

Seize Your CMA

By Peter Temko, CMA, CPA, CITP



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Carpe diem (seize the day) is the way I try to approach life, and I am never surprised at how successful it is. I use it as a way to shed excuses for not doing something and to get started with a plan. That philosophy is what got me started on my quest for the Certified Management Accountant (CMA®) credential, which I received in February 2010.

During the last few months of 2006, I came to the realization that working in the accounting profession without any certification reduced my opportunities with my current employer and elsewhere. As I was married, had two young boys ages 4 and 7, and was working full time, the decision to pursue certification wasn't something I took lightly, nor did I feel I could put it off. With everyone's full support, I started my journey.

One part of my plan was to take more accounting courses. In 2008, toward the end of my classwork at the University of South Florida, Dr. James Strachan, my professor for governmental and not-for-profit accounting, presented the idea of obtaining the CMA in a way that made it seem an obvious choice for me:

- ◆ Getting the CMA shows your employer a commitment to a broader, more strategic perspective, just as becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) would show your clients the same.

- ◆ The same continuing professional education (CPE) can be used for both CPA and CMA requirements, making it even easier to justify the time and expense of getting CPE.

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- ◆ You can take advantage of the similarities between some of the CMA and CPA subject matter to get both certifications.

- ◆ Even if you start in public accounting, you never know where you might end up. Having the CMA is a great way to be ready for future opportunities.

Thank you for that wonderful insight, Dr. Strachan, and thanks to my family and everyone else who supported me in my quest for the CMA.

In light of the recent global economic upheaval, my decision to get my CPA and CMA may seem prescient. Those who have their CPA or no certification might think that, with everything going on around them, it's too late or too much to take on the work required for their CMA. But as with my decision back in 2006, ask yourself, "If not now, then when?" Since none of us can predict the future, your decision now to pursue your CMA may seem just as strategic when you are finished as mine does now.

If I had delayed, my road to certification would probably still be just as long, but farther into the future. Instead, I have my CMA and can focus on even bigger goals. My advice to you is that now is the time to shed the excuses, make a plan, get the support you need, and seize your CMA! **SF**