

Special Message to students by
CMA (Dr.) A.S. Durga Prasad
President, Institute of Cost Accountants of India

My Dear Students,

“Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion”, said Hegel, the German philosopher.

Emotions run high among students when the Examinations results are announced. Those who succeed are naturally excited. Those who don't are obviously dejected.

I share the joys of the successful students. I welcome into the profession, those who have fully qualified. Now that you have achieved your ambition, it is time to celebrate and thank everyone who had contributed to your success: beginning with your family, then your teachers, your friends and all other well wishers. Then go into the world, take up the challenges waiting for you and come out with success and glory.

Those of you who have cleared a group or two, well done! Now go ahead and do even better!

I also share the disappointments and pains of those students who have not reached their goals this time. In this message, I focus specially on these students. I share with you my perspectives on the course, how to study, and how to tackle a question in the examination.

What gets you a CMA qualification? If your answer is 'passing the examination', I differ with you! **An examination merely measures what level of competency you have attained. Those who 'pass' are those who have reached the destination. Those who 'fail' are those who are on their way and not yet reached their destination.** That is why it becomes important for you to start with an understanding of competency (skills set) you need to acquire by means of study and exercise.

In my dialogue with students over the past few years, I found that most of the students do not have a clue or understanding of what skills set they have to acquire *before* taking up the CMA examination. The six skills required;

- knowledge,
- comprehension,
- application,
- analysis,
- synthesis, and
- evaluation

are included right at the beginning of the syllabus for each subject. They are also listed in the “CMA Target Success” document that is circulated to all students of the course and also available on the website. The first four skills are to be acquired at the Intermediate stage and the last two skills have to be added by the final students.

As you can immediately see, in professional courses, unlike academic degree/diploma courses, it does not stop with merely acquiring knowledge. In addition, five more skills are required, which mark the professional approach. This suggests that the way you study the subjects and prepare for the examination have to be very different, as these skills are tested in the examination by seasoned professionals.

Those who have passed their academic degree examinations with flying colors often wonder why they are not upto the mark in the CMA exam. The reason should be clear by now. Knowledge is not enough.

You need a different approach to acquire these additional five skills – comprehension to evaluation. Only when you do so, you can expect to be successful not only in the CMA examination, but also in any professional examination.

The good news is this is no rocket science and need only three steps to achieve success:

- Dream
- Prepare
- Perform

You have already taken the right first step and started with the **Dream** to become a CMA. Now you have to make sure that the remaining two steps are also to be neatly executed, like in a dance.

Preparation is the key step. Reading the Study Material, suggested book or any other material just to memorize the 'right answers and solutions' is not enough anymore. You must make sure that you really understand the subject so well that you can apply the concepts and tools to a given situation correctly. Practicing through writing in theory subject is equally important on par with subjects with sums to be worked out.

Performance is an ultimate step that how you present in the examination. In presentation of theory answers, it is expected good content with writing skills.

To quote a practical instance in answering a sample question in financial management, you may have to choose the method of financing – debt or equity – for a given project. This is not just about the lower cost of capital. You also need to *discover* the risks associated with the project and the probability of its success and the quantum of cash flows likely to be generated over the project period. You may even suggest short term borrowings as an alternative, provided you can see an opportunity to avoid sinking investments in long term assets and replace it with leased facilities. How many times do you think about such alternatives? To do so, you need to analyse the scenario smartly. Then evaluate the various options available. It must now be clear that your approach to studying a subject has to change completely.

Performing well in an examination is an extension to preparing well during the study period. Exam papers are designed to test you in all areas of your study in an interlinked manner. So you have to cover the entire syllabus, instead of ignoring some topics hoping to leave those topics in 'choice'. There are inter relations between subjects and you have to keep remembering the subjects you already passed.

These are general suggestions. I will be coming up shortly with two more letters to you. In the next one, I will address more specifically the general failures of the intermediate students (based upon a study under progress in the Examination Department). I will also offer guidance to you on how to overcome the difficulties you face. In my third message, I will similarly address the issues concerning final students.

So keep watching this space. Meanwhile, do not lose heart. Start your preparations for the next examination in right earnest immediately. From the Institute we understand your needs and are continuously providing you inputs which are regularly updated in the website. We have provided you a plethora of learning assistance – e.g. Study Material, PPTs, E-journals, PTPs, RTPs, MTPs, Examiner Comments, Repository on past examinations etc. Make full use of them. Also observe the Institute website for applicable regulatory changes in Companies Act, Direct Taxes, Indirect Taxes etc. Any other inputs or clarifications required for your success will be extended by the Studies Department on a continuous basis.

Cheers!

(President)

29th August 2014