

## The Inside Edge

By Beau S. Ganas, CMA, CPA, CIA, CFE



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I began my accounting career in high school when I took accounting I and II my junior year. I acquired an internship at Jackson Hewitt in my hometown of Waycross, Ga., where I enjoyed preparing tax returns and getting to know the stories of the people behind them. On slow nights, I read my accounting textbook and worked ahead of my classes. I finished accounting II early, so I began tutoring others in the class. After high school, I interned with a local public accounting firm during semester breaks from college. These work experiences and the people who mentored me helped me excel in college.

I discovered cost accounting in college and thoroughly enjoyed it. I appreciated the analytical nature of accounting and seeking the story the numbers were trying to tell. As a result, cost accounting became second nature to me. It also helped that my mentor was a former cost accountant and plant manager who shared insights from his career that went far beyond the classroom. While taking my second cost accounting class, I asked the professor about her CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) credential. She told me the CMA was well-recognized across the accounting industry and encouraged me to take the exam as a way to stand out from my peers.

Attending college during the “Great Recession” impacted my view of what it takes to succeed in today’s professional world. Many of my peers were having trouble finding jobs, and long-term

employees were losing theirs at an alarming rate. I believed the way I could create the most value for a future employer was to invest in myself. The CMA provided an excellent opportunity to do just that.

While still in college, I studied hard and was able to pass the CMA exam on my first try! Passing the exam gave me the confidence and skill set I needed in preparing for other certifications.

Upon graduation, I was able to land an associate position with a CPA firm thanks to the inside edge the CMA gave me. A consistent theme in my interviews was the completion of both the CMA and CPA exams. The CMA helped me stand out early on and was a strong step toward developing my professional skill set.

Last January, I took a position with Dixon Hughes Goodman (DHG) in Charleston, S.C. My move to DHG shows me the CMA has once again proven its value. The controllers or CFOs of my clients immediately recognize my CMA designation as a mark of distinction.

Although I’m in public accounting, the CMA helps me bridge the gap between traditional audit and accounting services and look beyond to meet the needs of our clients. The CMA has time and again proved its value by opening doors in my career, communicating trust and professionalism to my clients, and allowing me to provide the expertise my clients expect. I encourage you to become a CMA as well. **SF**