

CMA Career Launch

By Jeremy Vryhof, CMA



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What do you want to be when you grow up? “Anything but an accountant” was my typical response as a child. Firefighters, police, and basketball players seemed to have more excitement in their careers. Also, my dad was an accountant, and, not knowing any better at the time, I assumed his work was dull. Obviously, I was rather naïve as a child.

My perspective began to change in college, where I found my accounting classes interesting. I graduated from Hillsdale College in Michigan with degrees in finance and German. I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do as a career, but I did want to add value and enjoy my work.

I started my career as a financial analyst at a division of Stryker Corporation. I was shy at first and mostly sat at my desk as I dutifully prepared account reconciliations and month-end reports. It was a good job, but I was neither energized nor living up to my potential.

I shared with my manager my desire for more engagement, and he suggested the CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) exam as a career launching point. A career-long CMA, he said the credential would help me achieve my goals and boost my confidence. I took his suggestion, joined IMA® (Institute of Management Accountants), and started my CMA exam preparation.

Shortly after that, I branched out at work: I left my cubicle and started building relationships with those in other functional areas. Through my CMA skill set, I found ways to

partner with colleagues to add value to the workplace. I parlayed these experiences into a short-term assignment in Europe where I finished my CMA certification.

Along the way, I evaluated my abilities and how my newly minted CMA certification could best meet Stryker’s needs. My coworkers had a significant need and desire for financial training. They wanted to understand our financial results and how to drive financial performance. Based on my CMA credential and strengths in communication, I knew I could deliver this training.

I began to offer internal training to non-financial employees on financial statement basics. We explored key financial metrics, why they matter, and how we impact them. In fact, we covered many of the same topics that are on the CMA exam. This training led me to my current role in Finance Training and Development.

I’m also pursuing my MBA with concentrations in accounting and organizational management at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business. My CMA has proven its value on countless business case studies and projects.

As a child, accounting didn’t seem like an exciting career path, but I’ve grown wiser with age. Becoming a CMA was a true launching point for my career: It has allowed me to reach my goals of creating value and enjoying my work, and I’m excited to see how it will continue to impact my career. **SF**