**Qualifed Opinion**

May 2017

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**April Meeting Pictures:**

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**Carlyle Grill:** 3660 Jackson Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 (734) 213-9800

**Time:** 5:30-8:30pm  **Date:** May 18, 2017

**Price:** $30 for students, members, and retirees; $40 for non-members

**DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS?**

The Ann Arbor IMA has Meals-on-Wheels on the second Saturday of every month from 10:30 to 12:00. If you are interested in joining the party, contact **Evan Scarbrough** at eascarbro@gmail.com. Ideas for possible community service for the future are definitely welcome and will be considered!
Dinner Choices
Appetizer
Carlyle Salad
½ Carrot Cake

Main Course
Pecan Chicken
Pasta Carlyle
Steak Frittes
Rotisserie Herb Chicken
Half Rack of Baby Back Ribs

Beverages
Coffee, Pop, or Tea

CMA PREP:
Walsh College will begin offering preparation classes for the Certified Management Accountant (CMA) Exam this fall at its Troy campus.
http://www.walshcollege.edu/cmaexamprep

News of Interest
Contact me, Chris, at my email below if you have ideas for the newsletter.
My Email: christopherwoźniak@outlook.com

MAY SPEAKER:
Dr. Bob Okopny is Professor of Accounting at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). Bob earned his degrees from Southern Illinois University, Eastern Michigan University, and Texas A&M University. His professional experience includes management accounting, finance and internal audit in the automotive and steel industries. He has taught primarily at TAMU, LSU, and EMU with additional experiences at UM, WSU and in Indonesia, Hawaii, and Macau.

Bob has been active in several professional organizations including the IMA (Global Committees on Ethics - Current, COSO Refresh, and Academic Relations) and Ann Arbor Chapter Board, IIA Detroit (President and Board), International IIA (Academic Relations and Seminars), ISACA Detroit (Board), and MACPA (Fraud Task Force). He has also taught CMA, CIA, CFP, and CPA Review Classes.

Dr. Bob Okopny’s speech will be about the new IMA certification. See below for details!

Join our LinkedIn Group
www.linkedin.com/groups/ima-ann-arbor-chapter

The CSCA™ is a specialty credential designed specifically for CMAs*, which complements and expands upon the strategic planning and analysis skills developed through the CMA® (Certified Management Accountants) certification.

This credential will help you master the concepts and techniques that are required to earn a seat at the leadership table and become a key player in driving the strategic planning process at your organization.

https://www.imanet.org/csca-credential
Accountants Need Hard and Soft Skills for Success

Technical expertise is more valuable than ever for accounting and finance professionals. You need to constantly stay on top of accounting best practices, legislative mandates and digital trends like big data and cloud services. But in the rush to remain current and relevant, don’t overlook other skill sets. You need to develop hard and soft skills.

Why? Technical skills are relatively easy for employers to train for. Almost everyone who graduates with an accounting or business degree is able to learn new finance software and processes, whether through classes, online tutorials or simple hands-on job experience.

But sharp interpersonal skills are often harder to master, and managers seek to hire staff who either already possess them or show aptitude. In fact, a Robert Half Finance & Accounting survey of more than 2,200 CFOs revealed that 54 percent of them value hard and soft skills equally when filling open positions, and 10 percent of respondents gave more weight to soft skills.

Being a good communicator can give you an upper hand during the interview process, if you’re a job seeker, and when it’s time for your employer to pick new leaders, once you’re in the workplace. Whether you already possess these abilities or need to acquire them, it’s always a good idea to enhance or develop soft skills, as they can make the difference in your career’s trajectory.

How can you do that? Here are five ways:

1. Get the big picture

Organizations need accountants who understand how the entire company operates, not just their own turf. To bolster your business savvy, learn as much as you can about the organization. This means reading memos from the CEO and paying attention to other departments during company meetings. Have lunch with a non-finance colleague to find out more about that person’s job. Also, ask your boss for opportunities to shadow, cross train or partner with other departments. The more you know about a company’s inner workings and use your soft skills in this manner, the more valuable you are to your employer.

2. Speak out, loud and clear

Accounting teams are no longer confined to the back of the house. Today’s finance specialists are often asked to interpret complex data and analyses for stakeholders and upper management. If you’re used to speaking to fellow experts, dial back the jargon and acronyms for general audiences. While you’re at it, boost your listening skills. And since there’s nothing like actual experience, join a public speaking group and volunteer to give presentations at work. Ask if you can be included in more meetings and job interview settings. Practice makes perfect when it comes to soft skills like these.

3. Make friends everywhere

You never know when you’ll need advice or a referral from a colleague. Work to cultivate healthy friendships with coworkers — including those from other departments — so when the time comes, you’ve already laid the groundwork for successful collaborations. These soft skills aren’t difficult for extroverts to master, but don’t fret if you’re a timid accountant. Start by making small talk with coworkers. Then work up to asking a few cubicle mates out for coffee, lunch or a post-work happy hour. Perhaps even suggest that your boss host team-building events, such as bowling or karaoke. Be generous with your time, knowledge and help, as this investment pays off in the long run.
4. Embrace diversity

In today’s business world, you routinely work with customers, clients and coworkers of different generations, genders, cultural backgrounds, nationalities and political affiliations. Relating to such diversity can prove challenging for some finance professionals, from senior accountants to new graduates. To hone this soft skill, listen more than you speak. If you have a preconceived notion about how, for example, baby boomer bosses or Gen Z analysts act, look at them as individuals instead of stereotypes. The less judgmental and more empathetic you are, the more successful you’ll be in your finance career.

5. Stand up and lead

Succession planning is on the minds of many managers, so draw some positive attention to yourself and your soft skills by strengthening your ability to lead. Begin by having a conversation with your boss about a possible in-house career path. Explain how you would love to help the company grow — and to grow with the company. Be ambitious and ask if you can spearhead team projects or help out while the manager is on vacation. And to add to your knowledge bank, take advantage of any mentorship or professional training programs your company offers.

Here are some of the other hard and soft skills in demand for accounting and finance professionals— and how you can work toward developing them.

- **Analytical and strategy skills**

  Accountants are not just expected to crunch numbers anymore — they're expected to know how to analyze and communicate them to colleagues who may not understand accounting language. Being strategically minded and possessing the ability to deliver data-driven conclusions in an easily digestible manner can allow you to share information on how the company can increase profits and lower costs.

- **Written communication skills**

  Although you probably didn’t pursue a career in accounting because of your love of writing, business writing is an essential competency for success in the field. Whether you’re crafting an email to your supervisor, sharing information about financial products with a client or preparing a report for the bank loan committee, you need to be able to write clearly and concisely. To improve your writing skills, stay on top of accounting articles, news and blog posts. Why? Reading is a key way to develop written communication skills. As a bonus, you can at the same time monitor and stay aware of new trends in your industry.

- **Technology skills**

  One of the greatest pressure facing accounting and finance teams is the need to stay current on technology, so it can’t hurt for you to take the initiative with regard to learning on the job. Here are some of the aptitudes and expertise employers need:

  - Advanced Excel
  - Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
  - Data analytics
  - Business intelligence software (e.g., IBM Cognos)
  - Microsoft Visual Basic
  - Cloud-based software
  - QuickBooks (for positions with small and midsize firms)
- Revenue recognition
- Risk and compliance
- Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)

If you want to advance in your current position, consider asking your manager for on-the-job or outside training or enrolling yourself in a course in one of these areas.

You understand the importance of keeping your technical abilities sharp, up to date and relevant. Now make sure you’re that well-rounded finance professional who excels in both hard and soft skills. After all, employers are interested in hiring staff who can do things machines cannot.

Accountemps, a Robert Half company, is the world’s first and largest specialized staffing firm for temporary accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. Accountemps has 325 locations worldwide. More resources, including job search services and the Accountemps blog, can be found at roberthalf.com/accountemps.