



ADMISSIONADO

GUIDE TO LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Preview

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Introduction

The Letter of Recommendation (LOR) is nothing short of an art form.

At its best, an LOR can be many things at once: a tiebreaking vote, a chance to cover new ground in an application, a chance for someone new to share a unique perspective, a chance for you to showcase your ability to manage a project (that is, getting your boss to hit your LOR deadline), the opportunity to double down on key aspects of your candidacy... and more.

At its worst, an LOR can negatively impact your candidacy—if for example the letter is lukewarm, ice cold, written in platitudes, clearly forged, or... maybe not even submitted at all.

Perhaps the saddest part of all is the fact that the LOR is one of the least understood parts of the MBA application today.

Often, applicants spend so much time polishing other aspects of their apps, that they overlook the importance of a strong Letter of Recommendation altogether. Applicants may think, “Well, my recommender will write what they want anyhow, so there’s nothing really for me to do here.”

Even worse, many candidates choose to draft the letter on their own, perhaps thinking that this strategy provides some kind of advantage. “After all, that way the recommender will say exactly what I want him to say.” Oops! Ethical considerations aside, drafting your own LOR could kill your chances of getting in, entirely.

The truth is that there are PLENTY of things applicants can do to strengthen their LORs. And if you’re not paying attention (CLOSE attention) to the art of the process, you’re doing it wrong.

So thank you for joining us on this journey. Without further ado, let’s get into it.

CHAPTER 2

Selecting Your Recommender

Preview

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Selecting Your Recommender

Letters of Recommendation are vital for the Admissions Committee to confirm that you truly are exceptional. They are also a way for the Adcoms to evaluate your personality through the eyes of your bosses. Now although you can work hard to get a great LOR from your recommender, you won't be able to fake it; that is, if the recommender completely loves you to the core, it WILL be felt. And at the same time, if the recommender is "just another boss," that will also be felt.

For all these reasons and more, the first (and perhaps most important) step in producing stellar LORs is in choosing the right person. This is the single most important decision you will make throughout the LOR process. Pick the wrong person, and nothing else we have written here matters. Pick the right person? And you're probably 90% of the way there.

"Okay folks, I get it. Select the right recommender, or I'm toast. But cut to the chase already: Who should write the recommendation?"

Well this is the easiest question we will tackle today: and the answer is, "your boss." Unless you have a great reason why not, it is expected that you will get an LOR from your current employer. Why? A million reasons. First of all, this is the guy (gal) who can speak to your most recent achievements. We don't change jobs every six weeks, and a recommendation from your current supervisor is the best way to show "what have you done for him lately." Your best, newest achievements. Also, your current boss is senior to you, and therefore has more responsibility. He is perhaps in a position to "judge" your performance from the perspective of someone who has once been in your role.

Of course, sometimes it is impossible to get an LOR from a current employer. The most common reason being that at the time of applying, you do not want your employer to know you are planning to leave. This is not rocket science—such a move could ruffle feathers, lead to demotions, smaller bonuses, etc. We get it, and so do Adcoms.

But you *do* need to explain that situation in your application, perhaps using the Optional Essay. In that essay, you should be able to explain in 300 words or fewer, the reasons why you can't submit an LOR from your current employer. This should be a breeze. And if you need help with your optional essay, well, we can help you with that too. (By the way, in this essay, make sure to explain your choice for your recommender.) Be confident, get in there to make your point, and mambo on out in 300 words or less. Easy peasy.

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