

How the new RM – **Resource Manager** – Is Trumping the Competition

by Jack Hubbard



Like he's done every day for the past decade, Tom arrives to work at National Bank at 8 a.m. He checks emails and responds promptly to client needs. He reviews overdrafts, looks at his calendar for the day, and checks the bank's intranet for any internal news.

Tom is a dedicated relationship manager who makes certain his clients are happy. It's not enough, it seems, as business has leveled off. Not only that, he's losing deals to Janet, a new officer at a competing bank.

Both Tom and Janet are knowledgeable, hardworking, and good at their jobs. So what makes Janet more successful? It's that Tom is a *relationship manager*, while Janet, who holds the same title, considers herself a *resource manager* (RM).

Relationship managers maintain a portfolio of clients to serve and cross-solve to. It's their job to be operationally efficient, fair and equitable, and to keep the client happy enough to stay with the bank in the face of competitive pressures.

Resource managers are certainly all of that—but relationship managers have become reactive, and the new resource managers are much more proactive. They're constantly looking for fresh ideas to share with clients and coming up with ways to challenge the thinking of business owners and CFOs to ensure they're considering lots of ways to grow their companies.

With the economy improving, companies want to use their capital more effectively and are looking for ideas that fall to the bottom line. At the same time, interest margins are shrinking, and the options entrepreneurs have to do their banking are growing. Business is more dynamic than ever with money in motion (MIM) constantly. Gaining mindshare is, therefore, a key success strategy.

Relationship managers sell products, resource managers provide solutions. Look at any study, and that's exactly what business owners and companies want—and increasingly *expect*—from their banker. Here's how some bankers have made the transition to resource manager status:

It's a Work-Style Change, Not More Work

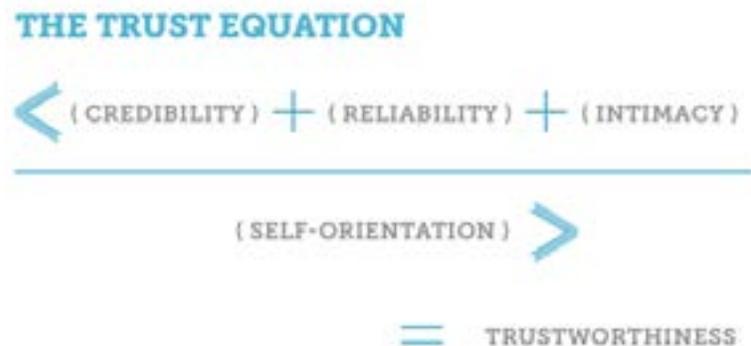
Becoming a resource manager sounds like a lot of extra work—especially if the banker sees it as being outside his or her job description. So, the first key to becoming the new RM is “ya gotta wanna.” Successful resource managers already have the “value gene.” They get it. All they need are some ideas and tools. Some never will get it and are destined to do deals, cut prices, and continually lose opportunities to bankers like Janet.

Resource managers take one hour out of their day and set it aside as value time. They target clients, prospects, and centers of influence based on a number of factors: profitability, future potential, industry type, or clients where the RM has had experience.

Once they've identified the opportunities that do or may need this special attention, they zero in on the things that will benefit these businesses most. This approach has got to be about the client, not, “If I do this, I'll make more sales.” Providing added value to customers and prospects means they win and ultimately so does the RM.

Providing Value Builds Trust

Charles Green created a simple trust formula in the epic bestseller *The Trusted Advisor*. It is Trustworthiness = Creditability + Reliability + Intimacy ÷ Self-Orientation. Trust means being a welcome voice of guidance for your clients. A resource manager invests time in value activities that build trust for the long haul, while keeping their ego in check at the same time.



Source: www.thetrustedadvisor.com

Five Value Builders

Here are five “secret weapons” for adding value and building trust. These are not short-term campaigns. They are forever.

1. Power-Hour Client Planning

Call planning is about the bank, forms, and tick marks. *Client* planning focuses outward. Resource managers understand that it is not about the bank against the competition. Rather, it is them and the entrepreneur versus the problem. Client planning involves understanding the business from the business perspective. Bankers that do this type of planning prepare better questions. They have better examples to review as best practices, and their leave-behind is not a bank brochure but something that might help the business owner with a new idea. Resource managers set aside time to strategize around conversations, not products.



2. Conversation Recap Replaces Follow-Up Letters

Clients don't want platitudes; they want action. When a banker takes good notes on a call and can reformat them into a recap and send them to the entrepreneur, he or she builds immediate credibility and differentiation. It's a great use of time, and resource managers use this process to install call notes into the Client Relationship Management system. This saves RMs time on the front end and has proven to shorten the sales cycle as well.

4. "3 before 8"

Business owners who work with resource managers receive emails before 8 a.m. These could be white papers about a relevant subject, an article about an HR issue, a best practice, or even a lead. RMs know that they can't do hundreds of these a day, but they can invest time to do three. In 2012, RMs at one bank sent more than 14,000 new ideas to their marketplace without ever leaving their desk. A record pipeline for that bank in 2013? You bet.

3. Tweeners

Resource managers know that it takes six to eight calls to earn a new partnership. Rather than letting mindshare fade between meetings, resource managers keep in touch with clients by providing informational articles, tips, or news clippings that may be of interest.

5. Networking

A resource manager comes to the office and is constantly thinking: How can I put buyers and sellers together? How can I bring people together so that each of the introductions can grow and prosper? This can be done by attending events, connecting through social media, and creating strategic relationships with the right people.

Resource Managers Aren't Lone Wolves

Time is the great equalizer. Successful RMs can do more for their clients by masterfully partnering with their own resources.

Once you've identified top priority opportunities and key activities, it's time to look for partners inside and outside the bank who can help provide value to your clients and prospects.

According to CSO Insights' "2013 Sales, Marketing and Support Alignment Analysis," bank marketing departments continue to be an ineffectively used resource. That's too bad. While I often hear relationship managers complain that "marketing doesn't understand our needs," interestingly, bank marketers unanimously say what they want most from the sales team is feedback.

Resource managers have caught on to the importance of keeping communication lines open in order to maximize partnerships with internal teams. By doing so, they avail themselves of opportunities to get help with social media, CRM tools, sales collateral, and gathering articles for call leave-behinds and "Tweeners."

Help Them Help You!

Here's how to get what you need from your support staff:

- ✓ Educate them about your clients;
- ✓ Introduce them to your selling process;
- ✓ Discuss the kind of prospects you are looking for;
- ✓ Keep them informed of the effectiveness of their efforts;
- ✓ Engage them in brainstorming, planning, and even bring them on sales calls; and
- ✓ Make certain they take sales training classes to better understand your approach.

Your external network is an equally critical place to mine for value on behalf of your clients. Think of it not only as a means of connecting with clients and prospects, but also as a way to expand your relationships in a way that can benefit them.

While traditional networking events and face time are important, don't overlook the power of social media. Resource managers use LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and other digital platforms to research potential contacts within a prospect company, as well as regularly connect with their circles of influence.

LinkedIn: The Foolishly Untapped Resource

Top sellers are connected to significantly more of their clients on LinkedIn, says Jill Konrath, author of *SNAP Selling and Selling to Big Companies*. The more connections you have at a particular business, the higher your likelihood of sales success.

Despite this, LinkedIn remains undervalued. At our 2013 Sales Execution Forum, Konrath reported that a very small percentage of senior bankers were using LinkedIn effectively:

26% had 500+ connections
28% had 100-300 connections
18% had 100 or fewer connections
11% had no LinkedIn profile at all

This may be due to the fact that about half of commercial banking relationship managers have their hands tied when it comes to LinkedIn. In another survey, a mere 42% of respondents said they were encouraged to use LinkedIn as a tool for prospecting and communicating with customers. And, more than 50% were actually *forbidden* from accessing LinkedIn at their bank!

True, new concepts take time to develop, and bankers often move slower than others—we're in a risk-based industry and have to be careful, after all. Clients have changed, however, and being stuck in our old ways and habits will not help this movie end well.

Being a good relationship manager today is your ticket to the dance. If your bank wants to be viable in the long term, a sustainable commitment to resource management is one key to victory. Banks that are successful at resource management don't worry about the competition; they are the competition.

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