



Message from the Chair



Push or Pull

BY WILLIAM BROWER, CMA, CFM

When I was in college, I remember trying to write a paper on whether labor wage increases were a cause of inflation or if they were a response to inflation. Another time, someone told me that science had demonstrated that it is easier to pull a wagon than push it. We have all read articles on the “glass ceiling” and how difficult it is to push our way up the career ladder but how easy it is

to believe that successful careers are assisted by a pull from mentors who are paving the way.

IMA® seems to face a similar situation today. A few management accountants have asked: “Why should I become or even remain an active CMA® and an IMA member when most companies do not recognize, reward, or even know what a CMA is?” In response, should IMA increase the effort behind creating a pull, or should members exert greater push to influence the companies that they work for to support the Certified Management Accountant designation and program? I believe we need both the pull *and* the push.

Let’s look at IMA’s efforts to increase the pull, beginning with marketing the CMA. We are rolling out a series of tactical marketing initiatives

designed to increase awareness of the credential in the profession. This includes an aggressive public relations campaign targeting the business, accounting, and management trade press; speaking engagements; and case studies profiling the careers of CMA professionals. IMA is also re-vamping its marketing materials to increase support of the program. A new certification brochure was recently introduced to position the CMA as the “gold standard” of accounting and finance professionals working inside organizations.

Further, a renewed focus on corporate development will help build an understanding of the significance of the CMA credential at the corporate level. Steve Weiss was hired as director of corporate development to lead this charge. Many professionals and em-

ployers don’t know that they are, by definition, management accountants, representing more than 90% of finance function professionals who work in industry. IMA’s corporate development initiative has begun tapping into the training and development needs of corporations to ensure their staffs are properly trained and certified. (If you want to contact Steve about any of these initiatives, you can reach him at saweiss@imanet.org.)

We also are striving to become a visible and outspoken advocate for management accounting. Recently, Paul Sharman and I were invited to dinner with the trustees of the Financial Accounting Foundation (FAF), which oversees the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB). Paul spoke strongly on the topic of bringing balance to the profession, and his remarks were well received. (You can read more about it in Paul’s “Top Line” column this month.)

These are good efforts, but they aren’t enough. Most great changes are not inspired or caused by someone pulling strings—they are caused by those who take the initiative, who strive to win, who have good ideas and take action to put them into use. These are the pushers who find a

way to be successful no matter what barriers are in their way. When the Certified Management Accountant program and credential were created 34 years ago, those who took the exam were the initiators. There was no one in the corporate world suggesting that they take the exam or rewarding them for success. Today, the companies that recognize the CMA are those that were encouraged by those earlier believers who pushed them to do so. I was one of the fortunate who worked for such a company, and it was through Clark Johnson's tireless efforts that Johnson & Johnson strongly supported and still supports the CMA.

So the quandary that IMA faces now is how to increase the number of Certified Management Accountants. Again, the answer has to be both pull *and* push! I urge all of you to become strong advocates for increasing your company's support of the Certified Management Accountant designation.

What do you think? Please share your thoughts with me at bbrower@imanet.org. ■