

2008 MBA Application Essay Topics

Wharton

Wharton

1. Describe your career progress to date and your future short-term and long-term career goals. How do you expect a Wharton MBA to help you achieve these goals, and why is now the best time for you to join our program? (1,000 words)
2. Describe a failure or setback that you have experienced. What role did you play and what did you learn about yourself? (500 words)
3. Tell us about a situation in which you were an outsider. What did you learn from the experience? (500 words)
4. Pick 1 Option
 - a) Where in your background would we find evidence of your leadership capacity and/or potential? (500 words)
 - b) Is there anything about your background or experience that you feel you have not had the opportunity to share with the Admissions Committee in your application? If yes, please explain. (500 words)

Wharton – Essay #1 (1 of 3)

Describe your career progress to date and your future short-term and long-term career goals. How do you expect a Wharton MBA to help you achieve these goals, and why is now the best time for you to join our program? (1,000 words)

Career Progress

- Freshmen Year in SYS U.
 - Been assigned to Math major which I don't like.
 - I loved programming, hoping to study Computer Science major
 - I could not see the future in Math (Math teacher?)
 - Decided to study CS in US
- Undergrad in Univ. of M
 - Experienced hard culture shock. But turn myself from an outsider to an active college student
 - Good academic score; debating club; book club; ACM programming competition.
 - Learned how to face tough changes and know that – “change is tough, but change is good”
- Grad school in Univ. of M
 - Passionate on my senior project – developing a programming platform that allows everyone to program
 - Decided to stay in grad school to make it come true and become the next Larry Ellison
 - But didn't know the customer. Didn't target a clear customer segmentation.
 - Project dropped due to lack of research funding and unpromising future
 - Learned that before making any changes, you have to know your customers.
- 3M internship
 - Ann, a HBS alumni with MIT engineering PHD, identified to use blog as a way to create a more efficient research environment
 - I helped Ann to develop the system
 - Realized how important to have business sense with strong IT background
 - Need to convert engineering mind – set to business mind set.
- Joined Deloitte Consulting
 - At the beginning, my lack of business sense gave me a hard time. In my very first project, the CBA I developed was trashed by my client because the assumptions I made is inaccurate. But I learned to convert my engineering mindset into business mindset from the mistakes and failures.
 - I tried hard to be exposed to different projects in various industries. In past 3 years in Deloitte, I worked in 4 industry (FSI, Public Sector, Media and Manufacturing). I focus on ecommerce strategy and effectiveness. I delivered the e-system for NYPD, my business process framework is guiding a Fortune-500 Insurance company to make their IT investment.
 - My experience made me feel a passion in the business opportunities in virtual work. There has to be a innovative and integrated strategy for business to move their business into the online world.

Wharton – Essay #1 (2 of 3)

Describe your career progress to date and your future short-term and long-term career goals. How do you expect a Wharton MBA to help you achieve these goals, and why is now the best time for you to join our program? (1,000 words)

Short-term career goal: Be a strategic management consultant focused on marketing and consumer strategy

- Why?
 - US market will be the first country which will reach the mass adoption point to build an integrated platform.
 - It is a globalized market
- Why me?
 - My strong IT background
 - Programming hobby gives me a good understanding on the new released technology
 - Advanced education on Computer Science enables me to capture the general trend of technical wave
 - My business technology consulting exp
 - Give me deep understanding on understand business processes and identify which tech to enhance those processes
 - Bridge IT and business
- Need:
 - Business education to make the right assumptions on investment
 - Understanding deeply on marketing operations and systems

Long-term career goal: become a strategic leader of a Chinese enterprise to implement an integrated marketing strategy, building a most recognized and respected brand in the world.

- Why?
 - China should enter the big league, one of the necessary actions is to build its brand
 - Lack of a well recognized brand reduce the profit margin
- Why me?
 - My dual culture background
 - My understanding of tough change
 - The US strategic marketing consultant exp
- Need:
 - Global vision
 - Other successful exp from Jap, Korea....

Wharton – Essay #1 (3 of 3)

Describe your career progress to date and your future short-term and long-term career goals. How do you expect a Wharton MBA to help you achieve these goals, and why is now the best time for you to join our program? (1,000 words)

Why Wharton MBA?

- Systematic business education with breath and depth. Wharton offers a full cover of all the business education
- Student club offers leadership opportunity.
- Global environment offers best opportunity to build a global mindset.
- Learn successful exp from other country to help China enter the big league – Jap, Korea....

Why now is the best time?

- With a pure engineering education background, in my 3 years business consulting work, I felt I don't know what I don't know. I am reaching a peak to leverage my past education background and feel strong wish to connect the dots of my past 3 years consulting experience.
- For my personal experience, my past 26 years prepare me with personal and professional experience for changes. With my project experience in bringing changes to my clients, I feel now is time to gain some systematic knowledge on how to bring change to an organization .
- For the environment, now is the age of technology boom. With Google and other tech breakthrough, and also much stronger BI technology, the new age for marketing and product development is approach. I want to enter MBA to prepare myself for this new wave.
- For my country, China is at the time to upgrade industrial structure. We need to play in the big league. I want to enter MBA to learn the experience from other successful players (Japan, Korea) to help my country enter its new stage.

Wharton – Essay #2

Option 1

Describe a failure or setback that you have experienced. What role did you play and what did you learn about yourself?
(500 words)

Belo Project Risk Assessment Project

Failure Description:

- It is my first project in Deloitte. I was sent to help a “mini” media giant to plan a CMS change.
 - CMS is a critical component for a media firm.
 - Client is concern on the change and hired Deloitte to help them to identify the risk and benefit.
 - I was relatively new to CMS area and a fresh consultant with no previous experience.
- Project challenges and background
 - My task is to conduct a workshop with a group of directors and senior managers to identify gaps, risks and business needs.
 - The engagement partner really wanted to push this effort forward. It could be a multi-million opportunity for Deloitte.
 - But the client is not ready for the change. They are nervous and concern on the change.
- My manager and I both felt that my in-experience could make my clients more nervous and concern on the change and also Deloitte’s capability
 - I read 500 pages of relative material to prepare for the workshop, trying to build my domain knowledge in 3 days before the project
 - On the workshop, I tried to hide my inexperience by avoiding tough questions and leading the workshop within my knowledge
- It was not working.
 - We were not collecting deep enough questions. Cannot identify real risks or opportunities.
 - The client felt more nervous because they could tell I am hiding something.
- After two weeks, I decided to be candid to my team.
 - I admitted that I had limit experience on our topics.
 - I told my client that I apologize for my misbehavior before and I would like to work with them closely in a more open environment to make the change happen.
- I tried to set a good tone for the team
 - I performed more a like a student and started to ask questions instead of hiding.
 - The team started to talk without hiding their real concerns and thoughts.
- We collected more useful information in the rest 4 weeks and worked hard on analytical works. We delivered a thorough risk assessment analysis. Even the client admitted that the report is the best one they’ve seen. BUT, we still lost the client’s.
 - Because it is impossible for us to rebuild a trustful relationship in 4 weeks, which we broke in the first 2 weeks.
 - But the client didn’t extend our work there. We lost the client for the future phase...

What I learn about myself

- As a junior professional, I cannot be arrogant. Many knowledge is not transferrable from books and documents. I need to be work in down-to-earth style to learn from first-hand experience in my following projects.
- My understanding on leaders is one-sided. Leadership is not just about courage, passion and excellence, but also candid, use the right people, and setting a right tone to the team. I need to enhance my leadership skills in my following projects.
- Business is not just about deliverables, but knowing your customers and establishing relationship and network. Even delivering good works doesn’t mean engaging your client.

Wharton – Essay #2

Option 2

Describe a failure or setback that you have experienced. What role did you play and what did you learn about yourself?
(500 words)

Wharton – Essay #2

Option 3

Describe a failure or setback that you have experienced. What role did you play and what did you learn about yourself?
(500 words)

Wharton Q2 (Grad School Project Failure)

Wharton – Essay #3

Tell us about a situation in which you were an outsider. What did you learn from the experience? (500 words)

My culture shock experience

- Transferring to University of M was a culture shock.
 - Gone were my friends and Chinese culture environment that I was familiar with.
 - I was in a new environment surrounded by strangers and western culture.
 - Difference is something that made me nervous and uncomfortable.
 - Univ. of Minnesota has the largest number of Chinese students. But they formed some small groups isolated from the others.
- I found it hard to communicate with Americans and adapt myself into the new environment
 - My eastern thinking is hard to adapted into the “American way”.
 - For example, on class discussion I struggled to present and defend my idea without knowing whether what is correct.
- I became an outsider.
 - I dealt with the challenge by gravitating toward people who were similar to me or appeared to share the same values I had grown up with.
 - I put up my guard, with doubts about how I could relate to the Americans and think in “their” way.
 - I, and the other Chinese and Asian students, formed our own group on campus.
- After being an outsider for couple months, I realized I need to face the challenge and change.
 - One day, after finishing another “mini-discussion” on class, I thought to myself, why I came here? Should I continue on the same parochial path and remain content with what I learned back at home, or explore what these new people and experiences had to offer.
 - I decided to take a chance and make a change.
 - My decision to breakout of old mindsets enabled me to open myself to the new environment.
 - I learned to tolerate the difference and stop making assumptions
 - I used every opportunity to adapt myself into the new environment. For example, borrow my classmate’s notes to learn how they approach a problem based on the highlights on American’s notes.
 - I further challenged myself to join the campus debating club and book reading club.
 - My accent gave me a hard time on the debating, I was always assigned to do the background analysis and preparation work
 - It took me 4 hours to finish a chapter that took the other s in the reading club one hour.
 - Some Americans didn’t understand at first – “why don’t you join those Asian club?”
 - Many Chinese students didn’t understand me either. They told me you have to do it modestly. “You would never be able to do in their way.”
- But I didn’t give up.
 - The harder the challenge, the more motivated I am.
 - My persistence touched many American friends. They gave me many helps.
 - One year later. I was selected as a member of the debating team to attend a Minnesota debating competition.
 - I used my own example to recruit many foreign, especially Asian students to join the club. Some quit, but more stayed and found themselves.
 - As one of the very first of China’s Gen-Yers who come to US. I am proud that I showed difference from the older generation of Chinese students. I showed the open minded personality from newer generation of Chinese students.
- What I learn
 - Culture shock is tough. It touches the deepest part of a person’s mind – the way of thinking. The deeper you touched it, they harder you will experience, but the more you will grow.
 - This is one of my first tough changes I experienced. I’d gained the courage to jump out of familiar patterns. Unlike those unaccustomed to change, I’ve been growing by constantly challenging myself and absorbing new values.

Wharton – Essay #4a (1 of 2)

A. Where in your background would we find evidence of your leadership capacity and/or potential? (500 words)

1. TRI Business Process Framework.

- As an analyst on the project. Process analysis and alignment.
- I might not be an expert in Marketing, in HR, in Sales Management, but I talked with those directors and VPs in those field and analyze the process I collected
- There is not one before who built an overall picture for the client's processes and functions
- My manager and I, we did it. In 6 weeks, I talked with 50+ groups, analyzed 400+ functions and identify their dependencies and relationships.
- We also discussed with each group and made them agree on the view. So in the future, they could easily identify the impact of their actions.
- I built up a map to show the relationships. The map guided the client's annual IT investment and hung on its CEO and CIO's office.
- Also, my framework is set as an example internally. I helped many other groups to understand my map and serve other clients.
- (Leadership is about aligning people, processes and resources to a common vision)

2. NYPD e- System.

- I came to the project as a member on the PMO team.
- I identified a unusual high defect rate when reading the status report.
- I tried to read some code from the outsourced developer and found the quality of coding is low and many conflicts in design
 - "You used 47 lines to finish this task? I could use 10 lines ..."
 - Programmer is not motivated. Designer is in lack of technical background.
 - Meeting deadline is higher priority.
- I proposed to make a change. And I felt I should work closely with the development team
 - "This is not our task..."
 - "We will miss the go-live date"
 - I said, "we could not afford the low quality, if go live, it wont work..."
- The partner is engaged and pushed for the change.
- I took a team of 2 designer and 3 developers to form a team to pilot the new way to work
- I was the youngest.
 - I tried to motivate developers by assigning higher visibility and helped the designer to communicate with developers.
 - I didn't take credit and passed those credit to my team members. "They made it happen!"
 - Task is moving slower and the quality improved a lot.
 - We met each checkpoint on time by high quality of code.
- The pilot finally succeed and we brought the change to the whole team
- We finally met the go live date and saved 40% of the budge on testing.
- When watching Law and Order, I said, "see, they might be using my system there !"
- (Take risk, motivate people)

Wharton – Essay #4a (2 of 2)

A. Where in your background would we find evidence of your leadership capacity and/or potential? (500 words)

3. Dragon Boat Race

- I founded a dragon boat team and served as the captain to participate the 2007 dragon boat race.
- The team initially had difficulties to find a steady pace.
- I decided to replace the key paddlers, our strongest men, with two girls.
- Everyone thought that was crazy.
- I persuaded the team to try following the different key paddlers on land and counted the times we paddled together.
- The girls led us to paddle 20% more! Along the 5-minute race, the team could afford a modest pace set by the girls.
- We finally won the race.
- As the captain, I am proud that I turned a doubted crew into a winning team.
- As a leader, face the skeptics and make the change. Use the right people at the right place

4. Disaster release

- As a board member of China Club. After disaster, I really felt I should do sth.
- On that Monday, just after it happened, I made a plan for donation drive on my flight to SFO.
- But I felt I should do more.
- In Feb.
 - For my lunch hour. I read news from Chinese news and translate the news into English to show how Chinese people bravely fought in this tragic event.
 - On my flight, I prepared communication letter that could be used for those Multi-national company employees to engage their colleges and send request for company donation matching program
 - I also set a goal to myself to engage 5+ non-Chinese friends everyday and I did it – not just my colleagues, college friends, but my clients event the hotel reception. I also form a networking group to invite friends to join an effort to support the orphans in the situation.
- I motivated many people while juggling with my tight schedules.

Wharton – Essay #4b

B. Is there anything about your background or experience that you feel you have not had the opportunity to share with the Admissions Committee in your application? If yes, please explain. (500 words)

Not selected....