



HBS

- Intended Post MBA:
- Industry: XXX (multiple options on the site)
- Function: XXX (multiple options on the site)
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)



Thomas

- Intended Post MBA: In the long run I intend to set up a financial institution whose step stone lies on the rigor of analysis that only Knowledge can provide.
- Industry: Investment Management
- Function: Activist Investor
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I need a HBS MBA in order to continue my professional journey. So far, I have nurtured a career path that values professionals able to provide intellectually sophisticated products. I appreciate the analytical rigor that only Knowledge can provide in business. I have explored environments in which I took the lead in solving problems - by challenging conventional wisdom. HBS MBA program is much more than conceptual frameworks. I want to be encouraged to think critically about these frameworks.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

My story would not be complete if I did not talk about a turning point in my life. My passion for Astronomy has changed the way I interact with others and defined my approach to act upon the world. What I have learned through my passion for Astronomy will also influence my future at Harvard as well as my post-MBA career path.

My curiosity made me a boy thirsty for Knowledge. In Astronomy, I found an endless source of discoveries. I still remember seeing the first episode of Carl Sagan's series Cosmos. At age 10, I was fascinated with the sky and the world above. My heroes in childhood were always scientists who used their intellectual prestige to change the world. Ten years later, I would further explore the theme when I signed in to the astronomy club in the college I was attending as an exchange student in XXX, Europe. Through this community, members could share their knowledge with the public. I was so excited that I sought a similar club to join as soon as I went back home. However, I found nothing similar in Brazil, so I searched the Internet and found like-minded people who welcomed my idea of setting up a club. Working as their catalyst, I founded the Cosmos Astronomy Club. I enticed my new friends to let strangers use our telescopes and be stunned by the wonders of the sky. We also delivered presentations in parks and public schools. But we could do more, I thought. The public deserved broader knowledge. I would have to convince others to welcome my idea of teaching lessons on my favorite subject. Despite my slim chance of success, I spoke to the management of XXX, my university. We would provide the community with free scientific education, I explained in order to earn support. They lent us a small classroom on Saturday mornings. As a teacher for the last four years, I have drawn valuable lessons from my classes and learned from my students. Today our more than 60 students per semester can enjoy astronomy and astrophysics courses. To ensure the sustainability of our project, I trained more teachers. Involving, motivating, and educating people, I have helped transform the way they think their world. This experience defined my choice and the way I lead people.

A few years later, as an investment management guy in a specific situation, I acted as an enabler of effective knowledge creation. At that moment, I felt that I had made the right career choice for my life. In this Knowledge Era, every institution should sponsor the sharing of Knowledge. The probability of increasing the assets under management of XXX, my current firm, reminded of what my previous employer experienced. I had studied the trade-off between liquidity and pricing, so I could predict serious consequences from such unsettling move. Naturally, productivity should soar and demand that we have scalability. No one asked me for it, but for two months, I put aside two daily hours in order to analyze my employer through the eyes of an investor. Hours of extra work enabled me to create a new model to measure productivity. "We have always done that way. Let's stick to it, ok?" - My boss and co-workers' view confirmed that it is just easier to follow what is established. They could not see the positive impact of change. Actually, they could not see the problem. My main challenge was to make my team think of a future problem and help them define it.



Additionally, I needed to state the problem in a way that will allow a solution. Thus, I showed them through figures how big our investments should have been to sustain a similar performance and proved that our investments would not have been liquid enough. My argument was “what worked in the past may not work in the future - let’s define the problem to fit a new reality”. The modus operandi was to play a fire fighter - answer the demands of a problem that had been defined in the past. Finally, my boss welcomed my studies and invited me to test them. He even insisted that I have a junior analyst to help me with what he called “Thomas’s Experience.” After successful empirical implementation of my model, I grew further aware of the leader’s role in redefining the way team members must define problems.

Now, when I have doubts about which steps to follow in my career, I always resort to my personal values: “will I be able to feed my intellectual curiosity?” I am fond of the greatest tool so far invented by humans in order to satisfy their curiosity: the scientific methodology in the approach of problems - “Tools + Curiosity = Unlimited Possibilities.” As I said before, I intend to set up a financial institution whose step stone lies on the rigor of analysis that only Knowledge can provide. I need Harvard Business School to support me.



David

- Intended Post MBA: Upon graduating, I intend to grow as an innovative leader inside XXX Education Practice, my MBA sponsor, and, in the long term, create my own organization focused on the intertwined frontiers, Education and Technology.
- Industry: Consulting (short-) / Entrepreneurship (long-term)
- Function: Consulting (short-) / Entrepreneurship (long-term)
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

Business is getting more and more complex. I expect to become a leader well acquainted with several disciplines. I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who have the courage to take bold steps and make decisions based on calculated risks. In order to understand and promote comprehensive and innovative solutions you have to appreciate complexity. I am looking for a learning environment in which I will learn to tackle some of the world's complex business problems.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

I believe I need to reveal to HBS Admission Committee the motivations that explain how all facts revealed in the other elements of the application, in a way or another, are related. I have never had any doubts that my “need to create”, my need for self-expression, is the propelling force of my past actions. In the future, it will be no different. Upon graduating, I intend to grow as an innovative leader inside XXX Education Practice, my MBA sponsor, and, in the long term, create my own organization focused on the intertwined frontiers, Education and Technology. The love for connecting multiple fields of knowledge is something I have inherited from my upbringing. Two college experiences confirmed my comfort in navigating smoothly and coherently across disciplinary frontiers. At HBS, I will explore my creativity through leadership training practices.

The need to understand complexity encouraged me to follow a career in the Academia. Discussing my plans with my supervisor, I learned about his old wish: create an interface to identify emotions and act upon them with verbal reactions. The main hardship in this endeavor was to insert “emotions” in the platform. In plain English: “how could we make synthesized voices sound neutral, sad or happy?” I embraced that challenge wholeheartedly. Our goal was to build unit selection voice that could portray emotions. Among many challenges was the fact that no one had ever successfully synthesized emotional. Another challenge was the language - no attempt whatsoever had been made in Portuguese. My professor proposed giving up this aspect and just let the machine release robotized sounds. I convinced him to let me try and told him that we could not simply translate existing models. I ignored the already published methods and went after innovative yet plausible solutions. I had no idea where all that would head, but I did not care. Just as it happens with Science, if we knew all the answers beforehand, there would be no experimentations and reformulations of established hypotheses. So that is when we chose to reconstruct and modify each particular trait of the Portuguese language. Concretely, we embedded the emotions on the run, something incredibly innovative. Later, promoting our partial success, we obtained support from international researchers. A renowned professor from Universidade de Minho (Portugal) helped us understand more about the speech blocks. In the end, we presented a novel and daring approach. Deconstruction and reconstruction of the language shed light on various aspects of the speech synthesis, enabling colleagues to confidently continue that endeavor. Real innovation shows itself in the gray zones. I no longer have an interest in pursuing an academic career. But now, I am doing the same in the business setting.

During college I often wore a black T-shirt proclaiming “I ♥ Complexity”. In place of the heart is a Mandelbrot set, a fractal pattern widely recognized as a symbol for complexity at its most beautiful. I was always fascinated by complex systems. At age 17, I chose to study Naval Engineering because of my passion (1.) for sailing; and (2.) machines, “the most complex



tools that man can invent.” Until the third year of my engineering program, my dream was to build boats and ships. And there was I pursuing my dream in my first internship at Naval Research Enterprise Internship Program (NREIP) at XXX. When you develop a ship, every single task involved in the process depends on cooperation. The integration of different areas of engineering calls for what we call interdisciplinary environment. From the first draft on paper to production and then maintenance, collaboration is essential to a successful resulting product. Once, as we were in the development phase, I noticed that there was not as much room as it was needed to install a number of pieces and systems in a given area of the ship. To me, it did not seem possible that the design people had yet realized that issue. I felt I should do something to solve that problem. It is almost instinctive: whenever I get involved in a project, in order to keep myself motivated, I have to dive into its complexity. More than once, I had been warned that “as engineers, we are not supposed to interfere in the designers’ job”. However, the intellectual challenge involved in that issue spoke more loudly than did my fellow engineers’ advice. After all, I would involve diverse knowledge areas in the definition of the problem at hand. Strategically, I approached the designers one by one and offered help with some analyses. I proved capable of supporting them and thus, earned their trust. In exchange, I could learn all there was about their systems. Next, I suggested meeting to study particular aspects of the installation process. We took each system into account. Then we analyzed the structural design. After contemplating the complexity of that phenomenon, we broke the problem into smaller pieces and distributed individual tasks among ourselves. As the only engineer working with those four designers, I could share my knowledge and experience, making important contributions and easing their work. We spent almost one semester together and our sense of accomplishment peaked when supervisors, managers and directors alike recognized our effort. My curiosity and my initiative culminated in the company’s acknowledgment of my approach as benchmark in the design process. I would never have done any of that alone. The knowledge and the expertise required in all disciplines came from a precious joint effort. Throughout this project I kept one book on my night table: “The Knowledge - Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation” It confirmed that knowledge creation is becoming a competitive advantage in most businesses. This is the knowledge era, which is significantly different from the “industrial society” and which sees knowledge acquisition and application as competitive factors. I will prepare myself to join this new society.

Upon college graduating, I pursued a career aligned with my personal values. My resume can defend my point.

At HBS, I expect to synthesize new ideas. I like learning that helps me see new patterns and elegant connections, cross the artificial boundaries of thought, and activate the imagination. Business is getting more and more complex. I expect to become a leader well acquainted with several disciplines. Taking advantage of different academic resources, I will learn to combine, for instance, history, psychology, and neuroscience in order to take strategic moves. I want to fully leverage this capability to attack what I consider the biggest challenge of Brazil: our precarious educational landscape. Before I can do so, I need a learning environment that feeds my desire to explore my creativity.



Victor

(...) What else would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy? (There is no word limit)

- Intended Post MBA: I shall create an Internationalization Practice Area within XXX and, later, join a Brazilian multinational company as a Chief International Officer.
- Industry: Consulting
- Function: Consulting
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I seek an MBA experience in which I can boost my leadership capabilities. I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who know how to articulate individual actions with collective efforts. I am good at defining, establishing, identifying, and translating a direction for collective action by followers. The MBA offers experiences through which students can learn more about values of group dynamics - I intend to explore my driven desire to influence positively the people around me.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

I would like to use this space to defend a very meaningful point for me. My personal values are directly related to my career project. My accomplishments so far bring evidence that I can and have the right to dream of growing into a global leader. HBS MBA will support me to make this dream come true.

I have always been a person driven by challenges. My country's economic and political scenarios offer a challenge to Brazilian companies: "how to grow into a global business?" I turned that challenge into my platform for my professional choices in the past. Harvard will help me consolidate this platform so that I can turn into a global leader. Looking ahead, I shall create an Internationalization Practice Area within XXX and, later, join a Brazilian multinational company as a Chief International Officer. Brazil has to face its challenges; I have been facing mine; HBS will prepare me to face ever-growing ones.

A global leader must have open-mindedness - the openness to finding out how a new culture can enrich his personal life. During childhood, I lived in the USA, where I realized my country was hardly known then. Observing my country through a foreigner's perspective, I was able, upon my return, to pay more attention to our values. I grew emotionally mature, with my eyes open to our problems as well as to the countless opportunities we have.

A global leader must have cultural sensitivity - the capacity to understand his biases. On the first day of college, I was looking for opportunities abroad. I wanted to replicate my eye opening experience in the USA. IAESTE is an organization that promotes international internships for college students. While most would choose US or Germany for these programs, I opted to work in Carinthia (Slovenia), a city I had never heard about. At age 21, I would take the "road less traveled", with limited access to the Internet and zero knowledge of the local language. I landed a job at a family-owned company that imported and sold electronic components. On foreign grounds, I exercised my understanding of cultural values. It takes me some effort to leave my comfort zone, mainly amidst cultural diversity. However, believing that I could surpass this obstacle, I developed the necessary sensibility towards that particular culture and I succeeded.

A global leader must have the ability to identify and prove the "different view" throughout his work environment. Nowadays, I participate in internationalization projects. Recently, as a consultant, I witnessed an attempt to acquire a major listed US competitor. Even today, such deal is unparalleled - most deals, especially in the industry, work in the opposite direction. The obstacles were numerous - from persuading investors to finance the deal to handling the



“poison pill” adopted by the US competitor’s management. Having experienced the complexity of breaking a contextual mold, I believe a HBS MBA is essential.

At HBS, I expect to consolidate my leadership style. I expect to lead passionately, directly, and for a cause greater than my own. I will strive to lead in a very human way, understanding that what motivates people is ownership in a vision, and the knowledge that they are critical to the outcome. Leadership to me is more than incentive systems, management structure, and mission statements. While these are critical components of management, leadership, in my view, is inherently human, is intensely personal, and should ignite a fire in the soul—and ultimately touch the hearts and minds of those you lead. I believe in the ability of human beings to effect large-scale change by motivating and believing in others. With the proper mind-set, we can rise to and meet almost any challenge.

I am confident that I can make a difference in a Brazilian company and reduce the gap to compete in the global market. My professional experience, complemented by an MBA from HBS, will allow me to become a well-rounded and qualified leader.



Sophia

- Intended Post MBA: After 4-5 years at XXX, my MBA sponsor, I will lead a consumer goods company with a strong sense of purpose.
- Industry: Consulting
- Function: Consulting
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I seek an MBA experience in which I can boost my leadership capabilities. I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who know how to articulate individual actions with collective efforts. I am good at defining, establishing, identifying, and translating a direction for collective action by followers. The MBA offers experiences through which students can learn more about values of group dynamics - I intend to explore my driven desire to influence positively the people around me.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

I would like HBS Admission Committee Board to understand how my perception of leadership has changed my life in the past five years.

“How will you lead?” In my third year of college, at age 20, I found in the HBS MBA homepage a collection of students’ testimonials on leadership. Inspired not only by their past actions but mainly by the promise that the future reserved for them at the time, I decided to expose my own view of leadership:

“My idea of leadership involves the perfect combination of heart and mind. I aspire to be someone who is not afraid of making difficult decisions, but at the same time has a strong set of personal and social values to guide me through these decisions. I aspire to be someone who is willing to listen, sensitive to others’ concerns, and open to the idea that I could be wrong. I aspire to be someone who will encourage the organization to embrace changes while helping everyone cope with the transition along the way. I will lead with passion—with a tough mind and a soft heart.”

Today, five years later, looking back and analyzing my four-year professional path, I can say that I’ve nurtured a career path that values professionals who know how to articulate individual actions with collective efforts. I am good at defining, establishing, identifying, and translating a direction for collective action by followers. Now, looking forward, I understand that my story needs the two years at Harvard.

When I entered college, at age 17, I naively believed that my professional success would depend exclusively on my effort, interest, and analytical capacity. Everything happened in France when I did my research on Institute of Robotics at the French Aerospace Center. Science and technology thrilled me with intellectual challenges. Research demanded sophisticated analyses, but did not allow me to synthesize impactful end-product solutions. Since I stood out among the researchers, I was invited to do my Ph.D. there. In a discussion with a professor on a technical detail, I suddenly had a breakthrough moment: “I could not spend my life in that lab discussing what only two or three technicians in the entire country could understand. I need to insert the people factor in my professional life.” I noticed that I needed those elements on a daily basis to achieve the balance I was looking for. I came back to Brazil and joined a Big-4 management consulting firm.

Acting temporarily as a post-MBA associate in one specific assignment, I realized that there is so much regarding leadership that I must still learn. As a consultant, I have to learn about balancing the work and life pressures. In this specific engagement, I realized that I got completely lost as I attempted to balance my personal life with a scenario that was testing my skills and resistance. In my three years of consulting, I have seen many directors get



divorced; partners that miss their children's birthday celebrations; I even witnessed one of my mentors having a crisis of identity. These are not inspiring leaders. Since I was responsible for one analyst, I felt frustrated to perceive that I could not change his resistance to my leadership style. After this engagement, in which the group blew out for lack of leadership, I realized that leadership is quite complex. I started to read about everything related to that subject and, mainly, I try to be involved in every possible leadership opportunity in my Firm. Supported by my mentor, I also devoted to various pro-bono actions. After this wake-up call, I joined different engagements where I could witness how certain managers or partner use their leadership styles to manage different leadership opportunities.

HBS MBA will offer me experiences through which I can learn more about values of group dynamics. The HBS MBA practical experience challenges management consultant analysts like me to go beyond their analytical function ("problem solvers") upon their return to the market as future managers. They are expected to add teamwork to the equation. In sum: the post-MBA challenge involves more than the pure need to "solve a problem," so the trick is to inspire a genuine problem solver to become a leader.

My intention is to grow into a leader who can transform and apply social behaviors in order to foster a more sustainable work environment. One project for a consumer goods company had me question the direct influence that these goods can have on people's routine and, in that way, change people's social behavior. Not many managers thoroughly understand social and environmental issues that are necessary to break conventional approaches of value creation, nor do they seek to explore and improve this field. Through the MBA, I can prepare myself to accomplish my dream of becoming a leader of a Brazilian consumer goods company with a strong sense of purpose. The peculiarity of the business challenges, which often comprise human behavioral aspects, and the speed at which transformation takes place, typical of this industry, is seducing. On top of all that, I will extract satisfaction from producing long-lasting benefits to society while serving this exciting industry. I need HBS MBA.



William

- Intended Post MBA: Private Equity (PE)
- Industry: PE
- Function: PE
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I seek an MBA experience in which I can take the most of change promotion capabilities to continue to follow an inspiring career in PE. I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who can couple strategic/analytical rationale and at same time promote effective changes. I am good at combining two complementary skills: analytical aptitude and action-oriented attitude. In my MBA, I intend to explore my questioning spirit.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit) consider your candidacy? (There is no word limit)

Dear HBS AdCom member,

No resume, data form, or recommendation letters would ever help me explain why and how I found a meaningful career in the past four years. Both my leadership style and my personal story suit the business environment of the PE industry. I would like to share how I have reached this comprehension.

As the son of a professor who quit his job in a college in order to set up a small biotech company, I was taught to value the combination of complementary skills: the ability to do the tough analytical work, but then step back and pull the trigger and execute. My father often says that a professor from USP will only leave the university in a hearse, straight to the funeral parlor. He was a pioneer. Despite the abyss in Brazil between scholar research and society, he identified an opportunity and was brave enough to leave the academic environment and build his first company in the biotechnology industry. In his fondness of challenges, he quit a safe and promising career. I witnessed his restless dedication to each of his ventures. Although he really enjoyed the Academia, he believed that as a professor in his lab, he could easily become alienated from reality. Always observing his adventures as an entrepreneur, I learned that in the business world there is a gap between theory and practice. It is the role of a leader to fill out this empty space and he has to rely on people surrounding him to do so. According to my father, there are many leadership opportunities in the business world and in the gap that exists between “having a good idea” and “having the attitude to take that idea off the paper.”

Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything. Since I was a boy, I learned the hard way about the power of change. Later, unlike other children, I learned to see that situation as something quite natural. Because of my father’s academic career, we kept moving around. When I was adapting to the neighborhood, to the new region and school, my father would get home with the news: “we’re moving next month.” In the beginning, it was very difficult to leave my friends behind. My father, however, was always there for me. He always reminds me that the *modus operandi* of most people is reaction: “change? Oh god, what will I lose with that?” only few think: “change, wow, opportunities ahead.” But it was not easy at all. I was the “troubled person” who could not fit with the kids. My pride told me I did not need the others, but deep inside I’d give anything to feel part of a group. My father observed as I felt rejected as a stranger in every new group: “In the beginning, you have to play their game; then, you invite them to play yours.”

I appreciate the rigor of in-depth analyses. On the outset of my college years, I was convinced that I should hone my evident analytical abilities though business-oriented assignments. Management Consulting was the best option - fast-learning environment, non-hierarchic way of thinking business, team-oriented assignments, and mainly, eagerness to learn and the



quest for excellence. The dynamics of working in assignments throughout team values would enhance an evident personal trait - the easiness to deal with people. But, I must confess: I missed the "action side" of the businesses.

I appreciate the capacity to implement my ideas. Private Equity helped me complement the binomial idea and action. I have delved into transactions, transposing the barrier of the superficial financial analysis and understanding the companies to the bones. With the business model involving selection and interaction with the management of our portfolio companies, connecting the dots involves thinking about and handling managers, selecting key executives, and negotiating budget and goals. Two years after my outstanding performance, my employer, aware of my needs, offered me an amazing opportunity to explore the corporate world before my MBA - a special ten-month work period at XXX. Now I can feel all the implications of having to 'solve the problem', but mainly for being responsible for all the aftermath decisions.

My focus on change as a means of improvement naturally influenced my choice of joining the private equity (PE) fund that works with the management of portfolio companies. I am a knowledgeable advisor and investor, but now I need exposure that CEO face daily. I need the HBS MBA to meet the combination of two complementary skills: the ability to do the tough analytical work, but then step back and pull the trigger and execute. PE funds are also probably the most prominent players in the evolution of the Brazilian way of managing businesses, which is still archaic; very influenced by the early family-run companies. I really believe that there is no real learning without action and no effective action without learning.

Thank you for this opportunity. I hope I can tell you other stories in my interview.

William



Igor

- Intended Post MBA: Venture Capital (VC)
- Industry: VC
- Function: VC
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I seek an MBA experience in which I can take the most of change promotion capabilities. I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who can couple strategic/analytical rationale and at same time promote effective changes. I am good at combining two complementary skills: analytical aptitude and action-oriented attitude. Bringing together my ability to rethink current reality with my analytical background makes me confident to lead a group to change established assumptions. In my MBA, I intend to explore my questioning spirit.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

I find it meaningful to share a turning point in my life. What I gained from this experience helps understand my deepest motivations while explaining why I dream of taking the Brazilian Venture Capital (VC) industry to another level.

The psychologist Gary Klein invented my favorite method for making decisions. He calls it the "premortem". It is pathetically simple: you imagine yourself in the future, after the project you're considering has ended in complete failure, total fiasco. Unlike a standard assessment session, which asks you what might go wrong, the "premortem" operates on the assumption that everything went as badly as you could have feared. It's already over. You're totally screwed. Now what? Knowing that you are dead provides a miraculous power. Impotence? Not at all. I leave each "premortem session" reinvigorated about my belief that I want to be the owner of my fate in the world. Perhaps Klein's technique works with me, for I have already empirically tested it.

Days before my 10th birthday, I was diagnosed with encephalitis. Although I was not fully conscious of that fact at the time, the illness made me resilient. It also made me confident to face challenges that life would present. Of course, I could also rely on my parents, who were always there for me. We never spoke about the high risk of death that I was running. Instead, we would pray together, faithfully. They never lost hope even when I entered a coma that lasted a couple of days. When I opened my eyes slowly and smiled, I made my father cry. I was born again, according to the doctors. As a family, we felt victorious. Another, even more difficult, challenge would come later. Raised by a housewife and a mason in the outskirts of Belo Horizonte, I had little chance of succeeding in life. My parents would hardly read and their writing was limited to signing their names. Like the vast majority of the population in my neighborhood, my friends did not go past elementary school. Today they keep jobs that require little intellectual ability. Unfortunately, their kids are following the same path. My future, according to my mother, depended on how much I studied. I needed a plan, an obviously bold plan. I promised her that I would break that poverty cycle, so I did all I could to win a scholarship in a private school. While many friends arrived in comfortable cars after a short ride, I used dad's old bike to cover the almost 7 km to the school downtown. The bus was a luxury reserved for very rainy days. After high school, I studied even harder to attend a preparatory course for college tests. Meanwhile my dad would start working in a construction 150 km away from the capital. I was so focused on my goal that I found the strength to travel 6 hours every day to school (3 hours to go and another 3 to return). I did not know this back then, but I was preparing myself for social mobility. Eventually I would be part of the 1% of people in Brazil who go to college. I took the time on the bus to review the subject and to do homework. Eventually, I was accepted to the country's best Engineering School (rate of admission is 0.7%). I paid my promise. My main inspiration was my grandmother. After she lost her fifth child to lack of resources/conditions in the countryside of Bahia, she arrived in Belo Horizonte with four children and, without knowing anyone, made herself a promise: "Never



again will I let another kid of mine die in such conditions.” Initially homeless, she eventually found a room in the back of a restaurant where she worked for forty years before retiring.

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything – all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. There is no reason not to follow my heart.

Professionally, I will follow my heart and pursue my career in the Venture Capital industry in Brazil. Brazil, my home country, has lived dramatic transformation in the past three or four decades. It has grown into a democratic nation, learned to eliminate soaring inflation, gone through privatization, and seen per capita income rise significantly. Nevertheless, much has to happen in my country's economic scenario. Private investments must increase, capital markets need to mature, and entrepreneurs have to be better prepared. I want to apply my courage to my career ambition - grow into a Venture Capitalist. With Brazil enjoying a more stable situation in the recent years, both our government and foreign investors have had the nation under their spotlight. However, there is still a huge distance between investors and entrepreneurs. My business knowledge, technical expertise, and familiarity with differences, obtained by living through different social classes, I feel eager to help reduce that gap. My support to entrepreneurs shall enable them to structure their businesses while we seek investors for funding.



Marcus

- Intended Post MBA: I intend to return to XXX, my MBA sponsor; later, I shall blend economic and social development as I lead teams in private-public frontiers.
- Industry: Consulting / Private-public Frontiers
- Function: Consulting
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I seek an MBA experience in which I can work on my “self-development project.” I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who are able to take advantage of the power that change brings to people’s lives and to my own. I am good at applying my self-awareness to improve interpersonal effectiveness in the groups I join. I must continue to devote to professional assignments that promote change in borderless, diverse, multicultural environments. I need HBS MBA.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

I need the following space to explain the real motivations that inspired me to build a professional journey that would take me to my “ultimate career goal”: I shall blend economic and social development as I lead teams in private-public frontiers.

HBS will inspire me to accomplish my long-term goal. I am committed to making a significant contribution to the Brazilian society by improving the public sector. My childhood shaped my development and drives my goal. Improvement in the public sector is a shortcut to the improvement of my country’s economy and society.

HBS will strengthen my desire to bring new perspectives to group dynamics. I was barely 10 when I found out what inspires me in life. As I watched the news - Israeli and Palestinians negotiating the Camp David agreement, I made my mother smile when I announced my career as a diplomat. Experimenting with new cultures and dealing with interdisciplinary themes while living abroad: that’s what I would like to do in life. Applying to college, I envisioned the means to follow my dream: International Relations at USP, Latin America’s top university. I started publishing articles and working on research for the Brazilian government. My main legacy to USP was the creation of an exchange program. I had to establish a partnership from scratch and eventually I earned a scholarship to live in Hungary. After an amazing period in Budapest studying different subjects such as Law, Business, Journalism, Public Health, and Urban Planning, I sought some ambassadors. Evaluating the diplomatic career, I realized that with the international expansion of Brazilian companies, there would be a demand for a new kind of professional, with fluency in politics and business settings, a frontier still to be defined. That’s how my desire to explore the business world began. During my Master’s degree, a classmate mentioned strategic management consultants: “I’m not sure, but apparently those guys solve intricate issues in big corporations”. I had never heard of BCG, Bain or McKinsey, but why not? At the same time, I had to take advantage of my intellectual courage. Until I turned 23, I had never touched an Excel spreadsheet. My world consisted of man and his complex relationship through political institutions. Consulting would allow me to mix numbers and humanities and to have an international career perspective. Two years after I became a management consultant, I had my “magical moment” where you feel you are living for what you are meant for. Through a specific consulting assignment, my expectations were reassured: I have learned how to bring the private sector managerial expertise to the government spending capital. It was a massive, 10-month study of Brazil’s railroad infrastructure and its capabilities for meeting passenger-traffic demand during the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil and 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Amidst a political and economic complex arena, I helped my team make several recommendations, including structuring rules of public concessions/privatizations, defining and monitoring clear metrics for rail-sector players, and providing ways to increase private-sector participation in the industry.



The business world is changing. I look forward to living practical experiences with diverse people. Organizational change implementation is an exercise that requires the effective use of power and influence. How can you be an effective change agent in your organization? What factors can affect success? I expect to know more about my emotional strengths and shortcomings, and to be more aware of the effect that I can have on others. I need to be involved with dynamic environments where people dare to question their own premises - I like to question my beliefs.

Once I earn my MBA degree at Harvard, I will focus on creating the public sector practice at XXX. My employer has done infrastructure, education, and oil and gas projects for the Brazilian government. Alternatively, I could serve a state owned company. Relying on knowledge and experience, many businesspeople have succeeded in the Brazilian political scenario. I might even do a summer internship at XXX at the invitation of XXX, who served XXX and now holds a position in the state XXX. I am sure my people skills and the analytical strength I built through consulting engagements will add value to the public sector. Brazil suffers with bureaucracy unprepared servants, and society pays the price. At Harvard, I can prepare myself to address serious questions in the Brazilian public sector.



Laura

- Intended Post MBA: Start Up
- Industry: Entrepreneurship
- Function: Entrepreneurship
- How does pursuing an MBA support your choices above? (Allowed: 500 characters)

I seek an MBA experience in which I can work on my “self-development project.” I have nurtured a career path that values professionals who are able to take advantage of the power that change brings to people’s lives and to my own. I am good at applying my self-awareness to improve interpersonal effectiveness in the groups I join. I must continue to devote to professional assignments that promote change in borderless, diverse, multicultural environments. I need HBS MBA.

Essay: As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA? (There is no word limit)

Dear HBS AdCom member,

No resume, data form, or recommendation letters would ever help explain what I felt the day I walked out of Megamega, the company that I created with Lucas, Otavio and Paulo during college. I abandoned a dream and doubted my entrepreneurial capacity. I failed to keep us united as our venture grew. By sharing this failure, I can show I understood the significance of team building while paving my way to become a serial entrepreneur.

Long ago, I learned at home the real value of belonging to a group that shares values. I will forever feel in debt with my father. I witnessed his herculean efforts to support my sick grandparents while offering his children a comfortable life and the best possible education. Like my role model, I believe that ‘no one should be left behind’ and do what I can to help others. They, in exchange, recognize me as a committed, dependable individual. Early on, I understood that my actions will reverberate, affecting others around me. Later, as I left home for college, my choices clearly followed from my need to grow within a group that shares values. The need to belong to a group filled my 4-year college experience. In my ambition to make my family proud, I would attend a top university far from home. I soon formed a new family at Unicamp, top-tier Brazilian university, as I saw professors as parents and classmates as siblings. Besides excelling academically, I committed to the community: choir, volunteer activities in asylums, student representative, and goalkeeper in handball. I became an example to others. Unlike most classmates, who could easily afford tuition, I attended Unicamp on a scholarship from Fundacao Estudar, cofounded by Jorge Paulo Lemann, BA from Harvard University and member of HBS Advisory Board. I nurtured a feeling of gratitude towards that community. I also joined AIESEC to make foreign students feel a sense of belonging. And as student representative, I helped elect a new Dean and created a campaign to criticize the school’s positioning on the market. I made lifelong friends while contributing to my community.

Graduation was near: “how could I replicate my cherished values in my professional life?” In that year, I had excelled as an intern at XXX (management consulting firm). But I felt I should put my career plan - entrepreneurship - into practice. It was time to move on. Instead, I moved back. Lucas, my former partner, wanted me to return to Megamega, which we had founded with Otavio and Paulo through the college incubator. For divergences in negotiations on investments, Otavio, Paulo, and I had left the company. Lucas believed in investments to take our project to unthinkable dimensions. We wanted to wait until we could improve our product. But I avoided any group conflict. I value harmony highly. Trying to please many people at once, I cannot always stand up for an unpopular decision. When I don’t express my opinions, I mislead others into thinking I agree with them. Otavio and Paulo relied on me to argue with Lucas, but I did nothing. The group blew up. I doubted my entrepreneurial profile.



My choice of Management Consulting was clear: the only career that allowed me to work in inspiring groups. I learned much from bright peers. From a privileged position, I observed how corporations operate and make decisions. Now I know: nowadays the coolest business opportunities lay in start-ups. My dream had remained dormant for two years when - surprise - Lucas invited me back. But returning would only make sense if I could turn the organization upside down. I had to prove that Lucas's one-man-show mentality would take Megamega nowhere. Moving forward required a strong team with bold ambitions. Unfortunately, Lucas overlooked this element in the reshaping of the business. "Lucas, nowadays, the 'money factor' has lost importance; a team will make ideas take off." Negotiations on hiring me back ceased when I convinced him that I would build the dream team. Recruiting talents for a tiny company with unproven track record would be tough. I rescued our two bright competent former partners. It felt like returning to our old rock band. But to convince them to leave a top consulting firm and IB, I shared my dream. Their initial skepticism vanished when I made them see how far we could go and how big the company could get. I highlighted our chance for entrepreneurship with steady cash flow. I motivated them: we would get things done and gain ownership for our decisions, stuff they missed in their employers. After that, getting to the signatures became easy. We joined Megamega as managing partners. Since then our team has grown from 12 to 57 members. We have secured US\$XXXMM with VC's for expansion. Ok, ok, you have my data form, huh?

Last June I spoke to a peer from XXX (my former consulting firm), MBA HBS' 13, about his summer job. He built XXX with two HBS classmates. Among the benefits from Field in HBS, he highlighted: "for the first time in my life, while considering starting up my venture, I made my own decision. Until then it was all about what my family expected, what my professor advised, and what the market ruled. The many ideas exchanged with HBS classmates were most encouraging. It is somewhat scary, but definitely worth every minute of it."

I believe entrepreneurs show high tolerance to frustration. Truth is we only know someone's value when he makes a mistake. If one has never erred, one has never tried anything different. Understanding my strengths and weaknesses is a life-long exercise and I will do it right and wrong along my journey towards self-awareness. I want to be a serial entrepreneur, preferably with Lucas, Otavio and Paulo and develop products and services that make us proud. I want to build teams with a sense of purpose.

Thank you for this opportunity. I hope I can tell you other stories in my interview.

Laura