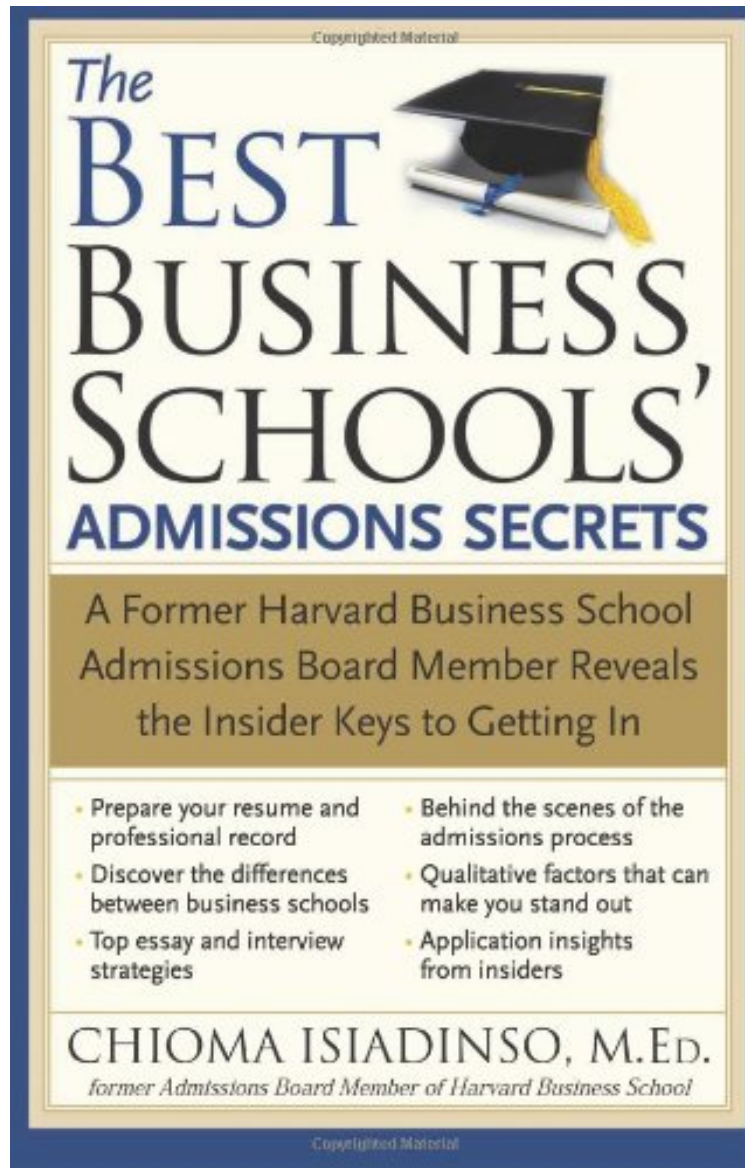


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The Best Business Schools' Admissions Secrets: A Former Harvard Business School Admissions Board Member Reveals the Insider Keys to Getting In

Chioma Isiadinso

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Chioma Isiadinso : The Best Business Schools' Admissions Secrets: A Former Harvard Business School Admissions Board Member Reveals the Insider Keys to Getting In before purchasing it in order to gage whether

or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Best Business Schools' Admissions Secrets: A Former Harvard Business School Admissions Board Member Reveals the Insider Keys to Getting In*:

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Read two years before applying to MBA programs
By Jaewoo Kim
This is a very sound book focused on the admissions to the top 8 MBA programs. The only regret I have with this book is that I wish I had read it earlier. The author provides deep insights into how each applicant is evaluated. MBA admissions to the top business schools is not all about GMAT and GPA. In order to be admitted to the top 5 business schools in particular, one needs to show tremendous leadership and other WOW factors. One needs to foster good relationships with potential MBA recommenders. And don't forget the arduous preparation for GMAT. Unfortunately, one can't just build a MBA WOW factor in few months. It may take years to build extracurricular credentials and leadership experience that an MBA program would find compelling and credible (it is too late to join the Peace Corp 3 months before the application). This would be an ideal book to read for those who just finished their undergraduate program and would like to attend an MBA program in a few years. It will provide quite helpful tips on how to prepare for the grueling and challenging MBA admissions process in a top school. DO NOT think high GMAT and GPA will guarantee you admission into a top MBA program (although they will surely help). To summarize the book, one needs to build a compelling personal brand and allow other parts of the application, interview, and recommendation confirm that brand. DO NOT write boring and trite essays that will put admission officers to sleep. Make your essays interesting and compelling with a touch of humor. The book also outlines a list of things an MBA applicant should never do in the essays, interviews, and recommendations. Other suggestions from the book: 1) Valid reasons why you would want an MBA (money and intellectual challenge should not be emphasized). 2) Choosing between Fulltime, parttime, executive, and accelerated MBA programs. (They are NOT the same). 3) Writing proper and effective Essays (Writing boring essays that do not foster strong personal brand is a sin). 4) Choosing and prepping the recommenders. 5) International student challenges (visa, obtaining financial aid, language barrier etc). 6) Financial Aid 7) How to handle interviews, open houses, and information sessions. Note, you WILL be evaluated in all 3, so be nice and professional to everyone. My main disappointment with the book is that the author provides deep insights into only top 8 MBA programs. Clearly, most of the suggestions are focused on the admissions to top 8 programs. The school I am targeting, which is a top 12 MBA program, was not dealt in any level of depth.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book is the perfect guide for your MBA application
By Yann Metz
This book is the perfect guide for your MBA application. I have used it as my "to go tool" and it has helped me understand what steps I need to take in order to be accepted into top MBA programs. Since I am not a consultant or banker, I really liked the tips for all types of candidates (consultants vs entrepreneurs vs artists) and the discussion about the challenges that they each face. Even if you are just considering applying to an MBA, this book will help you make up your mind. You will get the big picture of why/how to apply!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Book deserves six stars...
By Bulldog
The signal to noise ratio in this book is superb. The author's argument is that candidates who have the best odds of admission are those individuals who have a strong and clear sense of who they are, what matters most to them, and where they are heading in the future. This sounds simple, until you start trying to compress this into cohesive 250-500 word essays for an audience that typically has fewer than 20 people reading thousands of apps. The author breaks apart how to define and refine your story so that it is very compelling to any person in a position of authority to dictate your outcome (you'll find the methods spill over into many aspects of your professional and personal life). With that long preamble...
Chapter 1. Why do you want an MBA? Motivations, value proposition.
Chapter 2. Keys to separating yourself. Perspective from the admissions committee.
Chapter 3. 20+ core questions. Answer these thoroughly and your life will be so much easier during the process. The key is a great short summary of you/your brand. I cannot overstate the importance of the 3-5 themes you will develop here; you will revert to these throughout the entire process.
Chapter 4. What you should be doing pre-app. Nuts and bolts of what happens from the admissions perspective.
Chapter 5. Evaluation metrics of top schools. Methods to address leadership or lack of it.
Chapter 6. Soars, pgii, six c's, top questions admit committee asks, and great examples and analysis of essays. The book pays for itself 50x over just for this chapter.
Chapter 7. Resume. This not a job resume and it will be the platform for most of your interviews. Good tips.
Chapter 8. 50 fundamental interview questions. Amazing. Use a camera and record your answers. Really effective.
Chapter 9. Recommenders. Most who will write on your behalf do not write recommendations for a living. This chapter breaks down the process for you and your recommender so that what he or she is writing really complements your application. My recommenders found this incredibly helpful.
Chapter 10. Avoiding generic stereotypes.
Chapters 11-14. More goodies. The book contains numerous examples from real applicants. Chioma breaks apart why they are good so you are not left feeling helpless. Note that each part of the process builds on itself and reverts back to a very strong core message developed in chapter 3. The downside to the book: you may not have access to great live criticism. For this you need a set of friends who are really good at editing/eliminating fluff and/or you might opt to hire Expartus. This book is a gem. I'm glad it's in print and beyond thrilled with what I derived from the book and the interaction I had with Expartus.

Top MBA programs reject more than 80 percent of the applicants. When trying to beat the tough business school competition, how do you know what will get you fast-tracked to the "yes" pile (or the dreaded "no" pile)? No insider is better suited to set you on the right track than Chioma Isiadinso, a former Harvard Business School MBA Admissions Board Member and the founder of Expartus, an admissions consulting firm specializing in helping candidates get into the top MBA programs. The Best Business Schools' Admissions Secrets is the ultimate collection of insider advice, direct from one of the country's toughest admissions boardrooms. Centered around the concept of branding yourself, Isiadinso covers all the essential topics you need to master to stay ahead, including: Understanding the admissions criteria Essay essentials Resumes and professional records How to nail the interview Critical mistakes to avoid And much more No other business school admissions advice guide can claim this level of authority. The Best Business Schools' Admissions Secrets is sure to give you the edge you need to shine in the eyes of admissions boards everywhere.

"gives insider knowledge into what the members of the admissions board look for in an application (and a candidate)...Excellent resources for MBA candidates" - BusinessWeek.com About the Author Chioma Isiadinso was an Assistant Director of Admissions and a Member of the Admissions Board at Harvard Business School. Prior to working at Harvard, she was Director of Admissions at Carnegie Mellon University School of Public Policy and Management. She lives in New York. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter One Excerpt WANTING AN MBA IS a good thing. It suggests that you are ambitious and willing to push yourself to achieve a goal. But before starting on your application, you should examine what an MBA means to you. Be clear of your motivations and goals before embarking on the extremely challenging and expensive application process. All top business schools will expect you to address why you want an MBA. They each will word this question differently, but what they want to understand is what your career goal is and whether an MBA is necessary to help you achieve it. Equally important to the MBA Board is understanding whether your career aspirations reflect your true passion or whether they are simply the way for you to get your ticket punched. The issue of fit is also a very important one to business school Admissions Boards. They want to ensure that their program is right for you and that you are right for their program. The justification for an MBA will vary from one applicant to the next. The important thing is to remain true to who you are when presenting your rationale for pursuing an MBA. In this chapter, I will examine the four most popular reasons applicants cite for wanting to attend business school and how the Admissions Boards view these reasons. I will also review the benefits of obtaining an MBA and the different variables that candidates use in selecting a business program. Applying to business school will cost you a fair chunk of money. The average application fee is \$200, and given the acceptance rate of 10 to 20 percent, most applicants apply to four or more schools. In addition to the cost of the application fee, there is the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) to think of. With average GMAT prep programs charging about \$1100 to \$1500 (not including one-on-one tutoring), you should expect to shell out at least \$2000 just to apply to business schools. If you decide to hire an admissions consultant to guide you along the way, this figure can increase significantly. The MBA itself is a very expensive investment, with costs north of \$140,000. And I haven't even touched on the opportunity cost of leaving a lucrative job and forfeiting a salary and bonus for two years. If you include the lost income, the MBA price tag can easily be more than \$200,000. So before you take the application plunge, make sure the MBA is necessary to achieve your career goals. The good news is that although the MBA costs a considerable amount of money, the payoff can be substantial, with many graduates from top programs earning twice what they used to earn prior to receiving an MBA. But the payoff isn't only monetary. Many MBAs receive other perks, such as greater career exposure, contacts, skills, and so on. Before delving deeper into the benefits of the MBA, which I will further examine in this chapter, let's take a look at two major admissions traps that applicants fall into: jumping on MBA bandwagons and applying because they are unemployed. AVOID MBA BANDWAGON The MBA Board will be checking to make sure you are not simply getting on the MBA bandwagon because all of your friends are applying to business school. The MBA Board also wants to ensure that you are not applying simply because your firm has a structure where employees complete a two- or three-year analyst program and then have to leave. Analysts and consultants in investment banking and strategy consulting face this issue the most. It is understood that a majority of analysts and consultants will "move on" after two to three years and a significant number will end up pursuing their MBA degree. But this expectation of going for your MBA is not a strong enough reason to convince the MBA Board that you are serious about the degree. Candidates in these categories need to make a clear pitch for what their specific MBA goals are and how the particular program is best positioned to help them achieve their future success. Be wary of jumping on career bandwagons. Someone once asked me whether I thought she should join a private equity (PE) shop after working two years in consulting in order to get a PE stamp. My answer was that it depends on what you wish to do in the long term. If your passion is to start or lead a PE company, then making the leap now is fine. On the other hand, if it is simply to get a stamp, then it isn't the right path to take. MBA Boards can also see through someone's ploy of leaving a consulting or engineering job to join a nonprofit organization right before applying to business school specifically to get a social enterprise stamp of approval. On the other hand, if social philanthropy is a genuine interest, then make sure you connect the dots to other evidence in your professional

and personal life to show that social enterprise isn't just a passing fancy. Quite frankly, there is no set profile or work experience that guarantees admission to a top business school. So, at best, simply jumping on trendy bandwagons will signal to the MBA Board that you are not authentic about your career goals. Because each candidate's story varies, it is important to embrace your unique circumstance and articulate how the MBA fits with your goal and how it will transform your career.

GAIN ADMISSION DESPITE A PINK SLIP Another potentially flag-raising reason applicants give for applying to business school is that they lost their job and have nothing better to do. Obviously this situation is likely to yield an unfavorable outcome. Many casualties of the dot-com disaster contributed to the unprecedented application volumes seen at many leading business schools in 2001. Not surprisingly, many of the applicants did not gain admission to business school. From 2002 to 2004, many individuals received pink slips as a result of a slow economy. The 2007-2008 sub prime problems have led to job cutbacks in positions in mortgage backed securities. Many financial services companies have announced layoffs and some have shut down entire mortgage business units. Not surprisingly, some of those receiving pink slips will view business school as a viable option. Should you find yourself in the unfortunate situation of being unemployed, avoid saying that you are pursuing the MBA as a way to get back into the job market. I know, it sounds very obvious, but I have come across this rationale enough times to know that the obvious isn't always "obvious." Even if you don't explicitly state this reason for why you want an MBA, if you receive a pink slip and do not find alternative employment, the MBA Board will still likely conclude that you are seeking the degree because you do not have anything better to do. However, unemployed candidates are not necessarily doomed to rejection. I have worked with several unemployed candidates through my consultancy, EXPARTUS, and despite receiving pink slips, each was able to gain admission to elite schools. If you are unemployed, the important thing you should keep in mind is to use the time wisely to reassess your plans and to engage in activities that reinforce your brand. Using the time to learn a new language, to develop real skills that you truly care about, or to engage in activities that affect people's lives, through focused and committed volunteerism, can be justifiable reasons for how you have spent your time. For instance, if you were a varsity squash player and have always been interested in community involvement, now that you are not working a one-hundred-hour workweek, you can join an organization like StreetSquash to lend your skills to empower inner-city kids through athletics. Better yet, if you are trying to make a switch from finance to marketing, you can lead marketing initiatives to help this organization secure funding. The brief marketing experience you gain can provide insightful material for your essays and reinforce your justification for the career change.