

## ‘You’ve got to earn it’ ad campaign hits a nerve

By Laurie Fullerton - 19 September 2016



“You’ve got to earn it” is the slogan of a new advertising campaign launched by the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) this past week and it throws the notion that accounting is dry or dull on its head. Created in partnership with ad agency The Gate|New York, this multi-channel campaign combines the edgy appeal of body art and tattoos with the less sexy field of accountancy.

In a recent ad which aired during *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon* among other unexpected media outlets for its category, a newly minted certified management accountant (CMA) lines up in a tattoo parlor to get a full back tattoo that says “Certified Management Accountant.” While the new CMA endures the tattoo process in a retro Havana, Cuba-style tattoo parlor, when it’s done he proudly stands up and his back faces the camera with the new tattoo. Three other newly certified accountants, looking out of place as they wait in the wings, are anxious to get their tattoo next. The narrator tells us only 50 percent pass this test and that’s why you’ve got to earn it.

The multi-year campaign, targeting millennials and finance professionals under 40, points to the CMA certification as the solution to confronting the skills gap in the finance and accounting profession. And the point is that becoming a CMA, which involves a two-part, eight-hour exam, is not for the faint-hearted.

“The ‘You’ve got to earn it’ campaign isn’t just about the challenge of becoming a CMA; it’s a dare,” said David Bernstein, chief creative officer of The Gate. “We’re essentially issuing a call to action for accountants to differentiate themselves in the market by taking a test with a 50 per cent pass rate.”

According to The Gate’s research, 40 per cent of adults 26 to 40 years old have at least one tattoo (and 43 per cent of people with tattoos think a tattoo with a personal meaning is the most important factor).

“To call yourself a CMA, you need to pass a two-part, eight-hour exam. Our campaign is a challenge for people who want the status that comes with the credential and a point of pride for people who already have it,” added Beau Fraser, president of The Gate. “The creative and unconventional media strategy will break through typical financial certification marketing to show young finance professionals that earning a CMA is worth the effort for their career.”

The association of accountants and financial professionals (IMA) in business is one of the largest and most respected associations focused exclusively on advancing the management accounting profession. Globally, IMA supports the profession through research, the CMA program, continuing education, networking and advocacy of the highest ethical business practices.

“What’s exciting about this campaign is its focus on the sense of pride and mastery of management accounting issues that comes with earning your CMA. Other certification programs might find it acceptable to grandfather in their candidates, but with the CMA, you’ve got to earn it,” said Jeff Thomson, CMA, CAE, IMA president and CEO. “There is a market need for talented finance professionals, so we’re highlighting that the CMA adds credibility to your name and shows employers that you are competent and capable of adding value to business.”