

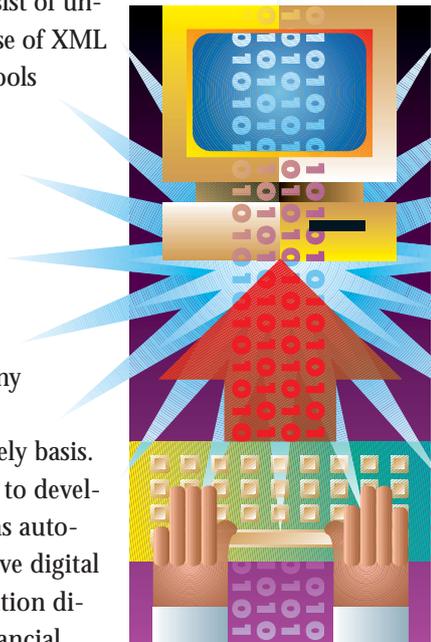
# The Digital Reporting Evolution: IMA Leads the Way

**IMA IS DEVELOPING A SERIES OF COURSES** designed to upgrade your business reporting skills with the latest advances in technology and practice. Called the IMA Digital Reporting Certificate Program, these five IMA-sponsored courses will give our members the skills and insight needed to lead the way toward integrating business information into actionable management reports. The course of study will consist of understanding XML and XBRL, the use of XML in standard business productivity tools such as Microsoft Business Systems (Office 2003), Web services, digital dashboards, digital balanced scorecards, business activity monitoring (BAM), business intelligence, and more.

Senior management teams become very frustrated when company information systems don't provide high-quality information on a timely basis. This frustration has led businesses to develop digital reporting systems such as automated exception alerts and executive digital dashboards, which deliver information directly to key personnel. Ideally, financial professionals are helping in the design, testing, and implementation of these new business reporting systems. The financial professional who can firmly plant one foot in the technical aspects of digital reporting while leaving the other foot firmly in sound accounting theory will be

highly sought after to assist in the further development of these systems.

The objective of IMA's certificate program is to give participants an overview of the latest developments in the transformation from traditional business reporting to the digital era. Emphasis will be placed on integrating financial data with key business indicators, delivering real-time information on demand to users.



## Digital Reporting Course Components

The lineup of courses, subject to review, consists of:

- An overview of XML, the eXtensible Markup Language.
- An introduction to XBRL, the eXtensible Business Reporting Language, and how it can be used internally and externally for business reporting.
- A course on how to use the XML features of office productivity software such as Microsoft Business Systems (Office 2003).
- A course on internal data integration

for the purpose of developing business activity monitoring systems, creating digital dashboards, and integrating balanced scorecards into real-time reporting.

- Using business intelligence tools to turn digital information into actionable management reports. This

would include an examination of corporate information portals and the latest developments in data warehousing and data mining.

Individuals who complete the Certificate in Digital Reporting sequence of courses will be prepared to fully participate in the design and implementation of digital reporting systems. The courses won't qualify as technical training. Instead, the focus will be on how the technology works and how the management team can use it. A strong emphasis will be placed on the end user.

### What's Driving Digital Reporting?

Have you ever watched a golf tournament or a baseball game over your computer? Have you custom ordered

a product such as a computer from an Internet website? Do you have various websites send you e-mail alerts when significant events take place? Have you used instant messaging with a business colleague? If you have, then you understand that our desire for instant communication is clearly on the rise. We no longer tolerate waiting for the next day's newspaper or the sports TV broadcast to find out if New York Yankee all-star Derek Jeter got a hit against Detroit; we can get the information from the Internet as it happens.

We are becoming accustomed to instant everything. Cell phones, pagers, PDAs, wireless Internet connections, 200+ channel cable TV all point to our insatiable desire for as much information as we can reasonably digest. Even businesses are getting into the act. Corporate instant messaging systems, more opportunities to work from home, desktop video conferencing, corporate information portals, e-mail, and voice mail are all examples of the desire to speed up business communications. The "normal" pace of business life has been replaced by an ever-increasing desire to get more information delivered faster and in more ways than ever possible.

In addition to speed, businesses also want to be able to combine different data elements into meaningful reports. For example, a call center might want to have instant access to product information and inventory balances while viewing a customer profile. Historically, integrating these multiple applications has proven to be very difficult technically and very costly.

Now companies are discovering a new way to integrate data using

XML. XML is a series of standards for describing and transporting data over networks. Developed by the World Wide Web Consortium, XML provides structure and meaning to data. The simple addition of information about data, or metadata, enables different systems to exchange data quickly and efficiently.

Acting as a translator or middleware, XML can serve as a system-to-system communications bridge. Have a legacy inventory system that needs to flow data directly to the computer of a field sales representative? No problem, as long as the data are further defined by XML markups. Need to send an automatic alert to your CEO when a key customer shipment falls behind schedule? With the underlying data marked up in XML, a program can be written that automatically checks a key shipment's status and sends the results directly to the CEO's desktop executive monitoring system.

### When Will This Happen?

The first course, "Introduction to XML," will be ready soon, and you'll be able to sign up for it directly through IMA's Lifelong Learning Center. Details will be announced at a later date. Subsequent courses are scheduled to be released in 2004. ■

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