

*Message from the Chair*



# Career Risk Management

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Last month's column focused on the need for those just entering our profession to plan ahead, particularly in regard to their education and the certifications they pursue.

This month, I want to discuss an equally important topic, one aimed at those of us with a few more years of experience behind us. While it may appear that thinking about where our career is headed is simply for college seniors and freshly minted MBAs, firsthand experience has taught many of us the opposite: The unforeseen can happen at any point in our careers.

Just as we spend time at our respective organizations managing risk—trying to assess and plan for random circumstances and losses—I believe we also must do the same for our own careers, both in how we choose to spend our time and the things we do now to help secure our professional future.

One of the best ways I know to help prepare for unexpected career curves is to invest time in maintaining a professional network. Personally, I am often disappointed when people only contact me when they're

looking for a job or want a reference. One of the first things I think to myself is, "Oh, so now you're calling me—because you want something from me." The gap in contact makes it more difficult for me to provide the kind of help they require; it also makes me less likely to go out of my way for them.

Spending time cultivating our professional network is a vital career investment. And it usually doesn't take too much effort: a few phone calls every so often, an invitation to lunch now and then. Frankly, attending IMA chapter meetings provides a great way to keep connected to your professional colleagues because you get the opportunity to see the same people month after month. Keeping those relationships fresh and up-to-date makes it much easier when a situation arises where you need to activate your network and ask for career assistance.

There's another aspect of our pro-

fessional life that should also stay fresh and up-to-date: our job skills. The accounting and finance fields are continually in flux, and so is the technology that supports them. Staying current with the latest trends in management, information systems, and the more technical aspects of our profession helps to ensure that we can adapt when our jobs—or even just job descriptions—change.

The most obvious way to gain this knowledge is through continuing education courses, like the kind required to keep a Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) or Certified Public Accountant (CPA) certification in good standing. Don't think you can rest on your laurels because you once earned these certifications but have now let them lapse. When I interview people who say they're certified, I always look them up to make sure they maintain active status. Formal professional development courses aren't the only way to keep abreast of the profession: Business books and periodicals (like the kind you're reading now) also offer an excellent means to stay informed about industry trends.

Of course no one can predict the

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**[PERSPECTIVES]** *cont'd from p. 6*

future, and that's especially true in today's climate of economic change. But working actively at risk management for our own careers can help shore up the investment we've made in our professional lives.

I welcome your comments at [fschea@imanet.org](mailto:fschea@imanet.org). ■