personal
MBA
Coach.

MBA Decision Making Guide

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ABOUT PERSONAL MBA COACH

Personal MBA Coach has helped hundreds of applicants around the world get into top MBA, EMBA, part-time MBA and graduate programs including HBS, Stanford, Wharton, Chicago Booth, Kellogg, Columbia GSB, Dartmouth Tuck, MIT Sloan, London Business School, INSEAD, Yale SOM, UVA Darden, Duke Fuqua, Berkeley Haas, NYU Stern and many more, as well as advancing their careers with a 96% success rate.

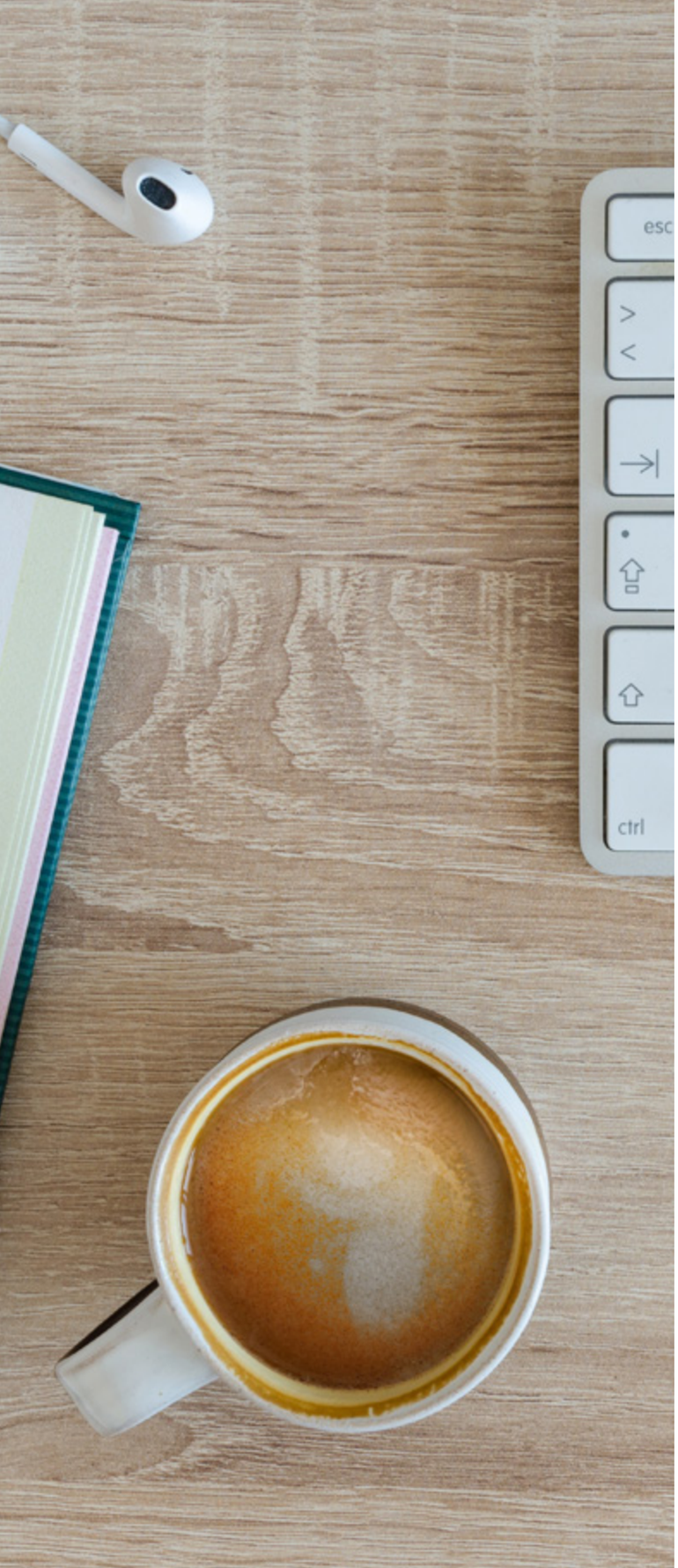
Personal MBA Coach was founded in 2008 by Scott Edinburgh, a former management consultant and industry strategist with an MBA from Wharton and a BS from MIT. With a boutique and personalized approach, Scott helps turn analytical, general management and client services experiences into the powerful and convincing stories that admissions committee members are looking for. Personal MBA Coach helps clients through all aspects of the application process, including application strategy, pre-application planning, GMAT/GRE/EA prep and school selection. Scott is on the Board of Directors and is a Committee Chair of AIGAC (Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants: an organization that meets annually with admissions directors of the top 25 schools globally). Learn how Personal MBA Coach can make your dreams a reality by walking you step by step through the entire process.

SERVICES OFFERED

- Comprehensive Packages
- GMAT/GRE/EA Tutoring
- Interview Preparation
- Waitlist Support
- Gut Check
- Early MBA Planning

WHAT SETS PERSONAL MBA COACH APART

- Founded by Scott Edinburgh, a Wharton MBA, member of AIGAC Board of Directors and industry veteran with 14 years of admissions consulting experience
- Scott presents globally and was invited to present to admissions directors at GMAC conference
- Prior corporate experience to inform your essays and goals, including consulting, banking and strategy
- Former M7 admissions director and M7 MBA interviewers on our team
- Flexible scheduling and fast turnaround times
- Personalized and customized GMAT/GRE/EA tutoring
- One point of contact
- Direct, honest feedback
- Internal network of former clients at all top schools



Comprehensive Packages Overview

1. Develop Your Story

The boutique one-on-one approach begins day 1. With a kickoff call or meeting, Scott will learn all about you and your aspirations. Together you will select target schools, articulate your DISTINCT story and fine-tune your goals.

2. Resume Review

Virtually all professional resumes need to be tailored for business school applications. Your resume will be updated from top to bottom, as many times as it takes to bring it to perfection.

3. Essay Brainstorming and Unlimited Essay Editing

Building from YOUR personal story, we will brainstorm topics and review award winning essays. Send your essays back for detailed edits and feedback as many times as it takes to get them right, with fast two-day turnaround and direct and honest insight.

4. LOR Support

Don't underestimate this crucial step. Scott will guide you through selecting the ideal recommenders and preparing them so your LORs shine and align with your overall application.

5. Interview Preparation

Seal the deal with detailed interview guides and mock interviews with former M7 admissions interviewers, followed by written feedback. For Wharton/Ross, we will conduct group mock interviews and for HBS we include post interview reflection support.

6. Waitlist Strategy and Post Acceptance Support

Our relationship does not end when you hit submit. Whether you are accepted or waitlisted, Scott will continue his personal support. Find out how and when to reach out to get off the waitlist and receive advice on which school best suits your goals. He will connect you with former clients at your future school as you join the small Personal MBA Coach alumni family and attend Personal MBA Coach alumni networking events.

4 Signs Now Might Be Time for an MBA

Every year Personal MBA Coach works with clients who know they want to pursue their MBA but are not sure whether now is the time. To help you answer this question, below are four signs that it might be the right time to consider an MBA.

1. **You already have 3-4 years of pre-MBA experience.**
The average applicant for most schools has approximately 5 years of pre-MBA experience at the time of enrollment. Once you have 6+ years, your chances begin to decrease, ever so slightly each year. Similarly, your odds of acceptance do not increase considerably between 4 and 5 years unless your role significantly changes. You should also consider the possibility that you may not be accepted the first time you apply if you reach too high (for instance only targeting Stanford). The longer you wait now, the more likely it is that you will run out of time to give your dream school one more shot by reapplying. At this stage in your career, now might be the time to pull the trigger.

2. **You have reached a plateau at work.**
Have you stretched yourself as much as possible in your current role? Do you need an MBA or advanced degree to reach the next level? If you are bored at work and feel that you have learned all you can in your current role, this is a good sign that now might be the time to think about an MBA. If you feel you are close to plateauing, now also might be the time to apply. Keep in mind it will still be another 18 months until you are likely to enroll.

3. **You are ready to switch careers.**
Switching careers while writing your business school applications can be tricky. While it works for some to change industries or functions pre-MBA, post-MBA is a great time to switch careers for most. If you know you want to move from banking to consulting or consulting to product management, why wait? In many ways the MBA is the great equalizer and post-MBA students often start at a similar level to each other. If this is you, think about applying today.

4 Signs Now Might Be Time for an MBA (cont.)

4. Your personal situation makes it a good time to become a student.

Are you ready for a break from work? Is your partner going back to school and it will be easier to study together? Going back to school full time is a major lifestyle change and your personal circumstance should be a key factor in your decision on when to apply. If late 2022 is shaping up to be a good time for you to become a student, it's time to get your applications started.

Choosing the Right MBA Option

Getting an MBA does not necessarily require taking two years off from work. For many, the traditional 2-year program might be your best bet. But for others, there are an increasing number of alternative options you can consider based on your personal circumstances and goals.

While all programs teach the same general curriculum, often by some of the same faculty, full-time MBA programs tend to have more students who are looking for a career change and interested in a more intense program with a heavy networking and social component in addition to the academics. That said, many part-time MBA graduates go on to seek new employment and/or change industries completely.

Additionally, the part-time (and especially the Executive MBA) programs tend to cater to students with more varied years of experience vs the traditional 3-7 years for most full-time MBA programs.

Wondering which program might be right for you? Here are some of the factors tipping the scale toward each program.

Choosing the Right MBA Option (cont.)

Executive MBA

Executive MBA programs are geared toward higher level executives and members of senior management. Entrepreneurs who run their own business also can fit well into EMBA classes. EMBA students tend to have more leadership experience than part-time MBA students, though the experience required varies greatly by school. We send applicants with as little as 5-6 years of experience to some schools, whereas others are looking for 10-12+ years of work experience. At MIT Sloan, for example, applicants have an average of more than 16 years of experience. Successful candidates also often have international leadership expertise, though this is not required for admission.

EMBA students are generally not immediately looking to change roles, though recruiting is certainly possible from the program. Much of the recruiting happens through internal networking (often with fellow EMBA classmates).

Part-Time MBA

Part-time MBA programs are geared toward professionals in the early/middle part of their careers who want the experience of an MBA without taking time off work. Students usually are less than 37 years old and are trending younger, with the largest majority ages 27-32.

By enrolling in a part-time program, students are able to reduce the overall cost of an MBA because two (in most cases) years of salary do not have to be forgone in order to earn the degree.

Programs are either at night, over the weekend, or both and can be completed in different amounts of time depending on the school and how busy a schedule the student wants to have / how many courses the student decides to enroll in each year.

Choosing The Right MBA Option (cont.)

One-Year MBA

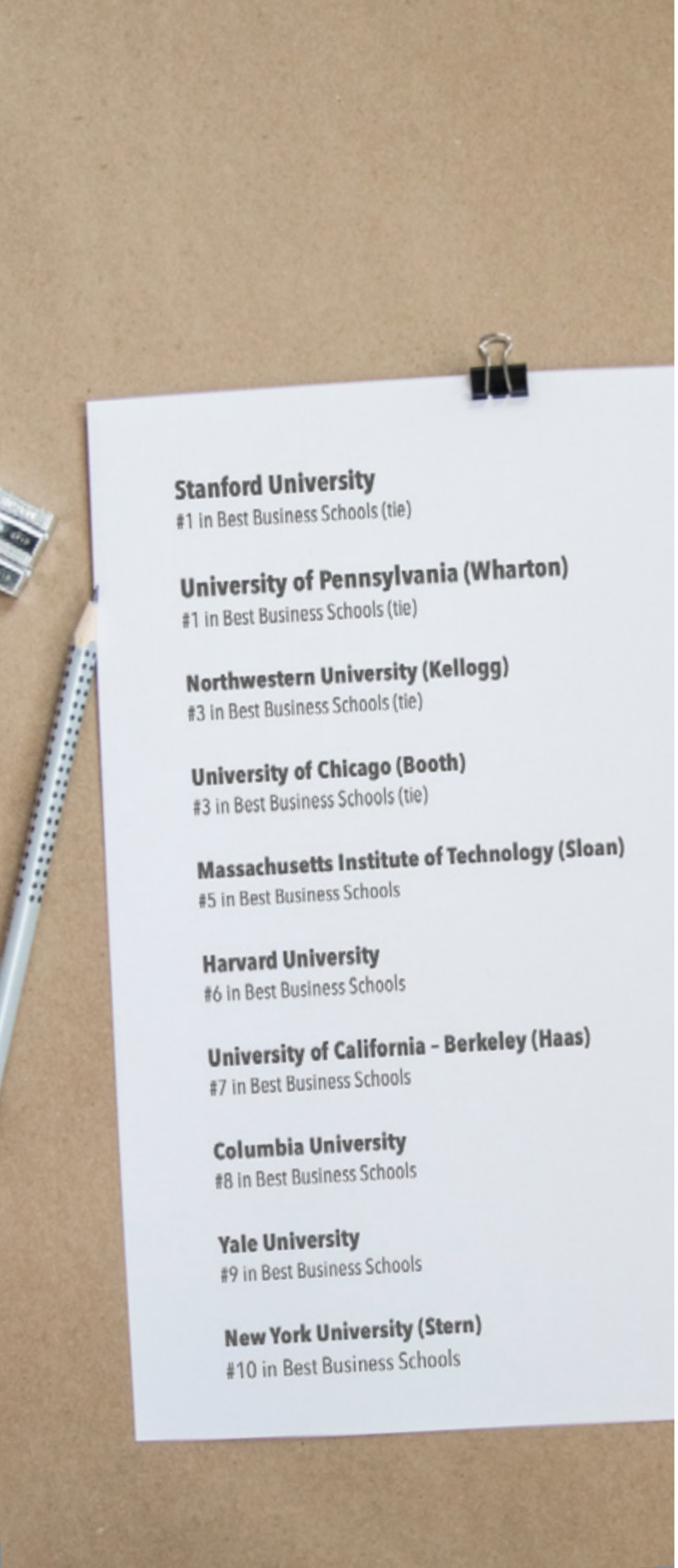
For those students who want to dedicate themselves full-time to their studies but do not need an internship, this can be an attractive option. If you are not switching industries or even roles, the standard recruiting process may not be necessary.

One-year programs provide fewer networking, recruiting and community building opportunities but for those candidates who can't afford to take two full years out of the workforce, they can be a good choice.

Early Admission / Deferral MBA

An increasing number of schools offer deferral programs where current undergraduate students can apply during their senior year, with the intention to work after school for a couple years and then enroll in an MBA program. This gives students the chance to lock in a top MBA program before entering the workforce. HBS calls the program 2+2 and has students work for two years before beginning the MBA. Stanford has a similar two-year deferral while Yale SOM has Silver Scholars, which allows students to study in an MBA program immediately upon finishing college. After one year, students enter the workforce for a year and then return to SOM for the third year to finish the MBA. Due to these programs' later spring deadlines, candidates can finish the undergraduate recruiting process and secure full-time job placement (hopefully) before applying.

Successful applicants already have demonstrated considerable leadership through internships and extracurricular activities, either on or off campus. They also have a strong sense of their career goals (though this often comes only after working with a consultant on the applications, and keep in mind that the goals can definitely change over time). While these programs are competitive, they are a good option for high achievers looking to get a jump on the MBA application process.



Our Thoughts on MBA Rankings

MBA rankings are often top of mind for all MBA hopefuls (and even many graduates). Personal MBA Coach would like to share our thoughts on the latest rankings, along with how we advise our clients to use MBA rankings in general. Before we cover the biggest changes in the 2021 US News and World Report Best Business Schools, we would like to remind everyone of one of the most important points to keep in mind when evaluating ranking guides: Average ranking over time is much more important than year to year fluctuations.

So, what is the big news this year?

Stanford GSB tied with Wharton for the number 1 position this year. Kellogg and Chicago Booth tied for #3 and MIT Sloan ranked #5. Other notable changes include Yale SOM and NYU Stern's place in the top 10, ranking #9 and #10 this year. Harvard Business School, Berkeley Haas and Columbia Business School also fell within the top 10. Check out the complete details online.

Personal MBA Coach has a few key thoughts following these updates:

First, all schools in the top 20 are strong options and you should not lose sleep over the fact that Harvard Business School is #6 this year, nor do we recommend that every client now apply to Kellogg and MIT Sloan just because of their jumps. As noted, the changes over time are most important, and these rankings change from year-to-year and guide-to-guide.

Second, seeing schools move in and out of the top 7 or 10 confirms that there are an increasing number of high-quality MBA options available. Many applicants are looking more broadly than just Harvard, Stanford and Wharton. Our clients on average apply to at least 5 schools. And Ross, for example, has been getting a lot more attention in recent years. Amazon (and other leading tech companies) hire a lot from Ross.

Third, beyond rankings, it is important to look at job placement. You often can land your dream job after graduating from a number of similar schools. Depending on your post-MBA goals, you also may want to pay more attention to some of the specialized rankings. Just because a school is higher ranked overall does not mean that it will do a better job at preparing you for your next job, especially if you are not going for a more standard goal like consulting or banking.

How To Use MBA Rankings

- Use them to get the lay of the land. Business rankings provide a great overview of the business school landscape: what schools exist, where they are located and how they generally stack up.

- Statistics included in rankings will give you some good benchmarking data. Use them to get a high-level of idea of which schools could be potential options for you.

- Do not consider them the be all, end all. Plenty of applicants with a higher than average GPA or GMAT won't get in each year and vice versa. The whole package matters so use these numbers as an initial guide only.

Important Facts To Keep in Mind

Average ranking over time is much more important than year -to-year fluctuation.
When you are courting that investor 10 years from now, she won't pay attention to what the ranking was when you applied but will look at what it is at the time. So pay closer attention to general rankings trends.

The ranking of the overall university, not just the business school, matters.
Many potential employers or investors will not be familiar with the business school landscape but will know about the reputations of the universities themselves. Often this university ranking can carry almost as much weight.

Nearly every rankings scale will give different results.
Of course, certain schools will be in the top 10 in nearly every ranking, but the general list varies considerably from source to source. As with historical data, the general trend is most important.

Rankings vary by industry!
While all business schools focus to some extent on providing strong general management education, each school has a specific area of expertise. Pay attention to how the schools stack up in the industry-specific rankings as well.

6 Tips for Business School Selection

Picking the right business school is a complicated and personal process and a key component of our services.

However, here are 6 tips to get you started:

1. Begin with the statistics.

Statistics such as acceptance rate and average GPA and GMAT/GRE of enrolled students will give you some good benchmarking data; however, use these numbers as an initial guide only. The whole applicant package matters, and plenty of candidates with a lower than average GPA or GMAT/GRE will get in each year and vice versa.

2. Go Broad.

Our average candidate applies to at least 5 schools. Make sure that you have some “reach” schools, some “more likely” schools and some “safer” schools, especially if you want to secure an acceptance this year. All business schools look to fill their classes with diverse candidates, and you cannot always predict which school might need someone who fits your profile. Adding a broad range of schools helps to balance this.

3. Pay Attention to Culture.

Culture is more than a buzzword: It will be key to having a fulfilling MBA experience and developing lasting long-term relationships. Do you want a small close-knit campus where everyone lives and studies nearby? Are learning teams important to you? Do you consider the entire city your campus? As you talk to alums and visit schools (virtually), these are just some of the many questions you should ask yourself while narrowing your list.

6 Tips for Business School Selection (cont.)

4. Look carefully at the curriculum and program.

Think about your post-MBA goals carefully and pay attention to whose offerings are the best fit. For example, is a flexible curriculum important to you? Do you thrive with more hands-on opportunities? Is the ability to study internationally important? All schools vary in the degree to which they meet these needs, so do your research. Not only will this help you determine which programs will be the best fit, but this research will also be critical as you target your application.

5. Explore areas of excellence.

Similarly, explore emerging areas of research at each campus. This is particularly important if you have a specific focus. Finding a professor who is working on a project in your area of interest could be a key driver of both your experience on campus and your chances of success during the application process.

6. Consider location.

Sure, you can live anywhere after graduation, and companies from all over the world will recruit far and wide (particularly in the current environment where all events are virtual). However, it has previously been easier to recruit at schools that are closer geographically. As in-person events resume, we expect this to again become true. Look at which schools your target companies reach out to for recruitment and which speakers talk (virtually) at campus. Though you initially may have had only major city schools on your radar, many programs in smaller cities also offer diverse and vibrant communities.

When I first applied to business school, I was rejected by six of the M7 schools. With Scott's guidance, I was able to secure acceptances from Kellogg, Booth and Sloan and was offered a combined $170K in scholarship money from Kellogg and Booth. Scott took the time to thoroughly understand my background before laying out our plan of attack. He is candid in his feedback, available at at a moment's notice, and provides great perspective on the admissions process given his history working with other clients. If you are considering the investment, I would highly encourage you to sign up with Scott. Working with the founder of a top consulting firm is a huge plus.

— CHICAGO BOOTH (W/SCHOLARSHIP)

Scott is extremely knowledgeable in this field. He deeply cares about your development with heart and soul and wants to do whatever he can to help you get into your dream school. It has been a fantastic experience of working with Scott and he made my application process very enjoyable. I would not have gotten into Haas and Tuck with scholarships if I did not work with Scott from Personal MBA Coach. I highly recommend anyone who wants to get into their dream school talk to Personal MBA Coach.

— BERKELEY HAAS (W/ SCHOLARSHIP)

I worked with a larger admissions consulting firm last year and did not have success. I was going to give up and do it myself until my friend put me in touch with Scott, who was a life saver! Scott LOVES what he does and working with Personal MBA Coach was the best decision I have made in my career. From the initial deep strategy brainstorming session to the 8th review of my HBS essay, Scott was deeply invested in my success. The level of detail he gets into is quite impressive and his energy and availability blow everyone else out of the water. I got into 5 of the 6 programs I applied to and will be starting at HBS in a few months. I have sent 3 friends of mine to Personal MBA Coach and they are all equally thrilled. Give Scott a call now and don't think twice.

— HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

LET PERSONAL MBA COACH HELP

Helping clients since 2008, our boutique one-on-one approach has led to a 96% success rate!

Call or email for a consultation with founder, Scott Edinburgh

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