

MY JOURNEY TOWARDS BEING A CIA



MY STORY by ZUHAIRI ISMAIL

1. Why did you decide to pursue a career as an internal auditor?

Internal auditing is an appealing choice as I enjoy analyzing data and processes. Examining documents, systems, and controls to ensure compliance and accuracy provides satisfaction as we can ensure that things can be put in orderly manner as I enjoy tackling puzzles and finding solutions. I also find self fulfillment as internal auditing prioritize integrity and are committed to ensuring that organisations adhere to legal and ethical guidelines. Internal auditors also have the opportunity to gain exposure to various departments, processes, and industries. This diversity was appealing to me as I can enjoy continuous learning and appreciate a dynamic work environment. Lastly, Internal auditing offers long-term career growth and advancement opportunities.

2. How important is an Internal Auditor's role in the organisation?

Internal auditors are essential for maintaining good governance, managing risks, ensuring compliance, improving operational efficiency, and safeguarding organisational assets. Their work helps organisations operate more effectively, reduce risks, and enhance overall performance.

3. What is the typical challenge internal auditors generally face? And amongst them, can you highlight what would be one of the biggest challenge?

- Internal auditors may face challenges in navigating potential conflicts of interest and ensuring that their assessments and recommendations remain unbiased. Limited access to data, resistance from employees or management, or inadequate information systems can also pose challenges in obtaining the necessary information.
- Changing regulatory landscape is also typical challenge as the regulatory environment is constantly evolving, with new laws, regulations, and standards being introduced. Another common challenge is time constraints as Internal auditors often face due to multiple audit engagements, tight deadlines, and competing priorities.
- Another area of challenge is the rapid pace of technological advancements.
- Lastly and the most important challenge that internal auditor may face is communication and influence as Internal auditors need to effectively communicate audit findings, recommendations, and their value to various stakeholders. They may encounter challenges in conveying complex information in a clear and understandable manner and in influencing management to implement recommended changes.
- However, I think the biggest challenge for internal auditors is to keep up with technological advancements and their impact on auditing, ensuring independence and objectivity in an increasingly complex business environment, and effectively managing limited resources to meet the organisation's audit needs.



PROFILE:

**Name:**

Zuhairi Ismail

Current employment:

Syarikat Takaful Malaysia Keluarga Berhad

Work experience:

27 years

Education background:

BA (Hons) Accounting & Finance

IIAM Membership Category:

CIA, CMIIA

MY JOURNEY TOWARDS BEING A CIA



4. Does the Institute play a role in supporting your Internal Auditor scope of work? If yes, in what ways? And if no, what can we do better?

In general, IIA support internal auditors by providing necessary resources, training, and access to information. They have also establish clear communication channels, ensure independence, and promote a culture of compliance and accountability.

5. Would you recommend IIA Malaysia to your fellow IA colleagues?

I encourage my colleagues to partake in IIA Malaysia activities and training as well as recommending them to elevate their technical skills and knowledge through attempting CIA examination. Presently, around 50% of the team had enrolled for CIA examination.

6. What motivated you to take the CIA exam?

Certified Internal Auditors is a globally recognized professional certification offered by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). I chose to take the CIA exam for several reasons such as enhancing career opportunities and open doors to higher-level positions within the internal audit profession, professional recognition, skill validation as well as personal growth.

7. What were the challenges you encountered when attempting the CIA exam?

- The CIA exam covers a broad range of topics related to internal auditing, including governance, risk management, internal controls, and more. Preparing for such a comprehensive exam can be challenging due to the vast amount of content.
- Time Management: Balancing exam preparation with work or other commitments were difficult. Finding sufficient time to study and review the material effectively can be a challenge.
- Complex Concepts: Some topics in the CIA exam may involve intricate concepts and technical details. Understanding and grasping these complexities was somehow can be demanding.
- Maintaining Motivation: Preparing for a challenging exam like the CIA requires consistent effort and determination. Staying motivated throughout the study period was quite challenging.

8. How did you manage your study time while working?

Few arrangements had to be made when I attempted my CIA like creating a study schedule, prioritizing tasks by identifying the most critical study topics, divide study material into manageable chunks, utilizing breaks during work to review key concepts or quick practice questions, creating study environments that is free from distraction, setting achievable study goals as well as take care of myself i.e. get enough rest to improve focus and retention during study and work.

9. As a CIA certified professional, where do you envision yourself?

The career path of a CIA certified professional can vary based on individual interests, experiences, and opportunities. The CIA certification provides a solid foundation for a successful career in the field of internal auditing and opens doors to various career possibilities within the realm of governance, risk management, internal controls and even as CEO of entity.

10. How important is CIA for an internal auditor?

The CIA certification is a valuable asset for internal auditors, as it enhances the credibility, knowledge, and career prospects. It serves as a testament to the dedication to maintaining high professional standards and staying current in the field of expertise.

11. Please provide 3 main advice for those attempting to take the CIA examination?

Certainly! My three main pieces of advice for individuals attempting to take the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) examination are plan and prepare diligently, focus on weak areas and key concepts and lastly, manage time and stress effectively.