

I'm a CMA Advocate

By Jason Lane, CMA



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Enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps right out of high school is what ultimately led me to a career in management accounting. Seems weird to say, but it's true. I served in the early 1990s during the first Gulf War. My occupational specialty was supply administration, and I spent the majority of my military career accounting for the assets that were strategically allocated to the units I served. I was even awarded the Navy Achievement Medal for my instrumental work in cleaning up the books for the unit I served with while stationed in California. Although being a Mechanized Allowance List (MAL) Clerk in the U.S. Marine Corps wasn't truly a management accounting position, it's what gave me the itch to choose accounting as a career after I was honorably discharged.

I started taking accounting classes in 1995 while working as a computer numerical control (CNC) machinist at a small factory in Baraboo, Wis. I knew that accounting was the career I wanted to pursue, but I had to overcome a lot to make that a reality. Considering that I was newly married and had a brand new baby boy to take care of, I hadn't made it very easy on myself. But I persevered and finished my associate's degree in accounting after four years of night classes. Almost immediately after this, my family moved to Phoenix, Ariz., where I took my first "real" management accounting position with CEI, a civil engineering consultant firm. I finished my undergraduate work in 2005 by taking night classes while working full-time as their project

accountant and financial analyst.

Jim Roberts, CPA, was my CFO and mentor at CEI. He and I had many discussions over the years about public accounting vs. private accounting and the pros and cons of each path. Ultimately, it was Jim who introduced me to IMA® and got me excited about pursuing the CMA® designation. Although the CPA is very popular and valuable, I chose to forego that designation and specifically pursue the CMA because it encapsulated the body of knowledge that most closely aligned with the career path that I wanted to pursue. I joined IMA in 2004, and I finished taking the CMA exam and was officially awarded the CMA designation in August 2006.

My family and I moved back to Wisconsin in 2006, and I have been working since then as the controller for Friede & Associates, a successful commercial general contractor in southern Wisconsin. In 2009, I added the Certified Construction Industry Financial Professional (CCIFP) designation to my repertoire. I believe that the CMA and CCIFP designations have dramatically increased the value I can provide to our clients but, more importantly, the value that I can provide to my employer.

Over the years I've remained an advocate for the CMA as the designation of choice for accounting professionals who are working to provide value inside companies. I'm thankful for my relationship with IMA and for the positive impact it has had on my career. **SF**