

Personal MBA Coach's MBA Admissions Roadmap

**personal
MBA
Coach.**

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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 with a 96% success rate. Last cycle our clients earned \$10M in total scholarships.

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 17 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 directors 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. Application Strategy & Story Development

Personal MBA Coach consultants learn more about your background and develop a thorough application strategy for you to follow, helping fine-tune your educational goals and articulate your distinct story. This includes compiling a list of schools you want to attend. Your consultant will review your credentials and work experience to help you identify what programs make sense for you based on factors like your test score, grades, scholarship desires, ideal study location and more.



2. Resume Review

Structure your MBA resume using our provided templates. We will go over your education and career accomplishments to paint an accurate picture of you on paper and make sure to turn your professional resume into an MBA resume that resonates with admissions directors. Our experts will help edit your resume so that it follows the correct format and uses effective language throughout. The Personal MBA Coach team knows what top schools are looking for when admitting students into their programs, so we make sure you stand out by including only important resume details.



3. Essay Brainstorming and Unlimited Essay Editing

Building from your personal story, you will partner with your admissions consultant to brainstorm topics and develop award-winning essays that allow you to stand out among other applicants. We provide you with school-specific insider knowledge as to what MBA programs are looking for in MBA application essays. You can submit your admissions essay and short-answer responses to us as many times as it takes to get them right. We provide you with feedback in two days and work seven days a week. We will check that you answer questions fully and provide enough detail to impress application essay reviewers. Count on Personal MBA Coach to catch spelling and grammar mistakes before the final submission of your personal development pieces.



4. Video Essay Feedback

Some of the leading MBA programs in the U.S., Europe and Canada require a video essay submission. For the live videos, we will send you software that you can use to practice sample video questions on your own.

Personal MBA Coach comprehensive packages involve sharing feedback on sample recordings to improve your confidence and perfect your video delivery.



5. Letter of Recommendation Support

To enhance your overall application, we will guide you through the process of selecting which of your contacts is best suited to write your letters of recommendation. Our consultants will help you develop the best timing and approach for reaching out and determining how much information and guidance your contact will need to write a letter that aligns with your overall application.



6. Interview Preparation

Personal MBA Coach organizes mock interviews with former M7 and T10 admissions interviewers from our team. Our interviewers provide you with written feedback to help you hone your skills. You have the option to participate in group interviews as well as to grow your skills for all interview structures. For Wharton, we will conduct mock group interviews with former group interviewers.



7. Pre/Post Interview Essay Editing

Harvard Business School, Chicago Booth and MIT Sloan ask that some candidates selected to interview submit an additional essay or video for their MBA program applications. Our personalized MBA admissions services in our comprehensive package include editing your follow-up written or recorded pieces. We will verify that your writing and speaking tone is consistent during the application process so that everything you submit is of the highest quality.



8. Waitlist Strategy & Post Acceptance Support

Our relationship does not end when you hit submit. Whether you are accepted or waitlisted, we will continue our personal support. Find out how and when to reach out to get off the waitlist, receive guidance on your waitlist update and get our advice on which school best suits your goals. We will connect you with former clients at your future school and across all schools as you join the small Personal MBA Coach alumni family.



Enhancing Your Extracurricular Profile

Strengthening extracurricular profiles is one of the key areas Personal MBA Coach is working on with MBA candidates this winter. By putting in the extra effort now, you will have ample opportunities to add real value before the deadlines this spring and beyond and avoid being penalized for not having a track record of involvement and leadership. Do not underestimate the importance of having strong examples of your extracurricular success when it comes time to write your MBA essays. This is particularly important for applicants hoping to secure a coveted MBA scholarship! Below are three key guiding principles to keep in mind when determining the best extracurriculars for MBA application success.

1) Quality over quantity

No one has the time to work with 10 different organizations. Having a laundry list of activities is not going to appeal to admissions committee members. Instead, focus your efforts on organizations or areas where you can have a real impact and add value. There is no “right” number of activities. This will vary from client to client and depend on the depth of your work. However, more often than not, less is more — particularly if you are just getting started now.

2) Focus on leadership

You have probably heard this time and again, but it is important enough to repeat: Business schools want leaders. This is true for all MBA programs, not just Harvard Business School. While there are countless ways that you can (and should) display leadership throughout your profile, extracurricular activities are one great opportunity to do so. Look for an organization where you can step up or explore options to expand your role at an existing organization. Take the time to do this now so that you have clear results to share come essay time.

3) Activities should fit with your profile

Successful applications share a consistent and impactful story. MBA admissions committees should instantly see who you are, what has defined you and why you have made specific choices. Choose areas that you are passionate about and that fit with your story. For example, if you want a career as an educational consultant, consider volunteering in the education industry. If your passion is tennis, give tennis lessons to underprivileged children in your neighborhood. You do not need to pick the most unique or prestigious charity. Instead, do what you love! You will thank us later when, during your interview, you are asked about something that makes your eyes sparkle. During application time, you will find many strategic ways to use your activities to fill gaps in your profile.

Answering Your GMAT & GRE FAQs

Testing, testing, testing! For better or for worse, GMAT and GRE are key topics of conversation throughout the application process. Even if you already have a strong GMAT or GRE, you want to make sure that you are fully maximizing your potential, especially if you are hoping to get a scholarship! To help you get started, below are the questions Personal MBA Coach is asked most often about the GMAT and GRE.

Q. How important is the GMAT/GRE?

A. While these MBA admissions tests are just one part of the MBA application process and are not the be-all and end-all, they are very important. Further, the GMAT or GRE score will play a more important role for some candidates than for others. If you are applying with a low GPA or from a field of study that is less analytically intensive, your score (particularly your quantitative scores) will be key to showing that you can handle the academic rigor of an MBA program. Additionally, if you are applying from an overrepresented applicant pool, differentiating yourself with a strong GRE/GMAT score will be even more important.

Q. What is a good GMAT score? What is a good GRE score?

A. With the new GMAT, the answer to this question is not as straightforward as it used to be. In prior years, we shared how it is becoming less common to see students earn admission to top 10 or even top 20 schools with a GMAT score below 700. However, a 700 on the GMAT converts to a 645 or 655 on the new Focus (now the only GMAT offered). Check out GMAT to GMAT Focus conversion data [here](#).

For the Wharton class of 2025, the average GMAT (old scoring) was 728 and the average GRE was 162 V/162 Q). For Stanford GSB, the class of 2025 average was 738 (old scoring) while the average GRE was 164 V/164 Q). Harvard Business School reported a median GMAT score of 740 (again, old scoring) and a median GRE of 163V/163Q for the class of 2025.

When determining your target GMAT or GRE score, researching average GMAT or GRE scores is a great way to start. While those with a very strong profile, a unique background, or from an underrepresented applicant pool could gain admission with a below-average score, it is becoming less common to see large numbers of applicants succeed with GMAT scores more than 20 to 30 points below average. In some cases, such as those discussed in the previous question, you may need a GMAT score above the average to be on the same playing field as other applicants.





Answering Your GMAT & GRE FAQs (cont.)

Q. GMAT Vs. GRE For MBA – Which Should I Take?

A: This question is much easier to answer. Candidates should take whichever test they can score better on. Schools do not have a preference about the two tests, and the GRE has become more common over the past few years. Personal MBA Coach's advice is to take a practice test for each and see which one comes more naturally to you. Generally, if quant is a strength the GMAT may be your friend, while those stronger in verbal tend to prefer the GRE. Further, if you have taken one test many times and have not been successful, consider switching gears and trying the other test. Of course, you will need additional preparation for this new test, but that may be worth the effort!

Q. How many times can I take the GMAT?

A: GMAT scores are valid for 5 years, and you can take the exam up to 5 times during a 12-month period. There is a lifetime maximum of 8 tests. Our average candidate now sits for the exam 2 to 4 times, with some giving the test as many as 6 or 7 attempts.

Q. How many times can I take the GRE?

A: GRE scores are valid for 5 years, and currently there is no lifetime test limit for the GRE. You can take the GRE exam once every 21 days and up to 5 times within any 12-month period. As with the GMAT, test takers can cancel their score if they are unhappy with the result. As with the GMAT exam, our average candidate sits for the exam 2 to 4 times, with some taking the test as many as 6 or 7 times.

Q. What about the new GRE?

A. On September 20, 2023, ETS changed the GRE format. The old format is no longer available. So far, no changes have been made to testing limits or fees, and candidates continue to have the option of taking the test online or at a test center. The new GRE is significantly shorter, lasting just 2 hours (as opposed to nearly 4 hours). This makes the GRE shorter than the GMAT. There are now 46 fewer Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning questions. There is also only one Analytical Writing essay. Given the shortened test, there is no scheduled break. Finally, it will take less time for the official score to be released—with the new GRE, the official score will be reported within 8-10 calendar days as opposed to 10-15.



Answering Your GMAT & GRE FAQs (cont.)

Q. How does online testing differ from the standard GMAT/GRE testing?

A. The GMAT online test is administered using the same time, scoring, and number of items as the test center-based exams. At this time, the online exam is available in all locations, except for Mainland China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Sudan. Like the in-person GMAT, scores are valid for 5 years and count toward the 12-month and lifetime limits.

The GRE General Test at Home is offered everywhere that the GRE is normally available and is available seven days a week around the clock, with appointments available as early as 24 hours after you register. The online GRE has the same content, format, and on-screen experience as the test center-based exam. Your GRE score report will not indicate that you took the test at home, and the retake policies are the same as the test center-based exam.

Q. How should I prepare for the GMAT/GRE?

A. Think about how you learn best and use this to inform your study plan. Personal MBA Coach feels that most applicants do best with one-on-one tutoring, allowing the applicant to target areas where they are struggling the most. For this reason, we offer a variety of one-on-one tutoring packages with tutors who scored in the 99th+ percentile on the GMAT and GRE exams and are graduates of MIT, Harvard, UPenn, Yale, Columbia and more.



How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays

Effective MBA admissions essays can be different from any other type of prose. Knowing how to approach them can significantly boost your chances of MBA application success. Before going into specific essay writing tips, let's look at the most common types of MBA essays. Understanding the type of MBA essay (and their ultimate purpose) will help you determine which personal and professional examples are most relevant, what tone you should choose, and how you can use the question to demonstrate your candidacy in the best light (and ultimately get into your dream school).

Types of MBA Essays

Goals Essay

The purpose of this type of MBA application essay is to discuss your post-MBA career goals and prove that you need an MBA to achieve them. In a goals essay, depending on the word limit, you may share some career highlights as well as your specific short-term and long-term goals. For instance, one of the Wharton MBA admissions essays invites MBA candidates to lay out their professional aspirations. When drafting this type of essay, make sure to be specific and focused. While no one expects you to commit to these goals post-MBA, you should demonstrate to the admissions committee that you have thought about your career goals and determined that an MBA is the ideal steppingstone on your path to achieve them.

Personal Story Essay

Varying in word count, this type of MBA application essay tends to be more personal. The main goal of a self-reflection essay is to get to know the real you. These essays can range from the 900-word, open-ended Harvard Business School MBA application essay to the 100-word questions Michigan Ross asks. Personal MBA Coach's expert tip here is to stay true to yourself and consider your Personal Story. Do not write what you think the admissions committee wants to read. Write about your passions, values, failures—nothing is off limits. At the same time, you want to keep a positive mindset. If you are discussing your failure or something tragic that happened to you, make sure to present it as a story of growth. This is not a creative-writing contest—remember that you are writing your MBA application essay, and the main goal of this essay should be to convince the admissions committee that you will add a unique perspective in the classroom and on campus.

How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays (cont.)

Contribution Essay

The goal of the contribution MBA application essay is to demonstrate how you will enrich the MBA experience for your peers. A number of top MBA programs currently require a contribution essay. The most notable examples of such an essay are Duke's "Based on your understanding of the Fuqua culture, what are 3 ways you expect to contribute at Fuqua?" and Wharton's 2nd essay: "Taking into consideration your background – personal, professional, and/or academic – how do you plan to make specific, meaningful contributions to the Wharton community?" The most effective contribution essays will give admissions committee members insight into your achievements and passions while demonstrating how you will positively impact your peers.

Leadership Essay

While evidence of leadership should be included in many different essay types, some MBA essays directly ask candidates about their leadership experience. Kellogg's first MBA essay is a classic example of this: "Kellogg Leaders are primed to tackle today's pressing concerns everywhere, from the boardroom to their neighborhoods. Tell us about a time in your life where you've needed a combination of skills to solve a problem or overcome a challenge. Which skills did you use?" While it is great to show how you have led your peers, do not forget about humility. It is expected that your leadership style is still a work in progress. In fact, in some leadership essays, you will want to tell the reader how you wish to fine-tune your leadership style during your MBA.

Video Essay

Video essays are becoming increasingly popular among business schools' admissions committees. For instance, Berkeley Haas introduced a video essay this year. Other schools, including MIT Sloan, have required a video essay for many years. Some schools, such as Chicago Booth, require a video essay for applicants offered an interview.

The video essay is a completely different format, and unlike all the essay types above, this is the one where you should not overedit. A few bullet points in preparation are great; however, writing out the whole script will make you appear less natural. Video essays are rather more personal, so you want to come across as approachable and show that you would be great to have in the classroom. Appearing too rigid and rehearsed will hinder your chances.



How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays (cont.)

MBA Essay Writing Process

Now, let's talk about the basics of the essay writing process. We advise our candidates to follow a 5-step process as they develop their application essays, leaving adequate time for each stage.

1. Brainstorm

Brainstorm each essay question one at a time. Now that early decision deadlines have passed, you are free to begin with the essay that seems easiest or comes most naturally to you, as your writing will improve throughout the process. In developing potential topics, consider your relevant strengths, experiences, and accomplishments: Choose those that bring the most to the table.

2. Outline

Before you begin to develop prose, outline the key points you hope to cover in a sequence that flows logically. Pay special attention to the length you will allot to each section of the essay.

3. Draft

Once you have a solid outline, begin to put together your first draft. At this stage, it is ok if your writing is not perfect. Most first drafts will be a bit longer than the final product, but make sure you have the substantive points in place and that they flow together well.

4. Edit Again & Again

Editing is the most time-consuming part of the essay writing process, particularly if you have written too much in the initial draft. Be critical of what needs to be there and what does not, and make sure you remove extraneous or superfluous material. Fine-tune your writing to make sure that the structure, verbs, and vocabulary all serve to make your thinking clear. Avoid repetition and be concise.

5. Proof

And finally, proofread. If you are not great at spelling or grammar or even generally at writing,



How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays (cont.)

ask someone who is good at those things to read your essay. A fresh set of eyes is priceless for catching mistakes. Personal MBA Coach uses proofreaders for each MBA application for this reason.

5 Tips for Writing a Successful MBA Essay

1. Answer the essay question

This seems like a no-brainer, but many candidates write beautiful essays that do not answer the essay question. Instead of writing what you want to show off, answer the question (or make sure that what you want to show off answers the question!). While we do advise thinking a bit outside of the box and considering the why behind an essay prompt (what are they really trying to get at?) first and foremost you must answer the question. That is one reason recycling essay copy from one school to the other is often not a great idea: While it works sometimes for schools whose essay questions are nearly identical, most often it obscures the whole objective of answering the question. Good MBA essay editing should address this, refocusing the material. So, go through your copy and make sure the answer is in there. If you are using the essay you wrote for another school, make sure you tailor it to fit and answer the pertinent essay prompt.

2. Write authentically

Do not write what you think admissions committee members want to read. There is no one perfect candidate profile. Instead, your uniqueness will be one of your greatest selling points. Your essays should paint a clear picture of who you are, what motivates you, and what you are passionate about—genuinely. Do not feel compelled to show how you fit the mold that seemingly makes up the “ideal” candidate. If you have no desire to run a non-profit, that is ok. If you are not motivated by improving the environment, do not pretend you are. Readers will see right through this, and you could end up doing more harm than good.

3. Look at the application comprehensively

Essays are just one part of the overall MBA application. In addition to submitting a resume (unsure how to write an MBA resume? [Check out these tips](#)), you fill out a detailed application whose value you should use in every detail. Many schools require short essays and short answer questions and video essays as well. In addition, you have [letters of recommendation](#).



How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays (cont.)

Those also should be used to your advantage to include material you may not have other opportunity or space to talk about. This means there are other places to list and highlight things such as extracurricular activities. There is no need—or space—to try to fit this all into your essays: Focus on a few chosen facets of your passions or accomplishments to answer the essay questions and use other material in other places.

4. Keep your language approachable

You should assume that terms you regularly discuss at the office—what is commonly referred to as industry jargon—are foreign to others, including admissions committee members, and they do not want to have to wade through it, trying to understand, as if it were a foreign language. The best MBA essay editing will eliminate jargony language entirely and translate to readily understandable English, which helps convey what you are talking about and who you are. Particularly when it comes to showing off an accomplishment or how you added value in a business scenario, you want to make sure that technical language does not get in the way and impede your ability to clearly communicate what you did.

5. Limit flowery prose

Similarly, we often read complex flowery prose. By flowery we mean prose that is overly ornate, rambling, and verbose. While showing off your writing style may be the point when applying to a writer's program, in applying to business school you should write well but practically and in a straightforward manner. Most schools want direct, substantial, detailed answers to the questions—not rambling prose. Everyone, from your grandmother to a professor of microfinance, should be able to understand your essays. In sum, your essays should convey why you are someone others would want to study with, learn from, and eventually be inspired by. That type of person is human and down to earth. Your essays should show this. Finally, be concise. Write to the word count. If you are having difficulty making a choice between two options, you can vet that choice, but once you have chosen your topic, during the outline process eliminate material that is not needed. It is very hard to cut 200 words from a 500-word essay and not change the overall intended impact and meaning. Trimming 30 words is one thing—though it is very time-consuming, it can be done artfully without losing much—but you cannot cut an essay in half and not lose substance that should be included.



Short Answer Questions, Optional Essays and Videos

While the MBA essays may get the bulk of your attention, other crucial application components require significant effort, including short answer questions, optional essays and MBA videos. This means it is time to kick your efforts into high gear—especially since Personal MBA Coach never advises waiting until the last minute to hit submit.

Below, get Personal MBA Coach's advice on how to tackle each.

- **Take Your Time Filling Out The Short Answer Application Questions**

Do not underestimate the importance of short answer MBA application questions. Applicants should set aside adequate time to perfect these answers, particularly since many schools, including Harvard Business School, have lengthy short answer sections that will require significant time.

These questions serve a few important purposes. First, they allow you to share additional aspects of your candidacy. Naturally, you cannot cover all of your accomplishments and traits in your application essays; the short answer section is your chance to share these important successes.

The format of the short answer section also allows admissions committee members to easily compare you to your peers. Ensure you take the time to stand out by carefully selecting the accomplishments discussed. Wherever possible, these answers should be complementary and not repetitive, but there will be some natural overlap between your short answers and your resume.

Finally, short answer MBA application questions are a test of consistency and cohesion. The voice used here should match that shared throughout your essays and should paint a credible and concrete image of who you are as a candidate.

- **Consider Whether You Should Complete Any Optional Essays**

Most schools offer candidates the chance to complete an optional essay. However, DO NOT feel compelled to answer it. In most instances, Personal MBA Coach advises only candidates with extenuating circumstances to provide additional information here. Such extenuating circumstances include low GPAs, gaps in employment and an unusual choice of recommenders (i.e., not asking a direct supervisor). Keep in mind that you should be brief and



Short Answer Questions, Optional Essays and Videos (cont.)

to the point with these essays. Do not offer long-winded excuses or any more information than is needed.

- **Allow adequate time to prepare for MBA Videos where applicable**

Increasingly, top programs use the MBA video essay to assess applicants. After all, you will have limited career success if you are unable to nail an interview, so this is the admissions committee's way of evaluating your physical presence and delivery. For some schools, such as [MIT Sloan](#), the video question is provided in advance and applicants submit a pre-recorded video with their applications. For other schools, the applicants receive some or all of the questions in advance but record the video on the spot. Finally, schools including [Yale SOM](#) and [Kellogg](#) do not share the video question in advance, requiring applicants to record videos on the spot within two days to one week after submitting their applications.

For these statements, be yourself. An MBA video essay gives admissions committee members the chance to learn more about you on a personal level. Potential topics include goals, passions, values and hobbies, among other more challenging questions. While you do not want to sound overly rehearsed, it is important to practice for these MBA videos. If you have the question beforehand, write out bullets in advance of filming. If you do not, practice sample questions. As you practice, consider factors such as audio quality, demeanor, and fluency in addition to the content itself.

Looking for additional help? Personal MBA Coach has proprietary software and a list of prior questions asked to help candidates prepare for these videos. We also include an analysis of sample videos in our comprehensive packages.

- **Do Not Forget To Proofread**

Of course, applicants should also set aside sufficient time to proofread their MBA applications. Personal MBA Coach encourages candidates to get someone who is unfamiliar with their applications to do a thorough review for grammatical mistakes and glaring issues. However, beware of making too many last-minute changes. The purpose of this review should be to catch typos, not to second-guess yourself or your hard work. For those working with us, our expert proofreaders review clients' applications at the final stage to ensure they are fully ready to submit.



10 Top MBA Application Pitfalls

At Personal MBA Coach we have been helping clients develop winning MBA applications through our Comprehensive MBA Packages for 17 years. Over that time, we have seen the same mistakes in MBA applications time and time again (in either first drafts from our clients or final MBA essay submissions from non-clients). Regardless of how these mistakes came to be, it would be easy to write a lengthy book with failed MBA application samples.

While we respect our clients and competitors too much to do so, we would like to help you prevent these same mistakes in your MBA applications. So below, we have shared the 10 MBA application mistakes we see most, along with tips on how to avoid making them.

1) Stating a vague reason for wanting an MBA

Although an MBA may be viewed as a “check the box” degree in some professions, this is NOT a message that should come across in your MBA applications. You should have a clear reason for wanting an MBA, detailing the skills you hope to gain and how they will help in your future roles.

2) Not including school specifics

While it can be tempting to copy and paste across essays, this is not recommended. Take the time to research the courses, professors and programs that are the best match for your future aspirations and include these details in your essays.

3) Using too many industry buzzwords

Many candidates use too many technical terms in resumes, essays, or even during interviews, potentially confusing or even putting off the audience. Keep the language simple so that your accomplishments do not get lost in technical terms.

4) Not answering the question

This may seem obvious, but we have read countless essays that do not answer the question. If the question says: “Do not repeat your resume,” then do not write 300 words on your accomplishments. While including some details may be needed for context, keep these limited.

10 Top MBA Application Pitfalls (cont.)

5) Too much repetition

While you may have a very impressive role or accomplishments, this does not mean you need to mention them in every essay and in your LORs. Instead, think about your entire story and everything you have to offer.

6) Asking your company's CEO to write your LOR

Unless you work very closely with your company's CEO, they are not a good choice to write you a letter of recommendation. Instead, consider who knows you well and will be able to compare you to your peers.

7) Lack of consistency across the application

All your application components should be consistent, including your letters of recommendation. An application that fails to do so will not be perceived as genuine.

8) Not properly engaging with the school

By engaging with your target schools, you are communicating to the admissions committee that you truly want to attend their program. Engagement opportunities include talking to students, attending MBA fairs, and visiting campus, to name a few.

9) Using job description bullets on your resume

Your MBA resume should sell your future potential. Rather than proving that you can do a particular job, use your MBA resume to highlight your strengths and leadership experience.

10) Having illogical career goals

In general, be specific and decisive when stating your MBA goals. It can be challenging to communicate true passion for goals that are illogical or not genuine.

Personal MBA Coach's MBA Application Checklist

While most checklists merely cover the basics, Personal MBA Coach challenges you to ask these 9 questions to assess whether your applications are REALLY ready!

- 1) Is your personal story clear? Does the reader walk away knowing who you are and what matters to you?
- 2) Have you thought out and articulated why you want an MBA? To get promoted or to gain "business skills" are NOT good enough reasons.
- 3) Are you consistent throughout all application components? Your resume, essays, short answer questions and letters of recommendation should all include the same general message. Any inconsistencies are an instant red flag.
- 4) Does your application include specific information about the target school? Admissions committee members read thousands of essays every year, and it is very easy for them to determine who is genuinely interested in the school and knows a lot about the program.
- 5) Are your letters of recommendation strong enough? Did you advise your recommenders to use specific examples and compare you to other candidates?
- 6) Are your essays easy to read? Or do you find yourself re-reading paragraphs because you do not see how they fit into the essay?
- 7) Did you have someone else read your essays? This will give you an outsider's objective opinion of your accomplishments and help to ensure you are talking about your experiences with the right level of detail for someone outside of your industry.
- 8) Do you have an MBA-specific resume? For an MBA resume, you want to show how you have been successful and demonstrated leadership. You are selling your future potential. Make sure not to get too detailed here, though.
- 9) Have you actually answered every question? It can be tempting to go off-book or include additional information but adcom members ask each question for a specific reason. Ensure you are answering the question asked and not offering what you think they want to hear.



How to Maximize Your Chance for an MBA Scholarship

With the cost of tuition at some of the top MBA programs topping \$80,000 per year, financing an MBA can be challenging. And while many MBA students take out graduate student loans to fund their studies, MBA scholarship money, though somewhat elusive, is available every application year.

In fact, Personal MBA Coach's clients earned over \$10M in scholarships last cycle!

Below, Personal MBA Coach shares our tips for maximizing your chances of scholarship success!

First, let's discuss the basics of MBA scholarships.

Scholarships/fellowships fall into two major categories:

1) Merit-based money offered as a result of the MBA application

The vast majority of scholarship money is offered based on your original MBA application. In these instances, candidates do not submit additional materials to be considered, and schools offer money to candidates they are trying to attract (often away from other schools). This money can come directly from the school itself, having nothing to do with the applicant's specific demographic or professional background. Or the scholarship may be in collaboration with another organization. While this other organization may suggest guidelines for consideration, the admissions committee members ultimately make the final scholarship decisions. For example, one of our partners, the Forté Foundation, gives the following guidelines to admissions directors selecting Forté MBA Fellowship recipients:

- *Candidates should exhibit exemplary leadership in one or more ways: academic leadership, team leadership, community leadership, and creative leadership.*
- *Candidates should represent a diversity of educational and work backgrounds, career goals, ethnicities, citizenship/nationality, sexual orientation, and gender identities/expression.*
- *Candidates should demonstrate a commitment to Forté's mission of launching women into fulfilling, significant careers through access to business education, opportunities, and a community of successful women.*
- *Additional requirements may be set by individual schools (for example, alignment with school's mission or core values).*

How to Maximize Your Chance for an MBA Scholarship (cont.)

Forté provides MBA scholarships for women applying to any of their partner schools. These include top MBA programs such as Harvard Business School, Wharton, Chicago Booth and Kellogg.

2) MBA scholarships that students apply for directly

These scholarships generally target specific candidates based on industry, ethnicity, gender, etc. A separate application is required for each of these scholarships, and specific criteria apply. Examples include:

- **The Consortium** (note: you can also apply to participating schools through the scholarship application): Since 1966, we have offered more than \$465 million in fellowships to the best and brightest MBA students in the country. We have programs that cover full tuition and mandatory fees for two years of full-time study (Emory also offers a one-year program).
- **The Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans:** The Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans is a \$90,000 merit-based fellowship exclusively for immigrants and children of immigrants who are pursuing graduate school in the United States. The program draws nearly 2,000 applications annually for just 30 fellowships.
- **Military MBA:** Military MBA is an education network for military officers and NCOs who are interested in obtaining and applying their MBA graduate degrees for career advancement. We represent MBA schools and prospective MBA students who have a background in the military.
- **NBMBAA (National Black MBA Association):** NBMBAA is positioned to help the Black community reach the highest levels of academia, increase lifetime median income potential and reduce unemployment rates among the Black community. With 11,000 members in 40 professional Chapters, we strive to increase awareness and facilitate access to graduate and business education programs in professional fields.



How to Maximize Your Chance for an MBA Scholarship (cont.)

NSHMBA/Prospanica (The National Society of Hispanic MBAs): Since our founding as the National Society of Hispanic MBAs in 1988, we've hosted annual career and professional development conferences, connecting thousands of Hispanics to graduate programs, subject matter experts, corporations, and each other. Prospanica has given over \$8 million in scholarships for graduate education, and many of those recipients have led our professional chapters and university chapters across the US and Puerto Rico, advancing diversity causes in their own communities. In 2016, as Hispanics continued to occupy a growing portion of the nation's demographics, we rebranded as Prospanica to broaden our mission to serve all Hispanic professionals.

Now that we know the basics about MBA Scholarships, what can you do to maximize your chances of earning one of these coveted scholarships?

Here are 4 key tips from Personal MBA Coach.

1) Ensure your application stands out!

The good news for candidates hoping to receive a scholarship is that the same advice Personal MBA Coach provides on developing stand-out applications applies to developing scholarship-winning applications (which is why our clients earn significant MBA scholarships).

Admissions directors are tasked with selecting diverse and well-rounded classes. For candidates seeking scholarships, it is particularly crucial that your application tells a solid story about how you will uniquely add value on campus.

2) Court your target schools.

MBA admissions directors have limited funds to distribute. They do not want to waste these funds on candidates not truly interested in their programs. Therefore, while it is not required, getting to know a school can help your chances of receiving an MBA scholarship.

How to Maximize Your Chance for an MBA Scholarship (cont.)

MBA hopefuls have multiple in-person and virtual options for reaching out to and connecting with their target MBA programs. In the best-case scenario, you can utilize these offerings to build rapport with an admissions representative and directly improve your chances of earning a scholarship.

Even if this does not happen, attending events and interacting with the school you hope to attend will give you valuable material to use as you develop standout essays. Remember, students can also be a valuable resource since admissions directors may not be as available to chat with you.

3) Submit your applications as early as possible.

With a limited amount of money to go around, the earlier you apply, the better. Schools want to be sure that their classes are filled with well-rounded students, and they are more likely to use scholarships to ensure this earlier in the process.

While there is still plenty of scholarship money to go around during round 2, by round 3, less money is available. That said, some clients do earn scholarships in round 3 so if you were hoping to apply this spring, a scholarship is still possible.

4) Excel in as many areas as possible.

While this may seem obvious, Personal MBA Coach often sees candidates who have a decent GMAT, GRE or EA score yet have not maximized their scores. If you took the test just once or twice and/or did little preparation, consider getting a tutor to reach your full potential!

Similarly, we see candidates who do not want to dedicate time outside of the office to beef up their extracurricular profiles.

While Personal MBA Coach always advises that candidates develop well-rounded portfolios, this is particularly crucial for those looking for an MBA scholarship. Scholarship recipients most often excel in multiple areas.



TESTIMONIALS



I would highly recommend working with Scott and his team. I was working with a low GPA and average GMAT but Scott went above and beyond to help sharpen my story and connect it with my short and long term goals. He was honest with me throughout the process and was very personable, making it easy to work with him. He and his team were exceptional in helping me edit my essays and crafting a strong story to communicate to schools. I would highly recommend working with Scott if you want best-in-class services and support in getting accepted to your dream MBA program. I always felt that Wharton was a reach for me but with the help of Scott he helped make it a reality.

— WHARTON



When I reached out to Scott, he responded promptly and was eager to begin our collaboration. Scott acted swiftly and worked closely with me to ensure my application was polished and submitted according to my preferred timeline. Beyond the genuine care and commitment he demonstrated in shaping my narrative, what truly impressed me during my collaboration with Scott and his team was their talent for prompting thoughtful reflection on the “why.” Scott pushed me to delve deeply into the reasons behind my aspirations

— MIT SLOAN



I reached out to Scott after speaking with a few other consultants, based on reviews that I read online. And it turned out to be one of my best decisions!!! We started work pretty late for someone who wanted to get my applications in for Round 1. Scott and his team were pretty responsive and never once tried to push back on the timelines. The pace at which I received feedback on my application was phenomenal, mostly within 24 hours. I was a tad over experienced for a full-time MBA student and my prospects of getting into a top B-school, let alone an M7 school, was always small. But Scott helped me tell my story effectively, resulting in an admission from an M7. Definitely exceeded my expectations in terms of outcome.
I highly recommend working with Scott & his team!!!

— KELLOGG

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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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