

From the RMA Young Professionals Group

Looking back on several years of experience with the RMA and its Young Professionals Group, I have come to realize that having a good network was the key to my professional growth. The foundation for developing a good network is in being proactive, taking initiative, and making sure that you exist for your network, not the network exists for you. I would like to share a few ideas of how involvement in the RMA and its Young Professional network can open new doors of opportunity.

Exposure and visibility

It is a common misconception that a network of professional contacts is there to help you with getting new jobs or meeting your business development goals. First and foremost, networking is a way to gain visibility in the market place. When I first became involved in the RMA I was a “green” credit analyst who did not see much of a future for himself in commercial lending or even banking. As became more and involved with a local chapter of the RMA, I met and was exposed to a number of senior banking executives, who were happy to offer their advice and guidance in planning my careers. Not only was my name becoming known by the right people, the ultimate bonus was the additional guidance on my career.

Support network

Over the years, I have reached out to members of the New England Chapter of RMA as well as its members in various parts of the country. The extent of my contact ranged from writing articles for the RMA Journal and asking members for feedback and ideas to getting help in understanding the industry of a prospective client I knew absolutely nothing about. I always had the feeling that my association with RMA was that magic key that gave me the time of busiest people and opened doors that normally would not open. It is worth mentioning the local New England Chapter experience, which is like a local office of RMA. I was never disappointed with the level of advice I received from the chapter’s executives as well as my peers.

Mentoring

It is enormously challenging to find a good mentor for a couple of reasons: 1) people have extremely limited amount of free time and a mentor will likely have one or two individuals that he or she can be a mentor to at one time; and 2) few individuals are interested in becoming mentors and of those few even a smaller number of mentors who are really good at it; guess why, everybody wants be mentored by the very few good ones. I feel that I have been lucky with several good mentors who have helped me shape my career and offered advice in difficult and at times delicate situations. Most of my mentors I have met through the RMA connection.

The last, job opportunities

Last but not least, my RMA connection has been instrumental in helping me secure my career moves, although this is perhaps the least important benefits of being with the RMA. Needless to say that the RMA connection will not be of much use if are not

performing well. Growth opportunities do not open to those who do not work hard, whether it is your on-the-job performance or involvement in the RMA chapter. It is unfortunate that as an industry, on average, we will receive an “F” in providing learning and growth opportunities for our employees. The reality of banking is that as much as many of us would like to stay and grow with one organization, periodically moving around is the key to learning and growth; this is from a person who knows what it is like to change a few banks in under 10 years. What is certain is that I would have been less successful with each move had it not been for my RMA contacts.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the benefits of being associated with the RMA are in the eyes of the beholder. As much as I dislike the phrase – “this opportunity is what you make of it” – this is probably one of few that will fit the definition. I may spend a lot of time telling you about how RMA has helped me grow; however, you are the ones who create opportunities for yourselves. Nobody will bring them to you on a silver platter. As RMA is a volunteer organization, you have to put in reasonable but not excessive amount of time to earn the benefits. Although it is more and more difficult to find time for such “extracurricular” activities as RMA, being busy is not an excuse. People who are involved in the organization are just as busy as you are, if not busier, simply because they are more involved in various endeavors and tend to have more responsibilities. The opportunity is there, and I hope you will get involved and take advantage of them to accelerate your growth. Good luck!

From the Chair of the RMA New England Chapter Young Professionals Group