

## My CMA Endurance Test

By Kevin Jones, CMA, CPA



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**A**s an accounting graduate ready to take on the world, I had very clear, distinct goals: land a job (preferably at a Big 6) and pass the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) exam. I secured an audit internship with Price Waterhouse, where I was introduced to public accounting. I was eager to learn and increase my opportunities for advancement there. But after completing my internship, I took a position as a state auditor in South Carolina, where I learned about governmental and compliance auditing and strengthened my analytical skills to prepare for the CPA exam.

After two years, I relocated to Louisville, Ky., to accept a cost accountant position with Philip Morris USA. This introduced me to manufacturing and was my first job in the private sector. Along with my responsibilities, I participated in many continuous improvement and training practices. After a short time, I passed the CPA exam and decided to move on to my next professional adventure.

In 2000, I was a staff auditor at Tricon Global Restaurants, Inc., before accepting a position at General Electric as a financial analyst. While at GE, I was selected to participate in the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Accounting Scholars Leadership Workshop. Though I was in practice, I still felt the need to be connected to the academic side of the profession.

Tricon soon asked me to return with a promotion to senior auditor. I was there until July 2004, when I became a manager of analysis in the Dixie Products Group of

Georgia Pacific Corp. I was responsible for Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) compliance, among other things. That's when I decided to pursue the CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) credential to enhance my professional knowledge and expertise. I earned the CMA in 2006 and took an audit manager position with GE Consumer Retail Finance. In late 2008 I was promoted to global operational controller. I held this position until 2012.

The main lesson I learned from these experiences is that jobs will come and go, but your skills and expertise provide stability, security, and an opportunity to write the next chapter of your professional career. The CMA exam was an endurance test that allowed me to hone and validate my skills as a management accountant. The knowledge, skills, and expertise garnered from the CMA exam helped me advance my career in industry.

Moreover, the exam is more than just a management accounting test—it offers a set of competencies that made me a successful business professional. Over time, these competencies become marketable assets that can provide a platform for business professionals and accountants to leverage their strengths to blaze new trails. I embarked on a new career as an accounting educator where I can use my transferable skills to teach prospective accountants and finance professionals technical accounting skills and share with them the many opportunities the profession has to offer. **SF**