

**personal
MBA
Coach.**

Personal MBA Coach's Essay Writing 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 15 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. 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.



How to Think About Your MBA Goals

What do you want to do after you graduate from business school?

This seemingly simple question actually can be one of the most difficult to answer eloquently. With a few exceptions, articulating your post-MBA goals is a crucial part of the application process. Most business schools want to know how you will make the world better when you leave their campuses and what your unique mark will be.

For those planning to apply to business school in September 2022, Personal MBA Coach clients are already getting started on round 1 applications. We advise our clients to begin the application process by thinking through their MBA goals and developing an MBA resume.

As you begin to reflect upon and articulate your goals, consider these six key pieces of advice.

1) Be decisive

While no one will hold you to what you write in your MBA application essays, you should generally be decisive when discussing your MBA career goals. Pick a set of goals and run with them. Candidates should not expect to “find themselves” in business school, though in reality this often happens.

If you do have multiple ideas in mind, some schools are comfortable with understanding your thought process and decision-making criteria (Personal MBA Coach discusses this with our clients on a case-by-case basis). Most schools, however, will want candidates to have clear plans laid out before they arrive on campus.

2) Be consistent

Your goals should be YOUR goals. This means they should not vary from one MBA application to the next. Candidates can lose credibility by changing their goals to please the audience, and it can be difficult to articulate true passion (see point 6 below) for goals that are not genuine.

3) Develop career goals that are ambitious, yet attainable

As valuable as an MBA is, you likely will not be running a department on the first day out of business school. Do your research and figure out what positions are realistic for you.



How to Think About Your MBA Goals (cont.)

You can start by looking at career postings from companies in your target industry. Pay close attention to required industry experience, particularly if you are considering changing careers. This will give you a good idea of what role you might be qualified for immediately post-MBA and will allow you to specifically note which position you hope to secure after school.

4) Consider a logical career pathway

With your attainable role as a launching point, set out an ambitious path and long-term goal for yourself. This long-term goal is your opportunity to dream big and show how you will drive change in your future industry. It should flow logically (though not necessarily obviously) from your short-term goals.

While you do not need to rise through the standard career ranks at your target firm (though it is perfectly fine if this is your goal), your career path should make sense to the reader and allow you to leverage the skills you will develop during your MBA and throughout your early post-MBA career.

5) Share how you will be unique

Even if you have a very common career goal, such as becoming a management consultant or an investment banker, you want to share how you will make your unique mark. Perhaps you intend to develop a specific area of expertise within the consulting industry or focus on a certain sector. You must go beyond simply stating the position you are hoping to achieve. Think deeper and share your vision for improving your chosen field or company.

6) Articulate passion

A strong career goals essay will communicate passion for your future field. This does not mean that you need a long explanation for why you selected this career path. That said, as you provide the context and discuss your future, it should be clear to the reader that you are excited about this profession. Sharing what drove you to this field and identifying current innovations that particularly intrigue you are ways to show such passion.

Identify your topic

To create a stunning presentation, it's best to simplify your thoughts. Start with an outline of topics and identify highlights, which can be applied to whatever subject you plan on discussing.

Articulating Your Personal Story

Personal MBA Coach started with the premise that everyone has a personal story and that the most successful candidates craft unique and compelling stories. This continues to be a cornerstone of our support and the area where we find our clients need the most guidance.

We advise candidates to start thinking about their stories months, if not years, in advance! The good news? Everyone has a personal story; you may just need help figuring out how to make it shine.

Keep in mind: This is not the time to tell the admissions committee what you think they want to hear. As an Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants (AIGAC) Board Member and Committee Chair, Personal MBA Coach is fortunate to attend an annual conference with Admissions Directors from 25+ top MBA programs including HBS, Stanford, Booth, Kellogg, Wharton, Ross, Sloan, Yale, Darden, Fuqua and many others. Authenticity is often a key point of discussion.

The most successful candidates do not always write essays about overcoming a horrible tragedy or solving world hunger. Sure, if you have done something impressive or triumphed over a difficult situation, include it—if it fits with your story. But you also can write compelling essays without this.

So, what should you include in your personal story? This answer will differ for every candidate but across the board I can tell you, NOT EVERYTHING! No one wants to read a long explanation detailing a chronological flow of your life. Instead, you must be **focused, logical and unique**.

When Personal MBA Coach meets with a new candidate, we start by asking a lot of questions. We talk about everything the applicant has done, often starting from childhood. You should start with a similar process.

Make a list of everything you have done in your life and take the time to write it all down. Think carefully about the decisions you have made, activities you enjoy and, most importantly, why you made those choices.

Think about your future goals. What do you want to do after you earn your MBA and, again, why?

Next, look for a theme! What single idea connects items from #1 and #2? This is the hard part, so give it time.

Articulating Your Personal Story (cont.)

Here is an example:

One candidate's passion for education began as a result of a family tragedy. Instead of centering his essay on his misfortunes, however, he barely mentioned the tragedy in his essay as, frankly, it did not say anything about him.

He focused instead on what he did in the face of this situation. He shared his penchant for education starting at a young age. His extracurricular activities, past career choices, and future aspirations laddered up to this. Sharing these highlights led to a compelling statement. His application strength did not come from his career successes but from how his essays were focused, his personal and professional moves were logical, and his career path was unique.

This candidate was accepted to an M7 school.

Business schools want to know how you will make the business world (and the world more broadly) better when you leave their campuses. They also want to know how you will leave a unique mark.

Past behavior is the best predictor of the future, and we all have left a mark in one way or another. No candidate is ever perfect; instead, we chart the best course we can with the hand we are dealt. The best personal statements show this.

As you can see from this discussion, crafting a personal statement is not easy—but Personal MBA Coach is here to help!



Less Is More When It Comes to Writing Compelling MBA Application Essays

Top business schools are just beginning to release their essay questions for the 2022-2023 application cycle, Harvard Business School being the first to do so again this year. Each year, Personal MBA Coach devotes considerable time to tracking all MBA essay questions and looking for trends, themes, and MBA essay format changes.

In recent years, shortening essays has been a common trend! While many applicants may be excited by smaller word counts, writing less is actually HARDER than writing more. It can be a challenge to summarize your life's accomplishments into one or two short essays.

Personal MBA Coach spends the greatest amount of time with our clients on the actual editing process, helping clients maximize each available word. Even with MBA essays that have no word limits, it is crucial to be succinct if you want to develop the best business school essays possible. Here are our top four tips for writing more with fewer words.

1) Resist the urge to include unrelated details

Business applicants are accomplished. Naturally, it can be tempting to try to include as many of these accomplishments as possible in your application essays. However, it is crucial that you avoid this urge.

For each application essay, think about what the question asks and why the admissions committee is asking this question. Do not include any detail that does not cover this what or why. For example, a question asking how an MBA will help does not require hundreds of words on your past professional success, however impressive it may be.

Similarly, a question on career goals does not require you to explain the industry dynamics in detail or the reasons behind your perspective on the industry. With each sentence you add to your essays, consider the question you are actually answering. If it is not related to the question asked, cut it!

2) Avoid repetition

With limited words available to sell yourself, there is rarely a need to say anything twice. Regardless of how successful you might have been in your role, admissions committee members do not need to read about it multiple times.



Less Is More When It Comes to Writing Compelling MBA Application Essays (cont.)

Whether you founded a non-profit, were the first in your class to be promoted, or were a Division I athlete, tell each story one time. While naturally you can (and should) touch on a broad theme or aspect of your personal story from multiple angles, this is not the same as repeating the same story. Avoiding repetition will help you stick to a strong MBA essay format.

3) Leverage all aspects of the application

As a natural extension of point 3, use all aspects of your application to your advantage. Even for schools requiring very short essays, there are countless other aspects of the application to pay attention to. The best business school essays ensure that every piece counts!

Take the time to carefully craft answers to your short-answer questions. Prepare your recommenders to ensure their stories complement (but do not reiterate) yours. Use every line in your resume as efficiently as possible to show your leadership and success. In addition, video essays and pre/post interview essays provide other ways to sell yourself. Leave plenty of time for these application extras.

In fact, Personal MBA Coach advises our round 1 clients to finish their essays by the end of July (and round 2 clients to finish by late November) whenever possible to allocate adequate time to other crucial MBA application components. Check out our [MBA application timeline](#) to learn more.

4) Look for every opportunity to trim words

As we have said countless times, edit, edit, edit. Ensure every word counts. If there is a way to say it more succinctly, do! Cutting excess words will lead to stronger writing while giving you extra space to cover details that really set you apart. You'd be surprised how a trained eye can cut 50-100+ words from a 400-word essay without deleting a single piece of true content.

Need help? Personal MBA Coach is willing to be your guide. Take a look at our [comprehensive packages](#) to find out how we can help you create winning essays and maximize your chances of success!



How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays

Essay questions for the 2022-2023 MBA application cycle are starting to be released. While we are still waiting on official confirmation from many top MBA programs (aside from HBS), there are many essay questions that candidates can and should get started on today.

Before you put pencil to paper (so to speak) on your essays, Personal MBA Coach would like to get back to the basics with MBA Essay Writing 101.

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 question one at a time. For those applying early decision, start with Early Decision essays first. Otherwise, begin with the easiest essay, as your writing will improve throughout the process. As you develop potential topics, consider relevant strengths, hobbies, passions, and experiences.

2. Outline

Before you begin to develop prose, outline the key points you hope to cover. Pay special attention to flow and length. (Hint: a 250-word outline is too long for a 500-word essay.)

3. Draft

Once you have a solid outline, begin to put together your first draft. At this stage, it is okay if your writing is not perfect. Most first drafts will and should be a bit longer than the final product. For your early versions, be sure that your points flow well and are easy to follow. Do not worry about grammar, spelling, or other minor errors.

4. Edit Again & Again

This is the longest part of the essay writing process. Edit your essays as many times as it takes to get them right. Finalize general content and flow, then begin to focus on fine-tuning your writing. If your essay is not working, do not be afraid to start over. You may need to repeat steps 1-3 multiple times.

How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays (cont.)

5. Proofread

Always ask someone unfamiliar with your work (and ideally your industry) to read over your essays. You will need a fresh set of eyes to catch all mistakes. As an admission essay consultant, Personal MBA Coach uses seasoned proofreaders for each MBA application for this reason.

Now that you have the overall writing process down, let's look at some key tips to keep in mind as you develop your essays.

Essay Guiding Principles:

1) Answer the question ASKED

It is surprising how often candidates write beautiful essays but do not answer the question. Instead of writing what you think admissions committee members want to hear, answer the question. While we advise thinking a bit outside of the box and considering the why behind an essay prompt, first and foremost you must answer the question.

Personal MBA Coach provides our clients with MBA essay samples to ensure that they have a clear understanding of what their essays should look like.

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.

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 okay. 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. Need help articulating your personal story? Learn more about story development [here](#).

3) Be succinct and avoid repetition

Keep in mind that the essays are just one part of the application. In addition to submitting an MBA resume (unsure how to write an MBA resume? Check out [these tips](#)), most schools



How to Write Winning MBA Application Essays (cont.)

will have you fill out a detailed application. This means admissions committee members will read about everything you have accomplished, all the roles you have held, and the awards you have won. There is no need to try to fit this all into your essays.

So instead of squeezing in as much as you can, focus on sharing a few key highlights and adding the details as well as your voice. This is your chance to explain your choices, show your accomplishments, and share your passions. The fewer things you try to cover in your essays, the more you will be able to achieve this objective.

4) Keep your language approachable

The terms you regularly discuss at the office may be foreign to others, including admissions committee members. When in doubt, do not assume the reader is familiar with everything about your job. Focus on language that is more general and easier to use to compare you to other applicants.

Admissions committee members do not need or want all of the technical details anyway. Our exclusive MBA essay samples serve as an important reference here as well.

5) Limit flowery prose

Similarly, Personal MBA Coach often reads complex flowery prose. You are not submitting your essays for a Pulitzer Prize or applying to become a professional writer. Instead, you are telling your story. While of course you want your essays to be well written and free from grammatical mistakes and typos, you also want them to be relatable and easy to follow.

Everyone from your grandmother to a professor of microfinance should be able to understand your essays. They should also 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.

Looking for an admission essay consultant? Essay writing is a key component of Personal MBA Coach's services. Check out our [comprehensive packages](#) to learn how we can help you develop winning MBA essays.



Short Answer Questions, Optional Essays and MBA 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.

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 these questions. 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).



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

Keep in mind that you should be brief and to the point with these essays. Do not offer long-winded excuses or any more information than is needed.

Record 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, including Kellogg and Texas McCombs, the applicants receive some or all of the questions in advance but record the video on the spot. Finally, schools including Yale SOM and INSEAD 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 a rough script 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. 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 those working with us, our expert proofreaders review clients' applications at the final stage to ensure they are fully ready to submit.

TESTIMONIALS

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I highly, highly recommend Personal MBA and Scott to everyone who is looking to apply for an MBA. Each one of my application essays has gone through tens of edits and the team has really elevated my essays to another level! They have even improved my writing skills as well. The entire process is extremely smooth and the team is very responsive, always responding my questions within 48 hours. I got into 3 M7 schools in the end.

— CHICAGO BOOTH

“

Working with the Personal MBA Coach team was the best decision that I made as a re-applicant to Wharton (my top choice school). The Personal MBA Coach team significantly improved my application storyline and was a huge help in preparing for interviews. In my initial applications, I didn't use an MBA consultant and didn't even get an interview at Wharton. This year, I was admitted to Round 1 with Personal MBA Coach's help. Highly recommend working with their team — it's a challenging process but so worth it to have a partner like them throughout.

— WHARTON

“

Scott and his team were absolutely fantastic! I could not have gotten through the MBA process without him! I used his services for applying to 5 schools and GMAT tutoring. I got into my top choice program at an M7 and couldn't be happier!

I started the MBA application process pretty late (treated it like a sprint, not a marathon). I started working through applications and the GMAT together starting in June/July for R1 deadlines in September. I reached out to Scott because I knew I was going to be overwhelmed. I was looking for somebody who'd keep me honest, was organized, pragmatic, easily approachable, and knew his stuff. Scott 100% met this... I could not recommend him more!

— KELLOGG

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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