

Executive News

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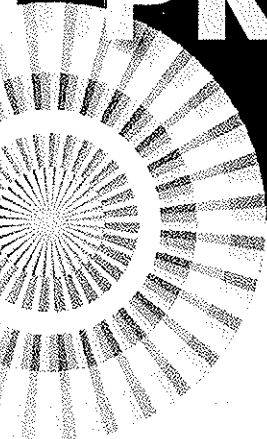
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PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT



Members discuss the value of working for the CAE designation.

By Jennifer Rogers

AS ANY OF the 3,500 to 4,000 current association executives with the Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation will tell you, the program is both a considerable undertaking and a very meaningful endeavor. And according to Kirk Lawson, CAE, executive director of Business Professionals of America, when it comes to appraising the impact of the CAE, it's a personal thing.

"What I gained from obtaining the CAE is a broader perspective in association management," says Lawson, who also serves as the chair of OSAE's CAE study group. "But it's a very personal answer: most professionals

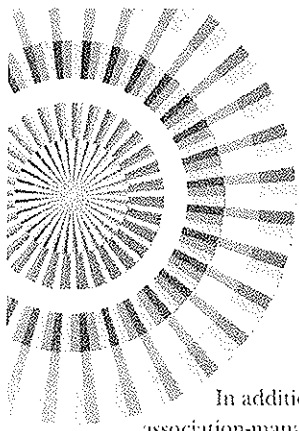
that I know are constantly learning... they're reading articles, they're going to continuing-education classes, they're going to lunch with their peers and picking up information along the way. And for me, the largest benefit of obtaining the CAE was the opportunity to focus and explore the topics of association management that I may not have to deal with in my day-to-day life."

This opportunity to bring one's attention to a variety of topics is, in fact, one of the key aspects of the CAE exam, which covers nine "domains," from finance and human resources to advocacy and lobbying

— essentially, anything and everything that an association executive may need to know.

"The CAE is such a broad perspective on association management that it forced me to pay attention," Lawson says. "I think [association executives] are all inquisitive by nature, but you can work in a job for a number of years and really do [the job] well, and still miss half of what your peers are doing. So [the CAE] gave me an opportunity in an academic sense to learn about a variety of topics that I may or may not have to deal with in my position."





It's a positive thing for anyone who wants to make association management their career. I will tell anyone to take the time to do this, because it will make you feel better about yourself, both personally and professionally. And in turn, you're viewed more professionally within the industry. — Kirk Lawson

In addition to enhancing one's association-management knowledge, according to ASAE, 70 percent of CAE exam-takers report that improving advancement opportunities is an important motivation behind obtaining the designation, a point that Lawson also touches on.

"Although the CAE is not as widely known to the general public as, say, the CPA or the M.B.A., professional association and nonprofit folks do recognize this credential. For example, headhunters will frequently note the CAE as a requirement. So yes, obtaining this designation can enhance one's professional profile."

However, Lawson notes that obtaining the CAE isn't so much about being a "better" association executive as a "more well-rounded one."

"It's a positive thing for anyone who wants to make association management their career. I will tell anyone to take the time to do this, because it will make you feel better about yourself, both personally and professionally," he says. "And in turn, you're viewed more professionally within the industry."

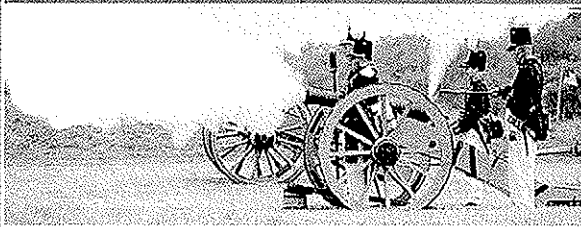
Kathie Cesa, CAE, executive director of KOC Member Services and an OSAE board member, agrees. "Having the CAE gives me instant credibility in the association world," she says. "But the most significant benefit of obtaining the CAE is increased self-confidence, as CAEs have clearly demonstrated a wide body of knowledge, plus the ability to apply this knowledge in real-life situations."

Lawson notes that preparing for and taking the CAE exam is not "just about learning a bunch of stuff and spitting out one acronym after another — because that doesn't help anyone," he says. "The CAE is about teaching you perspective — it's retraining you to look at things so that you're better able to do your work in the future.

"People seek credentials and licenses for different reasons," he continues. "But ultimately, for me the CAE was, and is, a jump-off spot to go on to the next level of knowledge and experience. This wasn't a culmination piece, but a validation that I have the knowledge that the industry requires of an executive. And now my goal is to continue learning about the things that were only just exposed to me during this process." ■

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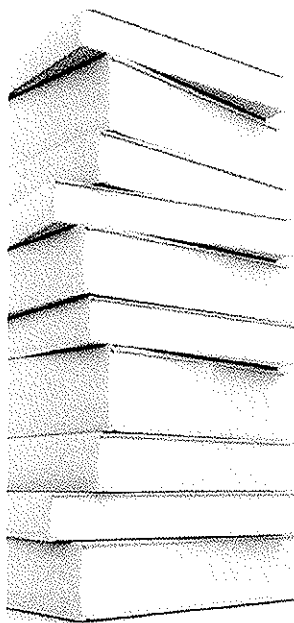
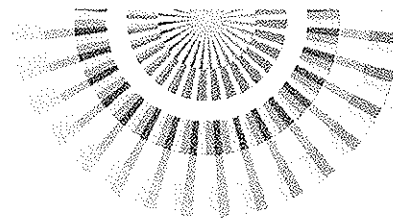


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GET READY for the CAE Exam



As a member of ASAE's CAE Action Team volunteer group, Todd Von Deak, vice president of operations and general manager of the Society of Hospital Medicine, helps members prepare for certification. Here, his study advice:

Read the books. You'll be happy you did, or upset you didn't, I promise you.

Join a study group. Talking through test questions helps, and is worth the drive to meet with study-group members each week.

Have an informal support group. One of my surprises was how much my office wanted to help. Also, my wife was patient as she flipped the same flash cards over and over.

Go to the ASAE Immersion Course and visit the candidate site on asaenet.org. It's a great way to understand the scope of the exam and find study groups.

Make your study plan. You set up a routine for going to the gym; this is no different. The more your plan is integrated into daily life, the more likely you are to follow through (I took my flash cards everywhere).

As the test gets closer, focus on what you don't know. If you're confident on six of the nine domains, focus on the other three. Time is limited — it's easy to waste time on the elements you know well.

Don't forget that two possible answers are right. The question is which one is more right, so make sure you read through the entire question and all the answer options.

Have a test plan. Top teams have a playbook — you should, too. It will help you stay in control in the midst of 200 multiple-choice questions staring at you. Mine was to write down key mnemonics once the test started for easy reference, and to pace myself (I got up and took a break each hour).

Executive

The Official Publication of the 115th Society of Association Executives

is one of OSAE members' best resource



KNOW OF A GREAT SUCCESS? We'd love to hear it.

HAVE SOME GREAT OSAE PICS YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE? We'd love to see them!

WHAT ABOUT MEMORABLE A RECENT LUNCHEON OR MEETING? Send them our way!

OSAE EXISTS TO SERVE ITS MEMBERS AND TO SHOWCASE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON THE PAGES OF EXECUTIVE NEWS.

Send images, comments or other information to editor Jennifer Rogers at jrogers@osaenet.org, art director Nikki Formica-Babb at nfbabb@osaenet.org and we'll do our best to feature them in the July issue of Executive News.

And speaking of the July issue, we're all about meetings — the best tips for planning, the best advice for choosing a venue and more.



WANT TO HELP?

SEND US YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS FOR THE JULY ISSUE:



What are the **top 10 things** you need to know before **planning a world-class event**?

We're all wired, and many argue that the **in-person meeting** has given way to **electronic conferencing**. What do you think?