMs follow a consistent approach that is visible, can be managed and one we could grow and improve. When we considered tools we were really looking for software that enabled the work we expected our SAMs to do.

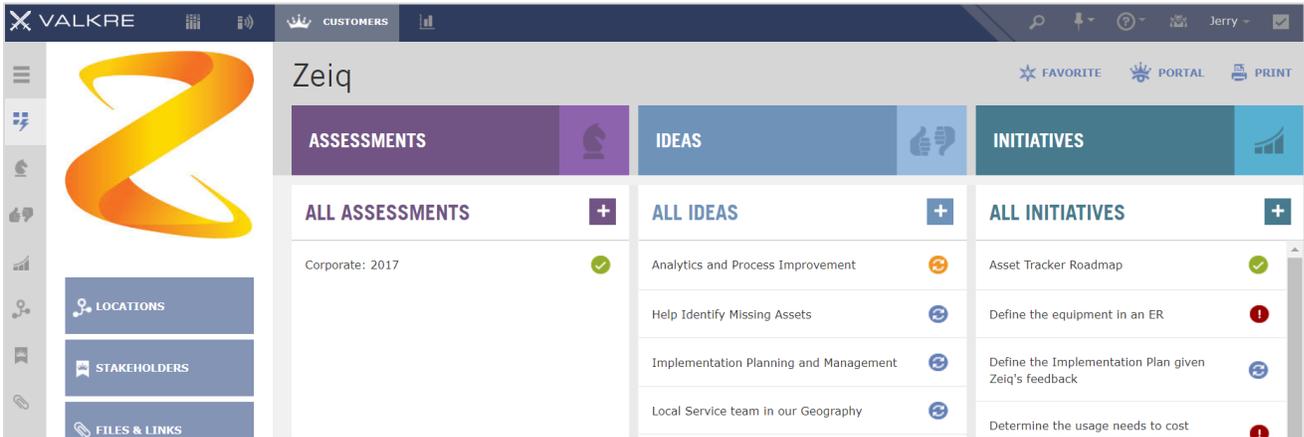


Ed Zupanc,
Key Accounts – Global
Operations Leader

Like others, we’ve had some form of Strategic Account Management for years. We recently embarked on renewing and refreshing our program. For an assist, we attended the SAMA Academy to get up to speed on the latest thinking and best practices. One of the top talking points at SAMA is that KAM/SAM is a different animal than Sales. Yes, there are revenue growth targets involved, but the role of the KAM/SAM in those targets is to define an overarching strategy to solve customer challenges. During the Academy we were exposed to a Playbook that SAMs could follow to further embody best practices.

In the Valkre tool we were able to see The Playbook come to life. It follows this basic logic:

- **Assessment:** What is the situation at our customer and what are their challenges
- **Ideas:** What ideas do we have that could help the customer solve their challenges and,
- **Initiatives:** What are the activities underway to execute against those ideas



SAM Playbook: from Valkre Demo Environment

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This is the core work we want our KAMs to focus on. For us, it follows a fundamental business logic that growth with our most important customers flows from how we help them solve challenges. Sometimes our ideas might be to organize a team to help our customer solve a challenge that has no immediate deal tied to it. Other times, it may be that the customer has a challenge that does involve buying a product or service. But, regardless of the solutions, we need our KAMs to always be focused on understanding the flow of: what is the customer challenge, what ideas we have, and what are the initiatives underway to help.

For us, the Playbook within the software is helping us to focus and manage our KAM resources on the continuous process of identifying and solving challenges. With this consistent Playbook across our team, we can now see when consistent challenges are cropping up across our customer base. We can start to share across the team how we solved those challenges. All of this is to help us position the KAMs as a growth engine for SUEZ.

CHALLENGE 3: QUANTIFYING CUSTOMER VALUE

SONOCO

Valkre has become our Productivity Tracker. With our customers we establish Productivity Improvement targets on an annual basis. These targets are established at various levels including Plants, Regions and Corporate. On an agile basis, projects are initiated and executed to achieve the Productivity Targets. We manage and track all of this in Valkre and document the Quantified Customer Outcomes. Over the course of a year for one of our large accounts this might include 50 projects across a half dozen locations.

In our past we would do this work and when time for negotiation would come around it was so very difficult to get any credit for all of the work. Valkre has changed that for us. We can now very cleanly and visibly track the thread from Productivity Improvement Target thru to Projects thru to Quantified Customer Outcome at the Plant, Region and Corporate level. The reporting and documentation has become a very positive part of our ongoing customer communication.

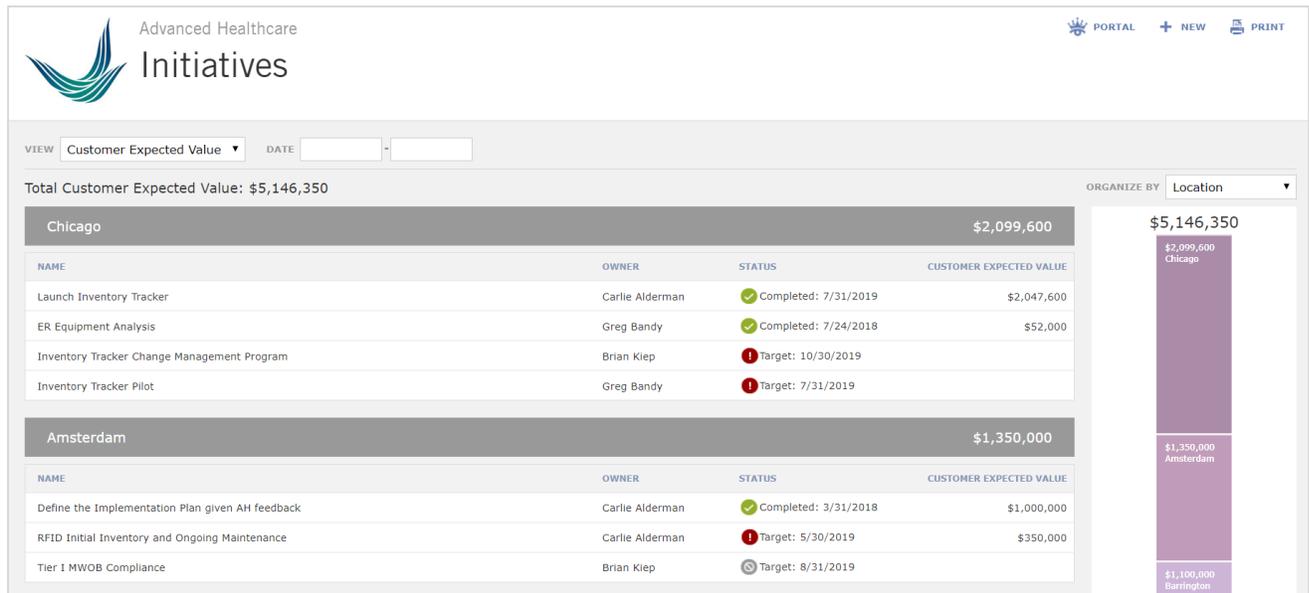


Tom Kurt
Strategic Account
Manager



Aaron Erbe
Strategic Account
Manager

TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY



Quantifying Customer Outcomes: from Valkre Demo Environment

So, for an individual customer we get great value:

- Documenting with numbers has yielded significant progress in growing and defending customer position
- Having consistent quantified documentation of completed projects over time within Valkre tech helps with people transitions internally and with the customer. This is especially true when a new Procurement Officer arrives on the scene as we are far better positioned to keep going rather than starting over.
- Often times when AH seeking the value of an improvement we learn facts about the customer they didn't know about themselves. Our effort to quantify customer opportunities elevates the conversations above "price" and towards collaboration.

In addition to these points, the visibility within Valkre Tech also creates a leverage effect within the customer and across market segments. We are now better able to leverage a completed project.

- We can share successful projects or lesson learned to help reduce the resource demands to achieve incremental success

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- Valkre holds together a process that allows us to learn from each other and achieve synergies that prior to Valkre were heavily dependent on individual effort and creativity
- Adds-up quantified outcomes across many locations and customers to help us and our customers better prioritize efforts and maximize effort
- Helps Sonoco operations drive projects that have internal benefits as well as customer benefits

Having these Quantitative Customer Outcomes turns out to be positive for both sides. Our customers appreciate the ability to communicate to their bosses regarding what has been achieved with an important supplier. For us, our business case for growth, margin and share, is a step-change better with Valkre Tech.

CHALLENGE 4: INTEGRATE WITH MARKETING

BRACCO DIAGNOSTICS

Our SAM program is relatively new. We, like so many others in Healthcare, are facing a new, more organized customer as a result of consolidation. For us, that has driven a need to literally elevate our game.



Cosimo DePinto
Vice President Marketing

Our selling model has been very oriented around selling individual products and services to the individual users of the products and services. We now find ourselves needing to sell a more strategic solution. What is the benefit to a Healthcare Executive of the overall relationship with Bracco that includes the many products and services we provide? We had not asked our Sales Professionals to have this sort of conversation. But we needed to and the transition is not trivial.

<p>BACKGROUND:</p> <p>Market conditions continue to accelerate the need for strategic account management & value based messaging</p>	Payer & Provider consolidation and integration
	Fierce competition & customer environment evolution
	Rise of consumerism and digital connected health
	Value-based payment model transition
	Pricing pressure

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The Valkre platform served as a lightbulb by leading us down a path of including Marketing in our SAM Strategy. Within Valkre we created a ‘value prop library’ that includes the critical value props our KAMs need to ‘level up’ the conversation from. These range from strategic OneBracco ideas that solve major customer challenges to details on specific initiatives we can execute together.

Each Value Prop story includes the challenge being solved, what we uniquely do so solve the challenge and the expected quantified customer outcome. This was an eye opener for both our Marketers and our KAMs in terms of how beneficial having common structure and quantitative rigor can quickly change conversations internally and externally.

Between our SAMA Training and Valkre Tech our thinking has shifted to think about the transition as more of a corporate strategy. A strategy that caused us to get more of the organization involved. The Valkre software has this understanding built into it. Within the same platform our Marketers and SAMs can work together on what is truly a powerful approach to Account Based Marketing and SAM.

CHALLENGE 5: CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

PARKER HANNIFIN

We run our team meetings within Valkre. To us, this means updates on critical initiatives in an orbit that includes the large company we work for and some of the largest Oil and Gas OEMs in the world.

The tools have been very valuable in driving internal alignment. Prior to Valkre, each GAM had his or her own version of an account plan ranging from spreadsheets to PowerPoints. These manual tools took an incredible amount of time to maintain and update for account review meetings. Trying to assimilate various formats and information for global business leaders was cumbersome and detracted attention from the critical aspects of our work.

We see Valkre as having gotten it right. The core engine of their platform is about the work we are doing as GAMs. It is centered on: customer challenges, our potential solutions, the initiatives and projects under execution. We can align on internal resources, track progress, and capture customer value to help drive accountability. Not only do we have visibility to our own accounts, Valkre enables us to see what the other GAMs are working on and have completed with customers and the groups within our organization. Another



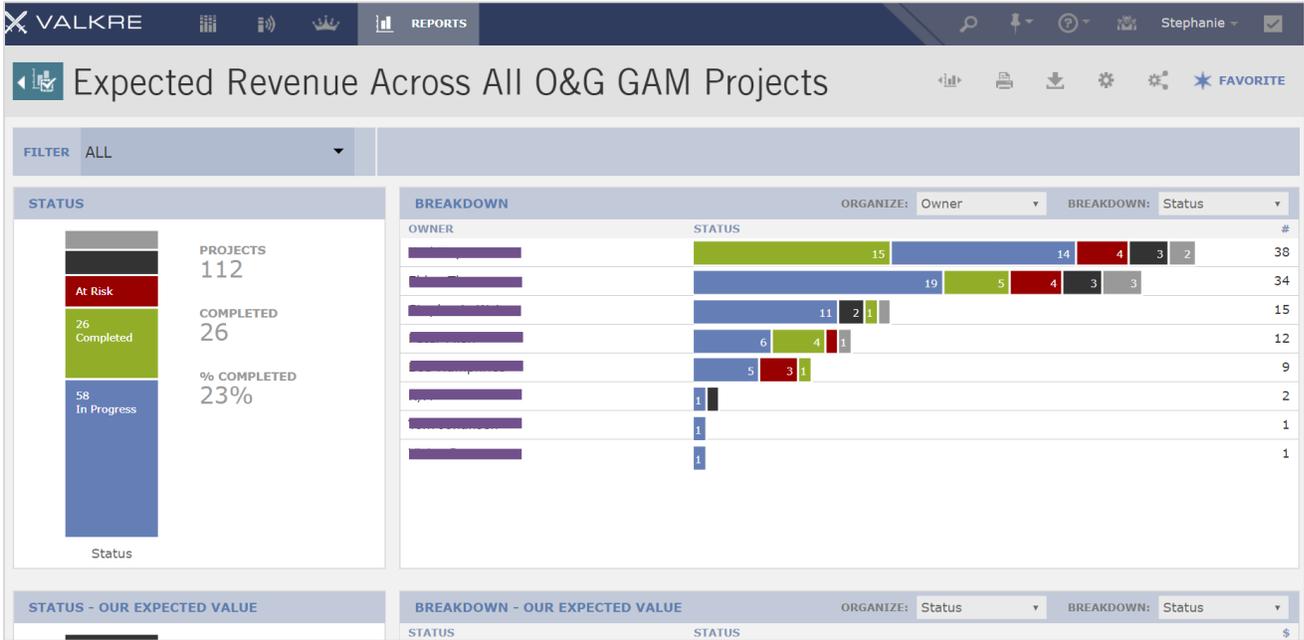
Stephanie Weiss
Global Account Manager

TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY

benefit of Valkre is the ability to capture the facets of traditional account plans, relationships, locations, background, in the same tool.

Our account review meetings are focused on aligning the priorities of our customers. Having all our information in one place aids in healthy conversations among the GAMs focused on customer challenges, our ideas, and projects. We have visibility to both where we may need more internal alignment from our organization and the various successes we have delivered to customers. The reports we can auto-generate for internal stakeholders enable us to communicate the impact of our role in the organization by providing a clear picture of value delivered by internal group and customer.

(Strategic Account Management Association)



Create Organizational Alignment: From Parker Instance of Valkre

Another aspect of Valkre that worked well for us was how simple it was for us to get started and grow from there. We were able to quickly convert our existing account plans into the system, and after a couple calls, our team was up and running without having to involve any IT resources. Together with the Valkre team, we developed a road map for our team starting with the features that addressed our alignment challenge first. As

TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY

the GAMs grew more comfortable in Valkre, we methodically expanded into the other features of the system. Today, it is second nature for our team to run our meetings and reporting from Valkre.

SUMMARY

As mentioned earlier, these are five areas from our experiences where Technology can make a major impact in advancing SAM as a Corporate Strategy. SAMA research suggests that 50 to 70% of a SAMs time is spent trying to get internal alignment with most of the balance of their time gaining customer alignment. In so many ways the 5 challenges discussed align along the dimension of where a SAMs time is spent. This is important because if technology aligns along SAM activity that consumes 2% of their time then it is hard to achieve adoption and drive impact. Think about the five areas:

- **Customer Facing Experience:** getting aligned with customer
- **Enable SAM Playbook:** making sure the SAMs operate in a consistent manner so the organization and the customer learns what to expect
- **Quantify Customer Value:** reduce time justifying the importance of projects and negotiation
- **Integrate with Marketing:** aligning with marketing on customer communication and potential customer outcomes
- **Create Organizational Alignment:** getting everyone on the same page regarding who's doing what, by when and why.

These are 5 great companies with examples on where Technology is being leveraged to drive SAM Strategy advancement and focus on continuing to achieve the sort of results SAMA benchmarks as best-in-class: 2X growth, 10% higher margins, 61% customer satisfaction improvement and 69% risk of loss mitigation.

These last several years working with and seeing SAMA Community members advancing their programs with the help of tech has been a blast. Now that SAM tech foundations are being set across many companies, it will be exciting to see how integration into advances such as IOT and AI platforms play out in the next couple of years. Rest assured, Valkre will be in the middle of it helping companies create hyper-focus on value creation to their key and strategic accounts.

TECHNOLOGY AND ENABLING SAM AS A CORPORATE STRATEGY

One way to experience Valkre for yourself is to take SAMA's Core 0 Training Academy course. Valkre is integrated in the course and after a couple of days you'll have a plan in place for an account and a new perspective on how SAM Tech can help your program. Checking out valkre.com or sending a note to info@valkre.com to learn more and set up a demo works just fine as well.

Best of luck.

Valkre is a Chicago-based company that has developed cloud-based SaaS solutions to help B-to-B companies enable Key Account Management and Strategic Account Based Marketing. Valkre has enabled companies with technology that improves how they articulate value propositions, understand customer needs, and develop strategic customer relationships focused on value creation. For more information, please visit valkre.com.