



# Newcomers learn what we take for granted

By **PATRICK McCABE**

**B**ecoming a chartered business valuator is a daunting process. It is designed as a three-year program, and requires the completion of seven exams and 1,500 hours of relevant work experience. Completing the program requires dedication to a study schedule and sacrificing the occasional personal commitment.

The exams are scheduled every March and September and usually require about three months of preparation. Each exam is designed as a self-study program and there is an online discussion board moderated by a course “instructor.” Because of the independent nature of the program, self-discipline is probably the toughest challenge to most CBV students.

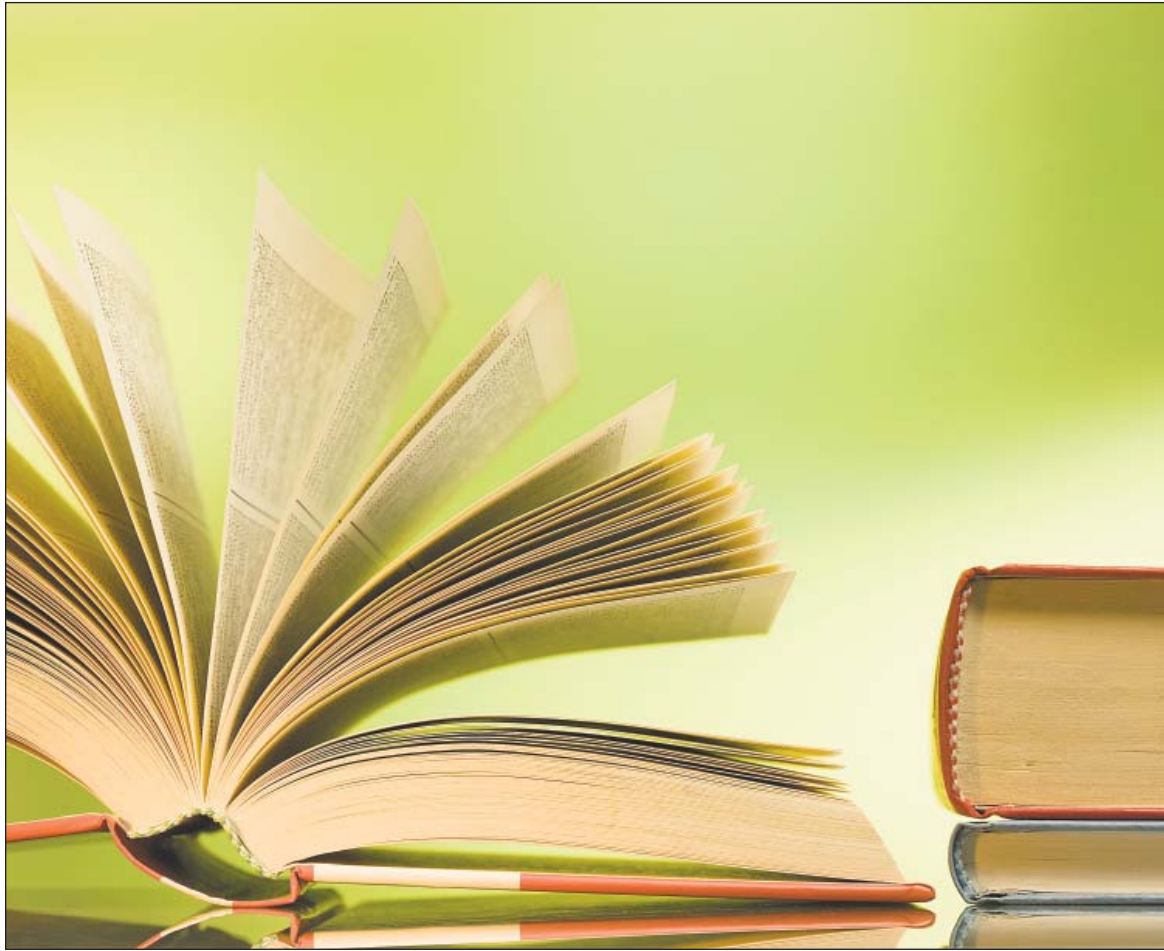
When I started studying for my first exam, the biggest challenge was being able to balance my full-time work as a valuations associate and the required study time during a busy work week. It had been over five years since I graduated from university, and the idea of taking on another academic challenge was a shock to the system.

Fortunately, the firm where I worked was very accommodating to my study schedule and provided some paid time off to prepare for each of the required CBV exams.

Another item I needed to balance with my work and study schedule was a weekly commitment to tutor math skills to adult students.

I have been involved in volunteering and tutoring since I was in high school. I have always enjoyed helping my peers and other students achieve their academic goals because I know that certain subjects and material can be challenging. There have been countless times in my own academic career where a simple brief conversation with an expert on a subject clarified the material more succinctly than hours of solitary studying. There are many programs these days without a classroom element and the ability to discuss subjects with fellow students and peers is limited.

When I started working in Toronto after university, I looked for volunteering opportunities where I could continue to be involved with helping other students. I ended up volunteering at the Alexandra Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre, the local community centre in my neighbourhood.



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APNLC has a tutoring program that matches volunteer tutors with students over the age of 18 who want help with reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills. Volunteer tutors are required to make a one-year commitment and be

together at individual tables.

I initially taught math skills to a group of three women that were intending to apply to one of Toronto’s local colleges. We met once a week and worked through a textbook of basic math skills that we in Canada

to George Brown College. We met one night per week and needed to complete a wide range of material in a limited time period. The entrance exams for the nursing programs were rapidly approaching.

We designed a study schedule

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available at least one night per week to meet with the student. On a given weeknight, the learning centre would be bustling with students and tutors working

take for granted. We worked together for about a year, but unfortunately their work obligations made it difficult to come to the learning centre every week.

In 2012, I started working with a woman named Conchita who wanted to improve her math skills.

Conchita wanted to write an entrance exam for local nursing programs and ultimately apply

to track her progress similar to what I had designed for my own CBV exam schedule. Conchita was working full-time at a senior care facility as a nurse’s assistant. She had a very busy schedule and we would meet on alternating Tuesday and Wednesday evenings to accommodate her work schedule.

The only times in over a year that we didn’t meet was when she traveled home to visit her family

overseas during the holidays in December.

It was very motivating to see another person working and preparing for an exam with all of the same full-time work obligations that I had. Any time that I had planned to study for my exams and considered ditching it to relax, I would think of Conchita and her hard work and motivation. Every time we met at APNLC, she had completed the unit’s work that we had planned.

The value of having a definable goal and a schedule to attain that goal can’t be underestimated. If she could stick to a schedule and fulfil her goals, I had to do it too. I usually planned to study three nights per week after work and one day on the weekend.

After Conchita completed a unit, she had to complete a test with a required minimum grade before we could move on to the next batch of material. Her grades on the tests were always near perfect and sometimes scored 100 per cent.

Her hard work was paying off and it was rewarding to see. Seeing her succeed was more fuel to keep me motivated with my own work. With each successful unit completed, she became more confident in her ability to pass the entrance exam. We finished all of the units on schedule and it was time to write the big exam.

In March 2013, Conchita sent me an e-mail that she had passed her entrance exam and was accepted into the nursing program.

As a CBV, we need to fulfill a continuing-education requirement to maintain our professional designation. Through professional courses and seminars, we continue to educate ourselves and learn even after attaining our designation.

As my academic path continues, I hope to continue to help others with their own goals. There are many opportunities to volunteer in Toronto in various educational programs, and I encourage anyone with some free time during the week to give it a try.

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