



## Earning the Designation "Certified Public Accountant" Is the Single Most Important Step an Accountant Can Take

By Michael T. Hanley, CPA

**CPAs command greater salaries than their non-CPA counterparts. According to the Robert Half International 2008 salary guide, CPAs typically earn 10% more than non-CPA accountants in similar positions. This equates to \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year more at the start of a CPA's career and \$10,000 to \$15,000 more per year later on in a CPA's career. In today's dollars, that equates to approximately \$400,000 in additional earnings over the course of a typical 40-year career.**

When preparing for the exam, a CPA review course is the obvious first step. But with so many options in today's marketplace, where do you turn? Do you seek out a classroom setting with a live instructor, enroll in an online course, or opt for the self-study method?



Whichever route you decide to take, be realistic with your plans. If you know that you are a procrastinator, do not choose the self-study method as you will end up putting the test off for years. Be true to yourself and make an objective analysis of your study habits to determine the best path.

As the instructor of a CPA review course, I encounter approximately 250 students each year who are preparing to sit for the Uniform CPA Exam. It is easy to say, "Those who put in the time have a better chance of passing the exam." However, I have access to data that truly supports this hypothesis. When I teach an online section of the review course, I am able to track how much time students spent logged into the online forum, how much time they spent watching the lectures, how many discussion posts they responded to, and how they scored on their homework assignments and quizzes.

Overwhelmingly, those students who never logged in or who logged in just for a few hours have very little luck scoring passing grades on the homework assignments and quizzes, whereas the students who spent 50, 60, or 100 hours preparing for a given section attain much higher scores on average.

For more information visit [www.merlandhanley.com](http://www.merlandhanley.com).