

By Jeffrey C. Thomson, CMA



Always Reaching, Always Growing

One of the IMA® Core Values reads: “We believe innovation and a spirit of continuous improvement are engines that keep us relevant, vital, and growing.” These words translate into action for IMA’s global staff.

Dear IMA members,

Learning and growth in any organization are vital for business success, especially when they mine all current knowledge and new learning to advance the business and society. More broadly, this area is referred to as knowledge management systems (KMS). Best-in-class organizations unlock and unleash all current and new knowledge for shared use and for increasing organizational capability. KMS is less about technology (although there’s an element of codification, using a database, etc.) and more about a mind-set and a passion for learning and growth.

Nine IMA staff members have embraced this spirit of continuous improvement by earning either an advanced degree or professional certification since February 2012. Miaomiao Tian, ICMA® exam development manager, became a CMA® (Certified Management Accountant). Doreen Remmen, senior vice president of operations and CFO; Lisa Beaudoin, director of educational partnerships; and

Jim Gurowka, vice president of international development, became Certified Association Executives (CAE). Dionne Downs and Tina Gaerlan, conference and events planners, became Certified Meeting Professionals (CMP); Paulette Brown, senior business analyst, received a Professional Researcher Certification (PRC); Christopher Dowsett, *Strategic Finance* senior editor, received his Master of Science (M.S.) in Publishing: Digital and Print Media; and Jenna Uszenski, community relations associate, received her Master of Business Administration (MBA). Here are a few of their stories.

Lisa’s career in the nonprofit world began at IMA. She said that getting her CAE helped give her a “helicopter view” so that she could see the big picture of how every aspect of business touches each department. “It enhanced my knowledge in general in all areas but also taught me how to think and plan strategically. I learned about best practices in association management and found that IMA already employs many of them.”

Jenna said that getting her MBA taught her time management, discipline, and organization. “Working with classmates from England

and India was a great way to see different perspectives but made me really conscious about how we spent our time. It also taught me new ideas in areas of customer service and accounting, which helps me understand our members’ needs better,” she explained.

Christopher, who received his M.S., wanted to be able to perform his job at a higher level and provide a greater contribution. “I’ve been fortunate at IMA to work on a number of different projects and learn new skills, but I recognized there were some areas I wouldn’t be able to learn about within the context of my job. While I’m regularly able to apply a general idea or concept I learned from class, several of my classes provided opportunities to develop specific projects related to my work at IMA and get feedback from my professors on possible improvements. In some instances, I was able to take that work and present it to people here to help generate new ideas and strategies.”

Dionne went for her CMP as a professional development goal she set for herself. “It showed me how to be mindful of and manage a risk plan to protect IMA’s conference attendees as the host and

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how to keep everyone safe. This is also the first time IMA has had two CMPs on staff. Also, IMA allowed me a flexible schedule and reimbursement, and the staff has been very supportive. Jeff was my biggest cheerleader, giving me ‘high fives’ for encouragement.”

IMA incents professional development and continuous improvement for staff by covering the costs for certification and providing significant tuition reimbursement for those pursuing a degree. It’s important to support and reward the efforts of our staff as they are the frontline to our members and can help identify new opportunities in serving members and advancing the profession.

As a nonprofit organization that promotes the CMA program, the gold standard certification for accountants and financial professionals in business, we find it important to “practice what we preach” by being committed to lifelong learning. I became a CMA less than three years ago and am working on another professional certification as we speak. So join us. Get certified. Pursue advanced degrees. The learning process alone will enrich your career and is vital to keeping you relevant in today’s fast-paced business world. **SF**

Sincerely,
Jeff Thomson, CMA
IMA President and CEO