

## Quest for Certification

By Susanne Schwager, CMA



**Susanne Schwager, CMA, is head of administration for LIMO Lissotschenko Mikrooptik GmbH in Dortmund, Germany, and is an international member of IMA. You can reach her at [s\\_schwager@gmx.net](mailto:s_schwager@gmx.net).**

**A**fter a three-year bank apprenticeship at a local savings bank, five years of studying economics with a major in “business administration” and “investment and finance” at the University of Dortmund, Germany, and two administration jobs at universities in Dortmund and Siegen, I started working as a financial controller at a small private manufacturing company in Dortmund in July 2001. This company was beginning to grow in an international environment with regard to customers, suppliers, competitors, and employees. For its accounting, it used German Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

In 2004, the company set up a small company in Atlanta, Ga., as sales support for the U.S. customers, and our accountants here in Germany were doing the bookkeeping for the U.S. office as well.

Because of my English skills, my boss asked me to deal with the U.S. bank, the external auditors, etc. for the U.S. company. This meant I had to find out what was relevant regarding U.S. accounting (U.S. GAAP), and I thought it would be a good idea to try to obtain a professional designation like the CMA®. I did some online research on what I would have to learn, how the exams could be taken, etc. I decided to use the Gleim self-study material. Prometric offered the exams at three locations in Germany, which reduced my travel costs and travel time. Online booking of the exam appointments was easy, and the people at Prometric in Berlin were competent and friendly.

I joined IMA® in early 2008 and took Part 1 of the exam in October 2008 and Part 3 in June 2009. I tried Part 2 in autumn 2009 and failed. I gave Part 2 another try in February 2010 and passed. Then I registered for Part 4 for August 2010 but by accident received a registration for April 2010. At first I wanted to change the date back to August, but since the CMA exam was switching from four parts to two, I decided to try Part 4 in April and then maybe have the option to redo it in August.

I was a little worried about Part 4 because of the essay style. Since English isn’t my native language, the multiple choice questions were easier to cope with. It’s easier to pick from given answers than to have to express your thoughts and knowledge with your own words. In the end I received the message that I passed, and I was really happy when I received the CMA certificate by mail in June 2010. A framed copy is hanging on the wall of my office, and when people ask about it they are impressed that I have the CMA designation. Earning the certification didn’t have an impact on my salary, but I think my value on the job market has increased by having it.

Next on my agenda is Certified Internal Auditor (CIA), and being a CMA has synergies here: The CMA is a waiver for CIA Part 4. I passed Parts 2 and 3 in May 2011 and had to give Part 1 another try in January 2012 and passed. I just received a letter confirming that I’ll receive the certificate in June/July 2012. **SF**