

# I Improving as Professionals

by Kim R. Wallin, CMA, CFM, CPA

In last month's column, we took a look at how the member discounts for goods and services more than offset the cost of membership in IMA. We hope you make full use of them, and we will seek to add even more for you

to use, but discounts and cheaper insurance are not the reason to join a professional association. Our purpose is to improve our profession and to help you improve yourself as a professional and, therefore, as a person. We do this through certification, professional development, networking, chapters and councils, and by giving you a voice in your profession.

IMA is setting out to place Management Accountants at the forefront of the accounting profession where they belong. We want you to have the professional recognition that you deserve as a CMA/CFM. According to our annual salary survey published in the June 2003 issue of *Strategic Finance*, if you are a CMA/CFM you can earn \$15,500 more than those who aren't certified. As the business world embraces the philosophy of "building quality in" and the elements of SOX 404, the value of certification will continue to grow. Aside from the earnings potential, the learning process will make you more secure in your skills and gain you recognition and respect in your workplace. Whatever time and effort you invest in becoming certified will be rewarded many times over.

Whether you are certified or not, as a true professional you must continually develop your skills and increase your knowledge. Today's legal and business environments demand high ethical standards in addition to knowledge of decision support, planning and control techniques, and corporate governance. IMA offers the education programs you need in a variety of formats that even the busy professional can take advantage of. You owe it to yourself to check out the opportunities that we have provided just for you. Use only a few, and

you will be handsomely rewarded.

Professional development can be more than formal education programs. The chance to network with other working professionals is invaluable. Although networking is often regarded as a means of finding job opportunities, you should consider it a valuable resource of experience and support. It can be informal and the natural outgrowth of meeting your peers at IMA functions. Local chapter meetings and Regional Council professional development programs are excellent for this, and many valuable connections and lifelong friendships have been formed in this rewarding way. But in today's hectic professional environment where time to socialize seems so scarce, many of us feel we don't have the time for such networking. No prob-



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lem! Our IMA Member Interest Groups and e-mail exchanges provide the means of networking quickly. These services give you instant access to people with a variety of experience who can help answer your questions, give guidance, offer support, and, who knows, maybe even help you find a job.

How much is IMA membership worth? Start participating, and you'll see for yourself. IMA is a gold mine of opportunity for enhancing your value and the value of your profession. But even a gold mine is worthless if you aren't willing to do a little digging! The more you "dig in" and participate and partake, the more you will get from your membership.

And don't forget to sign up for and participate in IMA's Annual Conference in Chicago June 26-30. As always, keep in touch. I can be reached at [kwallin@imanet.org](mailto:kwallin@imanet.org). ■

