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The Importance of Exposure for CMITs on the Path to Becoming CCMs

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An individual's professional journey is often held as a point of pride in his/her life. Success is celebrated. Failure can be soul crushing. But the knowledge gained on the journey is safeguarded and treasured every step of the way.

Whether you are hourly labor, a skilled tradesman, mid-level manager, or part of a senior management team, the need to benchmark and showcase milestones along your journey is fundamentally required in our industry. To the next generation of Certified Construction Managers (CCM) starting out as Construction Managers-in-Training (CMIT), as well as other newcomers to the construction management industry, choosing the right professional showcase can become an overwhelming task in itself. If you find yourself in a period of career transition or searching for the ideal path forward, you are not alone. Many of us started in the industry in just the same way.

My professional journey has been an assorted ride through an amazing industry ripe with opportunity. My first internship took me halfway across the United States from Washington D.C. to the desert in Phoenix, Arizona. I was also fortunate to land additional positions in Leesville, Louisiana, and Quantico, Virginia. Throughout my early career, I took a few turns, made a few leaps, and wandered into a pitfall or two. Every step and stumble along the way has helped me become more intrinsically motivated in building my career in the industry.

One thing I found to be intimidating at the beginning of my career were the letters that appeared behind a person's

name – PE, CCM, PMP, etc. I wondered to myself, “At what point did they know which professional certifications to pursue? What value does the construction industry place on each one? Which one(s) would be most beneficial for me to pursue?”

As my career progressed, I worked as an engineering technician, a field engineer, and as a quality assurance inspector. During my time as an inspector, I found that I had a natural talent for project coordination and contractor oversight. That was also the point at which I realized I had found an almost perfect career path. It only made sense that earning certifications related to that skillset was where I needed to turn my complete focus.

Most of my senior colleagues were already CCMs. Then I began to notice a CCM requirement on new Requests for Proposals advertised by clients. I did my research and discovered that the Construction Management Association of America's (CMAA) CMIT program was the perfect fit for me, based on my educational achievement and my professional experience and future goals.

When I received the study materials for the Capstone Exam I quickly realized that I was already familiar with many of the concepts and terminology presented, having learned this critical information through my professional experience. However, I also couldn't help but notice that some terms were quite foreign to me.

So, I decided to pick the brains of colleagues and found they all had differing views, outlooks, and approaches to the principles in the Capstone material. They had all earned the same CCM credential through the same organization, yet they all approached the same situation in differing ways. This allowed me to gain the mindset that latching on to one approach might not be helpful in obtaining my certification, or in my career.

I worked hard at learning the methodologies and tricks of the trade from my colleagues and applied it where appropriate to the various concepts within the Capstone course. Within two months, I was able to claim success! I passed

the certification exam and secured another celebratory moment in my professional journey.

Soon after becoming a CMIT, I was prompted to choose an official mentor through CMAA's CCM Directory. Although I thought CMAA had a great concept in allowing new CMITs

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to choose a mentor in this way, I found that I preferred a CCM with whom I was familiar to fill this role. I also remembered from my Capstone experience that no one CCM had all the answers.

I decided that, in addition to my official mentor, I would also build a cohort of informal mentors that included a scheduling wizard, a budget czar, a contracts guru, and a hands-on, milestone driven, phasing master. This mix of talent at my fingertips were always willing to share knowledge with me and foster my growth. This allowed me to build a level of confidence and comfort that wouldn't be possible if I had only pulled from one source.

As I continue on this journey, I find that immersing myself in a mix of responsibilities and teams has helped me to fully

grasp the concepts in the study materials for the CCM exam. My mentors have passed along an invaluable amount of information to me. The concepts that were foreign to me at the beginning, are now commonplace activities.

I've learned that an environment that immerses a CMIT in all aspects of construction management is the best way to foster individual growth. That growth will inevitably create an invaluable professional, who is capable of adding value to any project team.

When the opportunity to share my experience through this process presented itself, I knew the exact message I wanted to convey to fellow hardworking professionals on the same program path from CMIT to CCM. And that message is - exposure is your ally in this profession! Learn from as many different senior professionals as possible. Pay attention to differing styles, approaches, and methodologies.

Our industry is ever evolving, and each generation leaves its own unique impression on the world of construction. A healthy mix of experience, practicum, and application will make your path to becoming a CCM a wonderful chapter on your professional journey. I know it has been a fun ride for me!



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