



THE BUSINESS OF GETTING IN

You've decided to go to business school. Now what?

The key is to choose the right program and maximize your chances of acceptance. There's no magic formula, but following these tips will put you ahead of the game.

By Andrea Kahn



KNOW YOURSELF

"Your first task in finding a business school that's a match for you is to look within," says Derrick Bolton, assistant dean and director of MBA admissions at the Stanford Graduate School of Business in California. Consider: How do you prefer to learn? In what kind of culture do you thrive? What are your aspirations? "Once you've defined your preferences, you'll find it simpler to find a program that is a good fit," Bolton says.

While you're at it, ask yourself: Is this really what I want to do? Going to B-school with unrealistic expectations or because others have told you to is a recipe for disaster. "An MBA can help you get a job, but you'll only succeed if you're truly motivated and interested," says

Daniel M. Gropper, associate dean and Luck Professor of MBA programs at Auburn University in Alabama. "An MBA won't make someone successful if they don't already have the drive, intelligence and ability to succeed in high-pressure situations."



KNOW YOUR SCHOOL

Speak to current and former students of the schools that you're interested in. Visit campus if you can, meet with admissions officers and sit in on a class. Ask about the academic and social expectations. Find out which schools mesh with your goals. If you want to work on Wall Street, make sure students from those schools have gone on to work there.



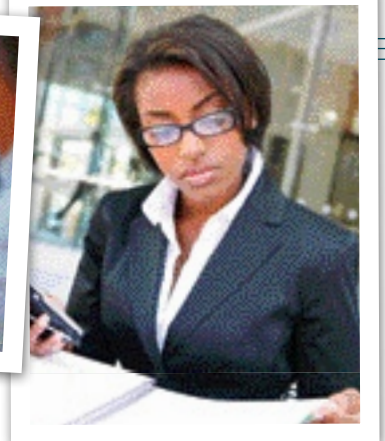
GET FOCUSED

Most students want to graduate from a highly ranked school and the rankings in *U.S. News & World Report* and the *Financial Times* are a good place to find those schools, but rankings shouldn't determine your final choice. There are niche programs for virtually every career interest whether it's aerospace, arts administration, real estate, international business, or church management. "Start with the end in mind and work backward," says Kelly R. Wilson, assistant dean of



Kelly R. Wilson,
Georgetown
University's
McDonough School
of Business

MBA admissions at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business in Washington, D.C. "Be open to different programs based on your own personal and career goals."



Did You Know: 27 percent of prospective MBA students plan to work for their current employer after they receive their degree.
GMAC 2011 MBA.com Prospective Students Survey

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CONSIDER THE DELIVERY

Executive MBA and evening programs geared toward working professionals are great alternatives for those who can't afford to take time off work to complete a full-time MBA program. Just know that juggling work and school obligations can be quite challenging. "Make sure you have the support of your employer and that personal circumstances—such as family commitments and community involvements—will allow for significant class and study time," says Melissa Trotta, associate dean for executive degree programs at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business.



Melissa Trotta,
Georgetown
University's
McDonough School
of Business



PREPARE FOR THE GMAT

The Graduate Management Admission Test is a computerized test measuring verbal, mathematical and analytical writing skills. It's one determinate of how well prospective students will fare in the classroom. It can be taken almost any day of the year. While a high score will help you get into a better school, it's not everything. In fact, some executive MBA programs don't even require it.

"The GMAT score is considered with respect to the entire application," Wilson says. "We accept people with a range of scores, but those on the lower end bring other things to the table that offset those scores, such as the strength of their work experience or their academic work."

Allow adequate time to thoroughly prepare for the test. Think

about how you learn best. Do you need the structure of a formal class, or would you be just as successful with a self-study approach? When registering for the test, look at application deadlines and give yourself enough time to retake the test if necessary. "Allow a safety valve for the pressure of having a good test score," Gropper says. "Anyone can get sick or have a bad testing day."



BE REAL

Your admissions application should fairly represent your talents and strengths, and should be thorough and thoughtful. "If you don't recognize yourself in your application, then surely no business school will either," Bolton says. Rather than generalities, focus on specific projects that have meant something to you. And don't tell schools only what you think they want to hear. Business schools are looking for compelling, successful, dynamic applicants from a variety of backgrounds. An authentic personal essay from the heart can go a long way.



ACE THE INTERVIEW

The interview is an integral part of the admissions process. It gives schools a sense of how you would present yourself to future employers.



Daniel M. Gropper,
Auburn University

Conduct yourself with the same level of professionalism as you would on a job interview. Stay poised, dress appropriately and ask thoughtful questions. Again, preparation is key. "Someone may have great scores and look like

what we'd expect them to," Gropper says. "But if he or she is arrogant and self-impressed, we don't want them." //

TIP: Demand for MBA graduates is highest in finance, accounting, consulting, health care, and high-tech sectors.
GMAC 2011 Corporate Recruiters Survey



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