

How to Write the Perfect MBA Application Essay

When it comes to writing a successful MBA application essay it is important to remember that business schools want future leaders. They look for candidates who can act quickly and decisively with little direction, even under stress. To decide if you are the right fit for the program, admissions departments use application essays to learn about the person behind the test scores and transcripts.

If you want to increase your chances of acceptance you need to be sure your MBA essay is unique, interesting, and informative while still following the outline provided by the application committee. There are a few basic guidelines that will help you to stay on track and ensure that you are creating an application essay which will grab the attention of admissions officers.

1. Be concise and stay on point.

Before you actually begin to write your essay you should map out the topics you will cover and the message you hope to convey. This is one time that you should not skip on the outline process. A solid outline will help you to create an essay that is focused, concise and stays on point. Admissions officers read thousands of application essays each year; an essay that is unfocused and difficult to read will quickly find its way to the rejection pile.

2. Showcase your personality.

One of the main purposes of the MBA application essay is to show admissions staff who you are as a person. Application officers want to see the *real* you; they want to know what motivates you and what makes you unique. Share your strengths and weaknesses and do not be afraid to brag about your accomplishments. Express how your strengths can benefit the school and how the school can benefit you

Business schools are seeking specific qualities in a successful applicant, these high-demand traits include:

- *Leadership abilities*
- *Effective communication skills*
- *Team players*
- *Strong Ethics*

Simply stating these qualities will not be enough to gain you approval, each claim should be supported by evidence in the form of an accomplishment or related story.

3. Answer the questions thoroughly.

Business schools will provide you with questions that need to be answered within your admissions essay in order to help them better decide if you are a successful candidate for the program.

The questions below are adaptations from Harvard Business School. Other business schools around the world will ask questions similar to these:

- *What is your career vision, and what makes it meaningful to you?*
- *What would you like the MBA board to know about your academic experience?*
- *What do you view as your greatest accomplishments, and why?*
- *In your career, you will have to deal with many ethical issues. What are likely to be the most challenging, and what is your plan to handle these issues effectively?*

Be sure you fully understand what the question is asking before you put a single word on paper. Admissions officers say the number one reason for rejection is an applicant's failure to fully respond to the question being asked.

According to MBA Essay Consultants, a common MBA question is, "what is your biggest failure?" Many applicants misinterpret this question by sharing success stories with minor challenges. Instead of talking openly and honestly about failure and the lessons it has taught them (which is what the question was actually asking) they often repeat achievements that they have already shared.

Every word in a question is important. Be sure to consider various angles before formulating your response. Often times, a question that appears to be a simple and straightforward has a much deeper meaning hidden within its words. Seek out the advice of friends, family, and advisors to ensure you fully understand what is being asked of you. The advice of others will ensure that you are providing the best possible response based on your achievements and experience.

4. Follow the rules and guidelines.

Pay close attention to the rules and guidelines. Word limits are an easy way for admissions staff to wean out unqualified applicants who cannot follow simple instructions. When formulating your responses be sure to take the minimum word limit into account, as well as the maximum limit if one has been established. It is also important that you ensure your essay is properly formatted using appropriate font, spacing and layout. Include a cover page if required, and above all else be sure you have your name clearly displayed.

5. Convey the key message clearly.

Do not allow the key message of your essay to get lost among a flood of personal stories. Many applicants use overly-dramatic openings to grab the attention of admission

officers, but these are only useful if they are relevant to the key point of your essay. Admission staff would rather hear a straightforward response on your future career goals than an unrelated story about your near-death experience while skydiving.

Using concrete examples from your personal life to clearly convey your main point is good practice, but it is vital that you do not turn your paper into an autobiography or stray from your original thesis.

6. Be specific about what you have accomplished and how.

Sharing your accomplishments is not enough; you need to explain how you came to accomplish them. Admissions staff wants to see that you are driven to succeed and that your achievements have not simply come about by chance. Stating your desire to make a change which led to a specific accomplishment shows possibility of repeating that success in the future. Sharing how you have accomplished your goals also shows that you are able to look at yourself critically. It allows admission officers to assess whether you are going to be a beneficial addition to the campus. It also shows that you are able to face challenges and are willing to work for results.

7. Express your future goals.

Business colleges want to know what you are planning to achieve in the future. More importantly, they want to know how their program is going to help you accomplish these goals. It looks good when a school's alumni are successful. Sharing your future goals and explaining how this program can help you accomplish them is a great way to get the attention of admission staff. Your entire essay and personal profile should align with these future goals and be expressed in a way that benefits the school in the long run.

8. Stress the importance of this specific school.

Does your chosen school have a credible reputation? Is it known for opening doors that are otherwise firmly secured? Are the alumni known for their success after graduation? Does it hold a prestige within the industry that surpasses all the rest? Is it part of your family legacy?

Flattery will get you everywhere. The admissions team likes to know that you have researched their school and that you have put a deeper thought into your attendance, outside simply wanting an education. Stressing the reputation of the school, the success of the graduates or the prestige they offer shows that you are serious about attending and that you will not settle.

9. Share what you have to offer and what you hope to gain.

Your MBA is like a relationship, it requires give and take. You need to show the

admissions council what you have to offer them and what you plan to gain. The school needs to benefit from educating you, as much as you need to benefit from their education. Share your strengths and weaknesses and explain how the school would benefit from your strengths, and how they can help you to improve on your weak areas. Show them that having you in their program will be beneficial to both of you in the future.

There may be no such thing as the 'perfect' MBA essay. However, if you stay focused on creating a paper with a clear, concise message that responds to the question and shows the school that your acceptance would be beneficial to everyone, then you are well on your way to acceptance and a successful future in business.