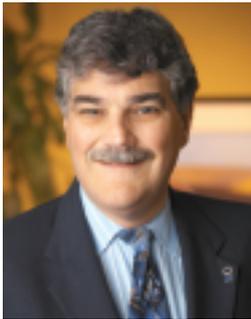




*Message from the Chair*



# The Importance of IMA's Certification Programs

BY CARL SMITH, CMA, CFM, CPA

As I begin my term as IMA Chair, I would like everyone to know that I am truly honored to have been selected for this position. For those of you who don't know me, I am an accounting professor and the Associate Dean

of the Barney School of Business at the University of Hartford. My teaching responsibility is in cost management with a side interest in accounting information systems. So, I am a management accountant.

When I was considering what to write about in my first column, I began to think of the five strategic imperatives that were passed by the Board of Directors last year. They are:

- ◆ Elevate the certification programs;
- ◆ Brand the IMA;
- ◆ Attract, retain, and engage members;
- ◆ Create and enhance the value proposition; and
- ◆ Governance.

As has been reported by now Chair-Emeritus Larry White in his columns, we have come a long way in getting our governance up to speed. We have also conducted research studies to give us insight into the other four areas. I would like to

share some of the preliminary information about our certification programs.

A certification study, conducted by the Credentialing Services Group, looked at the CMA and CFM in light of other certifications such as the CPA, ACMA, Canadian CMA, CIA, etc. The results showed that our CMA credential was superior in many respects to the other certifications. The group also pointed out some processes that we could improve. Among the recommendations was that IMA should continue, strengthen, "...and market the advanced level of the CMA/CFM credential." They also recommended that IMA "refine the messages and descriptions to highlight the internal organization role and function of CMAs." In other words, we should be marketing the strength of the CMA/CFM and stressing why it is so important to have CMAs/CFMs in our companies.

We should and will be focusing our marketing efforts on the external community to pull in more of the 5.2 million workers (Department of Labor statistic) who are involved in corporate accounting and financial management. We need to step up and say that we are the organization that represents the internal accounting and financial professionals and that our certifications are the best way to measure competence in those skill sets. We need companies to demand the CMA and CFM. This will attract many more professionals to our organization and will help solve the perennial problem of CPA firms being so entrenched on college campuses. When students are told by potential employers that they are expected to get a CMA, they will join IMA and go for the credential. If we can increase the number of CMAs and CFMs by 50% over the next five years, the other main issues of branding, retention, and value will also be taken care of.

You will soon be seeing a new approach to marketing our programs that will help accomplish these objectives. Our staff in Montvale has begun to develop the materials and

the approach necessary to make the CMA and CFM more visible to the external community. Some of you may have heard our ads on public radio. These were done to increase our visibility in general. It was just a first step, and you will be seeing more of these efforts as we go forward. We will also be doing a job analysis that updates work done back in the mid-1990s. The purpose of this project is to update the content of our certification exams.

Once again, I am very pleased to be IMA Chair this year. With all of your help, we can make IMA an even greater organization. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me by e-mail at [csmith@imanet.org](mailto:csmith@imanet.org) or by phone at (800) 638-4427, ext. 1613. I look forward to hearing from you and perhaps meeting you at a conference or other event. ■