

IMA Resources Help Drive Finance Transformation at Arcadis North America

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Leading global design and consultancy company Arcadis is dedicated, according to its corporate website, “to improving the quality of life.” When it comes to the quality of its finance team in the midst of new technology and disruptions to the profession, the company is utilizing resources from IMA® (Institute of Management Accountants) to help it address pressing issues like talent management, staff development, and organizational alignment.

Headquartered in Amsterdam, Arcadis’ team of approximately 27,000 people in more than 70 countries has been involved in some of the world’s largest projects: the London Underground, the Art Institute of Chicago, and a host of bridges, airport terminals, hospitals, and much more. In North America, the company employs approximately 200 people on its finance team.

Helping that finance team become better prepared for the digital future is Luke Chilton, Arcadis vice president and controller for the Infrastructure Business in North America. Chilton is a CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) and CSCA® (Certified in Strategy and Competitive Analysis), as well as a CPA, and he leads the company’s financial digital transformation efforts, which has included the establishment of a Finance Academy.

Chilton explains: “The idea began about two and a half years ago, when our North American finance team decided we wanted to create a program that would better enable us to evolve, become more innovative, and be better prepared to adapt to digital technology.”

During the two years since the idea first rose to the surface, it didn’t gain much traction. But about a year ago, Chilton proposed something new: incorporating resources from IMA as part of the program.

Chilton got the idea from his own experience. He earned his CMA in 2013 and then his CSCA in late 2018. Preparing for the CSCA helped inspire Chilton to want to bring elements of that program to his own finance team, to help it better align to the digital future. “I informed our CFO that now was a good opportunity to expand the program, applying what I had learned by becoming a CSCA and adapting it for our Finance Academy,” Chilton says.

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The program relies on many ideas derived from IMA and, especially, the IMA Management Accounting Competency Framework. In pitching the idea to the senior leadership team, Chilton discussed where the profession needs to upskill; the composition of the finance workforce of the future; the need for finance team members to evolve from accountants to strategic enablers; and more. He also explained how acquiring these new skills would help the team excel in areas such as data science, robotic process automation, and business intelligence.

A key starting point of the program is team members taking a skills self-assessment using IMA's CareerDriver® tool. As part of the program, team members would meet to discuss the results of that assessment with their managers, prepare a career development plan, and then meet quarterly to track their progress.

"The IMA tools will help us better manage our talent and develop a more appropriate organizational structure for our finance team," Chilton notes. "This will involve helping us identify new positions for the team and determining the best use of our current staff resources."

While Chilton is the driver behind the initiative, he is also working with a team of finance professionals and the company's Human Capital Management team to help with logistics and other elements, such as tracking CPE. "It's a joint effort," he explains.

To date, Chilton and his team have written a mission and a vision statement as well as created an implementation plan for the finance organization, both part of the CSCA recommendations. Team members who are interested in participating in the Finance Academy can join the program during an "open enrollment period." The program may also include group IMA membership for team members and possible in-house CMA and CSCA review courses.

Chilton expects the time and effort spent on such a comprehensive initiative to have a big payoff: "Yes, in addition to my role as the controller of a \$200 million business, I wanted to take the lead on this initiative. I've seen what the IMA resources can do, and I want to share that with my colleagues. We want our team to be recognized as a world-class value creator, and this is an important way we are following through with our People First commitment."



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