



Ramco Uses Organizational Network Analysis to Improve Sales Effectiveness and Measure Employee Engagement

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Ramco Systems is an enterprise software provider offering solutions in aviation, human capital management, global payroll, enterprise resource planning, and more. Headquartered in Chennai, India, its 1,600-plus employees work in 24 offices around the world. The company has recently undergone a significant business transformation. Company leaders believe that in addition to changing its offerings to clients, long-term success depends on creating a culture of transparency and collaboration and developing and maintaining strong communications networks—both externally with clients and internally among employees.

To promote this culture of collaboration and communication, the company recently implemented an organizational network analysis (ONA) platform. The platform collects and analyzes data from Ramco's various communications systems, and then applies what is known as "relationship analytics" to understand the communication patterns between employees and customers. Initially used to address sales productivity, the platform is now being used to address a wide array of challenges and opportunities, including onboarding, employee engagement, and performance management.





- ✓ The need for leveraging new analytics techniques such as ONA
- ✓ How Ramco leaders use ONA to identify strengths and weaknesses in their sales team
- ✓ How Ramco is using ONA to reduce onboarding time and increase productivity among new sales team members



Company Overview

Ramco Systems is an enterprise software provider offering solutions in human capital management, global payroll, and enterprise resource planning, monitoring, and evaluation. It also has targeted software solutions for the aviation industry in maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO). Established as an independent company in 1997, it is part of a \$1 billion Indian conglomerate, Ramco Group (see Figure 1).¹ Headquartered in Chennai, India, Ramco Systems has key operations in 24 offices around the world, including in North America, Europe, Asia, South Africa, Australia, and the Middle East. Slightly more than half of the firm's revenue comes from the Asia-Pacific region (including India, Australia–New Zealand, and China), while the United States and the Middle East make up more than one-third of the company's revenue. Ramco serves clients in several key industries, including aviation, energy and utilities, financial services, government, manufacturing, and professional services.²

Figure 1: Ramco Systems at a Glance

	Year Founded: 1997
	Annual Revenue (FY 2016–17): \$67.2 million
	Employees: 1,600+
	Headquarters: Chennai, India

Source: Ramco, 2018.

¹ "Corporate Overview," Ramco.com, www.ramco.com/about/.
² Ibid.

Business Environment and Challenges

Ramco is a pioneer in the field of cloud-based enterprise resource planning, payroll solutions, and human capital management systems, but this is a highly competitive space. Competitors include some of the most established and well-capitalized names in technology and software services. Because of the distributed nature of the organization, with key offices spread around the world, company leaders, sales executives, and all employees must be able to work across business functions—silos—and geographies to succeed.

Company leaders believe that they must have a highly collaborative and transparent workforce and likewise be heavily interconnected with their clients and prospects. Finally, as with any sales-driven organization, Ramco must ensure that its salespeople are performing at their peak and that they are engaged with clients' needs. To this end, as Ramco brings new talent on board, it is essential to get them up and running in their jobs as quickly and efficiently as possible.

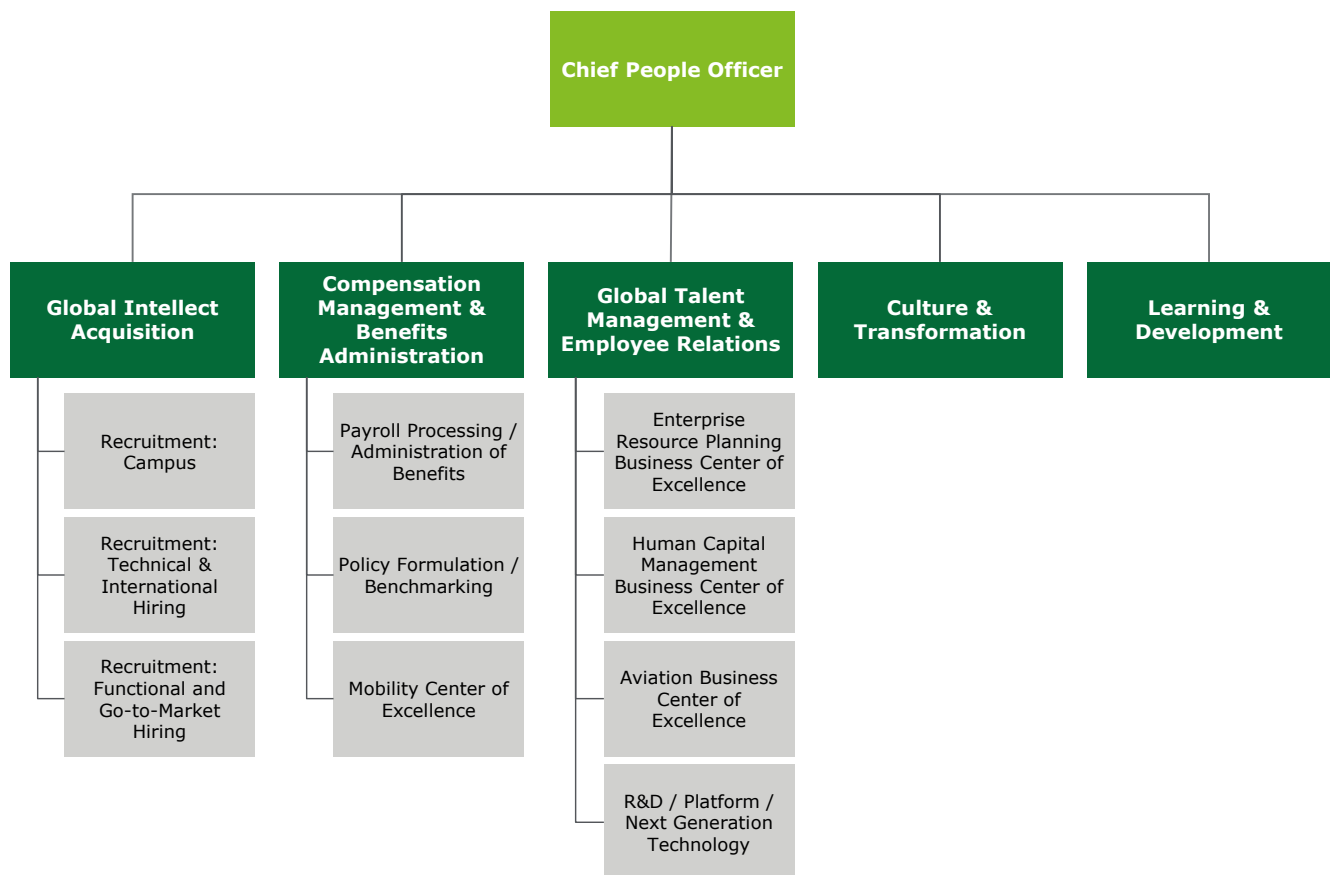
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HR Environment

A chief people officer manages Ramco's HR function and reports to the CEO. The HR function comprises 15 subunits, including global intellect acquisition, compensation management and benefits administration, global talent management and employee relations, culture and transformation, and learning and development (see Figure 2). Says the company's CEO:

It is a small department. And a big part of their job is to get away from their desks and spend a lot of time with employees. That is how we learn about what is going on in the organization and how we can improve it.

Figure 2: The HR Function at Ramco



Source: Ramco, 2018.

Transparency and Openness

Ramco Systems has been rebuilt on the core beliefs of transparency, breaking down silos, and a culture of networking. In 2012, however, when the company's new CEO joined the firm, the company was losing money, and many of the employees resisted the cultural shift to an open organization. The CEO wanted to create a culture in which the company would be hyperfocused on customers and individuals would share information widely across the organization. Says Ramco's CEO:

We need to network very rapidly as an organization. Being a small company with a small number of people based around the world, we need to work four or five times harder to build a strong network.

KEY POINT: Ramco Systems has been rebuilt on the core beliefs of transparency, breaking down silos, and a culture of networking.

Soon after starting, the CEO asked the sales staff to send him an email detailing their entire sales pipeline so he could get a sense of client relationships and sales opportunities. Based on the lack of responses and detail, the CEO realized that sales team members were not sharing information, which mirrored other information transparency challenges at the organization.

People were holding information, they were working in silos, and performance was difficult to measure in that environment. We wanted to become an organization that collaborates, that seeks and distributes information, and that is customer focused. We needed people with an outward focus, who react specifically and very quickly in real time to external stimuli or demands.

—Ramco Chief Executive Officer

As part of the larger business transformation, Ramco executives began changing several processes and product lines. In 2015, in order to continue to drive outreach to its customers—and to understand the implications of this outreach—Ramco implemented a new organizational network analysis (ONA) platform from the company TrustSphere. Sometimes referred to as relationship analytics or social network analysis, ONA is still early in its usage in the realm of HR, but Ramco executives believed that they needed to leverage existing data and relationship analytics to create a high-performing workplace.

The ONA platform collects and analyzes data from Ramco's various communications and collaboration systems to understand the relationship capital³ of employees and customers. This includes corporate emails, call data records, and interactions generated using other corporate communications tools. Critically, the platform does not analyze the content within the communications but rather the nature of the communication exchange between parties. By analyzing this data, executives can see a wide range of patterns and over time begin to understand what those patterns indicate and how to leverage them.

For example, the TrustSphere platform generates a TrustScore that measures the strength of the relationship between any two individuals, be it employee to employee (internal network) or employee to client (external network). The TrustScore (a proprietary algorithm developed by TrustSphere) is determined by analyzing the frequency, direction, response time, and cadence of communications, as well as other factors such as whether meeting invites or attachments are exchanged.

KEY POINT: The platform does not analyze the content within the communications but rather determines the relationship strength based on patterns of interactions between parties.

³ "Relationship capital" refers to all the work relationships that exist internally between employees and externally between employees and their customers, suppliers, and partners. Motivated by common goals and values, employees collaborate and cooperate through these networks to get their work done in an organization.

Organizational Network Analysis at Ramco

Ramco’s first use of TrustSphere’s ONA platform was to understand its sales network better. The solution gave business leaders a measure of each sales employee’s interaction with clients. This basic level of information showed the strength of the relationship networks of each sales employee, allowing managers to see whether or not their salespeople were actively engaged with customers. Easy visualization of these relationship patterns enabled managers to hypothesize about the networking behavior of their top sales employees versus others. Top sales contributors, they reasoned, would have stronger relationships with clients and a broad and active sellers network; poor sales performers would have weaker relationships with clients and a limited relationship network within the client organization. Until they had the data to back up their assumptions, however, leaders simply had to guess about a correlation.

As shown in the anonymized example in Figure 3, company leadership was quickly able to correlate strong sales results with strong relationships and, likewise, poor sales results with poor relationships. The top performer in the example sent out close to 350 communications to a dozen individuals over a three-month period. The poor performer, meanwhile, sent only 5 communications to just a single person at the client company during a similar time frame.

KEY POINT: With the help of the ONA platform, Ramco was able to find a strong correlation between sales results and sales employees’ communication patterns and network activity with client accounts.

Figure 3: Relationship Data and Sales Performance, Top Sales Performer Versus Weak Sales Performer

Account	TrustScore Average	Number of Relationships	Email Activity		Performance Rating
			Sent	Received	
ABCCompany.com	Strong	12	347	263	High
XYZCompany.com	Weak	1	5	13	Low

Source: TrustSphere, 2018.

Mapping the relationship network and determining correlations with sales performance was an early test for ONA at Ramco, and executives soon began to experiment with using the new solution for a wide range of performance management goals and even as an onboarding tool.

Additionally, executives use the relationship network data generated by the ONA platform to review the performance of their teams to determine when coaching or training is required. For example, the CEO reviews the relationship network of each of his own key sales team members as part of their quarterly business reviews to determine if and when sales coaching needs to be provided to help them deliver against their revenue goals.

By visualizing relationship strength with their customers and prospects, we can easily discover if any of our sales executives are facing challenges in managing their sales cycles or pipelines. For instance, if communication starts dropping when a contract is about to close, our managers can help sales executives to reengage the customer. These data-driven insights make it easier for our managers to coach their sales executives to convert leads, meet sales goals, and not lose opportunities. By mapping and quantifying relationship networks, our managers use TrustSphere's technology to coach sales executives to replicate the networks of high performers. We help our sales executives actually improve their ability to achieve better numbers. The platform is like a productivity investment, enabling us to help our sales executives manage both their actions and the outcome.

—Ramco Chief Executive Officer

Reducing New Sales Hire Ramp-Up Period Using ONA

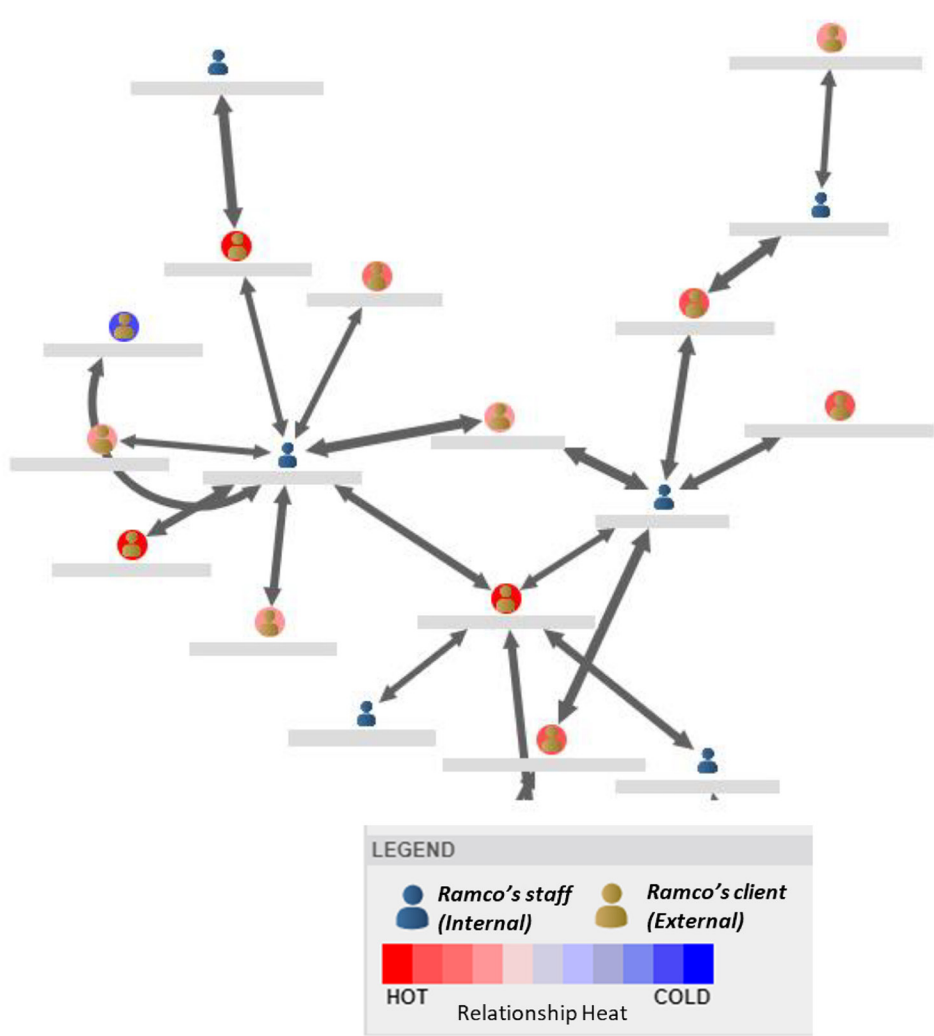
One of the biggest challenges at Ramco occurs when top sales performers leave. Hiring, onboarding, and bringing a new sales employee up to speed can create a gap in customer service. Ramco executives wanted to create a way to ramp up new sales team members as quickly as possible to ensure that client relationships and customer service relationships remained strong.

When a new salesperson comes on board, it can take three to five months for them to reestablish a strong relationship with an existing client. We needed a way to shorten that time frame and get new employees up and running as soon as possible—that is critical in a business-to-business organization like ours with high-value selling.

—Ramco Chief Executive Officer

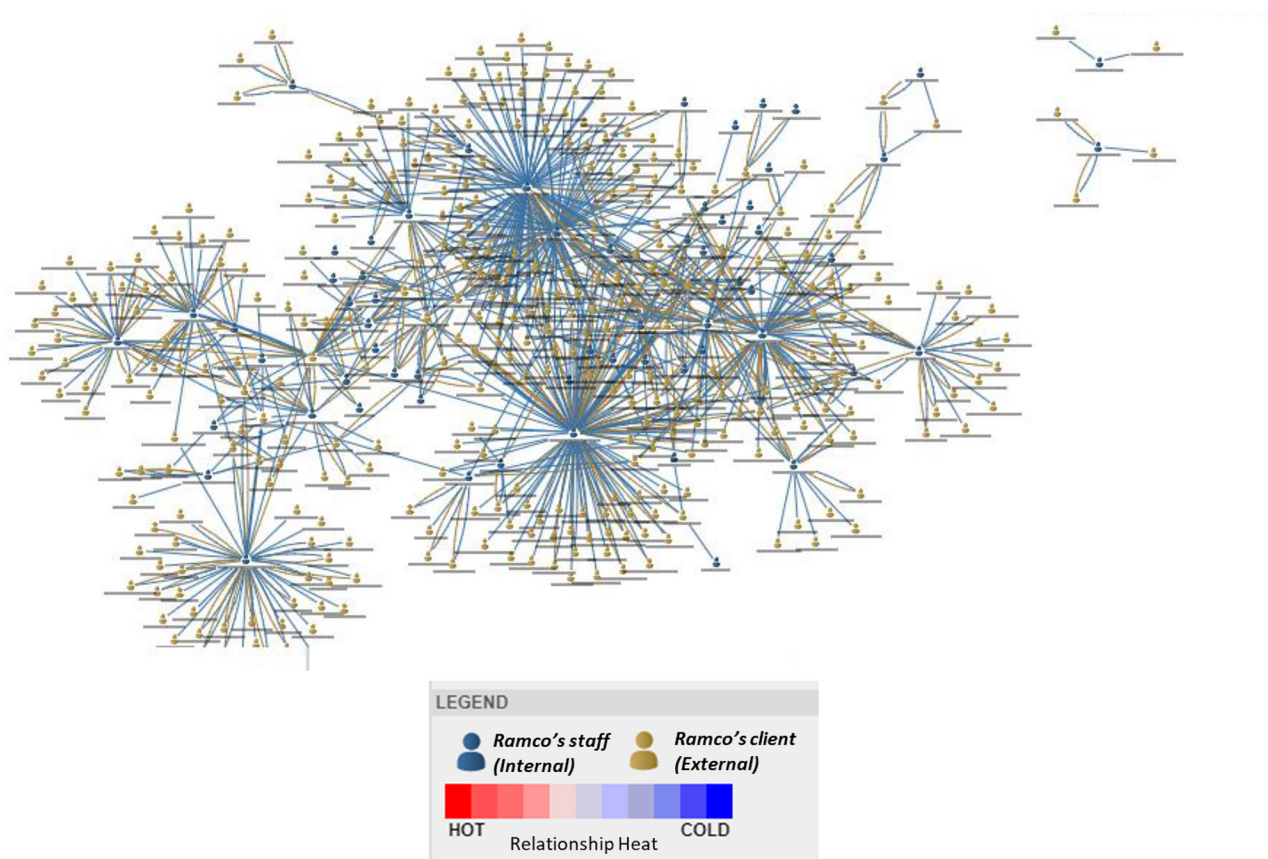
In late 2016, Ramco executives used the TrustSphere platform to create a visual map of the connections of departing sales executives. By understanding the departing employee's network at a client company and his or her strongest relationships, new salespeople can prioritize where to expend their energy to ensure a smooth transition of the account relationship and customer experience (see Figures 4, 5, and 6).

Figure 4: Report Highlighting Critical Contacts in a Client Organization



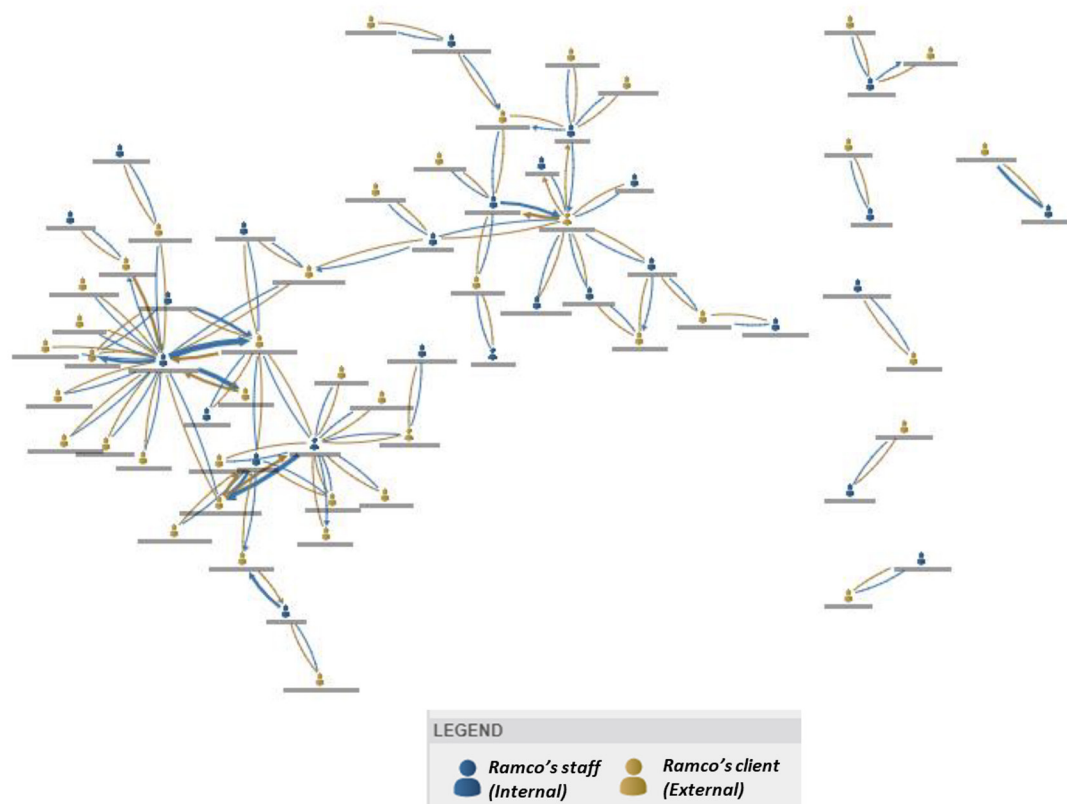
Source: TrustSphere, 2018.

Figure 5: Existing Relationships Between Ramco and a Client—Macro View



Source: TrustSphere, 2018.

Figure 6: Existing Relationships Between Ramco and a Client—Micro View



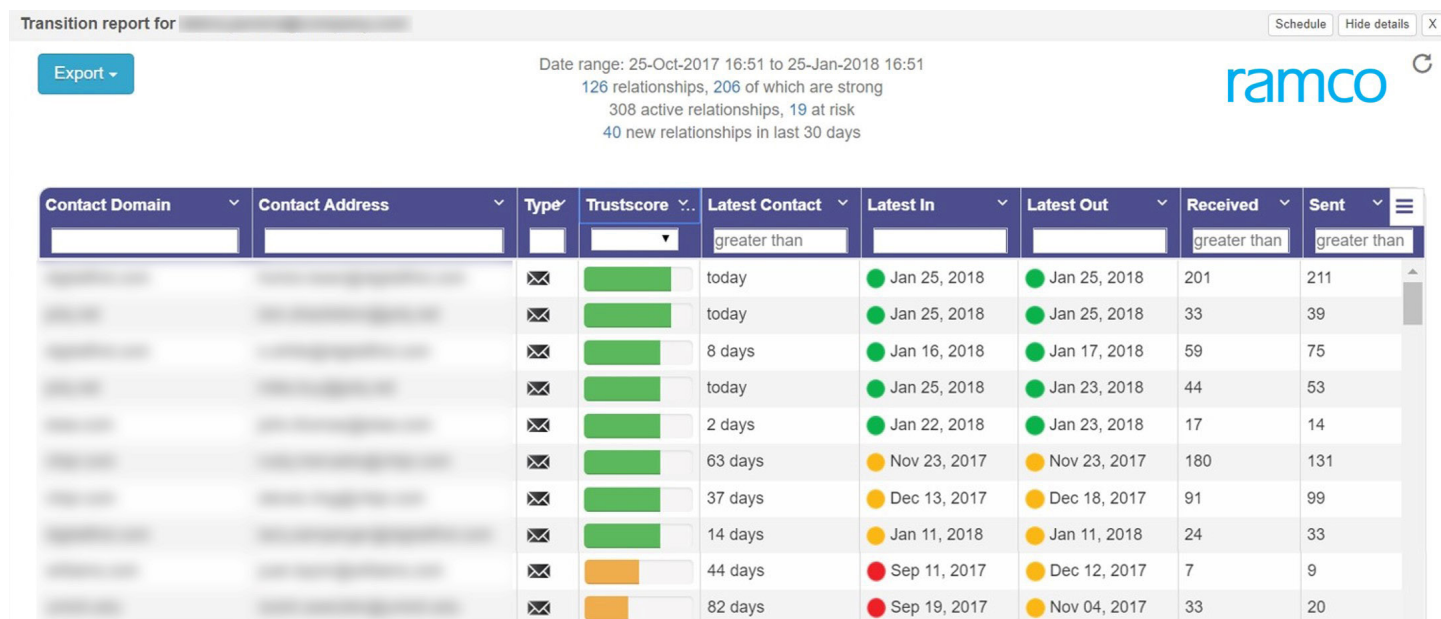
Source: TrustSphere, 2018.

More specifically, the period of transition between a sales employee leaving and a new employee getting up to speed is a very critical time and often results in a negative impact on customers. The TrustSphere platform produces a Transition Report (see Figure 7)—a quantified list of the 50 strongest relationships of the departing employee. This list is shared with the new employee on his or her first day, with the directive that this is the network he or she needs to build and nurture immediately to ensure a smooth transition. Managers can also use the data to help coach new employees. As a result, the transition is much more transparent and informed, and managers do not have to rely on memory of the previous employee's key relationships. What typically takes three to five months (getting a new sales employee up and running) now happens in a week at Ramco, thanks to TrustSphere's ONA platform.

KEY POINT: The time it takes to get a new sales employee up and running has been reduced from three to five months to only a week thanks to TrustSphere's ONA platform.

The new onboarding with sales executives has been so successful that the company is now using it with a range of other employees, including sales support and customer service, and has incorporated this into its standard onboarding practice, where appropriate.

Figure 7: Transition Report with Top Client Contacts



Source: TrustSphere, 2018.

Enhancing Engagement, Performance, and Efficiency Using ONA

Executives at Ramco are just beginning to expand ways to leverage ONA at their organization. The company has recently experimented with using the platform to help measure employee engagement at the firm. For example, the platform can show HR executives and managers when employees are not connected within the company or when their connections have dropped precipitously—suggesting something may be wrong. Executives are now using the TrustSphere ONA platform in conjunction with another solution that measures individual employees' moods and are correlating the information to look for insights.

If somebody does not feel great about the company, and they are not connecting across the company, that is a signal that we should potentially intervene.

—Ramco Chief Executive Officer

Because of the company's global footprint, Ramco executives encourage their employees to be heavily networked within the organization—not just with clients. As just one reflection of this, on top of an external networking score (derived from their connections on external professional networking sites) assigned to sales employees, the leadership team is now beginning to use the ONA platform to measure internal network strength. Like many organizations, Ramco is moving toward an increasingly team-based work environment. Furthermore, Ramco's innovation culture promotes an openly collaborative work environment in which

employees must build strong networks with colleagues. These internal relationship networks are very important in order to get work done. In one ongoing pilot, the company is identifying poorly networked employees to determine if these employees would be better suited for individual-contributor roles.

The HR team is also using the platform to drive efficiency. Ramco's talent team uses outsourced recruiters as well as internal recruiters to bring in new talent. Executives noticed the cost of using outsourced firms was rising. These leaders then analyzed the networks of the talent acquisition team and discovered that team members were sometimes not able to recruit suitable candidates because they had not developed strong relationships with them. Armed with this information, executives could now target their coaching on helping internal recruiters improve their relationship networks and thus find more suitable talent, enabling the company to rely less on external recruiters.

We continue to find cases through the ONA platform to improve our operations and deliver on our focus on customers.

—Ramco Chief Executive Officer

Business Impact

Organizational network analysis is only starting to be used to understand and enhance employee performance, and Ramco Systems is discovering ways to leverage its ONA platform to solve business issues. But in just 15 months since implementing the platform, the company has already experienced several positive impacts.

First, the ONA solution has dramatically lowered the onboarding time for newly hired sales employees and improved these employees' ability to quickly establish a connection with clients. Previously, it would take three to five months for these sales members to get fully up to speed with clients, but by providing a map of key individuals at client companies, Ramco has reduced that ramp-up time to a matter of weeks. Having visibility of key relationships with stakeholders, new sales employees know which relationships to prioritize building in their newly allocated accounts. At the same time, they can see who else in the organization has relationships with these customers and who can be leveraged for more information about them. In this way, new sales employees can quickly replicate the business portfolios of their predecessors and start contributing to revenue faster.

Second, sales managers are also able to improve their teams' performance by identifying and addressing trouble spots in real time. For example, a breakdown in communication between Ramco's sales team and a client organization during the final stages of a deal indicates that the deal may be in trouble. Managers can make immediate interventions based on that data to provide the necessary coaching or guidance

KEY POINT: In one ongoing pilot, the company is identifying employees with limited relationship networks to determine if these employees would be better suited for individual-contributor roles.

KEY POINT: ONA can yield increased efficiencies in talent management processes.

to rebuild the relationship. With relationship mapping across strategic accounts, sales managers can reconstruct the hierarchy of an organization to clearly identify whether strong working relationships are being built with the decision makers who will ultimately influence the purchase decision. It is this visibility of account entrenchment that has also revealed untouched sales opportunities. Managers can quickly review where hidden potential lies for increasing cross-selling and up-selling to existing customers.

Finally, ONA can yield increased efficiencies in talent management processes. The platform automates certain HR processes very effectively and makes it more rigorous—for example, by eliminating the reliance on human memory of interactions and networks by capturing an outgoing employees' most important relationships. And when there is a vacant sales position, HR managers can accurately identify suitable successors from anywhere within the organization depending on the strength of their relationship with the customers of a departing employee, instead of having to recruit someone externally.

KEY POINT: ONA can yield increased efficiencies in talent management processes.

Lessons Learned

- **Hold employees accountable for developing relationships.** ONA helped business leaders hold their sales team members accountable for building strong networks both internally and with clients. It also allowed leaders to identify and coach those sales team members who were lagging behind.
- **Test new ideas often.** Originally designed to measure the networks of sales team members, Ramco executives are now finding new ways to use ONA across the entire business—from identifying disconnected, disengaged employees to ensuring teams are collaborating more effectively. Further, company leaders believe they could have expanded its usage to other areas even more rapidly.
- **Cross-leverage platforms.** Ramco executives are using other internal systems and platforms in collaboration with TrustSphere's ONA platform to test ideas and assumptions. For example, the company already has a platform for measuring employees' moods; by correlating that measure with the strength of employees' internal relationship networks, executives get a clearer picture into employee engagement and behaviors.

Next Steps

Ramco business leaders are in the early stages of leveraging ONA. As the company begins to amass more data, it hopes to be able to further understand correlations between relationship data and business success. For example, is there a minimum number of connections and employee communications with a potential client that signals a potential deal? Or is there a particular cadence of communications between sales executives and clients that is most likely to lead to a new sale? Conversely, without strong critical relationships, are clients less likely to

renew contracts? Executives are actively exploring these questions, and many others, to see if the data will reveal patterns that are most likely to make their sales teams succeed with a client.

Ramco leaders are also exploring using the ONA platform to drive change management by identifying strong internal networkers across the company. The company is rolling out several initiatives, and it wants to speed adoption across the company. While the executive team may be aligned on new initiatives, it can be harder to communicate that message across the entire organization. Strong internal connectors help these initiatives gain momentum and get people on board.

We have all seen that what a leader says when trying to drive change can get diluted as it gets communicated by the team further down the organization. We need to find those employees who are great connectors and who can help spread change management messages. These employees can be like internal Wi-Fi repeaters, but first we have to know who those employees are.

—Ramco Chief Executive Officer

Conclusion

Ramco Systems is a pioneer in cloud-based solutions for aviation, human capital management, global payroll, and enterprise resource planning. As a globally dispersed sales-driven organization, the company is dependent on establishing strong communication connections with clients. The company has implemented an organizational network analysis platform to determine key stakeholders with their most valued clients, improve sales effectiveness, understand employee engagement, and identify strong internal communicators and networkers. The ONA platform has dramatically reduced the time it takes for new sales team members to get up to speed with clients, and it has given leaders a new tool for understanding their business and their employees. In the first 15 months since rolling out its new ONA platform, Ramco has achieved several successes, and leaders now plan to use the platform across a wide array of business challenges and opportunities. ■

Key Takeaways

- Using an organizational network analysis (ONA) platform allows Ramco to collect and analyze data from its communication systems to better understand the relationship capital of its employees and customers.
- The ONA platform enables the company to see a wide range of communication patterns, analyze what those patterns indicate, and understand how to leverage them for better sales effectiveness.
- At a basic level, ONA can be used to evaluate the strength of the relationships between employees and customers, and to correlate that to sales results.
- ONA can also be used to indicate where relationships may be weak and when interventions or coaching and training may be needed.
- The ONA platform can also enhance the onboarding process by creating lists of relationships with key client stakeholders that can be passed on to new hires in order to get them up to speed quickly with their newly assigned accounts.
- Beyond sales effectiveness, ONA is also being explored as a tool for evaluating and promoting employee engagement, performance, and effectiveness.

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