

Planning for Retirement Industry Disruption with the RMASM Certification

By Devin Ekberg, CFA®, CPWA®

Ask any advisor about disruption in the retirement planning industry, and you'll hear about changing client preferences, demographics, regulations, and more. The biggest challenge lies in how to translate these changes into tangible and precise strategies to produce better outcomes for both advisors and clients. There's a huge risk in not taking effective action while the world rolls over you and your business. You must be exceptional.

So how do you differentiate yourself from the rest of the retirement planning industry, which is sometimes disjointed in its product offerings and in conflict with its business models? How do you demonstrate that you are who you say you are—an exceptional advisor?

In the pursuit of preparing advisors to be exceptional in the face of disruption, the Investments & Wealth Institute recently launched the Retirement Management AdvisorSM (RMASM) certification program. Since the RMA designation originated in 2006, it has been thoughtfully developed from the client perspective and academically validated, and we are proud to offer it now as part of our education lineup for investment advisors.

Here are some reasons I believe the RMA certification can be part of your strategy to differentiate yourself as an exceptional advisor who can produce better outcomes for your clients and yourself.

Multidisciplinary approach to retirement planning. The RMA certification program maps a complete framework of the retirement planning universe, across all silos. It presents and evaluates several schools of thought, particularly about retirement allocation strategies and risk management techniques, allowing for advisors from any industry segment to adopt all or part of the best-practice processes.

Better understand the client's retirement mindset. Using a combination of behavioral finance, industry research, and practitioner experience, the RMA certification program can help advisors to better understand each client's perspective at retirement, when the mindset shifts from accumulating and investing assets to funding retirement income. Because the program was

developed, customized, and validated entirely from the client's perspective, it helps advisors improve communication, trust, and planning outcomes with clients.

Strategies for custom risk assessment and unbiased solutions. The RMA certification program teaches risk management techniques and solution strategies for each client segment, regardless of the client's income or assets. It is a product-neutral program with unbiased solutions for every type of client. Its client-centered, outcomes-based approach places doing what is best for the client first, no matter the product or the payout.

Practical tools and techniques to use in your practice. RMA certificants will have acquired a toolbox of strategies and practical techniques that result in actionable client product recommendations. For example, the RMA Procedural Prudence Map helps advisors design a decision-making process that complies with fiduciary best practices and results in the most appropriate recommendations for each client's situation.

Professional guidelines and standards. The RMA certification program provides information about the best of industry professional standards for advisors to follow with clients, and it also helps advisors comply with the ever-changing regulatory environment. RMA certificants also must abide by the Investments & Wealth Institute's *Code of Professional Responsibility*, meet continuing education requirements, and complete ethics education every two years. These professional guidelines and standards help ease a client's mind when choosing an advisor.

Clients demand advanced competency, ethics, and services that are aligned with their objectives. That is the purpose behind the Institute's commitment to certification and education, and the RMA certification program is the Institute's newest example of this commitment. Advisors who can demonstrate their commitment to these characteristics create significant value for their clients that can never be arbitrated away.

Learn more about the RMA certification program at <http://investmentsandwealth.org/rma-en>. ●

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