

## Institutionalizing Client Relationships

### 1 Assess where you are today.

In an institutionalized client relationship:

- There are many-to-many relationships between your firm and the client's organization
- There are several or more trusted advisor relationships
- You have good relationships with one or more senior economic buyers
- The client views the relationship manager as a gateway to your organization's expertise and resources as opposed to simply "the expert"
- The client considers your firm to be a partner in managing and growing their business
- There is institutional and not just personal trust (e.g., if you introduce a colleague to the client, they assume he/she is talented and capable, versus insisting that they "prove themselves")

### 2 Actively grow your network of relationships within the client's organization.

Do you have good relationships with senior economic buyers? Have you built relationships with executives outside the immediate area in which you're working? Have other members of your team also developed strong peer relationships at other levels of the organization?

### 3 Enhance your internal network.

Make a list of colleagues that you will need good relationships with in order to manage and grow your client relationships. Include names drawn from company leadership, service line/industry sector leadership, subject matter experts, and geographic capability. Ask yourself: How well do you understand their agenda of key priorities and goals? What can you do to help *them*?

### 4 Rethink and intensify your relationship management and team oversight.

If you left the relationship tomorrow, who could take your place? Are you holding team members accountable for building their own relationships in the client's organization?

### 5 Showcase your firm's capabilities to the client.

For example:

- Introduce expert colleagues based on an interest or issue that the client has mentioned (NOT purely to achieve cross-selling goals)
- Introduce your client to another client who can talk about and testify about your broader capabilities (ideally, get them to make a site visit in person)
- Identify an issue of interest and create an event (off-site workshop, breakfast presentation, etc.) around it
- Focus your efforts by pre-qualifying issues that your client raises — before you bring in others — by determining if it's truly a "red issue" that is owned by that particular executive