

## Lifetime Benefits

By Rick S. Thompson, CMA, CFM



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**T**he famous Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, “Life is not about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.” The Institute of Management Accountants (IMA®) is a great organization that has assisted me in recreating myself throughout my career. It is important to recognize areas for self-improvement and to take positive steps to enable future growth potential.

Let’s stop for a moment and reflect on our career successes. Most of us attribute achievements to job performance and to decisions that opened doors of opportunity. From a personal standpoint, the decision to join IMA and become actively involved in the organization has made a big difference in three important areas: technical capabilities, leadership experiences, and lifetime friendships.

The first eight years of my career were spent in nonfinancial roles, focusing on product and process improvement and cost reductions in manufacturing. The transition to a controller’s role for a year, followed by a corporate cost accounting position, resulted in a need to sharpen technical skill sets to improve job competencies. Although that was more than 20 years ago, I remain indebted to Harold Rakes, a former IMA national leader, who introduced me to IMA and the Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) program. The CMA program improved my accounting and financial knowledge and broadened my understanding of key issues in order to effectively com-

municate with company leadership.

IMA has provided numerous volunteer leadership roles, and it has been a privilege to serve as a Chapter President, Council President, Annual Conference Chair, and a member of the Board of Regents of the Institute of Certified Management Accountants (ICMA). These leadership positions have had one common goal: meeting the needs of IMA’s membership. In addition,

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each volunteer position has served as an important reminder that all leadership roles are positions of service.

These valuable IMA learning experiences have enriched my life and benefited my career advancement. I firmly believe that our entire lives are a work-in-progress. Each of us should set goals and work diligently to achieve them. IMA enables accounting and financial professionals to improve their personal competitiveness in today’s challenging business environment by improving technical, communication, and leadership skills.

IMA also reinforces the need to work with others in order to accomplish goals. There is an old adage that says, “People come into our lives for a reason, for a season, or for a lifetime.” IMA has provided a forum to make friendships that will last a lifetime. **SF**