



Hidden Gems |

BY JOHN B. POLLARA, CMA

I've been thinking about the Institute of Management Accountants' (IMA®) Annual Conference in Phoenix, Ariz., ever since I returned home. If you were unable to attend, you missed a great educational and networking opportunity. The JW Marriott Desert Ridge was a fabulous property, and their staff did a fantastic job of

accommodating our every need. IMA's staff should be congratulated on their fine job as well. Another great Conference is being planned for June 14-18, 2008, in Tampa, Fla., so please mark your calendars now so you won't miss the next opportunity to improve your skills and network with your peers.

On another subject: We have some hidden gems at IMA that everyone should know about. Although we advertise them on a consistent basis, not everyone is aware of the many no-cost opportunities we have for self-improvement. One of these is our monthly "Inside Talk" webinar series. These webinars, which are offered free to you and a guest, typically are scheduled for the third Thursday of each month at 1 p.m. Eastern Time. Speakers are practitioners, consultants, and industry experts with ex-

tensive knowledge of current practices and developments that all financial professionals need to know about.

Webinar topics are organized around IMA's five areas of research and practice: Enterprise Risk and Controls, Strategic Cost Management, Technology Enablement, Leadership Strategies & Ethics, and Business Performance Management. The events are moderated by IMA's staff member experts, who provide insightful commentary, ask intriguing questions, and bring real-world relevance to the discussions. Some popular webinar subjects include ethics; benchmarking; lean accounting; governance, risk, and controls; corporate performance management; planning and budgeting; and many more.

We usually have anywhere between 400 and 700 individuals pre-register for the webinars, and 95% of those at-

tending stay on the call for the full event. More than 80% of the attendees affirmed that they learned new information during the webinar that they could apply directly to their jobs—a good indication of the quality of these programs. This is a great way for you to introduce a colleague to IMA and the benefits it has to offer.

If for some reason you are unable to participate in a live webinar, IMA archives these events on our website for your viewing convenience (at www.imanet.org, go to Professional Development/Live Webinars/Webinar Library). Although you can't actively participate and ask questions, you still have access to important knowledge that will benefit you and your employer.

On a side note: I want to once again ask for your assistance in building our membership. Please ask one of your colleagues to join IMA and help us become a stronger presence in the accounting and finance community. Only through *your direct efforts* will we continue to grow and provide you with quality products and services. Together we can make a difference.

Please continue to share your thoughts and ideas with me at jpollara@imanet.org. ■