

I Recommend IMA

By Paul Manigrasso, CMA, CFM, CPA



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Membership in the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA®) has been invaluable to me since I discovered the organization as a student. Prior to IMA, I read extensively about business, but I still had a fairly nebulous view of what an accountant actually *did* on a day-to-day basis. My first IMA meeting took me from the theories learned in class to sitting with the actual people making decisions and driving change in our business community.

Industry accounting at our school was largely without a voice; our Beta Alpha Psi meetings were primarily devoted to the two areas of public accounting most open to new graduates: audit and tax. Counseling meant getting an interview with the then “Big Six,” a regional, or a local firm (in that order). A career in industry wasn’t really explored in depth, so any interest in cost accounting was pretty much developed and pursued on your own. As I continued my education, the mentoring and professional relationships I was developing within IMA began to have a significant impact on my studies. While remaining interested in auditing and tax, I also became concerned with detailed inventory variance analyses and business fundamentals.

Immediately after graduation, most of my classmates were pursuing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation to the exclusion of any other certification. I was unable to make my schedule “work” for either of the biannual CPA exams (they were always scheduled while we were closing the month). In contrast, IMA allowed for

scheduling the Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) exam practically on demand. Earning the CMA and Certified Financial Manager (CFM®) certifications helped me later obtain a position that enabled me to pursue the CPA.

An additional benefit of IMA was service at the chapter level, starting with the newsletter. IMA has provided me practical leadership opportunities culminating in service as chapter president. Like so many things in life, I’ve found that IMA gives back in proportion to what you put in. Service on the chapter board leads to close working relationships with people in a variety of industries. Even more importantly, the mix within the local chapter allows you to associate with and learn from people at all levels of an organization from staff accountant through CFO/CEO.

If the camaraderie at meetings weren’t enough, regardless of your designations or field of expertise, continuing professional education is just a fact of life. IMA offers some of the highest-quality (yet inexpensive) live CPE available. Ordinarily, this CPE is provided in a fairly intimate setting, allowing for multiple questions as well as discussion opportunities.

In conclusion, I would recommend IMA to anyone pursuing an accounting career in any professional capacity, whether public, private, or government service. The insights gained by active, sustained membership carry over into every area of financial and business endeavors. **SF**