

# 50 MBA ESSAYS THAT WORKED

by **ADMISSIONADO**





Hello there!

Welcome to [Admissionado's 50 MBA ESSAYS THAT WORKED - Volume One](#).

So you're applying to graduate school and, my my, you've chosen some of the most selective, elite and hard-hitting top programs in the world. You feel you can shine at these prestigious institutions and now (you can't believe it) you're actually applying. Whoa.

Perhaps it's a career change that has set you on this path. You've been climbing the ranks as a specialist at a premier financial institution for the better part of a decade, directing millions of ducats where they belong, but you can't put your dream on hold for another second. You're ready to go full-time with your blooming side business, to take your innovative web designs and start that IT firm you know you can rock in your sleep... if only you knew about day-to-day operations management.

Perhaps you've taken over your grandfather's hotel chain and opened three new luxury locations in the last five years across your native country. As the growing company's "heir," you want to harness all your new authority to expand into new business areas with different concepts, using your resources to make the right choices... but you find you lack the know-how to maximize your margins and reposition for the future. You aren't quite sure how much further you can take it without applying the fundamentals of modern business.

Or perhaps as the rising star analyst at one of the world's premier biometric labs, you just executed the merger of a lifetime, leading the charge with work ethic, techno-savvy, and sheer will. You've gotten the attention of the CEO who wants to make you the go-to mind for all major tech decisions. But first, they need for to you become a well-rounded executive, which means getting that business-based education you always dreamed of.

Well, here's what we say: good for you! And at Admissionado we believe in the power of the written word to help you get there. Or, as we like to call them, a set of "precision essays." After all, just about every business school in the world, from Harvard to INSEAD to LBS, will require you to dust off your quill and ink to pen together a coherent, interesting and convincing argument for your candidacy. You'll be asked for statements of purpose, career assessments and goals, personal narratives, and most importantly, clear examples of your leadership skills in action. Gulp.



Can you convince the admissions committee that you are one of the CEOs of tomorrow? Will you impact the world with your leadership and leave it a better place? Have you confronted failure and disappointment? Have you the ambition to make your vision a reality, and are you organized and disciplined enough to see it through? What have you done so far that should make anyone believe you can even pull it off? Are you prepared to “show me the money!?” Indeed, the time has come to put the answers to these questions and more on paper. And that’s where Admissionado comes in.

You’ve taken the tests, gotten your scores, and picked your schools. Assuming you are sharing similar credentials as the thousands of other applicants, how do you set yourself apart? Whatever your particular reasoning is for getting an MBA, it’s crucial that you play your cards as expertly as possible by presenting essays that make a compelling case in an unforgettable way. After all, you may not be the only stock market genius hoping to jump start an equity career.

Does all this seem daunting, if not impossible? Maybe the thought of writing anything about yourself sends you into a cold sweat. Trust us, with a little patience and good old-fashioned effort you, too, can be one of the thousands heading off to a top-ten MBA program next year after impressing an admissions committee with your story.

To prove it, we’ve put together this collection of real essays from applicants who, once the dust settled, had their pick of top schools. As you’ll see, they all have different careers and experiences. Some of these inspiring folks were applying to U.S. schools from as far away as Seoul, Istanbul, or Rio De Janeiro. In other cases, they were moving in the opposite direction, wanting to leave American shores for Europe and beyond.

Nevertheless, after working with Admissionado, all were able to produce these grade-A works even though, in several cases, English was their third or fourth language in life. We helped these young go-getters take the raw material of what they had and compress and polish it into a diamond. We worked with the client to create an individual representation that cannot be copied or faked. These were their stories, their ideas, and ultimately their accomplishments. We poked and prodded them, strategized with them, and asked all manner of thought-provoking questions. We gave them the tools to improve the clarity and effectiveness of their writing. Together, we present you with the following essays to read, essays that ultimately unlocked the schools of each author’s dreams.



You'll find these essays are models of economy and clarity. They are free of linguistic clutter, eschewing chunks of adjectival clauses for precise ideas. They are trying to connect with the reader, not bog them down with lists. They all feature an ease in readability, a wide range of unique voicing and styles, and at times, even singular senses of humor. Their authors were able to take a step back and demonstrate the ability to see the big picture; they aimed high and strove to feature themselves shining brightly from the center of an impressive past and ambitious future.

They were leaders of people and said so. Sure, there were mountains of revenue, but monetary results were not the only thing they wrote about. They righted the ships of sinking companies, spoke their minds to persuade bosses, and sometimes even saved lives. Their visions were bold, and the personal detail included is frequently courageous and, if nothing else, refreshingly honest. And often, less was more: while detail and context were certainly necessary, each essayist more or less hits the expected word count by sticking to what's important. Through it all, Admissionado was there, providing feedback and guidance. In the end, we all discovered something about ourselves, and in the process rendered essays that are interesting, compelling and fun. (And they worked!)

We hope you enjoy this volume as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Let's take a look at what some of tomorrow's leaders wrote. Are you next?

*{Please Note: In order to preserve the anonymity of these gracious volunteers, we have redacted/modified occasional identifying information such as names, locations, companies, etc. We urge you to look past any instances that may seem out-of-step; and instead pull back to see what we (as well as the Adcom) see. Also, essay prompts change year to year; you may notice these variations as well.}*



PART 1  
LEADERSHIP AND  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS



In Part One, we take a look at what they did, how they did it, and how they told it.

At work or at play, at home or abroad, they got their hands dirty, they rolled up their sleeves and made something happen. They fixed something broken. They created something never before seen. They followed a dream, plugged a hole, or saved a life. They brought in truck loads of dough. How did they lead that special something? What did they actually DO... ya know, literally? With their hands and their minds and their time, what actions were taken? If it was a personal achievement, what did it entail in terms of effort? What tasks were required? What did it lead to?

The essays tend to maintain a strict focus on one topic in defined time and space. Location is clear, duties are specific, schedules are clear and compelling results are plentiful. They also took the time to set up the "problem." Or in other words, what was going wrong before they stepped in. It is clear their worlds would have ended up in worse condition had they not stepped up to the plate. And more often than not, they strove to start the essays off with a bang.

MBA programs are looking for the leaders of tomorrow, which means leading people... not projects, not products, but leading PEOPLE to great things.



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**Please describe a time when you took responsibility for achieving an objective.**

'\$310 going once, \$310 twice, \$310 deal! Ma'am, this brand new Vita-Mix Juicer is yours!' The crowd burst into applause.

It was a charity auction held in May 2008 in a shopping mall square of Wagon Wheel, a Nasdaq-listed conglomerate which owns 20 shopping malls in Texas. I was delighted as well, since as the co-organizer, I knew this \$310 meant two more families could reserve shelters: the homeless who survived the 2008 Oklahoma Tornado, producing the nation's most devastating tornado damage in recorded history.

Two weeks before, ABC reported that storm refugees lacked temporary shelters in the coming months, and that \$2.76 million was needed to temporarily house victims. This news came out like a bomb, since we easily calculated that each family's spot would cost about \$150.

After responding to several emergency alert requests, and collaborating with representatives of FEMA and the Red Cross, I had signed up to deliver some form of shelter to 50 families. But how to raise \$10,400? Eager to help, I had leapt before I had looked.

First, I contributed a percentage of my online business' sales revenue in May. I motivated my salespeople to close more orders by highlighting the mission, hoping to inspire customers at the same time. However, since our monthly revenue was only \$83,000 at that time, I was still short of the target.

I recalled charity auctions I had organized when I was a member of League of Action at university. We collected pens, souvenirs, and even bicycles from donors and attracted students to the auctions.

Then what to collect this time? Six years' work experiences in electronics industry provided me an idea immediately: why not solicit my customers to donate their surplus products, usually dead stock in their warehouse? Then I could hand these products to Armorside, where my cousin Rennata was a regional manager in charge of four malls. I called Rennata and excitedly told her my idea. 'Let's do it!' she exclaimed.

In the following two weeks, my salesmen and I called all our customers and successfully got 80+ electronic products such as wireless telephones, blenders, baby monitors, MP4s, etc. Then I helped Armorside work out a



plan to attract people to attend the auction: every attendant would have a chance to draw lottery to win an electronic gadget. Moreover, I invited a community arts group to perform in the auction. I also asked my father, who can amazingly play five different music instruments including flute and harmonica, to perform.

The event was so successful that we had auctioned every item and raised \$10,400. Meanwhile, my salesmen worked hard to promote May revenues, which rose by 8% from April to \$90,000+. In the end, I raised \$13,000+, much more than expected, and helped shelter an entire small town together.

This experience showed me how to achieve an objective by breaking it down to specific parts, methodically. Moreover, it revealed to me the power of a great idea in the service of others – ultimately, the best ideas bring people together with seemingly unrelated resources to find solutions that matter.

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### **Tell us about your most significant accomplishment.**

“One day I’ll own a company bigger than Nike,” I assured my mother when I was eleven years old. While I haven’t started that company just yet, establishing the Paid Search Marketing division of Dellfix from the ground up felt very close to the same thing.

I needed to accept a pay-cut and leave my stable job in order to join the 25-person internet marketing startup. I also needed to train myself, single-handedly manage clients’ marketing campaigns, and meet certain pre-defined targets within six months, or the company would buckle and I’d need to find another job.

Simple choice: I took the leap. I devoured online tutorials and learned to create and manage marketing campaigns on search engines and websites for online businesses. It was a crash course in on-the-job training and I quickly combated a steep learning curve. As I shed my training wheels and settled in, I wondered how far I could take this division...

I engineered a well-oiled scalable process for managing campaigns. My designed training structure was effective at quickly transforming a lay person into an efficient campaign manager. My domain knowledge grew as I attended conferences and delivered lectures at colleges on search-marketing. Managing 120+ campaigns in 17 sectors, my confidence grew, which



paid off when I pitched our services to prospective investors. I acquired four prestigious clients and spearheaded three strategic global partnerships.

From a one-man-team to twelve people today, from zero to 14% of the firm's overall revenues and the accreditation of "Google Ad-Words Qualified Company," my division and I have come a long way.

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**At Booth, we value innovation and creativity. Describe a time when you created positive change in a group or an organization.**

A year ago at work, I spoke with the founder of a Boston-based Home Remodeling/Contracting-Jobs placement board. He was a leader in his industry until his competitors created more compelling websites. Sure enough, as soon as his own website's visits tumbled, his company revenues began sinking.

I studied the company's website from a job applicant's perspective and instantly recognized some flaws. The company's value proposition wasn't clear. As a hypothetical prospective applicant, I was left with questions: Will I get the department/job I want? How many jobs postings do they have? For these and many more, they had no answers. Impressed with our quick and clear feedback, the founder gave us permission to overhaul the site.

I'm neither a writer, designer, nor sports enthusiast, but in spearheading this project, I needed to become all three. I rewrote the site's content, adding client testimonials and contracting-job application tips and tested a sleek new design. The analytics showed that subscriptions jumped by 11%. Not bad. I implemented an algorithm that automatically notified members of specific new job listings that would interest them, and even automatically applied to those jobs for them.

Later, I encouraged the company to change its business model by providing free job postings and opening up the entire job database to non-members. These changes led to a further 12% jump in subscriptions.

My understanding of the target-audience needs coupled with creative changes and analytical testing led to an overhaul of the marketing pitch of this site. It was no longer a lifeless job-search portal. I re-positioned it as a



proactive partner to applicants, assisting them in their search for their dream contracting job. In six months, the website's revenues grew by 40%, restoring the founder to the industry-leading status he deserved.

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### Tell us about a time when you went beyond what was defined, established, or expected.

Although Tiger Shares, Inc. has fewer than twenty employees, there is very little collaboration because of the independent nature of the work, intense accounting deadlines and the closed office layout. When I began working there, I found it difficult to permeate the friendships among the accountants because of my heavy workload and the distant location of my desk. But because I value working in a collaborative environment, I sought to change this.

I first attempted to connect with coworkers over the company-provided chat messaging software to organize lunches and happy hours. After a few months, my manager said he noticed an increased level of teamwork and paid me the compliment by attributing it to me. As our friendships developed, our interests began to mesh. One of the accountants, Zebo, is an avid yogi. His passion sparked my own interest in yoga and I soon began to join him on the mats during our lunch breaks. My novice dedication in turn influenced other accountants and soon we all signed up to attend a yoga retreat together. Seeing this traction, I suggested to a manager that the company sponsor their own retreats to encourage others to join and he agreed. There are now several annual retreats planned around different activities and schedules.

I enjoy company-sponsored events because they create an opportunity to discover the other dimensions of my coworkers. Because of the high level of pressure to hit deadlines at Tiger Shares, there left little room for small talk in the office. But I was able to find ways to build friendships with my coworkers that in turn led to a more open and comfortable work environment for everyone. And to this day, the company continues to support group activities like yoga, tai chi, and even a 5K.

**End of Preview.**