Version: 1

Client Name: John **Target School:** Wharton

Essay Question:

Taking two years to pursue an MBA requires a considerable investment of time and resources. Please describe the path leading to your decision to pursue a Wharton MBA now. How do you expect the MBA experience to benefit you on both a professional and personal level? (1,000 words)

Essay Type: Future Goals / School Fit

Actual Word Count: 1150 **Target Word Count:** 1000

Original Essay with Editor's Comments:

I aspire. I plan. I execute. Cliché or not, this has been the cornerstone leading me from a fledgling student to a business professional, fully prepared to pursue my MBA at Wharton.

[Comment 1] My alma mater launched, upon matriculation, an orientation program that offered new admits consultation on academic study, and more importantly, early career plan. Tested to possess great potential in business, I pinpointed MBA as an ideal master degree to pursue following several years' solid work experience. Even more heartening was the fact each year our university boasted a cohort of alumni admitted by top programs including Wharton, Harvard and Chicago.

[Comment 2] With plans made, I embarked on the trek by opting to major in international finance, in addition to taking a broad spectrum of business-related electives including intermediate accounting, economics and banking. Unfortunately, most of the teaching materials derived from the communist time while teachers still resorted to the stale methodology of indoctrination. Final exams required students to memorize theories mechanically and took the form of multiple choices in lieu of more subjective case-based analysis. Though less stellar than my core course grades, they further solidified my plan to acquire a formal business degree.

[Comment 3] My liberal arts background proffered me great latitude in engaging in a variety of functions requiring disparate [Comment 4] skill-sets, thanks to my versatility as well as knowledge build-up. After all, I position myself as a generalist instead of a specialist typified as an accounting or software programmer. In retrospect, I have been progressing on a rolling project basis, with each stage building upon the previous one. [Comment 5]

My peers at each organization are mostly three or four years senior to me; nevertheless, my performance has been well on par with, if not better than, that of others. Unfortunately, to assume that my road to Rome has been plane and wide all along would be too premature a conclusion to jump at.

[Comment 6] While my project at International Media Corporation, my second employer, was in high gear, the 9.11 tragedy reduced international travel to a standstill [Comment 7] . For details, please see essay No. 2.) As if this were not enough, the ensuing fiber-optic scandal in which International Media Fiber Optics was involved, worked perfectly as the last straw—our parent company suspended its China-based operations including my project. The unemployment seriously undermined my career planning and mercilessly shattered my blueprint. I did not burn money; neither had I cooked books, yet was victimized by the irrational and irresponsible human nature. [Comment 8]

The ensuing half a year was to bring my career aspiration out of the murky. Six months with the UN initiative (for details, please see essay No. 3) were also a time when I reflected upon the world at large. Obviously it is no perfect world, but should it behave like this? What is my next career stop, or is there still one? A victim of the corporate ethics meltdown, I could not help feeling frustrated and disoriented—MBAs apparently played a large role in scandals. Consequently, this experience, allowing me to contribute to society, constituted a break from the mercenary world to seek rationalization.

[Comment 9] Originally my career plan was simple: to excel at workplace, get an MBA, and then work as a top strategy consultant before settling down as an executive at a corporation.[Comment 10] My work relationship with the UN program manager, a Wharton undergraduate who went on earning a master's degree in technology at U Penn, substantially changed all this. This time, I started to perceive MBA from a new angle—first and foremost, MBAs must be socially responsible before they can aspire to reap professional achievements; otherwise they are still doomed to failure however smart they are. [Comment 11] This was again solidified by my acquaintance and mentorship, at the UN conference, with an investment-banker-turned-social-good-doer, [Comment 12] also the founding chairman of the US-based Green Earth Institute. There were, and are, responsible people and organization after all. [Comment 13]

Six months on, I headed back to the corporate world, confidence recovered. National Data Systems (NDS) seemed an ideal place to start my career anew—I knew so the minute I saw the receptionist for interview—in lieu of charming girls, a pygmy [Comment 14] handled the task. Later I learned this deep-rooted culture resulted from NDS's strong advocacy of handicapped-hiring. As for me, I further extend it to hiring veterans in my department. Not only do I commit social obligations, but the department actually benefit from their ultra reliability and diligence. Besides, In addition, I volunteered as the department representative of the corporate environment, for the office health and safety initiative.

Comment [Editor1]: Stating that something sounds cliché does not make it sound less cliché - this opening statement implies that your decision to pursue an MBA at this point is all part of a grand plan from which you have not wavered, but the rest of your essay goes on to explain a period of uncertainty without convincingly assuring the reader that you have recovered from that uncertainty about the merits of a corporate career.

Comment [Editor2]: The basic message of this paragraph is understandable, but it could be clearer and more direct - upon entering your university you were tested and shown to have an aptitude for business, so you decided that's what you would study. That could suggest that it was a course of study that you didn't have a lot of choice over, or were strongly persuaded to follow - even if that is true, I would find a way to emphasize that it was a choice you made and are happy with - you could do this simply by saying you were pleased when you ...

Comment [Editor3]: You do not have to emphasize the shortcomings of your school's business curriculum - the reader will probably assume that business education in a communist or ...

Comment [Editor4]: Maybe say "varied" instead.

Comment [Editor5]: This paragraph does not seem necessary in light of the question, except perhaps the part about your versatility and ...

Comment [Editor6]: This paragraph is not necessary either, in terms of getting to the point of why you have chosen to get an MBA.

Comment [Editor7]: Add generalist/versatility comment to this paragraph if you think it is important in explaining your career progression.

Comment [Editor8]: While it was obviously horrible to have your life turned upside down by situations beyond your control, it does not come across well to express it in such tragic terms. In ...

Comment [Editor9]: Again - the emotional, negative terms you use to describe the business world do not come across well - you had some very bad luck, but you were fortunate to get a position ...

Comment [Editor10]: would start the entire part about 9/11 with this sentence.

Comment [Editor11]: It doesn't really follow that working with someone who does not have an MBA would change the way you look at people with MBAs - it seems that you are mentioning him sim ...

Comment [Editor12]: Normally one says do-gooder, and it has a bit of a negative connotation - I would use philanthropist or social activist, whichever is more accurate.

Comment [Editor13]: The important point is that at the UN you saw examples of how business school knowledge can be applied in socially ...

Comment [Editor14]: It is sufficient to say the receptionist was physically handicapped or just handicapped - the reader will know that this is a job usually filled by attractive women.

Mid 2004 will witness my department's consummation completion of a worldwide business transformation project, to which I have been contributing from the operations perspective. I deem it an optimal time to start pursue my MBA, which, at this stage, will be conducive to my career aspiration. [Comment 15]

Upon graduation, I will intend to join a top-tier IT corporation with a ~~and rotate in different functions in its~~ leadership/executive development program at mid-management level. In ten years I aspire to be a senior executive and strategy-setter.

[Comment 16] Meanwhile, I will devote myself to helping the underprivileged in China. Consequently, I plan on establishing an IT-based NGO in the long run. My business acumen will render me better positioned to contribute to this scenario—applying cost-effective technologies (only possible through my experience with an elite technology firm) to drag the poor out of the social and economic abyss plaguing generations for decades, if not centuries. After all, the betterment of the entire nation cannot hinge upon the prosperity of but a number of regions or cities. [Comment 17] I believe that managing an NGO shares much synergy with running a for-profit business: leadership experience developed and social connections established in the business arena should be most conducive to my long-term career aspiration [Comment 18]. The end of my achievements in business will ultimately find their way in the social cause. Admittedly, financial standing is an important yardstick, against which personal success is judged; however, it will be even more fulfilling if I can share this success with the needy and bring benefits to them.

As the leading business school, Wharton incorporates the many lectures in addition to cases that prepare students for all kinds of real business challenges and opportunities, which caters well to my career aspiration. Admittedly, Wharton is most famed for its strength in finance; however, it has, over the years, also churned out [Comment 19] a plethora of successful general managers. Having said that, I trust Wharton is where I can attack my weak link by brushing up my financial skills, which I believe are indispensable to my career advancement later on. "He is a sharp cookie, a natural leader just waiting to burst out of his shell", goes the comment on my first performance review. My communication with Wharton students and alumni has fully attested to my belief that Wharton is the very school that will transform me from a candidate to a bona fide leader in of the future.

Content:

First of all, your command of the English language is impressive. You have tried to address some rather complex issues that would be difficult for native speakers to write about clearly, concisely, and tactfully. For the sake of clarity, I will address those matters point by point in the body of your essay.

My impression after my first read-through was that there seem to be contradictions between your stated career goals and the way you explain them in the essay. From the question I might be able to guess that you are addressing how the MBA will benefit you on a personal level when you talk about starting an NGO, but when I read through your essay I get the impression that once you finally attain your long term career goal of being a Senior Executive, you're going to chuck it all in and address your real long-term career goal of starting an NGO, because ultimately that is the type of work you want to do. If the NGO is something you see yourself starting on the side after you achieve success as an executive, or devoting yourself to when you retire, then it's important to make it clear that it's a personal thing, and not another complete career shift. If it is a complete career shift, why spend all that time climbing to the top of the corporate ladder if that is not really what you want to do, or the kind of achievement by which you will define yourself as being successful? Getting the first-hand experience with a big IT company might be important for the type of NGO you want to start, but do you have to go all the way to the top of the company? If your ultimate professional goal is to do not-for-profit work, then it is not clear why becoming a senior executive is a necessary step in achieving your real long-term goal.

It could come across that you are saying you want to be a senior executive because you think that's what Wharton is looking for or wants/expects all their graduates to become. This is essentially a question about career and personal goals and how the Wharton MBA in particular will help you achieve them, so it is important to state clearly what those goals are. In terms of discussing the path leading to your decision to pursue a Wharton MBA, the question may seem to suggest that you should address that point first, and the career benefits later, but that structure is not mandatory – you could also start with a clear statement of your career goals, then go back and discuss how you arrived at them.

Where I have substituted wording, it is only meant to be taken as an example of a simpler, more straight-forward approach, not what I deem to be ideal or correct. In other places I tried to explain what to do differently, rather than insert a suggestion. In the end, it is most important to make some big cuts in the early part of the essay, (particularly in regard to the emotionally-charged phrases used to describe the situation you found yourself in post 9-11) thereby emphasizing the use of SAR. It is also important to clarify your long-term goals, and how they will work together. After you get those key points established and expressed clearly, then focus on making sure the paragraphs begin and end logically, and flow smoothly from one to the next.

I have eliminated most of the emotionally charged language that you used to describe your disillusionment with the corporate world. Therefore, you may have to add a few words about your feelings after you were laid off, if they were your motivation for choosing to do non-profit work (even if you took the UN job because it was your only choice, it sounds much better to say that you chose it on purpose). But stay away from creating the impression that you were victimized, or view yourself to be a victim.

Content Rating: 3 (out of 5)

Parameters / Structure:

As noted above, you need to be clearer about your goals. The structure you have chosen seems to mirror the order in which the questions were asked, and as a result, you are not really emphasizing the most important information. A basic structure is there, but it is obscured by too many details, which results in an almost rambling tone.

Parameters / Structure Rating: 3 (out of 5)

Grammar:

You grammar, overall, is very good. Occasionally you have misused or omitted articles, or used a more complex sentence

Comment [Editor15]: Make it clear that you are choosing to leave at this point, rather than start a new project that you won't be able to finish.

Comment [Editor16]: Please see my notes on the evaluation x this comes across almost as something you take for granted will happen - not something you will have to work hard to achieve. In reality, most big firms are full of MBAs from top schools, and only a handful make it to the level you expect to make it to in ten years. Why do you want to be a senior executive? If you are going to state such a lofty goal, then you should show a bit more passion about it.

Comment [Editor17]: Try to find a simpler, less dramatic way to say that you believe technology has the potential to reverse a lot of deeply rooted societal problems - portray it as an important part of the solution, not the entire solution, because that is more likely how the reader will see it.

Comment [Editor18]: See my comments on the evaluation x you need to clearly identify and be consistent in what you consider your long-term career goal to be

Comment [Editor19]: This phrase has a negative connotation - like a factory producing thousands of items that are exactly the same -better to say "produced".

structures when a simpler one would be more effective, but I did not finish the essay with a feeling that your grammar had been problematic. I did however feel that your choice of wording was awkward at times and focused too much on your personal feelings, which detracted from my ability to understand what you were trying to say in much the same way that numerous grammatical errors might. I have addressed the wording within the body of the essay.

Grammar Rating: 4 (out of 5)

Use of "Situation, Action, Result" format (if applicable):

It is there, but obscured by the fact that way more attention is focused on describing the situation than on the action (which should be stated as more of a deliberate action) or the result. The situation is that you were someone who had decided early in life to pursue a career in business and eventually get an MBA, but when your company shut-down after 9-11 amid scandals, you started to doubt the path you had chosen. The action was that you took a short-term position with the UN-taking a "breather" by doing something new and not profit-oriented, so you could reflect on your experiences to date and what you wanted to do going forward. The result was that you gained a different perspective on the ways that you could use an MBA not only to make a difference in your career but in society. The story needs to be told more concisely, eliminating most of the emotional statements that portray you as a victim, and emphasizing how you took control of a bad situation and made the best of it, and became a stronger, more focused person as a result.

Reflection on Target School:

Because Wharton has a strong focus on finance, they will want to know you are up to handling the coursework, so you shouldn't refer to your financial skills as a weak link (you lack skills), but rather an area where you feel it is important to further develop your skills (you have a strong foundation of skills and want to improve them). I like how you said the financial skills you get will be indispensable.

Also, considering Wharton's focus on entrepreneurial activity, you might want to state your desire to start an NGO in those terms – you have already stressed that your business experience and connections will be of great use in that endeavor – your UN experience could have shown you that when you do eventually start your own enterprise (as if that has always been one of your dreams), you now want to do it in order to make a social impact.

Finally, you could do a bit of research on the possibility of specializing in not-for-profit management, or creating your own cross-functional major combining technology and social organizations. Perhaps you can get a list of examples of cross-functional majors from previous years and get some ideas that way. The point is to make yourself stand out with your answer to the "why Wharton" part of the question by citing something that you can only do achieve there.

Reflection on Background:

Your GMAT scores and GPA are very good, and with a bit of revision I think your career background and the story behind it – particularly the stint with the UN and your resolution to continue to work for social causes – will help you stick out among the other consulting candidates. However, the job description you have stated in your profile – "analyze clients' IT needs, recommend and implement solutions" – is completely absent from your essay. Without actually stating what you did for the IT companies you worked for, the essay gives the impression that you floated around without focus. By stating briefly that you were a consultant and what that entailed, your claims of versatility and intentional positioning as a generalist make more sense in terms of a career strategy. I think you should approach the part of your essay that deals with your background by starting over. Try to cover your career in one paragraph – one paragraph for school and the decision to eventually get an MBA, one paragraph for your career and how you became disillusioned, one paragraph about the UN and what you learned there, and one paragraph about your current position.

Rating Descriptions

Category	Rating	Description
Content	4-5	The essay adequately answers all elements of the essay and utilizes a fitting experience / example for the question at hand.
	3	The essay does not completely address the essay and / or the experience / example used is not compelling.
	1-2	The essay fails to adequately answer a critical portion of the essay and does not use a fitting experience / example for the question at hand.
Grammar	4-5	The essay has minimal grammar flaws, including syntax, sentence structure and use of idioms.
	3	The essay exhibits grammar flaws that should be addressed, but do not affect "readability".
	1-2	The essay exhibits grammar flaws that detract from the essay and do affect "readability".
Structure	4-5	The essay flows well, is concise and meets the word limit criterion.
	3	The essay surpasses the word limit by a noticeable margin and the essay would benefit from structural improvement.
	1-2	The essay is difficult to follow and the main points of the essay are difficult to extract.