

## Diary of a Consultant

By Mo Ali, CMA, CPA, PMP



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**E**arly in my career, when I was a junior management accountant with a New York brokerage house, I felt I needed to hone my skills in order to distinguish myself. After doing some research, I learned about the CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) credential that IMA® offers and was quickly convinced it was the way forward for me. I became an IMA member, started attending local chapter meetings, invested in a review course, and soon obtained the CMA credential.

Becoming a CMA enabled me to be more analytical in my work and increase my productivity. After passing the CMA exam, I was more of an analytical business partner in each succeeding job I held and less of a technical accountant.

Over the next few years, I held management accounting roles for several different financial institutions and was able to work on capital hedging, foreign exchange, systems implementations, hedge funds, and Excel Visual Basic for Application (VBA) automation. Attending continuing education courses gave me cutting-edge knowledge about the industry and helped me improve my computer skills, which led to higher productivity at work. Attending IMA chapter meetings gave me professional confidence as I was able to learn from established members of the profession.

Then the financial crisis of 2008 struck, and it spawned both challenges and opportunities. Having built a strong base in my years as a management accountant at vari-

ous levels, I decided to enter the consulting world. Because of my training as a CMA, a focus on computer skills, and my management accounting expertise, I was chosen to work on projects such as the 2008 Emergency Economic Stabilization Act.

As a consultant, my focus expanded from monthly financial reporting to specializing in devising creative solutions for complex problems that clients face. I also had to meet the twin challenges of having strong technical and interpersonal skills. My experience as a CMA and the networking skills I developed by going to chapter meetings helped me meet these challenges. Along the way I met some extraordinary people and reconnected with others.

My consulting experiences led me to another venture where I was engaged in partnering with business and technology groups to help rebuild a global financial reporting system. Throughout my engagements, I was expected to navigate through new businesses and systems to quickly build efficiencies. Again, my CMA experience—particularly my computer-related CPE courses in enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems—has been very helpful.

Being a management accountant helped me establish myself, but becoming a CMA distinguished me from my peers and opened many pathways for me. My continuing involvement with IMA helps me stay current and add value to my clients. I'm very happy I decided to continue my education with this association. **SF**