

**O**NCE UPON A TIME, looking westward was the only option available to students who graduated with diplomas in Cost and Management Accountancy (CMA).

"Opportunities were few and far between," recalls Rakesh Singh, President, The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI), which recently changed its name from the Institute of Cost and Work Accountants of India to enable its members working in India and abroad to retain a common designation.

"The market was small and competition was limited, so whatever the companies produced could be sold without much professional help," says Singh. Up against a wall of unemployment, students flocked to countries, especially to the West, with a more favourable and competitive market.

Then came 1991, the first wave of liberalisation, and the ground rules changed. "The services of CMAs have now become indispensable for any company that hopes to survive in a market economy," says Singh.

# CMAs haven't had it so good

From VAT audits to reviving sick companies, cost and management accountants perform a variety of functions in the new economy. Little wonder then that the job market for them is expanding

**CMAs and CAs are like twins performing different roles. CAs report about the performance of a company to the stakeholders and the outside world; CMAs plan strategies to maximise profit for companies**



— RAKESH SINGH  
President, The Institute of Cost Accountants of India

"The demand for qualified cost and management accountants in the country now is so pressing that the ICAI is planning to expand to 500 centres by March next year. Delhi-NCR itself has seven centres with a total of 1,729 CMA aspirants. "Since 2008, there's been an annual increase of 30 per cent in the number of candidates enrolling at our centres across the country," Singh adds.

For ICAI, adding 10,000-15,000 students every year to its flagship CMA programme is no mean feat, considering the arduous process each one of them has to go through before getting the coveted certificate. The academic rigour that an aspiring CMA is put through is a lot similar to that of a chartered accountant (CA).

Candidates have to qualify in three stages for the coveted title.

## DECODING A CMA'S WORK PROFILE

A CMA is called upon to perform a variety of roles in a company. Some of the key areas where they offer their professional expertise are: VAT planning and audits; materials management; diagnostic accounting; merchant banking; investment counselling; preparing incentive plans; portfolio management; conservation of energy.

## THE ROAD TO BECOMING A CMA

**■ Stage I: Foundation Course.** You can prepare for it after clearing Class X, but you can take the examination only after graduating from Class XII.

**■ Stage II: Intermediate Level.** You become eligible for it only after successfully completing the Foundation Course.

**■ Stage III: Final Examination.** You have to clear the six Intermediate



Level papers to become eligible to take this exam, which is held in June and December each year.

For more information, go to <http://www.icwai.org>. It is the official website of The Institute of Cost Accountants of India.

## TOP RECRUITERS

BHEL, ONGC, Wipro, TCS, Coal India Limited, ITC, Nestle and Accenture

Course. Students who have cleared Class X can apply for this programme, though they are allowed to take the examination only after graduating from Class XII. The second stage is the Intermediate Level. Graduates, or candidates who have completed the foundation programme, can apply for this. To take part in the final examination, held twice a year in June

clear all the six Intermediate Level papers.

In addition to the CMA course, the institute also offers a one-year certificate programme for Accounting Technicians targeted at rural and semi-urban youth. Candidates who complete the programme also have the option to upgrade to a CMA.

"CAs and CMAs are like twins

about the performance of a company to the stakeholders and the outside world; CMAs plan strategies to maximise profit." In other words, CMAs guide a company on where to set up warehouses or source products from to gain a competitive edge.

The need to compile, analyse and plan strategies implies that aspiring CMAs need to possess a

for numbers and sharp analytical skills to succeed in their calling.

"The aspirants should be serious about acing the papers, study regularly, revise at proper intervals and solve the previous year's question papers so that they can complete the course successfully," Singh advises prospective candidates. And the demand for successful candi-

delivered in various business



The ICAI has been adding 10,000-15,000 prospective CMAs each year to its enrollment registers. The increasing numbers are an indication of the growing popularity of this career track.

**₹6.5 lakh**

The average starting annual salary that recruiters offer to newly minted CMAs

**500**

Number of centres that the ICAI plans to have by next year. These include seven in Delhi and NCR

**30%**

The year-on-year rise in the number of students enrolling for the CMA programme since 2008

to our candidates across the country this year," Singh adds.

Top companies such as BHEL, ONGC, Wipro, ITC, Nestle, Accenture, Coal India and TCS visit the ICAI campus regularly to recruit future managers. From managing to auditing, the job profile of a CMA can be as varied as the demand for new recruits.

CMAs get appointed as Value

the VAT Acts of the states. They are also recruited by various central and state government departments for assignments such as conducting techno-economic studies, financial management, project consultancy, materials management, tax planning, diagnostic accounting, revival of sick units, merchant banking, investment counselling, devising incentive plans, portfolio man-

agement and energy

audits, environmental audits, and hiring and training of executives.

The average starting annual salary for newly minted CMAs is around ₹6.5 lakh. "The growth prospects are enormous for an ambitious young professional," says Singh.

The growing number of students enrolling for the pro-