

## The Evolution of Resource Management (Professional Services)



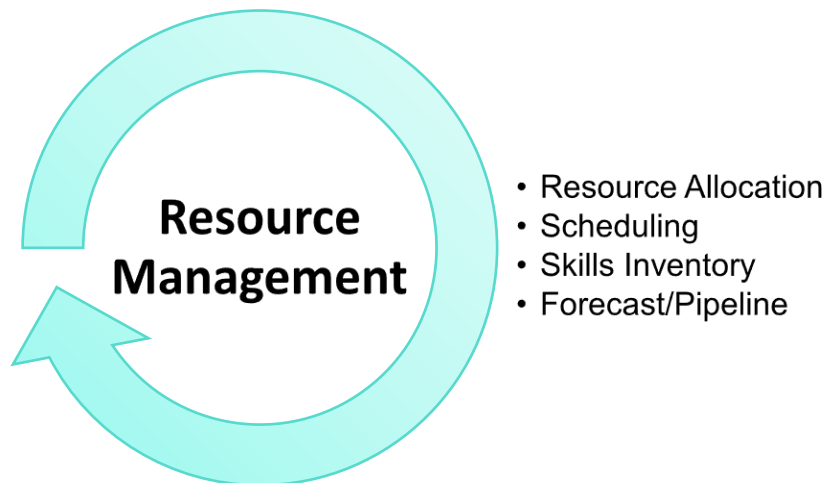
The existence of Resource Management as a standalone function has been steadily increasing over the past decade, especially across the Professional Services (PS) Industry. I predict that as the nature of work and business shifts to a more virtual landscape, the need for qualified Resource Managers (RM) will grow exponentially across the board.

Historically, the Resourcing task originated under the Project Management (PMI) framework and it was project managers who were responsible for the assignment and management of adequately skilled resources, to work on their projects.

As professional service companies grew it became less efficient & manageable for resourcing selection to be completed at the project management level. Companies started to see the value that could come from performing this role and its enhancements at a more strategic level.

*Stephanie Gough Director,  
Experience & Resource  
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The idea of strategic resourcing changed the dynamic of the role, new factors starting come into play when looking at staffing a project. Focus went from solely looking at skillset and availability to also include decisioning that would increase company margin, revenues and utilization. This direction increased the need to hire dedicated people and/or teams, hence, why the offering widely known today as “Resource Management” was established.



*Traditional Resource Management Focus Areas*

The function as a service became popular across multiple industries (I mean what business wouldn't want to use methods that increased profitability?) Companies were chomping at the bit to add multiple Resource Managers to their businesses. So much, that its now accredited by certification (RMCP®) and governed by the Resource Management Institute ([RMI](#)) who have set best practices and standards.

Fast forwarding to today, I have witnessed Resource Management evolve even further to include what I'm calling the "Secondary Functions" of Resource Management. Programs that are built to enhance; employee satisfaction, user experience and growth and retention efforts. When your resources are **people**, there is much more that goes into effectively managing them. This is slowly breaking the stigma that resource managers work solely on scheduling today.



*Primary & Secondary Functions of Experience & Resource Management. Optiv Inc.*

We now operate within an environment where virtual team and workplaces are the new normal and while statistics show remote working can drive efficiencies across the board. It also shows signs of strain when it comes to staying connected and highlights challenges when working within high performing virtual teams.

The perils of the virtual workplace are strongly felt across Industries like IT, Cyber, Healthcare or any kind of consultancy type organization, where employees more often than not are working virtually and/or from the road.



In addition to remote working challenges, Managers are now expected to not only be HR leaders (managing performance, growth and development etc.) but required to drive & assist sales, services development and delivery oversight. All while meeting and exceeding tight revenue targets. The increasing expectations that are put onto managers can start hindering those crucial manager/employee relationships that are critical to a healthy working environment.

This is where Resource Management began to bridge gaps, essentially by becoming a second point of contact from the moment the employee joins the company. RM's actively learn their resources skills, interests, goals, work-styles, life commitments, need for connection, communication style, etc. Resource Managers acknowledge that when you manage people, there are many very real (but non-quantifiable) factors that can and will affect project success and overall company bottom line!

Successful Resource Managers have a personable and empathetic quality, they tend to be people pleasers and strive to build relationships with their resources and partnering organizations. Communication styles are also key to their success by bringing people together and encouraging the use of effective communication styles like; picking up the telephone and utilizing video conferences vs the array of email threads and instant messages that typically are today's choice of communication.

I have witnessed firsthand positive feedback and thank you notes from employees to resource managers for their help and guidance throughout employment. In today's rapidly changing workplace (mergers & acquisition, offshoring, etc.) the need for leadership to stay connected and close to their teams is more important than ever. But with increasing bandwidth demands on Managers, Resource Managers play a vitally important role. A simple check in, quick catch up or helping hand resonates very well with employees who are working under challenging environments; and that is the nature of the work Resource Managers do.



Resource Managers are also taking skills capturing to the next level. Capturing and mapping employee skills and certifications allows RMs to quickly find niche resources. But we are now analyzing that data to leverage strengths across the company in new ways, and bridge the gaps where needed. When we can compare our competencies to pipeline and market trends, we're able to take a more proactive approach when it comes to potential skill shortages, improving productivity and satisfaction by developing employees' current capabilities.

Now you might be thinking that the secondary functions sure do look like elements of Human Resources? Many agree which is why some companies struggle when it comes to situating the Resource Management offering within the business. Many believe Resource Management is entirely a HR function because of its increased focus and emphasis on the employee.

However, while there are similarities with some overarching goals, Resource Management operates closer to the front line or as I like to call it the “delivery trenches”. Because of where we are traditionally situated (in delivery), we have a deeper understanding at the individual level and can work with delivery leaders (who also live in the trenches) to help maximize their offerings, increase talent development, growth opportunities and enhance users’ experiences.

Now this isn’t to say that HR does not share those same interests, BUT with the sheer size of Professional Services companies today, it is increasingly difficult for HR Leaders to work below the management line. Therefore, Resource Managers are the conduit between HR and delivery and can help advance current objectives and increase HRs visibility into the trenches.

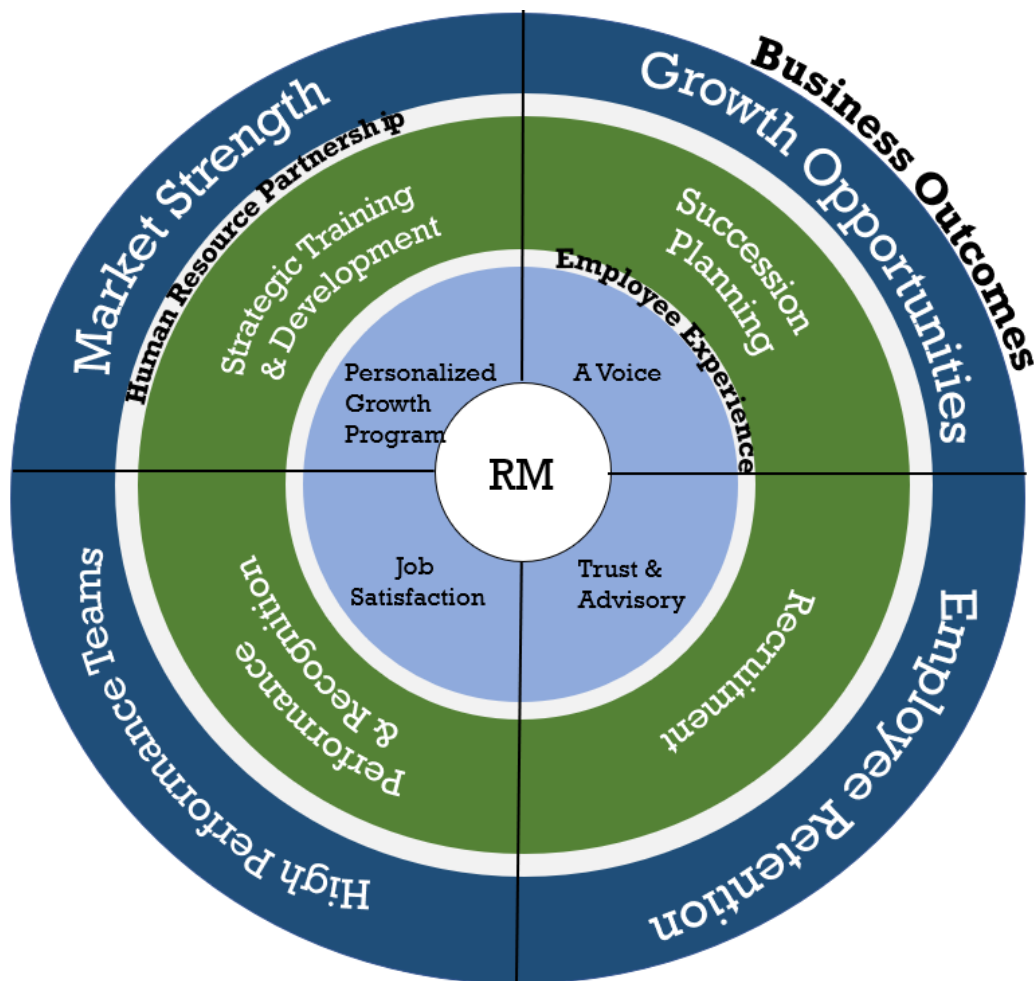


Figure 2 - Business drivers that can stem from Resource Management activities

All sounds great right?

However, implementing and sustaining a Resource Management function doesn't come without its challenges. Resource Management teams can find themselves fighting to justify their existence when cost cutting efforts are undertaken. There is no doubt that this function drives profitability and when it is executed well it even covers its own cost tenfold.

But RM's manage those critical but often non-quantifiable human factors that aren't easily represented by numbers on a spreadsheet. And because Resource Management is often a "non-billable" position, leadership are sometimes quick to send the function off-shore. Or scrap it all together and thrust the responsibility back onto PMs and/or Delivery Managers. I've even witnessed companies try to automate Resource Management with the use of PSA tools in order to eliminate the need for a human to do scheduling.

When the above scenarios are in play, we sacrifice the effectiveness of the secondary functions and in unfortunate situations they become completely redundant. The results of this can end up with its own set of underlying problems, that may not be immediately visible but will quickly crop up and become very costly. Examples include:

**Diminishing culture** – With less personal communication & collaboration, a culture once strong will starts to diminish; leaving people slowly feeling isolated and alone. This is particularly relevant in virtual workplaces, and this will take its toll on employees if companies can't fulfill that gap.

**Weakening Talent/Growth** – Less focus on individual growth and training programs will weaken the services offered over time. New offerings/solutions in the market will not be met with equally talented experts, causing delivery challenges and a company's ability to compete in the market. Talent will leave for companies who offer more development opportunities.

**Employee satisfaction** – Will decrease; low morale spreads quickly amongst colleagues, this may contribute toward performance issues and affect overall quality of services provided to clients, as well as increased attrition.

**Retention Efforts** – Band aid/ quick fix solutions to keep people engaged and wanting to stay employed by you. An uplift in salary, bonuses, creative recognition, events to try offset job satisfaction and a fading culture. Afterall we still need to maintain delivery activities to our clients, and we need our employees to do this. *Wait... I thought we were trying to cut costs?*

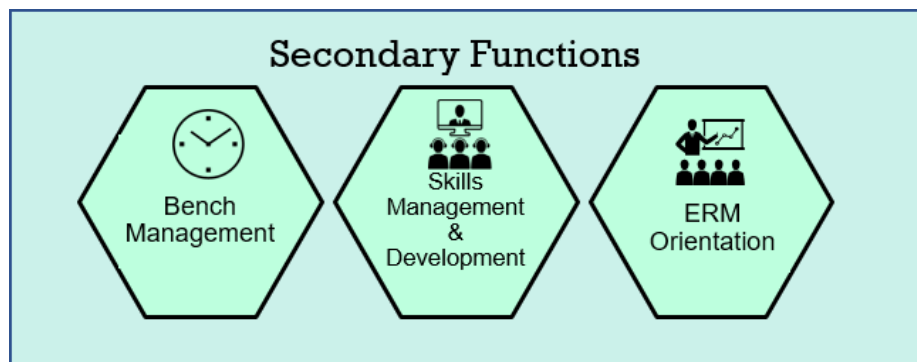
**Attracting New Talent**– With all the above and the industries feeling "small" (everyone knows somebody) word can quickly spread if employees are not satisfied within a company, especially across widely growing social platforms (Glassdoor, LinkedIn etc.). Having a reputation as a bad employer makes it extremely difficult for HR to attract new hires to backfill the attrition. The business ends up forced to make more costly decisions like referral bonuses, utilizing 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to assist in sourcing as well as the need to ramp up marketing initiatives to attract people. *Wait... I thought we were trying to cut costs?*

Some of these examples may seem extreme but anyone who's been through a substantial organizational change or shift in work environment knows the difference between employees who are engaged and employees who are not, and the very real impact this can have on the business. And while Resource Management isn't solely responsible for holding this **all** together, its unique situation between resources (the team), leaders, and HR makes us the "glue" of sorts; its contributions have been proven to help mitigate the above scenarios time and time again.

## Future State:

Ok so where are we heading? What does Resource Management look like in the future? It's apparent the function is needed, highly regarded and companies are dependent on the secondary functions to not only exist but to be implemented and managed, partnering with HR business partners.

The evolution of this role leads me to believe that over time our secondary functions will become the central focus of the role. Resourcing & scheduling will still be owned by Resource Management but assisted by intelligent tools and/or RM associates. Focus will then be directed toward people, culture, growth and development.



Culturally, regardless of the industry (and I touched on this before) our work styles and environments are evolving so the way we manage our resources must as well. People will spend less time connecting in person and spend more time behind the keyboard. Our younger generation already views this style as the normal way of working and with more employees given the option to work remotely and accepting this, we have unknowingly started to isolate ourselves.

Because of this, it is imperative that companies find ways to bridge the isolation gap caused by modern working styles by increasing communication efforts (the old fashion way – i.e. picking up the phone). Resource Managers are perfectly situated to do this by increasing touch-point meetings with their teams, pushing people to connect through collaboration and learning programs, gaining a deeper understanding of people and their career aspirations, be available to answer questions and just continue to be that overall "people person/people manager", which we have already proven contributes to overall employee satisfaction.

We will need to ensure that our successors of this role over the upcoming decades, continue to strengthen communication without getting caught up in some of the less effective modern styles and culture.

We will need to stay in the trenches, stay in tune with our employees and keep driving Collaboration, Consistency, Cohesiveness and Customer Satisfaction, which is my 4C approach/mantra to Resource Management & PMO partnership.

While we can't always predict the future, it's clear that this role has the potential to evolve as rapidly as it has historically over the past 10 years. I believe that the demand for this function will continue to grow across industries as companies see the value of a connected, collaborative workforce, supported on the backbone of Resource Management. I am very intrigued to see where owners (like myself) of this function take it next, how they enhance it to cope with the markets new ways of working, how Industries consume it and lastly how the RMI modifies their curriculum to keep up with the evolution.