

From CMA to CEO

By Dan McGowan, CMA, CFM, CPA



Dan McGowan, CMA, CFM, CPA, is CEO of Pioneer West Virginia Federal Credit Union in Charleston, W.Va. He also is an IMA Member-at-Large. You can reach Dan at dmcgowan@pioneerwv.org.

I was somewhat of a late arrival to the accounting/finance world. The first decade of my career was in radio and television broadcasting as a disc jockey, news director, and anchor. The second decade was in Human Resources at commercial banks.

During that time, I soaked up all the banking and finance education I could get, expecting to be a career banker. But after the Texas banking debacle of the mid-1980s, an investment banking firm I worked for collapsed in 1989, prompting me to reevaluate future career options.

No matter where I worked or in what industry, accountants seemed to have a great deal of influence in the organization's decision making, so I decided to go back to school to pick up the additional credits to sit for the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) exam. I enrolled in Troy State University's graduate program where I was mentored by Dr. Khamis Bilbeisi, who also encouraged me to join IMA®. Although my immediate focus was on the CPA exam, Dr. Bilbeisi spoke favorably of the CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) credential, noting that many accounting graduates migrate from public accounting to business and industry during their careers.

I earned my CPA in August 1993 and an MBA a year later. Then I spent a year as a financial accounting manager for an international manufacturing company, followed by my first controllership at a software/e-services company before moving back into financial services with Regions Banks

and into the credit union world four years later in 2003.

Along the way, it became apparent that my greatest contributions and value to the companies I worked for were in the areas of management accounting and analysis rather than financial accounting. Financial reporting was important, but what really mattered to the executives was never-ending "what-if" analysis, so I developed some reasonably proficient skills in financial modeling. And I began to take a serious look at the CMA program. I earned my CMA credential in 1998.

I also seem to have a knack for information technology, data organization, and even programming/applications development. One of the special projects I've developed for Pioneer WV is a dashboard of key metrics, enabling us to know where we start each day.

As I became more committed to professional development in management accounting, I offered my services to the ICMA® Board of Regents. I thank Former IMA Chair Kim Wallin for appointing me. Those three years were among the most rewarding of my career. I got to network with some of the most exceptional people imaginable and contribute to the cause of elevating management accounting as a profession.

Although my life has taken some twists and turns, I believe my managerial-accounting-focused career path is directly responsible for enabling me to acquire the collaborative, interdisciplinary skill set and related insights that made it possible to become a CEO. **SF**