

Alas poor CIRM, I knew ye well

By Dwight Comer CPIM CIRM CSCP

I note with some sadness the passing of CIRM from the list of available APICS products. For me it proved to be a long and hard undertaking to complete all five exams. It's funny, but when it first came out I thought I'm going to be one of the first to complete that certification. As fate would have it I ended up being one of the last. It's not that I didn't give it a good effort, it's just that there always seemed to be more pressing things that needed to be done and unfortunately CIRM never developed some of the aids that CPIM enjoyed like the availability of practice exams and other study aids being available commercially.

If you are not familiar the CIRM certification it is different from the CPIM in that instead of the shop floor control / demand management discipline CIRM pursued a study of the integration of the whole enterprise. It studied everything in the enterprise from the information technology department (IT) to sales, marketing, engineering as well as different aspects of operations (like managerial accounting for instance). It was one of the first real efforts to develop a complete understanding of how to break down the traditional silos and get all the functions of the business to sing from the same sheet of music. From the first time I looked at it until now I thought it was a great discipline to master. That's why I'm sad to see that it is no longer offered.

I thought I could eventually get this certification, but frankly I was intimidated every step of the way. I eventually managed to get the first four exams out of the way which gave me great points for my CPIM re-certification. But that last exam which they termed the "capstone" required an essay component that is essentially ten different business cases that have to be developed. I dreaded that exam for what seems like an eternity. Finally, we were closing in on the last chance to take that exam and finished the certification and my wife said, "you have invested all that money and time in taking the other exams you have to take the last one."

She was right of course but that didn't make taking it any easier. That essay weighed heavy on my mind. Quite honestly I didn't see that there was a great chance in me passing this but I thought, well I might as well try. Finally after three months I received my results. Not only did I score higher on the last exam than any of the others, but the essay received a higher score than any other area of any of the other exams for the entire CIRM series. I mean, who knew that I could do an essay exam and actually pass it. Live and learn.

The lesson here is that we need to not let those things that we believe are obstacles to hold us back. Those hurdles probably aren't nearly as high as we think. Give it a try and don't be so afraid of failure. If Edison had been afraid of failure I would be writing this by candlelight tonight.

The other thing we learn from this is far more serious. Despite the fact that CIRM is a great product if no one will buy it then it is removed from the market. That same lesson applies to the products that we market in our businesses. No matter how good the product may seem on the drawing board it must be of value to the customer. If not then our businesses and ultimately our jobs are threatened. That's why APICS and the various training and certifications are of value. It teaches us and our co-workers how to be more competitive in the market place. So that ultimately we don't have to hear, "Alas poor (insert your businesses name here), I knew them well!"