

## **Columbia 2005 - Final**

*How have you enhanced your candidacy since your previous application? Please detail your progress since you last applied and reiterate your short-term and long-term goals. Explain how the tools of the Columbia MBA will help you to meet your goals and how you plan to participate in the Columbia community.*

For me, much of this past year was a time of reflection, which started on the very day I got a rejection letter from Columbia. Not being able to get into my Business School of choice was a wake-up call to reevaluate my personal and professional goals. Still, in the end, I have only reaffirmed my belief that a career in business is something that I should pursue and that Columbia would be the perfect place for me to jump start this next phase of my life.

Even the process of writing the essays was highly beneficial as I realized that, beyond my entrepreneurial endeavors, I had limited exposure to how major business decisions are made in the corporate world. Thus, last February, I asked to be transferred to a different department where I was hoping to gain more insight into contract management and procurement processes. As a result, I received a leadership role on a vendor selection effort for a crucial component of a Navy defense system.

This was a real chance for me to prove myself. I had to quickly become familiar with every technical option available and learn the proper procedures for Military supplier sourcing, a rather convoluted and bureaucratic process. In a relatively short period of time, starting with 15 manufacturers and working our way through the bidding process, we narrowed the field down to three serious candidates, including the incumbent.

Ironically, after six months of an intense search, our formal selection process resulted in a tie. Consequently, a preliminary internal decision was made to stay with the original supplier, which once again provided the lowest bid. However, fully convinced that going back to the incumbent would be a grave mistake, I took initiative to write a formal "white paper" on why it could end up costing our company millions of dollars, not to mention our reputation with the customer.

After a few sleepless nights and in just three pages of condensed analysis, I presented the numerous technical and financial risks of doing business with the current vendor (which I am including in lieu of the last essay). As soon as my trade study was released, it took on a life of its own, circulating its way to upper management and prompting them to reevaluate the situation. The matter will be decided in the next few months.

Last year, I could only speculate about what it would be like to make a difference at the corporate level at a Fortune 500 company. This summer I got to actually live through the experience and it provided me with the kind of exhilaration that makes life worth living.

This was also a great opportunity for me to analyze a business problem and to learn how to effectively communicate my findings to others. I realized the importance of having a good understanding of the dynamics of an organization and how invaluable it can be in trying to influence the direction in which the company is moving. This is precisely the kind of knowledge that I hope to expand upon at Columbia.

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While finding success in my current occupation, I continue to have new ideas on the kinds of business opportunities I would like to explore. In my spare time, I've been doing small case studies on companies I admire, ranging from JetBlue to Hotwire.com to Honest Tea. What all of these diverse businesses have in common is that they were latecomers into fairly developed industries, yet were able to offer a successful niche product that was clearly superior. While none of them aimed to become market leaders, they were still able to make a tangible difference in people's lives.

I also look for potential new ventures everywhere I go. In particular, in my recent travels I have stumbled upon a few sizeable market niches that the domestic online travel industry is failing to address. To date, nobody offers a centralized system that would allow to make reservations for inexpensive non-chain motels along major highways, or B&B's in resort states like Vermont. Apparently, this is possible in Europe, but not yet in the U.S.

Another promising business idea arose while my fiancée and I were looking for an engagement ring. The market for this kind of jewelry is so uniform that there is no place for people who want a custom ring whose value cannot be measured in carats, but rather in its uniqueness and craftsmanship. There are also quite a few individual artists with original designs striving to achieve greater exposure.

I've been contemplating these ideas lately, discussing them with friends, and trying to formulate a coherent business plan. Still, every time I go through these mental exercises, I invariably realize that I am lacking both the background and the connections to be successful in such undertakings, which is precisely what an MBA is supposed to provide.

There is only one school where I am truly passionate about getting this degree, and it is Columbia. Since I first visited the Manhattan campus in 1995, I've always felt that I would fit right in. This notion was only reinforced while I was living in New York where I became friends with a number of Columbia alumni who have inspired me to apply to their alma mater. They are the kind of enthusiastic, open-minded, and cultured people with whom I'd love to study and work.

I also have a great love and fascination with New York and all the things it has to offer. And there is simply no better Business School than Columbia to help me gain entry into the business community of the Big Apple. Last but not least, I am very excited about Dean Hubbard's new initiative for integration of entrepreneurship into the MBA curriculum, which would provide me with additional opportunities to gain the perspectives that I need to crystallize my business ideas.

While at Columbia, I would like to utilize my extensive academic research experience to collaborate with either Eugene Lang Center for Entrepreneurship or the Center for Excellence in E-Business. I could also contribute my journalistic expertise and analytical skills to a Columbia publication, such as the famed Chazen Web Journal. Additionally, I hope to enter one of my entrepreneurial ideas into the annual Lorne Weil Business Plan Competition.

Upon graduation, I would like to work for a smaller, more dynamic Management Consulting company where I could apply my strong technical and analytical background to assist in making

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business decisions or optimizing business transaction processing. This would allow me to get exposure to the kinds of opportunities that are available within different industries as well as the technological and operational challenges they face.

I believe that all of the above would prepare me best for what I now see as my ultimate career goal, which is creating and sustaining my own business. And, once I finally find my market niche, I am confident that I would be able to rely on the Alumni Club and a network of my Columbia peers to work together to make my dream a reality.

Suddenly, it all comes together.