



# Make the Most of Your Management Career

EDUCATION CAN NEVER BE TAKEN AWAY.  
OBTAIN IT, EMBRACE IT, USE IT, TEACH IT.  
INVEST IN AND EMPOWER YOURSELF  
WITH KNOWLEDGE.

by Lisa Isaacson, CCAM, PCAM

**W**hat does it take to become a successful Community Association Manager? It takes what you're willing to give and absorb from an industry vast in knowledge, education and importance. It takes commitment. Management companies who support education do so because they understand it is the foundation of our industry, an industry made up of 9 million residents living in 32,000 Common Interest Developments throughout California alone. Educated managers are able to guide their volunteer boards of directors towards making the best business decisions possible for their communities. It takes knowing yourself and accepting that you don't know it all. It takes a smart manager to recognize this and know where to turn to get the information.

Education becomes most apparently critical when managers speak to their boards of directors, or to a group of homeowners during a board meeting. It is also equally critical when speaking on the phone or just in passing during a property inspection. Many of our board members are highly educated, and even highly accomplished, but that does not qualify them as experts in managing their associations. They count on us!

What the manager says will be heavily scrutinized by the most savvy of board members -- those that truly understand the role of the community association manager.

The two main organizations within our industry are Community Associations Institute (CAI) and California Association of Community Managers (CACM). Each provides higher education and certifications recognizing personal and professional achievement.

Taking a brief look at each organization's education structure will provide insight into time commitments, coursework and costs while the manager is on track to higher learning:

### Community Associations Institute (CAI)

CAI recognizes several levels of achievement starting with their CMCA® certification. From there, a motivated manager will seek to earn the AMS® designation and culminate their education by achieving the PCAM® designation. CAI's designations are recognized not only in California, but nationally as well.

### Certified Manager of Community Associations® (CMCA)

- Successfully complete the M-100 – Essentials of Community Association Management. This can be done as a home study course and exam, or classroom participation and exam
- Time commitment - 2 1/2 days (includes classroom hours and exam) plus an additional 120 question exam given on a separate date
- Costs - Approximately \$445 for coursework (M-100), plus application and exam fees

### Association Management Specialist® (AMS)

- Must have previously earned CMCA designation
- 2 years Community Association Management experience
- Successfully complete one M-200 series course study (M-201-206)

- Time commitment – 16 hours
- Costs – \$445 for coursework plus application and maintenance fees

CAI's designations are recognized not only in California, but nationally as well.

### Professional Community Association Manager® (PCAM)

- Must have previously earned CMCA and AMS designation
- Five years Community Association Management experience
- Successfully complete all M-200 level course studies
- Successfully participate and complete a comprehensive, two-day case study. In this environment, the manager spends two full days at the subject property learning every facet of the property. Then, during the next 28 days, the manager prepares a comprehensive, formal case study that reviews, evaluates and formulates solutions to the following (this is just a sampling):
  - How do the board members interact with one another?
  - How does their community manager interact with the board? With the membership?
  - How are the financial records kept? The manager needs to have a basic-to-advanced understanding of the association's financial reports. The case study gives the manager on-the-spot-training by forcing them to step out of the comfort zone of their own association's budgets to working with an unfamiliar set of financial reports, and in some cases, with different laws applicable than to what the manager is accustomed.
  - Is there a budget? Is the association keeping within the budget? During the case study, the manager will be tasked with making recommendations for the short term, while

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## MAKING THE MOST...

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- offering recommendations for the new fiscal year.
- How effective are the association's policies and rules
- Is the association properly insured? Being under insured can prove as large a catastrophe as not being insured at all.
- How successfully do the board and its manager disseminate the vast amount of information to the membership?
- Are there committees that assist the board? And the list goes on...
- Costs – \$2225 for coursework plus case study participation and application fees. Additional travel expenses may be incurred depending on location of case study. As with all CAI coursework, case study locations extend beyond California.

CACM offers the Certified Community Association Manager (CCAM) and awards their designation after the candidate successfully completes a four-part, 16-hour course study along with a 16-hour, two day course reviewing the Basics of Association Management (BAM) + ethics. Costs are approximately \$2185 for coursework plus application and membership fees. This designation is recognized in California only.

Laws are constantly changing and now more than ever managers must stay current with what is coming down the pipeline. Be prepared to address the impact that changing laws will have on your associations. Be cognizant that board members have access to trade magazines, the internet and are now more focused than ever before on how association money is spent. In the old days, a simple response was sufficient. In today's rough economic climate, a detailed, more thorough answer is required.

Sources of education include trade

magazines, trade organizations providing course study relevant to today's demands, participating in online seminars known as webinars, which are fast, inexpensive and as convenient as your desktop; spending a day at the Capitol hearing the bills before they become laws or simply by listening to experts speak on topics in their respective fields.

So, what does it really take to become certified in California? You need a CMCA designation plus the 8 hour CID Law Course. Go for it! It's fulfilling and worth it!

*Lisa Isaacson, PCAM, CCAM, is a Community Association Manager with Walters Management, a full service management company with offices in San Diego, Chula Vista, Carlsbad and Murrieta.*



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