



Leadership in Times of Change

IMA is undergoing a number of changes that will describe its mission, aspirations, and members more accurately and elevate the CMA. We look forward to a smooth transition.

Change is an interesting phenomenon. Without it, organizations and individuals can regress or even decay. And while regressing or the fear of regressing makes change more imperative, the process of changing and the actual change are never easy for either organizations or individuals.

Likewise, leadership is rarely easy. Being a leader in times of great change is even more difficult. Leadership expert Warren G. Bennis once said that, "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality." The Institute of Management Accountants (IMA®) has played an important leadership role in the accounting profession since 1919, and, during these past few months, we've shown that we're willing to make the changes necessary to help our members and our profession adapt to the ever-evolving world of accounting and finance.

That willingness to change is evidenced by two major initiatives IMA announced late last year: sweeping revisions to the Certified Management Accountant (CMA®)

program and the introduction of new IMA and CMA logos and taglines.

By now, almost all IMA members have heard about the changes to the CMA program. The other big change at IMA—to logos and taglines—reflects the desire to describe our mission and aspirations more accurately. IMA's new tagline, "The Association for Accountants and Financial Professionals in Business," better articulates who we are and what we hope to continue to be: an association of professionals who come together for the common purpose of advancing both our careers and our profession.

Similarly, the new CMA tagline, "IMA's Certification for Accountants and Financial Professionals in Business," positions the CMA as IMA's flagship product and emphasizes that IMA offers its members exclusive access to the CMA program. IMA remains committed to helping its members expand their professional skills, drive the performance of their organizations, and enhance their careers. The CMA gives IMA members exactly that.

As we've been in the process of these changes, I've been reminded of an article from the Streetwise

section of the August 2007 issue of *Strategic Finance* titled "Barriers to Change." That article quoted Gayla Hodges of Change Agents, Inc., who said that there are three major barriers to the way an organization changes: (1) inadequate culture-shift planning, (2) lack of employee [member] involvement, and (3) flawed communication strategies.

I believe that IMA has successfully avoided all three of these barriers in navigating these current changes.

First, in terms of culture-shift planning, IMA has always respected its traditions, even while the organization has continued to move forward and keep up with the times. This remains an important priority because if IMA's cultural norms and traditions are not honored, then any change may alienate more members than it attracts.

Second, in making changes to the CMA program, the leadership of IMA involved as many volunteers and staff as we could to gain their insights and to create a new CMA program that would be as attractive to current CMAs as it will be to potential CMAs.

Third, in any change, it isn't just

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what's being said, but it's also the way the change is communicated to various constituents. It's especially necessary to strike a good balance between not overwhelming people with too much information and communicating too little. In all these areas, it has been an honor to work with our dedicated staff in Montvale, N.J., USA, as the new CMA message has gone forth.

One of the key reasons Amazon.com is such a successful retailer is that it posts online reviews of every product it sells. Whether you like a product or not, your opinion is always welcome. Likewise, IMA has made *LinkUp IMA* (www.linkupima.com) available for any CMA, CMA candidate, or other member to give his or her thoughts on the new examination. I like what member and CMA candidate Stuart Gibb posted to *LinkUp IMA* about changes to the examination: "Certification programs like the CMA are more than just about passing an exam. They are a lifelong commitment/dedication to the profession. Completing the exam is just one step. You still have to meet the professional experience, maintain your CPE credits and perform your job in the professional manner expected of any certificated professional."

Give the new CMA exam a test drive. I hope that you'll like it, and I hope that you'll join the 31,000 CMAs who have gone before you and make that lifelong commitment to our profession.

As always, I welcome your comments at jbrausch@imanet.org. **SF**