

PROMETRIC

Driving Innovative Processes

Successfully delivering a paper-based testing (PBT) event during a pandemic.

Background

The Institute of Management Accountants (IMA®) is the worldwide association of accountants and financial professionals in business. IMA is one of the largest and most respected associations focused exclusively on advancing the management accounting profession. IMA is committed to empowering finance and accounting professionals to strengthen on-the-job skills, better manage companies, and accelerate careers.

IMA supports the profession through the CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) program—a globally recognized certification program for management accountants and financial professionals. The CMA is a two-part exam that covers 12 critical practice areas, including financial planning, analysis, control, and decision support. The exam is administered in English and Chinese. The English language exam is computerbased and the Chinese language exam is paper-based.

Challenge

In early 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of CMA PBT exam events in China for several months. The Chinese government began allowing larger events in July, but there were still many provisions and challenges in place. In addition to operational requirements around social distancing, quarantine, cleaning protocols, and personal data collection, campus venues that usually hosted the test events were not available for commercial use. Alternative venues had to be sourced and vetted. Further, with COVID-19 spikes still occurring in various Chinese cities, the turbulent situation caused expense increases and revenue risk.

About IMA



Locations

China, various cities



Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of IMA's PBT exam events in China for several months and impacted standard testing event practices once rescheduled.



Outcome

Successfully delivered 18,500+ in-person exams in 26 cities, while prioritizing candidate safety and adhering to government mandates.

<https://www.imanet.org/?ssopc=1>

Strategy

Looking for alternative, innovative solutions to ensure a safe and secure test experience in the new normal, Prometric and IMA worked together to locate new venues that could ensure social distancing, reviewing site and seating plans on an individualized basis to ensure strict adherence to governmental guidelines. Venues were assessed for overall environmental, lighting, temperature, and sound quality to create a positive testing atmosphere for candidates.

In preparation for the exam, Prometric made sure rooms were properly cleaned, standing queues were set up to assist with social distancing, route directions and room information were visible, and personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, hand sanitizer, etc.) was available to candidates. Prometric and IMA developed a safety plan that integrated with standard procedures, while following all governmental requirements. As detailed in the plan, candidates were informed of items they should bring with them (e.g. scratch paper, standardized health statement), and proctors were trained on all new procedures.

During the check-in process Prometric took each candidate's temperature via no-touch thermometers and allowed candidates to lower their masks briefly for an ID check, while enforcing strict social distancing. To avoid high-touch situations, we waived having candidates sign-in and used the standardized health statement with signature as a replacement.

Candidates were spaced out to observe social distancing and were required to wear masks at all times during the exam event. Prometric proctors disinfected all testing tables between morning and afternoon sessions. When the exam event was complete, Prometric disinfected any returned testing materials via a sterilap before packaging, locking up, and shipping the exams.

Outcome

Prometric and IMA's collaborative and innovative efforts led to a secure and successful PBT administration of the CMA exam across 26 cities throughout China in July 2020. These efforts included forming a team of Prometric and IMA stakeholders to regularly evaluate the ever-changing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, developing a communications strategy, and brainstorming creative ways to manage through major challenges. Prometric and IMA worked together to make decisions, communicate those decisions to stakeholders, and implement solutions when issues arose.

Ultimately, Prometric and IMA successfully administered the exam to 18,500+ candidates by combining the April and July administrations of the CMA exam, while prioritizing the health and safety of candidates, as well as exam security.

IMA's SVP of Certifications, Exams, and Content Integration, Dennis Whitney expressed his excitement over the success of the event:

"I would like to congratulate the joint IMA-Prometric team for achieving such a great result in the administration of the Chinese language CMA exam on July 25 and 26 in 26 cities throughout China... the hard work that [IMA and Prometric] put in together paid off, as we successfully delivered the first large scale PBT event in China in 2020. More than 18,500 exams were taken by candidates who studied hard and who appreciated all we did to keep them safe and give them the opportunity to take the exam and pursue their dream of earning the CMA."

With businesses everywhere having been forced to adapt operations, the innovative thinking and partnership between Prometric and IMA serve as key examples of meeting candidates and society where they are, and setting the pace for what is possible in the near future. With another PBT exam event scheduled for December 2020, Prometric and IMA will build off the lessons learned from this event, as well as respond to additional challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and implement future solutions to ensure the safest testing experience for CMA candidates.

For more information,
contact us at
www.prometric.com.



About Prometric

Prometric is more than just a testing organization—we are a partner in your success, building the workforce of tomorrow across all industries and professions. As a global leader in credentialing and skills development, we change lives to create a better world with more than 30 years of assessment expertise, innovation, and best-in-class solutions.