









From a Dream to Reality

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

CMAE




















My CMAE Journey

Kevin Fish CCM - Honorary Member CMAE

One of the benefits of being the last person to contribute to a celebration booklet is that you get a feel for what others have written. I am pleased to say that the other contributors have already done a brilliant job of recognising the many volunteers and exceptional staff who have made CMAE what it is today. That gives me permission, therefore, to concentrate on the more exciting elements of the movie – the car chase, the love interest, the race against the clock to stop the bomb going off.

No, wait. Sorry. It's not really like that, is it?

It is, after all, just a bunch of Club Managers trying their best to help other Club Managers become better at their jobs.

But what a great mission that is. And what a privilege it has been to have had a front-row seat.

So how on earth did we get from there to 200 people gathering in St Andrews to celebrate 25 years of CMAE?

Well, without wanting to revisit the key turning points of World War 2, there was another significant point in history, when a fairly significant intervention from America – and, more particularly, from the Global Education Committee – changed the direction of travel.

The message was pretty straightforward: Europe, and particularly the UK, needed to raise its game. We needed to embrace the CMAA global curriculum and standards if our managers were ever going to have access to the CCM designation. The Board at the time thought we were making good albeit slow progress, and as you can imagine, words were exchanged, and sadly also some lines were crossed, and it took several years to build the bridges afterwards.

But from that mini-explosion came, in my view, the real turning point in the development of CMAE as a membership organisation: the creation of the Management Development Programme.

We were being asked to launch a programme we had never seen, to an audience we were convinced did not want it, within an industry landscape where some partners were enthusiastically supportive, while others were perhaps rather less enthusiastic than their words suggested.

> ***We needed people to take a risk.***

At Scottish Golf, my then boss Andy Salmon did exactly that. He was prepared to underwrite not only the cost of the pilot programmes, but the considerable man-hours required to establish a beachhead for structured education throughout the UK and, incredibly, even into Europe. His message to the Scottish Golf Union Board was simple: "If it's good for golf, it's good for Scottish Golf." And he never wavered from that position.

We had Ronnie Malcolm to help us understand where to start in developing five-day programmes. And when we needed to raise the level of knowledge in MDP 2 and MDP 3, Gregg Patterson simply said, "Tell me what you want and you have it."

There were battles with people and organisations who were not convinced by what we were trying to do. But some of the most difficult battles were closer to home, with friendly fire in the Board room. The Education Team could apparently be criticised for going too fast and going too slowly in the same board meeting. On one memorable occasion, Dear Old Colonel John Hunt suggested that two Board members should step outside and resolve their differences in the traditional military fashion. I will resist the temptation to name names, but I can tell you I would definitely have lost that battle.

Those meetings could be bruising because, to a large extent, we were all feeling our way, but as I often say in my strategy sessions, you don't really have a strategy until you are willing to disappoint somebody.

Looking back, some of my most vivid and emotional memories are of the many occasions when Dave Roy, James Burns and I found ourselves in random airport departure halls, taking it in turns to pick each other up, dust each other off and encourage each

other to go again. That persistence mattered. It would have been much easier to preserve the status quo – to continue with the occasional educational seminar, sales pitch from a sponsor and perhaps concentrate on the really important stuff, like giving members airport lounge passes. (no really..).

But there were some must-win battles that had to be fought. And eventually, we started winning them. The first MDP programme sold out. Then another did. Then another.

Suddenly there was evidence of something we had perhaps underestimated: a genuine hunger among Club Managers for structured, relevant and demanding education. That, I believe, was the real inflection point.

CMAE had been created because of a hunger for education. Fifteen years ago, the MDP gave that hunger a vehicle. The programme created momentum, membership began to grow, sponsors started to see a return on the brave investment they had made, and clubs increasingly recognised the value of developing professional managers.

From that point onwards, the story became much bigger than any individual.

Colleagues throughout Europe could see the opportunity. The relationship with CMAA became stronger. Countries began developing their own education programmes within a common framework.

And, perhaps most importantly, managers began to believe that this organisation really could make a difference to their careers. Which brings me to Jason.

Jason has been a constant throughout this process. He has brilliantly led mostly from the rear when that was appropriate and from the front when it was necessary. He helped build our confidence to take the programme forward, while simultaneously building confidence in the States that Europe could be trusted to deliver it.

We remain the only continent given the autonomy to run our own courses, with our own presenters, delivering a common curriculum.

Jason also supported our request to change the name of the programme to something we felt would resonate more readily with our managers. And when we worried that our managers might not be prepared to wait seven years before being eligible for the CCM examination, he supported the creation of a unique qualification as a stepping stone towards CCM. Nothing gives us greater satisfaction than knowing that, fifteen years later, our managers no longer need that stepping stone. They are fully embedded in the wider mission of this global movement.

And then there is the final gift Jason has given us: facilitators. He has helped create people who sit alongside our managers during these programmes, acting not as lecturers, but as wise guides at the side. People who understand what it means to hold somebody else's career in your hands for a few days and help them believe that they can become better at what they do.

He once warned me that doing this would be a life-changing experience. He was right. The greatest privilege of my professional life has been sitting with Club Managers who have told me that, in some small way, I have helped their career or their life.

I know that every facilitator who has been involved in CMAE education has experienced that same moment. And perhaps that is the real story of CMAE at 25. Not one person. Not one board. Not one programme. Not one country. A group of people who cared enough about the profession to keep pushing, keep learning, keep challenging one another and, occasionally, pick one another up from the airport floor and say:

"Come on. We're not finished yet."

That is why we are here in St Andrews. And that is something worth celebrating - and no, I don't think we are finished yet. Cheers.

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Kevin Fish and Jason Koenigsfeld.



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