

The CM&AA Certification and Being All You Can Be by Dennis Niven, Arizona Chapter

I attended The Alliance's CM&AA course at DePaul University in Chicago a few years ago along with two of my partners in **B2B CFO®**. The class helped me celebrate my 60th birthday with a cake at the training. You might wonder why a successful and mature senior partner in a large strategic consulting firm would want to add a credential like this behind his name. Well, it wasn't the credential on my business card that I was after. I am a CPA and have master's and doctoral degrees that aren't mentioned on my card. It was the additional skill set that I was after.

The purpose of our attending the intensive week-long course was to complete a "deep-dive study" of private capital markets, financing growth, private company valuation, M&A negotiations, investment banking, and the legal & tax implications of all phases of M&A, and, of course, pass the CM&AA® exam. The four-hour exam was very comprehensive and, after an intensive week of training that followed weeks of reading textbooks, proved to be worthy of the senior credential that is the CM&AA® (there were less than 500 holders of the certification in the entire world). I am proud to say that the three of us passed, as have many of my partners since then. Every partner in our firm is encouraged to obtain the CM&AA® as our senior credential.

B2B CFO®'s Founder & CEO, Jerry L. Mills, a previous *AM&AA Middle-Market Thought Leader of the Year Awards Finalist*, recognized years ago that to successfully render strategic advisory services to our clients we should have business transition skills. Our firm's internal Certified Business Transition Expert™ training, our book *The Exit Strategy Handbook* and our new educational series *The Business Sale Solution™* are examples of our dedication to those skills.

Our partners are entrepreneurs as are virtually all our clients. I have found that after becoming a "most trusted advisor" to a client with an eventual transition in mind, the client almost always wants me to assemble and quarterback the team of advisors (contract and tax attorneys, investment bankers, M&A intermediaries, insurance and valuation and wealth planning advisors, etc.) to facilitate a successful transition. What better way to do that than to have a thorough understanding of those roles, taught to us by the top M&A advisors in the country?

While our partners do not generally go on to earn FINRA licenses, our non-contingent compensation for increasing the value of our client's business has raised the annual income of many of my partners to our targeted \$350,000 to \$650,000 range. To borrow a phrase from the Army, it is great that our firm allows us to be all that we can be.

