

Ambassador for Life

By Benjamin Mulling, CMA, CPA, CITP



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I joined IMA® in 2001 as a student. Working full-time as an inventory accounting clerk during the day, I completed my accounting degree at night. Upon graduation, I wanted to further my career by finding my niche and making connections, so I went the usual routes of obtaining my CPA and MBA.

By 2008 I had worked as a cost accountant and a plant accounting manager and was a controller for a local manufacturing firm. I realized that my niche was managerial accounting, but I began to think that there was a skills gap between the education and certifications I had earned and what I needed for my current position, particularly regarding the planning, analytical, and problem-solving areas.

I believed the CMA® certification would fill that gap. I studied vigorously and received my CMA in October 2008. The exam wasn't easy, but the information covered provided me exactly what I needed. Little did I know how much of an impact the skills emphasized by the CMA would help me in the coming months. Two major events in my career occurred: I was unexpectedly promoted to CFO of my company, and I became involved in IMA from a volunteer standpoint as a member of the first Young Professionals Committee. Feeling that IMA had helped me out so much in my career, I wanted to give back.

My initial months as CFO were greeted with the recession of 2008 and 2009. My company and I had to make many tough decisions that required us to rebuild our

strategy and company structure from the ground up. Critical skills I learned from the CMA, such as forecasting, capital investment analysis, and other analytical problem-solving techniques, were invaluable in coming out of that environment as a stronger, successful, and more sustainable company. Also, the network I was able to build as a result of my volunteer involvement in IMA proved to be a tremendous help. Shortly after my service on the Young Professionals Committee, I was nominated for and placed on the IMA Global Board, serving on the Planning and Development Committee.

As a young CFO, having the ability to network and “pick the brains” of more tenured accounting professionals was also an invaluable asset that IMA provided me. I was involved in IMA's strategic development process, and I was able to utilize some of these principles and techniques in my own company's strategic development process. I still continue to serve in volunteer leadership as an at-large Board member. Recently I received one of IMA's first Young Professional of the Year Awards. It's quite an honor to not only participate in an organization such as IMA at a young age, but to be recognized for my accomplishments means something special to me. I will continue to strive to be an ambassador for IMA, the CMA, and the management accounting profession—not just for what it has meant and done for me, but also for what IMA has done and will continue to do for the accounting and finance profession. **SF**