

***Ivy League Admission:***

***180 Successful Business School (MBA) Essays***

**Nancy L. Nolan, Ph.D.**

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**First Edition**

**Magnificent Milestones, Inc., Florida**

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(1) This book is a compilation of successful admission essays; it does not claim to be the definitive word on the subject of MBA admission. The opinions expressed are the personal observations of the author based on her own experiences. They are not intended to prejudice any party. Accordingly, the author and publisher do not accept any liability or responsibility for any loss or damage that have been caused, or alleged to have been caused, through the use of information in this book.

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## **Dedication**

For students everywhere;  
may the size of your dreams be exceeded only  
by your tenacity to attain them.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am deeply indebted to the students, professors and admissions officers who have shared their perceptions and frustrations about admissions essays. This book, which was written on your behalf, would not be nearly as powerful without your generous and insightful input.

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## Introduction: The MBA School Admission Process

For most students, few processes are as daunting as the MBA admissions process. Competition is fierce at top business schools, particularly in the prestigious Ivy League programs. Candidates must generally pass two levels of screening to be offered a seat in the class:

1. **The Numbers.** Your GPA and GMAT scores must exceed the minimum cutoff level that the school has imposed. Selectivity varies greatly among programs, which means that scores that are considered "great" at one school may not be competitive at another. As a general rule, a successful candidate at a state school has a minimum GPA of 3.2 to 3.5, and a minimum GMAT score of 600 to 650. At highly competitive programs, the cutoffs are as high as 3.75 and 700 for the GPA and LSAT, respectively. Candidates whose "numbers" fall below these levels can still gain admission in special circumstances, but their odds of success are greatly diminished.

2. **Personal Strengths.** Candidates whose "numbers" meet the school's expectations are further evaluated for their personal fit for business school. In the pre-interview stage, this "fit" is assessed from the applicant's essays and reference letters. Without exception, these documents *must* highlight the skills and traits that business schools covet, including honor, maturity, a solid work ethic and exemplary communication skills.

A great essay brings your "numbers" to life and provides a creative description of your performance and potential. It also provides critical information about your personality, ethics and integrity that isn't captured anywhere elsewhere in the application. The BEST essays are short, specific and insightful. They are written by candidates who know what they want and aren't afraid to go after it.

Here is what the committee hopes to learn from your admission essays:

- a. Your specific qualifications, including the depth of your academic and professional experiences
- b. Your unique traits that aren't covered anywhere else in the application
- c. Your demonstrated commitment to pursuing an MBA
- d. How you compare to other candidates with similar aspirations

## How Personal Statements are Used in the Admissions Process

The most typical question we are asked about personal statements is how they are used in the admissions process. As a general rule, they supplement the primary admissions criteria, which are your GPA and GMAT score. In highly competitive programs, the applicant pool can quickly be sorted into three categories:

- a. candidates with excellent grades and test scores: good chance of admission
- b. candidates who are borderline cases: application is competitive, but not outstanding
- c. candidates with low grades and disappointing test scores: poor chance of admission

Unfortunately, if you fall into category c, even a great personal statement may not save you from rejection. In a highly competitive applicant pool, schools usually screen out lesser qualified applicants by imposing a minimum "cutoff" for GPA and test scores. Although an essay can "explain" a disappointing academic performance, it usually cannot compensate for it. There are limits to how much leeway we can give to a candidate who does not present a solid track record of success.

In contrast, essays from candidates in category a are usually disaster checks. These applicants have exceptional grades, test scores and impressive letters of recommendation. On paper, they are everything we are looking for. Their personal statements must:

- a. explain their motivation and goals
- b. document their character, integrity and work ethic

For candidates in category a (excellent grades and test scores), bad or mediocre essays can be extremely harmful. In a highly competitive applicant pool, each piece of the admissions puzzle (GPA, GMAT score, essays, references) must "fit" together in a cohesive manner to show us who you are and what you have to offer. If your essay is poorly written, or reveals a lack of focus and dedication, the committee will be less likely to take a chance on you.

Surprisingly, nearly 70% of the applicant pool falls into category b, or borderline. These candidates have competitive grades and test scores, but are otherwise not distinguishable from others with similar "numbers." Their acceptance or rejection often hinges on an exceptional intrinsic quality that captures our interest and makes a positive impression. In some cases, this can be their commitment to family, their dedication to community service or their ability to overcome an obstacle. A persuasive essay that discusses a candidate's passion (and how (s)he plans to use that skill in the future) can make or break his/her application; it provides the final piece of the "puzzle" that the committee needs to become excited about the applicant.

## Writing Tips

In a typical day, an MBA admissions officer will read between 25 and 50 essay sets from candidates around the world. What makes a positive impression? Passion. Sincerity. Insight about yourself and the world around you.

From our experience, a great essay can take any number of forms; since no two candidates are alike, their personal statements won't be, either. The only "magic formula" is honesty; you must have the courage to reveal your true personality, whatever that may be. Show us who you are and what you will bring to our program. Show us the contribution that only *you* can make.

We surveyed thirty admission officers on what they expect to see in business school essays. Here's what works:

1. **Answer the question that was asked.** Many candidates try to dodge tough questions, particularly those about ethical issues, personal weaknesses and failure. Yet the committee asks these questions for a *reason*. We want to understand how you respond to adversity and the specific insights you developed from those experiences. Answer the tough questions honestly and directly. Don't try to sell us the artificial "canned" response you *think* we want to hear.

2. **Write naturally, but concisely.** Use simple sentence structure and your normal everyday vocabulary. Don't waste time on fancy introductions; get to the point quickly and reinforce it with specific examples.

3. **Use excellent grammar and punctuation.** Use logical paragraph breaks to separate your thoughts and to make the essay easier to read. Proofread your work carefully before sending it in. Don't let simple carelessness ruin your chances.

4. **Show your real personality (let us get to know you).** Too many essays are long, boring theoretical pieces about politics, the economy or complex business issues. No matter how well-written or researched, they don't tell us a darn thing about the candidate. Anyone can write a rational, detached paper, but that's not what we are looking for. We want to get to know you and the unique contribution you will make to our school.

5. **Personalize your essay as much as possible.** Write about your own unique, funny, interesting experiences. Provide details to add color. Adopt a relaxed, conversational style.

6. **Use humor only if it works.** Few people can write humorous prose or recount funny experiences effectively. If you have this gift, by all means use it. Before sending us a "funny" essay, though, have several different people read your material to make sure it comes across well on paper. Avoid anything off-color or mean-spirited.

7. **Convey a positive message (avoid cynicism).** Many applicants choose to discuss a misfortune they have experienced and how it shaped their personality. Be very careful of your tone if you decide to write about a hard-luck story. Avoid the "victimization" perspective and focus on how you *overcame* the situation. Show us how the experience helped you to demonstrate your stamina, perseverance and intelligence. If written well, these essays show us that you can succeed in the face of terrible obstacles. If written badly, you may sound plaintive, self-righteous and bitter.

8. **Use the active voice.** Nothing is more tedious than trying to read an essay written in the cold, detached passive voice. While popular with scientists who publish in technical journals, it is pretentious and verbose in everyday writing. Keep your verbs simple and active. What's the difference?

*Active Voice:* The cow jumped over the moon.

*Passive Voice:* The moon was jumped over by the cow.

Yes, it sounds that silly when *you* use it, too!

**9. Explain events whenever appropriate.** Many of your accomplishments are of interest to the committee because of why you tackled them, what you thought about them and what you learned. Tell us the reasoning behind your decision and how your life changed as a result of the experience.

**10. Be specific and focused.** Rather than listing several items or events, give a full description of just one. The more details you include, the more personal your essay will be.

**11. Proofread several times and get feedback from valued sources.** Explain to them what you hope to convey in your writing and ask whether you met your objectives. The true test of your writing isn't what you *intended* to say, but what the reader actually understands.

**12. Revise and polish until it is perfect.** Give yourself enough time to do the statement well. Successful applicants usually invest several hours deciding the correct approach, constructing an outline and writing a first draft. You may have to write and revise multiple drafts before you are satisfied with your essay.

### Common Pitfalls to Avoid

**1. Don't let anyone else tell you what to write.** Well-meaning parents and advisors often interfere in the writing process, which tends to sabotage the candidate's chances. Use your own best judgment in choosing a topic and writing your essay. Don't let anyone else influence you. We read thousands of essays each year, and have developed a keen eye for authenticity.

**2. Don't oversell yourself or try too hard.** Many candidates manage to squeeze every accomplishment they've ever had into a single one-page essay. Others explain emphatically how much they "really, really" want to attend our school. Don't take such a desperate approach; just be yourself.

**3. Don't rehash information that can be found elsewhere in the application.** We already know your GPA, GMAT scores, academic awards and honors. Use your limited essay space to discuss experiences that aren't revealed anywhere else. Consider your essay to be an informal interview, your exclusive "one-on-one" time with the committee. Show us why we should accept you into our academic community.

**4. Don't write a scholarly or technical paper.** The essay is your opportunity to demonstrate your non-academic strengths, particularly your personality. Don't waste the opportunity to let us get to know the real you.

**5. Resist the urge to write a manipulative or argumentative essay on a controversial issue.** Be original. Each year, we receive hundreds of essays that discuss the horrors of nuclear proliferation and the dangers of global warming. Sadly, they don't tell us anything we don't already know. If you choose to discuss a meaningful issue, do so in the context of your demonstrated commitment to change it, either through your career or volunteer work. Don't confuse passive idealism (or future intentions) with productive action. A demonstrated commitment to a cause is worth writing about; passive idealism is not.

**6. Don't try to explain blemishes on your record.** With rare exceptions, it is impossible to explain poor grades and test scores without sounding irresponsible or defensive. Neither will enhance your admissions chances. If you have a compelling excuse for an academic disappointment, place it in a separate addendum to your file, rather than in the body of an essay or personal statement.

**7. Don't use large, pretentious words.** Use the simplest possible language to explain your meaning precisely. Using three-dollar words to impress the committee usually backfires, as it comes across as presumptuous and arrogant.

**8. Don't be boring and safe; tell a real story!** A fresh and well-written essay will enhance your credentials and aid your application effort.

**9. Don't lie or exaggerate.** Applicants seldom realize how easy it is to detect lies and half-truths in admissions essays. Don't pretend to be someone you are not. After reading your file, committee members have an excellent "feel" for your character and can tell when a reported event or achievement isn't consistent with the rest of your history. Lying is a fatal mistake. A single misrepresentation on your application will lead us to doubt all of your other assertions.

10. **Don't be gimmicky.** Avoid using definitions to begin your essay. This crutch was extremely popular in the late 90's, but is now synonymous with sloppy writing. Avoid using cute or "meaningful" quotations, unless they perfectly fit the character and tone of your essay. Quotations are terrific if they are seldom-quoted and deeply relevant to your chosen topic. All too often, though, their usage is cliché and the resulting essay is unimaginative.

11. **Don't play games with the word limit.** Don't use a miniscule type size or invisible border to shrink an essay to the stipulated length. Except in extreme circumstances, your finished essay should adhere to the maximum word limit. In many cases, less is more. Convey your points quickly and efficiently; don't feel obligated to "fill" extra space.

### Strengths to Highlight

Your essays **MUST** emphasize the intrinsic traits that the committee seeks in the admissions process. Due to the high ethical standards and level of critical thinking that are expected in global business, your character and motivation will be highly scrutinized by the selection committee. Use the essay set to sell your *whole* self, not just the individual pieces that you think the school wants to see.

Admissions officers seek the following traits in MBA applicants:

ambition	maturity	diplomacy
honesty	independence	communication skills
creativity	passion	strong personal ethics
confidence	humor	perseverance

To whatever extent possible, you should build your essays around the achievements and experiences that have enabled you to cultivate and display these strengths. This is your only chance to sell yourself; use it for everything that it's worth.

The essays of successful applicants will probably surprise you. They are seldom academic in nature, and may seem risky to candidates who feel compelled to assume a false (or misleading) persona for the committee's benefit. That's why studying the essays is so valuable. They reveal the heart and soul of each writer and demonstrate what (s)he would add to the business school class.

These candidates were accepted because they caught the eye (and captured the heart) of a receptive admissions officer. They have accomplished what you are trying to do. Before you put pen to paper to write your own essays, read on!

## Successful Business School Essays

The following collection of essays offers three different responses to 60 different business school application questions. Collectively, they show the many different ways that candidates have presented their achievements and goals in a creative (and effective) manner. Please use the essays as guidance and inspiration for your own original writing.

### Post MBA Goals

As an actress and stagehand for the New York Civic Theatre, I am committed to a career in the entertainment business. Over the past twelve years, I have worked on every aspect of set design and production, mastering the endless technical challenges that live theatre presents. Consequently, I am equally comfortable constructing sets, sewing costumes, stringing lights and running lines with famous actors. Even after all these years, I have not lost my passion for the business. I still get goose bumps on opening night when I watch the combined energy of the production company come together for the first time in front of a live audience. I can't imagine feeling tired after an 18-hour day, as my job is enormous fun.

As much as I enjoy my work in production, I am equally interested in the other aspects of the business: how shows are financed, how authors are compensated, and how the theatre makes money. Clearly, many people contribute to the financial success of the acting and production troupe at 5th and Broadway. By learning more about the business behind my art, I will be better prepared to assume a managerial or administrative role.

I also acknowledge my need to become more knowledgeable about viable entertainment alternatives to Broadway shows. Other than tourists, who devour live entertainment, those outside New York City tend to perceive the theatre as old-fashioned and irrelevant. Since few successful shows do well on the national touring circuit, my beloved art form may well be in its declining stage. Consequently, I've concluded that for many dedicated theatrical professionals, the future will be elsewhere.

I am eager to acquire the business expertise to navigate the anticipated changes in the entertainment industry. In a few years, our industry will be forced to adapt to the tastes of the MTV generation, who favor alternative forms of entertainment such as movies, television, live internet feed and pay-per-view offerings. I want to be prepared for this transformation. To whatever extent possible, I hope to take a proactive role in converting our most successful products to video, DVD, and the emerging satellite television business. I'm not certain what role conventional theatre will have in twenty-first century entertainment, but I want to be positioned as a leader in the field, who has the skills and flexibility to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

### Post MBA Goals

Blessed with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, I see potential business opportunities in situations that most people do not. After business school, I will use my training and enthusiasm to develop the tourism industry in Singapore, which provides the lion's share of the country's national income. Despite its solid reputation with European tourists, Singapore fails to attract young American visitors to the area. Sadly, many Americans do not realize the benefits of the region, including beautiful beaches, a temperate climate, a rich sense of history and close proximity to a thriving business district. While in business school, I will continue to investigate a novel idea to market the Singapore region to American college students.

My dream is to start a student-run business that leverages my familiarity with the Singapore economy with my desire to help American students start their own businesses and joint ventures in Singapore. My firm will co-ordinate two-week visits from American students to Singapore, which will be filled with cultural, business and recreational activities. My goal is to provide each client with a realistic experience of life in Singapore, including an orientation to the business climate and living conditions. In rigorous brainstorming sessions, students can learn unique ways to market their products and services in the burgeoning Asian market.

My preliminary research suggests that this type of service would be highly beneficial to both the students and the Singapore economy. By holding the sessions during off-season, the local hotels and restaurants will

make money during a traditionally slow season. By promoting potential joint ventures between participants, I will also create the potential for future earnings that would not otherwise exist. At an early age, young men and women (all future business leaders) will identify Singapore as a vibrant, exciting place to do business. My firm will play an integral role in promoting the city to a new, highly-educated group of people.

To date, I have received overwhelmingly positive response to my idea. As I pursue my passion for business, I am eager to learn from the experience and perspective of others. My two years at Wharton will be a wonderful time to identify, refine and pursue a number of ventures that will be personally and professionally rewarding. My pursuit of each idea will require painstaking research, as I determine the most efficient way to market and deliver my services. As a true entrepreneur, I embrace this research as an essential component of my success. In any venture, it is the critical link between a terrific idea and a successful execution.

### **Post MBA Goals**

As a college student in the early 1980's, I discovered my passion for technology. Wayne State University had one of the first PCs in existence and I was determined to learn everything possible about how it worked. Fueled by a powerful sense of self-reliance, I completed my degree in Business Administration/Computer Science, which sparked a successful career selling financial software to government agencies and large corporations. At the time, my role was largely educational, as the software industry was in its infancy. For seven years, I earned an excellent living (and exceeded several sales records) by helping people take advantage of the powerful benefits of technology.

Despite my financial success, I yearned for more personal fulfillment from my career. Throughout college, I worked in several hospital positions, including front desk operations, patient transport, transcription, billing and systems operations. In every location, I noted a chronic need for a fast, reliable radiological transcription service. In 1996, I formed Lightning Fast Scrips, which provides medical transcription services to 38 radiologists throughout the Atlanta area. Combining my talent for sales and my knowledge of health care administration, my business has enjoyed explosive growth. In less than ten years, Lightning Fast Scrips grew from a tiny one person firm to employ 18 employees and generate \$23 million in annual sales.

As the owner of the company, I manage the accounting, marketing, advertising, customer service and human resource functions. Many days, I transcribe radiology reports alongside my employees. After 8 years, my business has earned a reputation for providing fast, honest and reliable service in the health care community. Yet recent trends in the industry suggest that our growth may be limited by my lack of formal business training. My largest competitors are large health care conglomerates with state-of-the-art expertise in marketing and advertising. By competing on price, they have become formidable opponents to my hometown, personalized approach. I want Lightning Fast Scrips to be able to compete in this market, not just in 2006, but in 2116 and beyond.

An MBA from Chicago will provide the nuts-and-bolts expertise in all aspects of growing a business, from increasing my sales to projecting my income for a new revenue stream. With formal training in strategic planning, I can realistically evaluate alternative aspects for growth, such as franchising my concept or offering my services to other medical specialists. Chicago has an enviable reputation of attracting older, more seasoned students than other highly competitive MBA programs. I am eager to tap into their collective expertise to formulate my future plans.

Ultimately, my long-term goal is to develop my business in as healthy a manner as possible. As an employer, I hold the future of many families in the palm of my hand. I also have a vested interest in creating new jobs and doing my part to expand the economy. With an MBA from Chicago, I will learn more efficient ways to deliver my services in an increasingly competitive market. In turn, I have numerous strengths to offer your program. My entrepreneurial success, intellectual curiosity and health care experience will contribute to the diversity of the class and ultimately to my success as a student. After a lifetime of preparation, I am ready to embrace everything that a Chicago MBA has to offer.

### **Discuss Your Unique Contribution to our School**

My work as an organizational and management consultant with Mobil Oil has given me an ideal portfolio of professional and personal skills to bring to business school. During my time with the firm, I have used a wide range of tools, concepts and theories to help teams analyze problems, develop solutions and

build action plans. On a regular basis, I help teams clarify their values to determine the roles and responsibilities of each member. By sharing my practical experience in organizational and management consulting, including my focus on the impact of a company's leadership, culture and politics on its success, I will provide an original perspective during class discussions.

With my multicultural background, I will also bring a wealth of team building experience in which members have different nationalities, styles, expectations and reward systems. After years of international business travel, I am comfortable in any work or social environment. As a result, I am able to recognize and use individual differences and cultural norms to motivate team members. By building ethical relationships based on honesty, trust, respect and cooperation, I have built several high performance teams at Mobil Oil, and I plan to do the same at Harvard Business School.

Throughout my diverse experiences, I discovered that my consulting and technical tools are only successful in an environment of honesty and trust. For managers and employees to achieve a common objective, they must be willing to build ethical relationships in which all parties share their concerns, dreams and honest opinions. Without exception, all of the intangible strengths of a great team, including creativity and cooperation, depend on open communication. As a result, I am passionate about creating an environment that nurtures these strengths.

I pride myself on developing teams that are strong enough to handle the pressures of large egos, conflicting agendas, external resistance and negative feedback. I am excited about the possibility of using my skills to advance the entrepreneurial plans of my fellow students. Once team members are committed to achieving a common goal, and are confident that they have the unconditional support of their peers, the possibilities for collaborative innovation are limitless.

### **Discuss Your Unique Contribution to our School**

With nothing but the clothes on their backs, my parents fled Liberia in 1983 and came to the United States to provide their children with a better life. As an adolescent, I visited the nation and witnessed the dire poverty from which my parents had escaped. To my surprise, nearly everyone in Liberia, including my elderly grandmother, was a fledgling entrepreneur; they sold food, clothing and bottled water in an open-air market just to survive. During my summers in Liberia, I learned that my family's tiny merchandising business supported over fifty of my relatives. Their dead-end existence forced me to acknowledge how different my life would have been if my parents had not moved to the US; I certainly would not have enjoyed the benefits of an education. Helping my extended family in Liberia became not simply my responsibility, but my personal calling.

Throughout high school and college, I organized and promoted charities that help impoverished families, including tutorial programs for Liberian immigrant children. After graduation, I worked as a team leader with Berkeley Collaborative, a non-profit organization that prepares low-income middle school students for success in college preparatory programs. As I performed my administrative and project management duties, I connected deeply with the students and confirmed my desire to run a non-profit organization. Yet I also acknowledged that my degree in International Business from Harvard University did not provide me with the expertise to resolve issues and implement new programs in a non-profit group.

In early 2000, I joined Bank One as a business associate in the Securities Lending Group. Through stints in strategic business planning, development, network management, investment products and securities lending, I learned how to implement new products, research market trends and develop action plans that improved performance. I developed my analytical abilities by creating models to examine the effectiveness of the firm's network of ninety affiliates and depository banks. Although I am successful on a superficial level, I have drifted from my original goal and the activity that I find most fulfilling: serving underprivileged communities. As I advance in corporate life, I have retained my commitment to helping others. When I envision my professional future, I am eager to channel my talents and energy into non-profit organizations that aid neglected communities.

My motivation to obtain an MBA is two-fold: (1) to acquire the managerial expertise to run a non-profit enterprise, and (2) to prepare myself for an eventual return to Liberia, where I will start a non-profit organization to help entrepreneurs develop and grow their businesses. Eventually, I hope to make a meaningful contribution to the Liberian economy by creating jobs and building a spirit of community. I

cannot imagine a better place to achieve these objectives than at the University of Pennsylvania.

I am particularly attracted to Wharton's action-based approach to learning, which will allow me to apply what I learn to real-life situations. Through a classes in business, economics and public policy, I will learn about directives that affect human welfare and their role in the development of successful non-profit organizations. Through programs such as MAP (Multidisciplinary Action Projects) and XMAP (Experimental Multidisciplinary Action Projects), I will work on teams to address critical business issues that challenge non-profits. I will also contribute to the efforts of non-profit groups in the arts by serving as a non-voting board member as a Nonprofit Board Fellows.

Yet my interest in Wharton is not purely professional. I will also contribute to the school's educational climate by organizing an African Economic Forum to raise awareness about the trade sanctions imposed in that region. With the support of the faculty, students and staff, I can promote the benefits of free trade in my native continent. Ten years from now, I hope to run a non-profit group that provides technical assistance and economic resources to ensure the self-sufficiency of Liberian entrepreneurs. As one of the poorest countries in Africa, Liberia must learn how to produce and distribute essential goods in the marketplace. I am eager to play a part in the nation's economic revival, to ensure a better future for its next generation.

### **Discuss Your Unique Contribution to our School**

During my six years in semiconductor research and development, I discovered many exciting ways in which the confluence of biotechnology and wireless design may improve the quality of health care. My long-term goal is to combine my passion for technology and entrepreneurship into my own successful venture that develops and markets innovative health care solutions in the global market. Besides being an intriguing technical challenge, the venture will be a fulfilling way to give back to the community.

Following the completion of my MBA, I will take a phased approach to achieving this goal. Immediately after graduation, I will work for an early-stage venture-capital firm that specializes in emerging semiconductor technologies, where I will view the complete life-cycle of the portfolio firms from concept to liquidity. Later, I will lead a team of technologists to explore and develop the most viable products for use in the burgeoning health care industry. Armed with a soundly researched idea, a firm footing in the venture capital business and a talented team of professionals, I will be ready to embark on my own entrepreneurial endeavor.

To make a seamless transition into the business arena, I must co-create a program at Harvard that supplements my technical expertise with business fundamentals. I will use the flexible course structure to explore multiple areas of management, including Strategy, Entrepreneurial Finance and Organizational Behavior. By participating in the Entrepreneurial Club's annual project competition, I will apply these core concepts to specific organizational objectives. Leveraging my engineering background, I will also conduct interdisciplinary research at the College of Engineering to determine the viability of my current technical ideas.

With its focus on entrepreneurship, Harvard offers an unparalleled opportunity to pitch and perfect my ideas in a competitive yet nurturing environment. To this end, I plan to participate in the Business Plan Competition and explore relevant networking opportunities in the Entrepreneurial and Venture Capital Clubs. To hone my leadership skills, I will attend the Executive Skills Workshop and assume leadership positions on team projects both inside and outside the classroom. These initiatives will help me to develop my own leadership style and create a crisp professional image.

With my concentration in science and technology, I will bring a fresh viewpoint to the business world and a critical approach to standard concepts. Along with providing a holistic view of the server industry, I will bring to Harvard my extensive insights into microprocessor design. As the moderator of my company's technical reading group and as a speaker at Toastmasters, I have learned how to innovate and lead in a mutually rewarding environment. I hope to use these skills as a facilitator in study groups and as a panelist at business conferences. Harvard offers several ways for me to share my strengths and learn from the diverse experiences of my fellow classmates. By pursuing my own ventures and supporting those of others, I will lend my creative spark to a new world of innovation.

### **If You Could Change One Decision in Your Career, What Would It Be?**

Three broken glasses, a damaged candle and a blistering burn on my left hand. Despite the physical carnage, I beamed with theatrical pride. At age twenty, I quit school to work as a magician with the Cirque de Soleil European troupe. The fact that I knew nothing about "magic" didn't deter me in the least. After several weeks of practicing the tricks in an entertainment magazine, I was finally on the right track. Our seamstress made a beautiful cape for my debut, in which I dazzled my attentive audience. Not even my mistake on the floating glass trick could ruin the joy of my performance.

After my first magic show, I was fascinated by my ability to enrapture an audience. Throughout my three years touring with the Cirque, I entertained over three hundred thousand people in eighteen different countries. Our reception was phenomenal, particularly in India, where interpretive dance holds special religious significance. My job as a traveling entertainer gave me the chance to learn about different people and cultures all over the globe. On my own initiative, I began an aggressive self-education program to teach myself Russian, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. With each new language, I opened my world to an entirely new set of people.

Despite the obvious benefits of my entertainment career, I eventually became restless with the nomadic lifestyle. At age twenty-four, I owned nothing but the clothes on my back and a handful of childhood dreams. Many goals, such as starting a family and a business, could only be achieved by returning to college and finishing my degree. After three rewarding years with Cirque de Soleil, I returned to the United States and resumed my studies at Kansas State University. After the initial culture shock of small town life, I committed to my studies and graduated with honors.

Looking back, I regret my decision to leave college for as long as I did. Despite the rewards of my career as a magician, my re-adjustment to college life was hindered by my extended period of unsupervised wanderlust. Life on the road left me undisciplined in areas that are critical to academic success; I returned with poor study habits and a tendency to sleep until ten. When I looked around my classroom, I felt significantly older (and more cynical) than my fresh-scrubbed peers, who considered Manhattan, Kansas to be a "big city." Nothing in the classroom could possibly rival the excitement of my global adventure.

Although I still believe in magic, I define it somewhat differently than I did when I worked for the Cirque de Soleil. After readjusting to student life, I discovered true magic in the everyday moments that made me laugh or taught me something new. During troubled times, I created my own magic by tutoring other students, making children smile and expressing my creativity in a unique way. I discovered the collective magic that we all share, which ignites our desire to succeed and to help others.

### **If You Could Change One Decision in Your Career, What Would It Be?**

Following my graduation from college, I accepted a position teaching high school history at a small Catholic girls school in northern Tennessee. The job was an excellent fit for my degree in humanities and provided an opportunity to live near my mother, who struggled with the debilitating effects of lupus. Although the small town was a startling contrast to my life in New York City, I was eager to become part of such a close-knit rural community.

Unfortunately, my liberal religious beliefs were a poor fit for the conservative local diocese. On a regular basis, I received negative feedback for my decision to discuss major events in United States history through a secular perspective. From the administration's view, my job was to present each event through a religious filter, labeling all non-Christian influences as negative. If a student questioned that perspective or asked for my opinion, I was advised to refer them to the Bible. No other discussion would be permitted.

By the end of my first semester, I knew I was in an untenable position. The restrictions that were placed on my classroom discussions not only stifled my enjoyment of the job, but my students' ability to learn. With the onset of the first winter snow, I felt trapped in my increasingly narrow, inhospitable environment. I gave my notice a few weeks later and stayed long enough to train my replacement.

Looking back, I accepted the job for all the wrong reasons, without considering the poor interpersonal "fit." As a liberal, open-minded woman, I was appalled by the school's inflexible positions on topics of moral and social relevance. In my mind, my job was to encourage discussion and nurture independent thinking, not to

simply parrot the school's "party line." Fortunately, I quickly received another job offer teaching history at a public school outside Nashville. My employers not only tolerated, but supported, my commitment to lively classroom discussions. In fact, I was named "Teacher of the Year" in the Nashville school district for five consecutive years.

In hindsight, I regret accepting the first position at the Catholic girls school, which was a profound professional disappointment. Yet the experience forced me to re-evaluate my commitment to teaching, which requires presenting views that are not necessarily my own. I also confirmed my passion for free speech, which is an essential component of any meaningful exchange. I want my students to think, grow and confidently express their feelings, even if they differ from my own. Without that terrible year of restrictions, I might not have brought the same level of passion to my classroom in Nashville.

### **If You Could Change One Decision in Your Career, What Would It Be?**

Shortly after I graduated from college, when I was laid off from my job at Bank of America, I accepted a position in the margins department at T. Rowe Price. An ambitious self-starter, I was frustrated by the menial nature of the job. My duties were significantly less challenging than my role at Bank of America, which offered managerial possibilities. When I didn't see an immediate opportunity to prove myself, I began to question whether a financial career was right for me. Rather than consider an alternative position in finance, I decided to pursue my childhood dream of running my own business. After less than a year, I resigned from T. Rowe Price and started [www.FlashWeb.com](http://www.FlashWeb.com), a web design firm.

As an early "internet junkie," I was definitely ahead of the curve, both creatively and financially. Few other small companies were designing web sites in 1996, and my firm enjoyed a huge competitive advantage. Yet within a matter of months, I realized that I had made a terrible mistake. I missed the fast-paced environment of finance and became restless in a sedentary job in front of a computer screen. Many days, while completing a project with Flash animation, I found myself listening to the market reports on CNBC. After careful introspection, I admitted to myself that my true calling was to work in finance, regardless of the time required to prove myself.

Unfortunately, I re-entered the job market during one of the worst economic climates in recent memory. After an extensive search, I accepted a position as a human resources coordinator at the Royal Bank of Scotland. Although the job is only tangentially related to finance, the experience has been invaluable. In addition to developing my skills in human resources, I learned about the challenges of working at an international bank. By making several key placements in the financial planning group, I discovered that it is an excellent fit for my strengths in mathematics, logic and finance. I plan to pursue a long-term career in financial planning following the completion of my MBA.

Looking back, I can see that my decision to resign from T. Rowe Price was inspired by immaturity and poor judgment. I was naive to think that I could build a satisfying financial career without proving myself first. Despite the false start with my web design firm, I do not regret the experience. By exploring an alternative path, I forced myself to re-evaluate my goals and adjust my plans for achieving them. When I returned to the financial world, I brought a more mature outlook and an increased appreciation for my job. Ultimately, I realized that nothing is "menial" in the development of a lifelong career. Every task, large or small, has taught me something valuable about the industry and my eventual place in it.

### **Imagine You are a Member of the MBA Admissions Committee. Write A Summary of Yourself as a Candidate.**

John Ling is an exceptionally motivated young man with a BS in Engineering from the University of Beijing. After working as a Chemical Engineer for Exxon in China, John left his native country and relocated to the United States. Without family or friends, he faced the daunting challenge of supporting himself, mastering English and preparing for his eventual enrollment in an MBA program. Fortunately, John's adaptive skills helped the transformation go smoothly. He embraced the opportunity to learn more about western society by simultaneously enrolling in school and starting a new job. He accepted a position as a manager of a local upscale restaurant and quickly advanced to a district manager's position. The CEO was impressed by John's interpersonal skills and his ability to assume more responsibility. Within a few months, John rescheduled the workload within his district, improved the customer service and implemented a quality control program. After just two years with his firm, he is considered senior management material.

While advancing in his restaurant career, John also achieved academic success at Lake Placid Community College. Classes in business, economics, and law provided a deep understanding about the rules and business practices in the western hemisphere. John's dual work and college responsibilities greatly challenged his time-management skills. Many nights he had only a few hours of sleep, yet by becoming increasingly efficient, he juggled his multiple roles. John's resilience, stamina and lust for knowledge helped him to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles on his path to success.

Despite his hectic schedule, John always finds time for social and community activities. He took a leadership role in organizing the first International Student Club on campus. He negotiated the structure and financing of the club with the administration, wrote articles and organized the first meetings. For his efforts, John was proud to be chosen the club's first President. John also works tirelessly for the Brethren, a volunteer group that helps Asian immigrants assimilate into American society. Since 2000, he has organized four fundraisers for the group and secured housing for 23 Chinese exchange students in the Lake Placid community. New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani wrote a glowing reference letter for John, praising his tireless efforts in the Asian-American community.

John shows an uncanny ability to apply his skills in diverse environments. He demonstrated incredible motivation by his willingness to start at the bottom, leaving a secure life in China to pursue a western business degree. John's references all cite his friendliness, cooperative work ethic and willingness to help others. His versatility is excellent preparation for the intensity of Sloan's MBA program. After just three years in the United States, John achieved a composite GMAT score of 760, which is nearly impossible for someone who is not a native speaker of English. Clearly, John has the "right stuff" to succeed in a corporate environment and fulfill his aspirations. He will make a unique and valuable contribution to our next class.

**Imagine You are a Member of the MBA Admissions Committee. Write A Summary of Yourself as a Candidate.**

Jade Smith, a 30-year-old African-American female, is an impressive candidate who will make a strong contribution to Harvard's next class. Jade completed a dual degree in Chemistry and Women's Studies at Princeton University, where she maintained a 3.98 GPA. Her scientific major demonstrates her strong quantitative and analytical abilities, along with her commitment to academic excellence. Jade's ability to maintain top grades while pursuing many outside activities is particularly impressive.

During her undergraduate years, Jade started and managed a web design business on the Princeton campus called [www.SavvySkills.com](http://www.SavvySkills.com). The firm provides low-cost web design services to job seekers in the community who wished to market themselves on the Internet. Jade contributed over 15 hours a week to this program, while also participating in the Tri-Delt Sorority, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sigma Xi fraternity. Her GMAT scores are also outstanding (740 composite).

Jade's career progress is unsurpassed. Since 1997, she has served as secretary to John Stevens, the Governor of New Hampshire. Jade is highly visible in the media, where she provides a voice for the Governor's position on issues such as Affirmative Action and reproductive freedom. On a regular basis, Jade assumes responsibilities that are rarely given to a junior consultant, including serving as the media liaison with the New Hampshire State Assembly. Jade also writes a monthly column for the *New Hampshire Daily*, which has the highest circulation of any newspaper in New England. Her 1999 series on gay and lesbian rights, "Choices in Peril," received a Pulitzer Prize nomination. Because of this recognition, Jade is often invited to speak about women's rights issues on television and radio talk shows.

Jade's references confirm that she is a talented, dynamic woman with great potential for a political career. Her ability to flourish in a high level position without formal business training indicates her natural affinity for management. Jade currently manages a support staff of eight people, including several key players who normally report directly to the Governor. She understands how to manage and motivate people, both on her staff and throughout the community. Jade's political savvy, combined with her writing and entrepreneurial skills, will provide a unique addition to the classroom. She will also be a terrific asset to our community service and fundraising programs on campus.

Jade's essays provided tremendous insights to both her character and motivation. Jade seeks a career behind-the-scenes in American politics, running the staff of a Governor, State Senator or other elected

official. Jade is a clearly self-starter, creating situations in which she can use her strengths to promote worthy social and political causes. References confirm that Jade is not only motivated and intelligent, but also fun and outgoing. She is a tri-athlete and a talented concert pianist. Friends marvel at her high energy level and wonder how she manages to juggle so many diverse interests and responsibilities.

I am certain that Jade will be a vibrant contributor to the class and a distinguished alumni. She is exactly the type of candidate we want to attract.

**Imagine You are a Member of the MBA Admissions Committee. Write A Summary of Yourself as a Candidate.**

An MBA from Sloan will enable Jhana Lee to develop new businesses in Korea and to establish a nonprofit program to promote education. In preparation, she will embark on an MBA program that focuses on innovation, value-based leadership and fundamental business principles.

By training, Jhana is an industrial engineer (Yale University, Class of 1997, 4.0 GPA). Jhana's career path has provided wonderful preparation for formal business training at Sloan. After five years as an engineer for General Electric, she advanced to a position in business management. In her new role, Jhana worked closely with General Electric's marketing team to open the company's first office in Korea. As project leader, Jhana educated the marketing team about the Korean business culture and helped to develop a comprehensive business strategy for the new sales office. The promotion was an excellent opportunity to develop key leadership skills and a global business perspective.

Jhana's promotion brought numerous challenges and opportunities for growth. Unlike her engineering position, Jhana's new function is managerial, including direct supervision of six employees. To bring the new office to fruition, Jhana rented office space and handled the relevant legal issues and regulations. Jhana served as liaison between customers, branch offices and governmental agencies, greatly strengthening her interpersonal skills. Jhana also built a strong marketing and engineering team, recruiting local talent with diverse backgrounds and skills. Though young, the office already generates additional revenue for General Electric from new customers in Korea. The team helped General Electric establish a strategic partnership with several large telecommunication firms in Korea to develop the local standard for cellular telephones. This partnership is a strategic coup, giving General Electric a competitive edge in developing future telecommunication products and services for the Korean market.

Jhana also contributes her time and energy to relevant social causes. Throughout 2002, Jhana taught religion classes in a village primary school where the only available teacher was ill. Through this experience, she gained a first-hand appreciation of the unique challenges facing the Korean educational system. Insufficient government funding, economic disparity and an ineffectual management system threaten the already under-subsidized rural education programs. Sadly, in a country once known for educational excellence, the majority of the population has been left behind the boon of economic development. In addition to her teaching, Jhana also promotes an educational awareness program in Korea to teach methods to prevent and treat Hepatitis C. With increased awareness, Korea can implement effective programs to prevent the spread of Hepatitis C and to treat its victims with knowledge and compassion.

Jhana's long-term goal is to establish a nonprofit organization to address the educational concerns arising from Korea's changing character. She is committed to making a personal contribution to ensure that the next generation is fully prepared to lead productive, fulfilling lives. Jhana's immediate post-MBA career objective is to work in a Korean government-backed or foreign-owned venture capital firm that focuses on Korea's emerging markets. By promoting business development from the investment side, Jhana will expand her managerial skills and build a powerful support network. This preparation will enable her subsequent transition into the nonprofit sector.

Jhana's international work experience allows her to pursue both professional and humanitarian goals in a developing nation. Sloan's strong entrepreneurial spirit, including its innovative "Entrepreneurship Lab," will nurture her passion and provide hands-on experience on starting and building new business ventures. With her diverse cultural and professional background, Jhana has a lot to offer Sloan's collaborative culture. I recommend wholeheartedly that we accept her.

**Favorite Outside Interests**

On a personal level, my greatest accomplishment is music, my true passion. I started playing the violin and piano at age five and was "discovered" by a talent agent at age eight. Throughout my childhood, I competed rigorously in all types of events, including categories beyond my age group. Although I competed against older musicians from around the world, I usually won the events.

Although I am justifiably proud of my achievements, I despise the labels "child prodigy" and "musical genius," which ignore the importance of discipline and skill in attaining my goals. For most of my life, I trained for at least six hours a day after school, with no guarantee of competitive success. Fortunately, my efforts paid off handsomely. I represented Canada in the 1992 New York Opera House Christmas concert, and later toured with the same group throughout Europe. I won an original composition scholarship to Harvard, which allowed me to train with Claude George, a renown music composer. Later, I was chosen to perform my own composition with the Boston Pops.

My long journey to musical success thoroughly changed my character and self-awareness. Many years ago, my dad told me that "to succeed in this world is to fail deeply first." Indeed, I failed many times before I tasted success. I learned to set expectations well above my goal and to always aim higher than the norm. By pursuing my true passion, I also discovered that the process and the journey are more rewarding than the outcome. My achievements in music gave me confidence in my ability to succeed in all areas of life. At a young age, I saw the phenomenal results of sacrifice, perseverance and having faith in myself. I am confident in my ability to set, manage and achieve ambitious goals. My experiences also taught me to define success in non-monetary terms. Long after the audience leaves the concert hall, music gives me a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment that money can not buy.

### **Favorite Outside Interests**

Since early childhood, I have been fascinated by politics. Long before I was old enough to vote, I kept abreast of political issues and each major party's position on them. One of my biggest frustrations was the limitation of the two-party system, which reduced complex issues into arbitrary black-and-white dichotomies. I often wished there was a third choice for those of us who were open-minded enough to explore the myriad shades of gray, where most viable solutions can be found.

For the past six years, I have been the President of the Utah chapter of the Green Party, which has gained a national reputation for the type of free thinking I enjoy. Yet even "my" party shows signs of cynicism in these tough times. When I tell people that I hope to run for elected office some day, their response is usually profound skepticism. "Who in their right mind would want to be a politician?" As a lifelong optimist, I am saddened by the negative perception of our government leaders. After a decade of business corruption (Enron) and political scandals (Whitewater and Travelgate), far too many Americans have lost faith in bureaucracy.

Yet over the past several years, I have become intrigued by politics and the way our government works. An intelligent, free-thinking third party is essential to the concept of true choice. Promoting that party is my personal destiny. As I campaigned for several Green Party candidates in the 2004 elections, I became aware of pressing local interests and the power of an elected official to change them. Leaving their

professional interests behind, our federal, state and local representatives work tirelessly to promote the best interests of their electorate. They are our voice. As I distributed pamphlets and held rallies, I was energized by the large turnout and the exceptional questions that citizens asked. Despite the media's focus on a few salacious scandals, politics remains an honorable profession for those who heed its calling.

After studying political leaders, I concluded that many are motivated by personal gain, such as money, power and prestige. For our political system to work effectively, we need leaders whose first priority is representing their district. Although one person can't change all of the problems in government, (s)he can make a difference on a personal level. As a Green Party candidate, I am eager to assume the challenge.

### **Favorite Outside Interests**

For many people, cooking is a nightly burden with few intrinsic rewards. When pressed for time, they are happy to grab a hamburger at McDonalds or pop a frozen pizza in the oven. Yet, for many generations of my family, cooking has provided a cherished social occasion to create and enjoy the most delectable dishes. My passion for preparing gourmet meals stems from my fond memories of childhood dinners in my parents' household. Each Saturday morning, my mother asked for our input for Sunday dinner. We then spent our weekend procuring fresh ingredients at the Farmer's Market, where the smell of fresh produce permeated the air. After buying seasonal vegetables, we created delightful blends of international meals, including Adana kebab (a Turkish regional specialty) and Russian zucchini pancakes. Although these dishes took hours to prepare, once we sat down at the dinner table and began to discuss our day, the memories of our hard work dissipated into animated chatter and laughter.

Aside from my appreciation for good food, I never gave the physical act of cooking much thought until I moved to the United States at age 16 to spend a year with a host family. My initial adjustment to a steady diet of "convenience foods" was agonizing. Instead of the tasty dinners I enjoyed at my parents' home, we ate hamburgers, hot dogs and an occasional ready-mix chili. Even worse, my host family's spice drawer was collecting dust and their kitchen cabinets were filled with canned goods, which were a major taboo in my parents' home. Although I occasionally enjoyed fast food, I was not fond of eating it on a daily basis. Fortunately, my host family's busy lifestyle gave me the chance to develop my culinary skills. With my host mother's help, I took the initiative to create nice home-cooked meals. Ultimately, we both benefited from this experience; while I learned how to prepare American specialties like apple pie and Thanksgiving turkey, she learned how to make quick feta cheese pastries and a traditional shepherd's salad.

After graduating from high school, I attended the prestigious Columbia School of Hospitality Management, where I combined my passion for cooking with my love for the hospitality industry. By attending classes in Wine History and Desserts Merchandising, I further sharpened my culinary knowledge and cooking skills. Thanks to my creative flair, I quickly developed a reputation for being a whiz in the kitchen. While most of my peers skimmed the necessary textbook chapters, I meticulously read the material and experimented with new recipes. In my spare time, I followed the trends of my favorite television chefs and re-created their most enticing concoctions.

Years after completing my culinary education, cooking remains a major part of my life. Living in a culinary mecca like New York, I am continually inspired to try new things. Whenever possible, I flaunt my skills by entertaining my friends with themed dinner parties. Seeing their faces light up after taking their first bite out of one of my dishes strengthens my belief that good times are always enhanced by good food.

### **Describe your most challenging professional relationship.**

As the vice president of the Rhode Island chapter of Sigma Tau Omicron, I promoted the training, education and public awareness of criminal justice professionals throughout the community. During my first year as an officer, I took my direction from Rick Binkley, our chapter president, who had nearly thirty years of law enforcement experience. During the first six months I knew Rick, he generously shared his time and expertise to help me understand the group's objectives. I looked forward to learning much more from him as a mentor and friend.

Unfortunately, fate had other plans. On a rainy night in March of 2003, Rick was killed in a violent car crash. At age 54, he left his family, friends and peer shell shocked by his sudden passing. To my surprise, Rick's death left me as the interim president of Sigma Tau Omicron for the remainder of 2003. Despite his previous mentoring, I felt completely unprepared for the responsibility. So much of our group identity came

from Rick's personality and dedication. He inspired loyalty and passion beyond my wildest dreams. How could I possibly fill his shoes? More importantly, would the other members even want me to?

Although the chapter members unanimously voted to retain me as interim president, they also revealed several pressing challenges. Despite Rick's calm demeanor and optimistic outlook, our group was actually in serious financial trouble. Before we could even hope to participate in a national conference, we needed to raise funds. Our previous efforts, through traditional bake sales, car washes and pot luck dinners, had barely covered our costs. With several charities expecting our support, including Toys for Tots, we needed several novel fundraising techniques.

Thankfully, I have never underestimated the power of brainstorming. While still mourning Rick's loss, Sigma Tau Omicron members from across New England phoned us with creative suggestions to get our chapter back on track. They lent equipment for a carnival fundraiser and even offered to staff our booths. Everyone was committed to helping Rick's friends promote his legacy. The subsequent lobster fest in Rick's honor was well-attended and profitable. With the help of our brothers-in-arms, we achieved our aggressive financial goals and Sigma Tau Omicron survived for another year. I always felt that in some small way, Rick guided our group to our final destination.

### **Describe your most challenging professional relationship.**

During my first year of study at the University of Connecticut, I was live-in caregiver for an 83-year-old lady with Alzheimer's disease. Many times, she could not remember details from one hour to the next. Upon our return from the library or grocery store, she would ask me to go back to get items she had forgotten on our first trip. Understanding her condition, I always happily and patiently accommodated her requests. One summer day, she fell on the beach during her morning walk and required medical treatment. I took care of her at the hospital and brought her to each follow-up visit.

Although the lady's family expressed gratitude to me for making a "demanding" lady happy, I didn't consider my efforts to be particularly extraordinary. I loved taking care of her and took great pride in bringing joy to her final days. As a live-in caregiver, I gained first-hand experience working with a geriatric Alzheimer's patient. I learned to be meticulous, patient and sensitive to another's needs. I also confirmed my genuine concern for others and my desire to take part in their healing process. Thanks to my lovely 83-year-old patient, I acknowledged my calling as a nurse and was honored to answer it.

### **Describe your most challenging professional relationship.**

At the request of senior management, I served as an internal consultant for a project that investigated employee performance and morale in a troubled division. During the first meeting that I tried to facilitate, the team leader dominated the discussion and tried to impose his views on the rest of the group. I quickly realized that he resisted the project because he was a primary part of the problem. Rather than support my efforts to encourage discussion and reach a consensus, he opposed to any solution that might include a reorganization or leadership change in his division.

After the first meeting, he invited me to lunch to discuss the project. When I raised my concerns, he said, "Don't worry, I will make this project easy for you." To my surprise, he asked me to ignore the project plan that his boss had proposed and agree to his predetermined solution. In his mind, the existing problems were exaggerated and not worth major changes in the division. He asked me to direct the team toward his agenda of maintaining the status quo, which would avoid exposing any unnecessary problems to upper management. In fact, he already had a plan in mind that would address several minor problems.

His suggestion was a direct violation of my cultural and religious beliefs, which support integrity, freedom and equality. As the facilitator, it was my responsibility to solve the problem to the satisfaction of the entire team, not just the team leader. Sadly, this man expected me to violate my own ethical principles to further his own agenda. At first, I politely explained that we both had an obligation to promote the company's values. His idea was risky and could have a negative impact on employee morale. When he refused to abandon his plan, I advised him that I simply could not support him. Changes in the division would be determined by group consensus, not by one person's opinion.

After our lunch meeting, I hoped that the team leader would abandon his misguided plan, but he did not. As the project moved forward, other team members started to realize that he was pushing a

predetermined plan that did not honestly address their problems. With mixed emotions, I reported the situation to management, who put the project on hold. Four weeks later, the team leader was transferred to another department and was replaced by a new leader who was committed to the original project. With his support, I helped the team successfully complete the project in a manner that was consistent with my core values.

### **Ethical Dilemma**

While auditing a bank in Brazil, I discovered some unexpected interest accruals (totaling \$283,000) in a savings account that belonged to the wife of a computer programmer. I confronted him, but he initially denied any knowledge of the funds. Upon further questioning, the employee confessed that he had falsified the instructions in the software and had embezzled money for several months. The programmer was fired, but he agreed to reimburse the money within two years.

Three months later, a local company requested a reference for the terminated employee. Our Human Resources Manager wanted to give him a positive reference, so we could recover the money. I disagreed, arguing that we should tell the truth. Ultimately, the General Manager agreed with my position. The bank's attorney drafted a letter stating that the programmer's performance was "less than satisfactory" without giving specific details. After one year, the programmer stopped making restitution to us. He moved to a limit country (Argentina), joined a local bank and committed the same fraud there.

My decision was correct under the unusual circumstances. If we had been totally honest in our letter (by revealing the fraud), the fired employee could have sued us for character defamation, which would have been a public relations debacle for the bank. On the other hand, if we lied in his reference letter (to recover the lost money), my bank could have been liable for future problems at the employee's new place of business. Only by exemplifying our own highest principles could we ensure employee awareness and adherence to a corporate code of ethics.

### **Ethical Dilemma**

Six months into my tenure with Dell Computer, the company opted to outsource the manufacturing function of our mother boards to a tiny firm in Venezuela. Although senior management assured us that the company was not a sweatshop that used child labor, I had my doubts. In my previous position with Hewlett-Packard, I had visited a manufacturing plant in the same city where Dell planned to do business. I saw with my own eyes the age of the workers and the inhumane conditions they endured. I strongly disagreed with Dell's decision to support this practice.

Although I was not in a position to change the decision, I presented a videotape of my footage from Venezuela to a sympathetic manager in human resources. She promised to show it to the senior manager in charge of the move. She also asked me to document my concerns in a memo to senior management. My findings were influential in their decision to postpone the move.

According to United Nations statistics, 250 million children between the ages of five and fourteen are exploited for cheap labor in manufacturing plants like the one Dell planned to build. Sadly, the "solution" to this type of exploitation remains elusive. Immediate bans, sanctions or boycotts cause corporations to fire the child workers without raising wages, which drives the displaced children to more dangerous forms of labor. Companies that exploit the low wages in these situations rob these children of a chance for an education and a real future.

Dell's long-term solution was to build the plant in Venezuela, but to use creative solutions to prevent child labor. On the advice of a consultant, they shifted their focus to family-oriented efforts, such as providing school lunches and giving tax breaks to parents who sent their kids to school. In addition to alleviating the family's financial burden, this approach also promotes education, which eventually yields a better qualified work force. These changes, over time, will end child labor by empowering adults to earn a living wage without supplemental income from their children. I was proud to be a part of such a creative solution.

### **Ethical Dilemma**

As an ICU nurse for Beth Israel Hospital, I work with patients of all racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Occasionally, my own status as a Chinese-American creates a complex issue relating to medical ethics. One case last October was particularly challenging. An elderly Chinese woman was diagnosed with terminal cancer and had only a short time to live. According to contemporary ethics in Western medicine, the doctors were required to disclose her condition and offer all available treatment options. Her family vehemently opposed this disclosure. Since her death was imminent, they felt that any discussion regarding her prognosis would be impossibly cruel.

As someone who was raised in China and educated in the United States, I understood both positions. In China, the family's wish would have superseded the medical community's desire for full disclosure. The patient would have been allowed to live out her final days in comfort and peace. In America, however, the medical community is compelled to offer all available treatments, even in terminal cases. They will not promote ignorance or destroy a patient's hope. The American perspective also acknowledges the need for the family to resolve legal issues, such as the execution of a living will. Sharing the prognosis in a timely manner gives the patient time to plan the funeral and make appropriate arrangements to settle the estate.

In this particular case, a higher power resolved the situation for us, as the patient died before the doctors could disclose her prognosis. Under the circumstances, it was the best possible ending. Despite our best efforts to provide quality care to all patients, cultural clashes and ethical dilemmas are fairly common in multicultural health care settings. Families and physicians must work together on a case-by-case basis to find a mutually-agreeable solutions.

### **Team Experience**

In early 2002, I assumed the responsibility of opening three Walmart Supercenters on the outskirts of Corpus Christi, Texas. The market, which was previously dominated by the floundering K-Mart Corporation, offered a promising opportunity for Walmart to penetrate an upscale urban area. To my surprise, our construction schedule hit an immediate snag because many of our Spanish construction workers did not speak or understand English. Their mistakes were not particularly costly, but they raised critical concerns about workplace safety and productivity. When I discussed them with Sara Carlisle, who was in charge of staffing the three stores, she expressed similar problems with our applicants for sales and service positions. Although many people were eager to work at Walmart, few had the requisite fluency in English and Spanish to adequately serve our multicultural customer base.

Rather than wait for a corporate directive from Bentonville, Sara and I took the initiative to solve the problem on our own. With the support of our colleagues, we were certain that we could teach classes to give our construction workers and sales staff a rudimentary understanding of English. I approached the director of a community service organization, Life Skills Connections, who provided us with free books and tapes, along with a suggested curriculum. To encourage participation by the less-educated field workers, I distributed fliers that described how learning English would benefit them, both as individuals and employees.

With no previous teaching experience, we began with a moderate level of trepidation. What if we were unsuccessful? What if our students didn't understand us? Fortunately, the camaraderie in our classes was intense and immediate. Our students were eager to learn and our teachers were eager to share their tips about what techniques were most effective. Within a few months, the demand for the program grew

significantly, which motivated us to recruit more teachers. With the help of thirteen volunteers, Sara and I ultimately helped 282 students significantly improve their fluency in English. The results of our efforts were far-reaching. In addition to communicating better at work, many students got their drivers licenses and were able to assist their children with their homework. Some employees even received promotions at Walmart because of their increased fluency in English.

The project was a powerful example of how a small team of motivated people can make a difference. By taking the initiative to mobilize our available resources, we helped our employees develop a skill that will last a lifetime. On May 1, 2003, Sara and I were honored to receive the 3-Star Volunteer Excellence Award from the Governor of Texas, in recognition of our service. Inspired by the results, I am eager to participate in future community service efforts.

### **Team Experience**

As a relationship manager at Ameritrade, I develop and lead cross-functional teams to provide client solutions. In late 2003, I struggled to solve a communications problem that threatened a project's success. During an important business engagement, our client expressed dissatisfaction with the timing and coordination of a new service. When I investigated his concerns, I discovered that some of the deliverables he had expected were delayed because of communication issues on our team. To avoid losing his business, I took the initiative to resolve the issue in a timely manner.

As the project leader, my first objective was to define each person's responsibilities and to explain their inter-relationship. The team members, which included specialists in technology, operations, business and the law, lacked the structure needed to work on a multi-faceted project. To alleviate uncertainty, I prepared a flowchart presentation that outlined each person's contribution and expertise. I explained how a delay by one person could create a crisis for someone else; they were humbled to see how a seemingly trivial mistake could sabotage the entire project.

My second objective was to leverage the team's strengths and weaknesses. To improve our communication, I scheduled weekly meetings to discuss issues and acknowledge major milestones. By fostering an environment that promoted feedback and teamwork, I encouraged the team to draw from their diverse perspectives to arrive at an effective solution. Whenever possible, I acknowledged superior performance and gave each member the opportunity to shine. By implementing a clear and measurable set of objectives, measures and rewards, the team eagerly took ownership of the project.

Working with a cross-functional team is challenging because of the limited viewpoint of each member. By communicating effectively and drawing from diverse perspectives, I helped the team to develop and share a common vision. As a result, the team members felt accountable for the success of the project and not just for their individual contributions. By thinking strategically and solving a thorny organizational problem, I built camaraderie within the team and saved our relationship with a valued client. As an added benefit, our subsequent working relationships have been far more rewarding than I ever expected.

### **Team Experience**

As a member of the elite, high-performance Honor Guard for the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Riley, Kansas, I am required to maintain exceptionally high physical and moral standards. We perform under close scrutiny for many high profile situations and dignitaries, including the Commanding Generals, honored retirees and visiting VIPs. My specific challenges relate to being the only female member of the ten-person team. Assimilating into the male-dominated squad was a challenge, as I had to learn numerous skills from a disadvantaged position. Although I outranked all but three team members, I had little experience in procuring equipment, arranging practices and delivering orders to subordinates. I relied on the graciousness of my fellow squad members to teach me these skills in a timely fashion. Within a matter of weeks, I had

mastered the particulars of military drill and ceremony, including precision movements, attention to detail and performance under stress by supervisors.

Fortunately, our group became quite close while dealing with these responsibilities. We weren't plagued with the sexual harassment issues that have haunted other areas of the military. My success is due in great part to my ability to put other soldiers at ease, and by not using my gender as leverage in difficult situations. Once my fellow squad members realized that I could perform my duties without special assistance, they treated me with respect and dignity. We became true friends, which is quite rare in the military.

After September 11, 2001, we found ourselves in great demand to attend the funerals and memorial services of US Veterans who had been killed in the terrorist attacks. Despite the competing demands on our time, we refused to decline the invitations. For nearly two months, we flew to every service, whether it was located in the heart of New York City or the mountains of New Mexico. Amid the trauma and sadness of random death, we provided a formal presence of military support for the survivors of the deceased. The quiet dignity of each service bonded our group and kept us motivated throughout the difficult times. We are American soldiers who are dedicated to doing whatever is required to serve our country. That bond supersedes any individual issues we may have in any aspect of our daily operations.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

**Strengths.** Whenever I embark on a new venture, I tend to be very enthusiastic. As a result, my high energy level enables me to motivate people, get along with everyone and create a fun and supportive environment. After surviving the rotational nature of the eighteen-month training program at JP Morgan Chase, I learned how to be amazingly flexible. I circulated through a new business unit every three months, mastering different topics and business segments, adjusting to different groups and situations, and producing results in a short period of time. I quickly learned how to anticipate change and form solid friendships.

By overcoming serious financial obstacles to put myself through college, I demonstrated great determination. To my family's pride, I was the first college graduate from our large, immigrant family, yet my education required great sacrifices. Starting in my freshman year, I worked 40 hours per week, in addition to my class work, to pay for school. Whenever I felt weary, I focused on my goal of being part of the Howard University legacy that produced some of our greatest black leaders, including Thurmond Marshall and Stokeley Carmichael. Balancing my academic and personal activities was challenging, but it enabled me to graduate from college and to serve as role model for my family.

**Weaknesses.** Many times, I am so eager to make a decision or solve a problem that I take action before gathering enough information. To address this weakness, I have made a conscious decision to thoroughly evaluate all relevant data before I act. As part of my due diligence, I pay particular attention to alternative solutions and evidence that contradicts my initial judgment. By doing so, I have increased my capacity for solving problems, making informed decisions, taking effective action, and generating new knowledge about a complex world.

A second weakness is my tendency to become emotionally involved in my work. Rather than respond to a customer rationally, I tend to take a faster, empathetic approach. In customer service, this tendency has both positive and negative aspects; although men view emotional reactions negatively, women appreciate a response that is sensitive to their feelings. As I progress in my managerial career, I will try to strike a healthy balance between a style that combines the best aspects of rational and emotional models.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

As a college student, my *organizational skills* have enabled me to juggle the demands of a double major with my participation in sports, volunteering and social outings. Unlike my friends, who must cram the night before an exam, I plan my work to meet my deadlines in a relaxed manner. Over the years, I have become highly *disciplined* in my study habits, avoiding the typical distractions that might interfere with my work. These skills have been invaluable in my career as a pediatric nurse, in which I must balance my clinical duties with the demands of research.

My life has also been enhanced by my *vibrant curiosity about different cultures*. At age

29, I have already visited 18 countries on 5 continents, where I learned about the history, outlook and philosophy of several intriguing places. As a result of my travels, I have developed an interest in reading international literature and learning languages to better understand the intricacies of a culture and its people. In addition to English, I also speak French, Polish, Spanish and German and am currently learning to speak Russian. With each new language that I master, I expand my ability to touch the lives of others.

Whenever possible, I give back to the community by *volunteering* at a local children's hospital. By making someone's day a little brighter, I have gained an appreciation for what really matters in life, which is family and friendship. To alleviate stress and keep in shape, I am also an avid athlete, with a flair for aerobics and intramurals. I particularly enjoy the sense of friendship and teamwork I have derived from tennis, which has taught me the importance of fair play and determination. Through sports, I continually challenge myself to extend the limits of my potential.

My greatest weakness is *self-criticism*; as a perfectionist, I am rarely satisfied with my achievements. Rather than accept someone else's opinion that my work is excellent, I will continue to try to improve it. I also tend to focus on the negative and worry about small problems that could occur. These fears lead me to make conservative choices and miss out on opportunities because I am uncertain of the outcome. A final weakness is *shyness*, which prevents me from speaking up in group situations. Far too often, I get overly nervous when I have to give a speech, even though I have an excellent command of the material.

Ironically, my perfectionism stems from the high expectations that I have set for myself. Thankfully, I have acknowledged this weakness and am trying to be more flexible. Rather than catastrophize a situation, I step back and assess things objectively. By participating in social and athletic activities, I have become more comfortable in group situations and have opened my world to new experiences. After careful introspection, I have realized that I cannot control every aspect of my life; sometimes things go wrong. By keeping a realistic perspective, I have balanced my desire for perfection with the knowledge that even the most talented and committed person sometimes makes mistakes.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

From the time I learned to walk, I was an avid explorer. Childproof locks, closed doors and baby gates couldn't keep me from investigating every sound and smell that intrigued me. Almost twenty-eight years later, nothing has changed. I'm blessed with an extremely high energy level and a desire to embrace as many different experiences as life will allow. This hyper-enthusiasm is simultaneously my greatest strength and my greatest weakness.

My passion for learning enabled me to graduate from high school at 16 with a full academic scholarship to Harvard. As one of their youngest students, I was determined to demonstrate my maturity, academic talent and my ability to fit in. I nearly killed myself in the process. As a freshman, I couldn't decide between majoring in Chemistry or Political Science, so I opted for a dual major. Between late afternoon chem labs and evening poly sci lectures, I often found myself completing homework assignments well after midnight. During my "down time," I traveled with the debating team and worked as a seamstress for the Hasty Pudding Club. "Free time" became an impossible fantasy.

At first, I enjoyed considerable benefits from my frenetic schedule: a perfect 4.0 grade point average in two tough majors that I thoroughly enjoyed. In addition, I was team captain for the debating team during our 1997 national win, and was subsequently interviewed by Tom Brokaw for NBC News. My parents couldn't have been prouder to see their "little girl" taking Cambridge by storm.

After two subsequent semesters of non-stop work, my over commitment finally caught up with me. During the spring quarter of my sophomore year, I contracted mononucleosis and was bedridden for three weeks. Contracting a serious illness forced me to face a tough reality; my over commitment was making me sick. Clearly, the little tiny explorer within me had to make some painful decisions.

Thanks to my understanding faculty members, I recovered from my illness without seriously damaging my grade point average. But I also dramatically changed my approach to college life. I acknowledged that I couldn't do everything and that it was foolish to even try. By dropping my second major in Political Science, I had more time to focus on chemistry. I also stepped down from my participation in the Hasty Pudding Club, turning my seamstress gig over to someone new.

With my newly-discovered free time, I invested more time into personal friendships and I joined a few social groups on campus. Occasionally, I indulged in the supreme joy of doing nothing, which is anathema to a high achiever! Ironically, the changes actually improved my performance. I graduated Summa Cum Laude from Harvard and remained a debating champ throughout my four years. But I did it at a slower pace, with fewer rigid deadlines, surrounded by a small circle of nurturing friends. Over the past six years, I learned that overachievers perform best (and most enjoyably) when they listen to their own hearts as well as to the demands of the outside world.

**While recognizing that no day is typical, describe a representative day.**

At 8:00 am my message light is already flashing. My Vice President is irate because my valuation is \$50,000 below our client's expectations. I hurry to his office to explain my analysis. After drilling me on every figure, he finally concedes. His ringing telephone interrupts further discussion, but his thumbs up authorizes me to confirm my numbers with the client. As I reach my desk, my phone is ringing. George Wyatt of the Bridgman Group has never organized an IPO before, so I walk him through the process and provide a detailed explanation for our proposed evaluation.

I draft a presentation and stop by Glenda's desk, the analyst on the deal. Her frustration is palpable. "Just three days to prepare for the Collins presentation and I STILL don't have the data! Another all-nighter, I guess." Before discussing my needs with Glenda, I decide to take her for a cup of coffee. We formulate a plan to prepare the Collins material using junior support staff, if necessary. Glenda's focus must be on crunching numbers, not wasted on stapling documents. After a brief pep talk, I sense she is back on track.

Next I am off to the conference room for a client meeting. The client, an international banker with limited command of English, immediately seeks my leadership. Drawing on my two-year internship in Costa Rica, I lead the discussion in Spanish, detailing the current state of the Latin American equity markets. We quickly conclude that the likelihood for a successful banking IPO is weak. Instead, we recommend selling the bank as the best way to unlock value. We establish a firm timeline to expedite the process.

Returning to my desk after lunch, the voicemail light is flashing again. This call, from Human Resources, is promising. We recently extended an attractive job offer to a candidate for an junior analysts position in my group, and she made a reasonable counteroffer. I agree to her terms regarding vacation days and benefits, and await word on her final acceptance. I relish having another seasoned professional in the group to share the burgeoning workload. My whimsy is interrupted by yet another phone call, confirming a last-minute meeting with the marketing group.

Glenda and I wrap up with marketing around 6:00 pm and discuss the Collins documents over Chinese take-out. She is feeling better and has some creative suggestions for the presentation. I have been in her shoes and understand her need for help and encouragement. Working as a team, we finalize the first batch of material by 9:00 pm. I walk Glenda to her car before heading home.

**While recognizing that no day is typical, describe a representative day.**

My day begins with a morning meeting with the sales group to discuss a critical issue with the proposed Tidy Cat co-packaging program. Due to limited resources, we can only fulfill customer demand by using a second source of clay. This is a sensitive issue with sales, as they believe that driving this revenue to a competitor, even temporarily, is bad for the company. I desperately need the support of the sales team for the program to succeed. During our meeting, I carefully demonstrate the long-term value of using the second vendor. Cooperative ventures provide us with supply flexibility during times when our plants work above capacity. Ensuring a stable product supply through co-packers fulfills the immediate customer demand and builds long-term consumer loyalty. As I demonstrate the detrimental effects of lost business due to our inability to fulfill demand, I finally sense that I have support from the team.

In late morning, I wrap up outstanding issues with the Fresh Step fragrance reformulation. We recently

signed a long-term exclusive supply agreement with a small, highly motivated fragrance house that specializes in dual action, time-released fragrance/biocide combinations. The product is a great fit for our premium cat litter brand and I am excited about our potential competitive advantage. After reviewing the final contracts, I authorize the team to present the plan to the entire organization at our upcoming quarterly staff meeting.

After lunch, I have a conference call with the Alabama plant to discuss a critical quality control issue. Recent batches of coarse cat litter from their plant have failed the absorption test and interact negatively with our classic fragrance. Consumer complaints from Walmart have reached a five-year high. Since they are our largest customer, we cannot afford to lose even a portion of their business. The Alabama plant has already identified a potential source of contamination and presents a plan for speedy resolution. We agree to speak via conference call in a day or so to discuss progress.

After this meeting, I spend an hour checking my voice mail and answering my messages. My boss stops by for a quick chat about the upcoming Christmas party and we muse about our long, productive year. We enthusiastically discuss new projects and opportunities for future growth. Our discussion ends well after 7 pm, when we both head home for the evening.

**While recognizing that no day is typical, describe a representative day.**

As a high school English teacher, my daily schedule is fairly standard. I arrive at school at 7:00 am and take an hour to prepare my lessons. I teach three morning classes: Shakespeare, modern literature, and an honors class in poetry. Each group is filled with talented students who have a true flair for language. Although I always loved writing, I don't remember being as confident and articulate as these kids. My students are a refreshing contrast to the surly, self-involved teenagers who are personified in the media.

I spend my lunch hour monitoring the cafeteria, affectionately known as "Food Cop" duty. With just 300 students, our school is small enough for me to get to know each child as an individual. At twenty-eight, I am old enough to be a role model, yet young enough to remember the pains of first love, acne and pop algebra quizzes. I spend most of my lunch hour discussing boys with Shauna, a fifteen-year-old cheerleader who thinks she's in love with a senior football player. I enjoy my banter with Shauna, a sensitive girl who just started dating. I hope the boy realizes how special she is.

My afternoon classes are for freshmen with dyslexia, who struggle to process numbers and letters correctly. Although my students love to read, they feel the stigma of the "Special Ed" label that accompanies their disability. My role is more of coach and cheerleader, encouraging them during times of extreme frustration. I see progress, however, even on bad days. I am delighted to be an encouraging force in their life, acknowledging that their gifts to the universe will be quite different from my own.

I remain at school until 4 pm, grading papers, reading essays and preparing my lesson plans for the following day. Occasionally, students will drop by my office to discuss an assignment or a short story they don't understand. A particularly enthusiastic junior is already researching colleges and asks my opinion of Brown University. After reminiscing about my years in Providence, I encourage her to apply. She wants to be an English teacher, and I know from personal experience that my training at Brown was exceptional.

**What was the most difficult constructive feedback you have received, and what did you do as a result of it?**

I became financially self-sufficient after my parents died, which required me to work long hours at several part-time jobs. Although this responsibility helped me to mature, it left me highly critical of those who seemed less conscientious. In high school, I didn't understand why other students didn't complete their assignments as quickly and perfectly as I did. My diligence became a source of frustration in college, where our grades were based primarily on our successful completion of group projects. My first year project team consisted of six members who were selected randomly within the department. After a few nonproductive meetings, I concluded that my teammates were uninterested in achieving our objectives.

When I confided my frustration to my guardian, she warned me that I would not succeed by forcing my

unrealistic expectations on the rest of the group. Instead, she suggested that I view the group project as a personal learning experience. Rather than harp on project goals, she encouraged me to help improve the team's morale. Before we could achieve our mutual objectives, we needed to learn how to work together and combine our individual strengths. My primary job was to improve communication and establish trust within the group. For the first time in my life, I assumed a leadership role and began to build a team.

After studying our objectives, I divided the team into sub-groups to oversee the progress and technical content of a specific part of the project. Whenever possible, I assigned tasks that matched the skills and interests of my team members, which greatly improved morale. Each week, I organized group meetings and took minutes for those who were absent. I sent a meeting schedule and progress update to each group member via email. After we made these changes, group members became excited about making a contribution. As my guardian suspected, I achieved better results as a leader than as a critic.

In my post-collegiate jobs, I continue to employ a similar approach in managing group situations. Instead of demanding results and getting frustrated, I create an environment in which everyone can perform to his or her full potential. Last year, I was part of a twelve-member team that developed a new product for an intelligent network project. Although I was relatively new to the project, my team building skills were essential to its success. From the project's inception, I assumed responsibility for meeting the product's quality requirements and deadlines. I initiated meetings to reorganize the technical team and to tackle problem areas. To accommodate our rigid deadline, we divided into sub-teams that worked in parallel. After consulting with our systems engineers, I revised our designs and kept management abreast of our progress. In October, we passed the quality control tests and shipped the product on time.

Thanks to the lessons I learned from my guardian, I have repeatedly built solid teams that created success in bad situations. By remaining focused in difficult circumstances, I achieved aggressive goals and earned the respect of my teammates.

**What was the most difficult constructive feedback you have received, and what did you do as a result of it?**

During my junior year in college, my English professor encouraged me to join the Latin Youth Federation, which sponsored debates among Latin students throughout California. One of the goals of the program was to prepare students to debate political and social topics, particularly those of interest to the Latin community. Of the proposed topics, I was particularly intrigued by the controversy that surrounded the Bilingual Education Program. Opponents lobbied to eliminate its funding, because they didn't think the program benefited the community. I knew better. Without the bilingual education program, I could never have learned English in a step-by-step process.

Despite my weeks of painstaking preparation, my performance in the debate was an embarrassment. The moderator interrupted me several times to ask questions in a sarcastic manner; unprepared for the confrontation, I got overly emotional and lost my objectivity. Once he realized that he had the upper hand, my opponent exploited my weakness and undermined my confidence. He handily won the debate.

In the painful aftermath of the debate, my English professor offered the most constructive feedback I have ever received; don't be so invested in the outcome of a situation that you lose your composure. An excellent debater should theoretically be able to argue either position with equal vigor and skill. In this situation, I was so personally invested in the topic that I was blinded to my argument's weaknesses. By losing my objectivity, I gave my opponent his opportunity to win.

I have taken my professor's advice to heart in subsequent debates, and have achieved impressive results. More importantly, I became less focused on winning than on simply enjoying the experience and doing a good job. All of the preparation in the world doesn't help if I lose my composure in the final hour. Thanks to my professor's constructive feedback, that is no longer an issue.

**What was the most difficult constructive feedback you have received, and what did you do as a result of it?**

"If I try to pick you up for lunch, it will take an extra 15 minutes. You know how slow the elevators are." I felt terrible when I received this instant message from my friend Joanne. My bold response: "I would have come and picked you up, but I guess that is where we differ." When we discussed the incident later that day, she blamed me for being overly sensitive.

Although it wasn't the first time I had heard the accusation, I finally understood its significance. Previously, I had always viewed my sensitivity a positive quality which inspired my consideration toward others. Joanne's comment forced me to realize that being hypersensitive occasionally caused people to think less of me. Our argument was a startling wake-up call. Clearly, I needed to change my expectation that other people would act and speak the same way that I did. I also needed to learn how to take innocuous comments with a "grain of salt."

My touchiness probably has its roots in my Turkish heritage, coupled with my upbringing in Germany. Both cultures place a high value on etiquette, which has certainly influenced my personality. Throughout my life, I have always read deeper meaning into other people's words or actions than they actually intended. If faced with more than one possible interpretation, I automatically assumed the worst. As a result, I created all sorts of drama in my head that simply didn't exist. When a co-worker failed to include me in his e-mail about an upcoming lunch event, I immediately thought that he had purposely excluded me. I later discovered that he had simply forgotten to include me in his mass e-mail. Far too many times, I assumed that a simple miscommunication was an intentional slight.

After my conversation with Joanne, I was determined to take control of my hypersensitivity. Although it is not easy to change a twenty-year-old mindset, I am making progress. When I evaluate someone's comments, I simply take the words at face value and do not ascribe any "hidden meanings." By assuming the best, I can take things less seriously and avoid jumping to the wrong conclusions. In fact, I owe it to the people in my life to do so. After all, we each have a different value system, which affects our level of sensitivity toward others. Few comments are nearly as "personal" as I had assumed.

My argument with Joanne is now in the past, as is my tendency to micro-analyze everything that I hear. Although I didn't immediately realize that she was trying to help me, I can now acknowledge Joanne's comments as constructive encouragement that inspired me to grow as a person. As I look to the future, I will use my sensitivity as a gift, rather than as a defense mechanism. I will no longer allow myself to sabotage good relationships by expecting others to see the world exactly the same way that I do.

### **What Matters Most To You? Why?**

Escrow accounts. Title searches. Contingency clauses. From my earliest memory, my life has been shaped by Suncoast Insurance & Real Estate, my father's successful real estate business. As the third generation of my family to work in the same field, I am honored to carry on the Smith legacy. In many ways, my parents are the embodiment of the American dream; they have used their innate talents to build a satisfying life doing something they love. Besides closing deals, my father's primary goal was to teach his three children the power of persistence and determination. With tenacity, he insisted, anything was possible.

In my academic career, I definitely took his words to heart. By setting ambitious yet attainable goals, I learned how to push the limits of my scholastic potential. As a Real Estate major at the University of Florida, I maintained an excellent GPA while attaining all-district honors in baseball and golf. For the past six years, I have also worked at my father's firm, where I research deeds, measure homes for appraisals, and prepare sales sheets and photographs for real estate listings.

Working with my father has given me the opportunity to acquire practical experience in an environment of integrity and trust. As a man of deep faith, I am committed to bringing strong personal values to all of my business transactions. By honoring God, I am able to successfully navigate all of life's experiences. As a student, I distinguished myself from others who lacked the commitment and social skills to thrive in the rigorous educational environment. In my four-year college career, I missed only one day of classes due to illness. In business, I bring a sense of honesty and trust to all transactions, acknowledging that a deal does not "work" unless it benefits both parties. In all aspects of life, my core values enable me to face the future with confidence and enthusiasm. Whatever challenges I may face, I am certain that I have the character and judgment to make sound, well-reasoned decisions.

As I mature, I continually re-define my personal definition of success. In addition to a prosperous real estate career, I must also find time for sports, friends and family. As an undergraduate student, I sometimes struggled with the challenge of balancing my schoolwork with my other hobbies and interests. In

some ways, my challenge was attributable to my inherently inquisitive nature; I have always enjoyed learning new things and participating in a diverse set of activities. By perfecting my time management skills, I graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Florida, while also volunteering for the American Cancer Society. By coaching basketball at First Unitarian Church and youth baseball in Orlando, I also assumed the responsibility of mentoring young men in the community. Although my schedule is often frenetic, the professional and psychological benefits are enormous. When I envision the challenges of business school, I am confident that I have the ability to set priorities and manage my time effectively.

As I advance in the real estate business, I have discovered that my passion is converting undervalued properties into successful commercial units. Over the past two years, I have invested my own capital to convert four abandoned warehouses into thirty luxury condominium units. In Orlando's white hot real estate market, the project yielded nearly \$6 million in profits. With my father's encouragement, I have drafted a long-term plan for the Somerset Plaza in Altamonte Springs, which will convert one-half of a million square feet of abandoned retail space into an assisted living facility for the elderly. The project will allow me to combine my love of development with my desire to make a long-term contribution to my community. With the skills I acquire at Harvard, I will be well prepared to achieve both objectives.

On several occasions, I have discussed my aspirations with Marianne Walters, a close friend and Harvard alumni who works as a commercial real estate developer in Boston. She assured me that my background in finance, along with my analytical nature, makes me an excellent fit for the profession. Yet my most valuable asset is my set of core values, which will enable me to help struggling communities achieve their highest potential. Armed with a strong mind and a competitive spirit, I am eager to embrace whatever challenges Harvard may present. I cannot imagine a better legacy to leave in my parents' honor.

### **What Matters Most To You? Why?**

What matters most to me is making meaningful improvements in my native Iran. Although my short-term dream is to form a successful Internet business, my long-term aspiration is to graduate from business to politics. I take my cue from America, where industry leaders like Michael Bloomberg have revitalized communities and made great people leaders.

Iran has been ravaged by several decades of "ivory tower" politics, corruption, unemployment and caste divide. For the nation to survive, a new breed of leaders must step in and make desperately needed changes. Sadly, Iran's younger generation has grown apathetic toward their community and society. After years of political corruption and rampant violence in elections, many have lost hope of a better future. I plan to be an advocate for change.

Sadly, Iran's myriad problems have had terrible ramifications on her people. After decades of civil unrest, millions of children have been left without parents, and even fewer have enjoyed the benefits of an education. Throughout my childhood, I worked as a volunteer for Children First, a group that organized street shows, cultural exhibits and fundraisers to benefit abandoned children. As a volunteer, I organized the events, raised money and handled local marketing and publicity. But my greatest joy was simply spending time with the children.

My first visit was eye-opening. Raised in a financially-secure home, I always enjoyed the love and attention of two doting parents. In contrast, the thirty-one orphaned boys shared a tiny house in the ghetto with one teacher and two nannies. Although the adults provided food and shelter, they did not offer parental love. At every visit, the children embraced me as a long-lost friend and enchanted me with their playfulness. My time with the boys was both exhilarating and sobering. Although I was delighted to enrich their day, I was saddened to know that they survived on charity and the kindness of strangers.

Inspired by Children First, I continue to support organizations that serve the needs of orphaned and abandoned children. Here in the US, I am an active member of Imaginings, which supports an elementary school outside Tehran. In my role as fundraiser, I held two gala benefits, which raised over \$300,000 for our cause. According to the teachers at the school, this money will support a full year of education for nearly three hundred students.

Although several charities like Imaginings try to help children, Iran's political system must devote additional money and resources to alleviate such pressing social problems. Unfortunately, widespread corruption has prevented sustained improvement in these areas. Until Iran adopts a better political system with a sustained interest in helping disadvantaged people, orphaned children will rely on the generosity of charities.

Wherever I go, I am committed to doing my part to alleviate their stress and provide the loving support they desperately deserve.

Iran needs to implement a long-term plan to provide young people with exposure to political life. An excellent prototype is the White House internship program that was started in 1965 by John Gardner under President Lyndon Johnson. Over the years, it has given hundreds of young Americans a feel for politics and has cultivated leaders like Secretary of State Colin Powell and Retired General Wesley K. Clarke. I would like to promote a similar program in Iran to stimulate political interest among qualified youth. The contacts I make at Stanford will help me to fulfill my dream of building a stronger and safer Iran.

### **What matters most to you and why?**

During my first trip to New York City, I was amazed by the rugged skyline: what a marvelous human achievement! Later, as I walked through the airport, I saw a news clip about a teenage girl in Hawaii who lost her arm during a shark attack. Just three weeks later, she was back on her surf board with a smile on her face, as if nothing had happened. In that brief moment, the significance of the skyline paled in comparison to what the teenager had achieved. Her ability to rebound from a disaster and push herself to a higher level was a powerful example of the human spirit. What matters most to me is embracing life's challenges with a similar passion that will enable me to push the limits of my own potential.

In my own life, I faced an unknown challenge when I began to train as a mountain climber. Despite my reputation as an excellent planner, I overestimated my ability to scale Angel's Peak in Zion National Park. Standing at an elevation of 2500 ft with a steep drop on either side, I suddenly experienced giddiness and nausea, the classic symptoms of acrophobia. With just a quarter mile to go, I ignored the symptoms and decided to proceed with the climb. Unfortunately, about a tenth of a mile from the summit, my legs began to shake vigorously and the giddiness threatened my visibility. Acknowledging this ailment was a tremendous blow to my pride, but I was determined to eventually conquer it.

Later that year, I accompanied a group of friends on a 17-mile Half-Dome hike in the Yosemite Valley. After my experience in Utah, I was prepared for the aggressive climb. At the base of the final ascent, I was flooded with the same traumatic symptoms as before. After an initial period of self-doubt, I decided to work through them. After completing 8 miles, I simply refused to go back without reaching the top. As a precautionary measure, I wore glasses that blocked my peripheral vision. Focusing on the rock, rather than a potential fall, I eventually made it to the top.

To this day, words cannot adequately describe the exhilaration I felt at that moment. On a deep emotional level, I realized the power of persistence in achieving a seemingly impossible goal. I also realized the many ways in which my challenges as a rock climber are similar to those I will face as a leader. Both situations require nerves of steel, along with a slow, careful plan to achieve a goal. In both cases, there are no hidden agendas; my only reward is the challenge of stretching my comfort zone by conquering a steeper climb with fewer footholds and handholds. Like management, scaling a cliff requires both physical and mental dexterity; surveying the terrain for routes and obstacles is as crucial to the climb's success as physical strength and endurance.

As I complete my application for business school, I am ready to embrace an interdisciplinary approach to solving the difficult problems that leadership will present. Just as I used a wide range of physical and mental strengths to scale the mountain, I will draw upon the resources of different disciplines at Stanford to develop decision-making or pricing models. Like most complex endeavors, climbing is actually quite simple if reduced to its fundamentals: planning, footwork and strength (finger, arm and back). Regardless of the level of difficulty, the same fundamentals help the climber negotiate the terrain. Similarly, Stanford teaches the basic concepts of running a business, which can be tailored in creative ways to satisfy different needs.

Throughout my career as an engineer, I have often been presented with challenges that initially seemed impossible. Yet I systematically conquered each obstacle by using the same techniques as when I scaled the mountain. My motivation to complete my MBA at Stanford is to acquire the tools to scale even higher mountains and achieve more significant results. Thanks to years of preparation and training, I am ready. Just a glimpse of the Half-Dome poster in my room inspires me to challenge myself and explore the world outside my comfort zone. By overcoming my demons, I opened my mind to a million new possibilities for my future.

### **Addendum To Explain a Low GPA**

When comparing me to other applicants, I hope the committee will take into consideration my difficult adjustment to the United States. Throughout my childhood in Honduras, my mother often spoke of the "American dream." Unlike Central America, where jobs and education were restricted, the United States offered unlimited opportunity for those who were willing to pursue it. Although I was eager to move here, I didn't realize how hard I would have to work to succeed.

When I came to the Bronx in 1993, I faced the formidable challenge of adjusting to a new country and language. At age seventeen, I enrolled in Morris High School, where I didn't know a soul. Making friends was difficult, as I barely spoke a word of English. My salvation was the school's bilingual education program for students learning English as their second language. Through this program, I not only learned how to speak and write English, but was also encouraged to perfect my fluency in Spanish. With the patience and support of the faculty, I adapted well to my new school system.

Unfortunately, the language barrier prevented me from competing successfully with other college students who were native speakers of English. Although I worked incredibly hard, my grades were primarily Bs and Cs, rather than the As I desired. Fortunately, as my English improved, so did my grades. By my senior year, I was in the top 10% of my class and had published three papers in peer-reviewed journals. I also was elected as captain of the University of Rhode Island nationally-acclaimed debate team.

Throughout my life, I have become deeply appreciative of the opportunities I have reaped by living in America. Yet my struggle to perfect the English language is most certainly reflected in my grades. When evaluating my application, I hope the committee will look beyond my grade point average and consider the tremendous efforts behind them. In addition to learning a new language, I adjusted to a new culture and carved out my own unique set of values and goals. This maturity will be an asset to your school and will make me a more competent and empathetic professional. I chose Vanderbilt University both for its academic reputation and for its commitment to enrolling an international student body that is tolerant of diversity. I am eager to take my place on campus and make a positive contribution to the world. America has given me so much; I am eager to give back the fruits of my academic labor.

### **Addendum To Explain a Low GPA**

My GPA was nearly perfect until I suffered a severe injury during my junior year of college. While driving home from work, I spun out of control on a patch of ice and injured my right leg. Fortunately, fate spared me from permanent physical damage, but not from excruciating pain. In that split second collision, I broke four bones and needed extensive surgery to repair them. I also needed physical therapy to regain my muscle strength.

During my two months in rehab, my focus was on recovery rather than schoolwork. Although I established a good rapport with my tutor, I couldn't concentrate on my assignments. During the first few weeks, I struggled with every minor detail of my hospitalization. I went from being a jock to a helpless patient who needed help going to the bathroom. It wasn't pretty. Thanks to the exceptional doctors, nurses and counselors on staff, I managed to get past my initial anger and complete my rehab in just nine weeks.

Unfortunately, the emotional effects of the accident lingered well into my senior year. Because of the residual damage to my leg, I could no longer play football, which had been a huge source of enjoyment and pride. My concentration deficit was also troubling. During fall semester, I struggled with a heavy course load, including graduate level classes in Physics and Differential Equations. Rather than take a reduced load, I opted to simply do my best and hope that my concentration would improve. Although it eventually did, my GPA paid a heavy price. I hope the admissions committee will understand.

Two professors (Drs. Davis and Hanson), along with my rehab specialist (Dr. White), have provided reference letters to document my struggles after the accident. I offer their letters not as an excuse, but as evidence of the powerful support I needed to recover my mobility and graduate with my class. Several friends and advisors suggested that I should take a year off to fully recover. Looking back, that option would probably have enabled me to get better grades. Yet I am proud to graduate with my class. The accident was a setback, but not a fatal one.

If given a chance, I will bring my dedication and tenacity to all of my endeavors. I am back in the game and

ready to show you what I can do.

### **Addendum To Explain a Low GPA**

Many people are surprised to learn that I have struggled with dyslexia my entire life. Thankfully, by working with tutors to develop alternative learning methods, I have graduated from a top college, published an article and been promoted rapidly at work. In addition, I can clearly convey my thoughts and ideas, both orally and in writing.

During my first two years of college, I did not request any special accommodations from the university for my dyslexia. Although I was "entitled" to take my exams in a separate classroom (with no time restrictions), I opted to compete with my classmates on a level playing field. My lower GPA for these two years reflects this decision. During my junior and senior years of college, when I was granted extra time on my final exams, I attained a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

Unfortunately, my decision to avoid "special treatment" was later responsible for my mediocre score on the GMAT. When placed under considerable time pressure, such as a once-in-a-lifetime exam, I struggle with slips in visual processing and organization of written information. The first time I took the GMAT (in April of 2004), I did not request special accommodations for my disability. As a result, my score was not as high as I would have expected. In October of 2004, I re-took the GMAT under special conditions and raised my score from 660 to 730. Clearly, with additional time, I was able to demonstrate my mastery of the material.

I want to assure the admissions committee that dyslexia has only a limited impact on my life beyond the fundamentals of reading and writing. Throughout high school and college, I excelled at math and science, demonstrating that strong ability to draw together disjointed pieces of information into one cohesive thought. Although dyslexia occasionally presents minor challenges in my life, I am confident that I can overcome them.

### **You have been given \$1 million to set up a philanthropic organization. What would it support and why?**

I would create an endowment to support a program like the Police Activity League (PAL), which builds children's self-esteem through community involvement. The Miami chapter of PAL nurtured my initial passion for sports and taught me the importance of teamwork. Under their auspices, I developed the discipline to succeed in athletics, along with the ability to keep things in perspective. With the support of my PAL mentor, I applied for several athletic scholarships, which paid my way through college. Looking back, I owe most of my career success to the abundant resources that PAL provided.

I'm passionate about giving back to this fine group. In my spare time, I work as an instructor for our PAL youth program and serve as a lacrosse coach. In addition to improving my own game, I enjoy helping young players master the sport. As a criminal defense attorney, I see what happens to kids who don't get the type of nurturing and support that PAL provides. Without a guiding hand, kids fall into all types of criminal behavior that ruins their lives. PAL can help.

### **You have been given \$1 million to set up a philanthropic organization. What would it support and why?**

I would place the money in a trust to support cancer research. When I was twelve years old, I became the primary caregiver for my mother, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her illness (and survival) left me acutely aware of our individual responsibility to make healthy lifestyle choices. Since high school, I have volunteered at several organizations that educate the public about preventive medicine.

As secretary and treasurer of YSAC (Yale Students for the Awareness of Cancer), I led an anti-smoking campaign and helped to educate older women about the importance of early detection for breast and cervical cancer. As a volunteer for Gilda's Club, I coordinated parties and seminars for cancer patients and their families. I currently work with cancer patients at New Haven Oncology Associates, where I draw blood, conduct lab analyses and take vital signs. Helping others is the most rewarding aspect of my life. If I can put a smile on a patient's face for just one second, I feel like a success.

Besides their underlying mission to prevent cancer, these groups also suffer from a chronic need for money. Each agency relies heavily on state and federal funds, along with the proceeds from public fundraisers. Sadly, the quality of services each group can provide is directly dependent on the availability of funds. I've seen first-hand the difference that a small contribution can make. I would place the million dollars in an annuity that would subsidize an aggressive educational program on cancer prevention. The money would also ensure that no patient would be denied essential treatment because of an inability to pay.

**You have been given \$1 million to set up a philanthropic organization. What would it support and why?**

As the Director of Human Resources for the Mesa office of Dell Computer, I am continually challenged to attract and retain skilled workers in a technologically-driven economy. All too often, we must relocate employees from remote locations because we are unable to source viable candidates locally. With that in mind, if I had \$1 million to invest, I would establish a not-for-profit and tax-exempt corporation that would increase computer literacy among local high school students. The money would cover the costs of a fully-staffed computer learning center in public high schools in Mesa that do not currently offer computer training. The centers would offer instruction on key skills of interest to employers, including common office applications, programming languages and networking fundamentals. After completing this training, the students would be well prepared to assume highly-paid skilled positions in the technology industry.

Such a center would be a win/win in the burgeoning Mesa community. The students would receive targeted training without the costs associated with a four-year college degree. By developing a highly skilled work force, the area would be more attractive to high tech companies that may consider moving here. In the past three years, both Hewlett Packard and Cisco Systems have cited the "technically literate" workforce in Boston as the primary reason they chose the city as the location for their new manufacturing plants. With a better trained workforce, Mesa would be an alternative choice for these companies to consider.

The "upward spiral" from this sort of growth is a precursor to many exciting possibilities. As more businesses relocate to Mesa, the city's tax base will increase, which will finance the necessary infrastructure that accompanies growth. It all starts with training. By producing a highly qualified workforce, we will set in motion an exciting cascade of events, which will culminate in Mesa becoming a "high tech community with a small town feel." In an industry dominated by expensive, overcrowded technology strips, such as Boston and Silicon Valley, Mesa would be a pleasant and affordable alternative.

**If you could be present at any event in time, what would it be and why?**

Looking back, it is one of my fondest childhood memories. After dinner, my grandfather Thata would call his nine grandchildren inside for one of his 'talks.' As I plopped onto the floor in front of his chair, Thata would clear his throat before he launched into the speech I had heard many times before: the importance of continuing Martin Luther King's movement to promote racial equality in the United States.

At age six, I already had a strong appreciation for what Dr. King had accomplished with passion and hard work. For over ten years, my grandfather had worked with Dr. King as a speechwriter and spiritual mentor. Thata had been an integral part of Dr. King's speaking tour, which visited big cities across the United States. Wherever they went, they carried the promise of a better future for all of God's children. If I could have been present at any moment in time, I would have been in the audience for Dr. King's heart wrenching 1967 "I have a dream....." speech, in which he eloquently summarized his hopes for a prosperous

and integrated America.

Decades after losing both Thata and Dr. King, I struggle to carry on their dream. As a member of the Rainbow Coalition, I work tirelessly to promote equality in the US legal system. I am honored to have the camaraderie and support of leaders such as Rev. Al Sharpton and Rev. Jesse Jackson, yet I still wish that I had been part of the generation who knew Dr. King, a true American hero. Through books, videos and discussions with his peers, I have tried to acquire a sense of who he was and what he hoped his legacy might be. To whatever extent possible, I will pursue his dream.

**If you could be present at any event in time, what would it be and why?**

I would have loved to have been a NASA employee during the historic 1969 moon landing. My father was an engineer for the Kennedy Space Center from 1965 - 1971, where he worked directly on the landing mechanisms for the Columbia and Gemini modules. At the time, I was only three years old, but the event has attained legendary status in our family history. Throughout my childhood, I heard every remarkable detail about that night in the summer of 1969, when American astronauts defied the odds and landed on the surface of the moon.

Although I did not share my father's passion for engineering, I envied his obvious pride at being part of something so magnificent. For many years, my father would call me after every NASA liftoff and recount the magical story of Neil Armstrong's "giant leap for mankind." More than any other moment, that event was permanently engraved in my father's heart.

With my father's death in 2002, I lost my link to that sacred time and must rely on my own fading memories of the story. Although I was just a child, in my heart, I was there, too, sharing the pride of the possibility of life in an entirely new world.

**If you could be present at any event in time, what would it be and why?**

On December 20, 2003, the Pennsylvania General Assembly voted unanimously to declare over one million acres of land as "protected territory," which would prohibit its commercial development. As an advocate who lobbied strongly for the vote, I would have loved to have been present at the meeting.

My work as a community advocate dates back to 1994, when the issue struck dangerous close to home. After the death of an elderly friend, his 12-acre spread of wetlands, ponds and natural wildlife in historic York County was sold on the condition that it would "not be developed." Just a few months later, several surveyors and building contractors tried to negotiate a development deal with the new owner. The ecological ramifications of the proposed development were staggering. Thousands of migrating Canadian geese would lose their habitat, which was federally protected by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition, the proposed environmental changes would threaten the endangered species of bog turtles that are indigenous to our area.

With my wife's support, I began a grassroots campaign to fight the development. Through pictures and testimonials, we documented the existence of the turtles to various state and federal organizations. We also displayed the photographs on our web site, and attended township meetings to educate the public about the devastating impact it would have on our ecosystem. Our results enabled the later findings of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which protected the area to ensure the survival of the turtles. Our success in thwarting the development reinforced my long-term aspirations to work in local government.

As a lifelong resident of York County, I felt compelled to infuse the local political system with a much-needed sense of balance in making decisions that affect the community. Throughout the past decade, I've watched the community struggle with difficult issues relating to land consumption, rising taxes, historical preservation, and the economic incentive of real estate developers. Although one person can't change the world, an informed advocate can educate the public about the long-term ramifications of community growth. The December 20, 2003 decision from the Pennsylvania General Assembly was a wonderful reward for my efforts and a long-term benefit to the future of the state..

**1. The cover letter should conform to the standards of business correspondence and be addressed**

**to the Admissions Committee. It should point out the features of your résumé that you believe to be of interest to the Admissions Committee, both in your education and in your work history. Further, please comment on your career goals and those factors which influenced you to pursue an MBA education. Additionally, discuss which management track appeals to you and how it fits your professional aspirations. We are also interested in what you believe you can contribute to the school and your fellow students, and we encourage you to describe your most substantial accomplishment.**

Mr. Rod Carcia  
Director of Admissions  
MIT Sloan School of Management  
MBA Admissions Office  
50 Memorial Drive  
Room E52-101  
Cambridge, MA 02142-1347

Dear Mr. Carcia and MBA Admission Committee:

An MBA from Sloan will enable me to direct and shape the growing Asian financial service industry. Since graduating from college, I have held several positions of increasing responsibility in the financial industry. I have specialized in information technology and equity investment and gained experience in both a small start-up company and an established global corporation. I am prepared to embark on an MBA program that focuses on innovation and fundamental business principles.

After graduating from Harvard University in 1995, I landed my first job as a quantitative analyst at American Financial Products, an innovative firm that specializes in catastrophic reinsurance. My primary achievement was developing their internal risk management system. While AFP gave me my first hands-on experience with finance and technology, the opportunity to work for Citicorp in their Investment Management Division brought me to the forefront of finance and investment. Fisher Black, the creator of the "Black-Scholes-Merton" option formula, was a partner in the division and founded the quantitative group. I first worked in the technology group and led a team of two software engineers to develop an Automated Trading System (ATS). The assets under management by the group have increased almost three-fold to \$55 billion. Thanks to the ATS system, the same small staff of five handles the thousands of trades generated by the quantitative model every day.

I was promoted to associate at Citicorp in 1999 and transferred into the product group. My responsibilities also broadened to encompass new model research and product development. I was assigned to a multi-functional project team to develop and launch a new tax-efficient investment product. After performing varied analyses and simulations, I eventually developed some robust investment strategies that underpinned the new product. We classified clients into three distinct groups and directly addressed each group's concerns. Our precise targeting enabled us to illustrate key benefits to each investor group in one single slide and powerfully differentiate our product from the competition. The product had the second most successful launch in Citicorp Asset Management history, drawing over \$100 million in its first month, and has become a key revenue and profit generator for the group. The project has also been a tremendous learning experience for me. I came to appreciate the complexity of launching a new financial product, but also learned how to communicate with non-technical staff and contribute effectively in a multi-functional team.

This rewarding experience reaffirmed my long-term goal to create innovative financial products and services for the Asian markets. Compared with the well-developed financial markets in the United States, the markets in Southeast Asia are still in their infancy. The savings rate is high in the region, yet the investment rate is still low. There is little choice in investment products and many of the recent advances in finance and risk management have yet to be applied. The opportunity will be greatest in China, due to the changes that accompany its entry into the WTO. Chinese banks, insurance and mortgage industries will be gradually deregulated, while their health care, education and housing system are privatized. As the Chinese financial needs become increasingly complex, their market will be seized by those companies that can offer innovative financial solutions.

It is the right time for me to embrace these changes and take a leadership role in this historical transition. I want to be fully prepared to seize the opportunity presented by the opening of the Asian and Chinese markets. I have solid training in technology, finance, marketing and operations through my working experience in American Financial and Citicorp, but I realize that the depth and breadth of these experience

are not to the degree that my goals require. A systematic examination of fundamental business theory in an MBA program will provide me the framework to run an international business unit. Equally important, advanced comprehensive training in finance will give me the strong foundation for new product development.

Sloan's MBA program is ideal preparation for my career in finance. Graduates of the Sloan's "Financial Engineering Program," headed by Andrew Lo, created many of the innovative financial products traded on Wall Street. In my work at Citicorp, we use many of the tools developed by the Sloan faculty to assess and manage risks and returns on multi-billion dollar portfolios. It will be exhilarating to learn new advances in financial technologies directly from the leading faculty who pioneered these innovations at Sloan.

Sloan is not only a place for me to learn, it is also a community for me to share and contribute. With my diverse cultural and professional background, I think I have a lot to offer to the Sloan community. I am eager to share my research and networks in Asian financial markets and bring the Asian cultural and business leaders to Sloan. I also hope to continue my commitment to helping young professionals develop their career skills. I directed a mentoring program in the National Association of Asian American Professionals in New Jersey/New York and hope to continue this work at Sloan.

Please contact me if you need additional information regarding my application. I can be reached at (212) 555-5555 or through email at applicant@yahoo.com. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**2. The cover letter should conform to the standards of business correspondence and be addressed to the Admissions Committee. It should point out the features of your résumé that you believe to be of interest to the Admissions Committee, both in your education and in your work history. Further, please comment on your career goals and those factors which influenced you to pursue an MBA education. Additionally, discuss which management track appeals to you and how it fits your professional aspirations. We are also interested in what you believe you can contribute to the school and your fellow students, and we encourage you to describe your most substantial accomplishment.**

Dear Committee Members,

The two most influential people in my life chose paths on the extremities of the professional spectrum. My father, with the goal of remaining in academia, completed his doctoral and post-doctoral degrees in chemistry. He later joined a multi-national chemical conglomerate as a chief chemist, and retired from the same company 25 years later as the head of R&D. He reveled in various roles, providing leadership and technical expertise at many different levels of management. To my father, the security and benefits of a large company far outweighed the excitement and heady feeling associated with a business start-up.

My uncle, on the other hand, decided at a young age to become an entrepreneur. Identifying the need for automotive suspensions in the booming public transport industry, he started his own manufacturing plant on the outskirts of New Delhi. With careful expansion, the plant eventually employed 65 people, but it stagnated after its first 5 years. As a kid, I was attracted by the constant influx of people and materials in the plant. During one of the quiet times, I asked my uncle why some of the idle lathes were in different stages of assembly. He simply said, "I experiment during slow times." At age twelve, I didn't appreciate the underlying implications of his passion for engineering and entrepreneurship. I simply knew that he struggled to remain self-employed, convinced that his brain child would someday blossom into a successful enterprise. I silently wondered if it was worth it.

Fifteen years later, my own understanding of technology and the need for a creative outlet not only propel my future, but enable me to understand my uncle's dream. His business was never about money, but about honoring his calling; he focused his heart, mind and soul on an endeavor that could make a difference in the world and provide him with a sense of independence. Sadly, my uncle did not possess the business background to bring his dream to fruition. He never made the perfect leaf spring, nor did he ever get rich. Yet his dedication to entrepreneurship provided a powerful example that continues to inspire me. As an engineer, I am committed to combining my passion for technology and entrepreneurship into my own successful venture. An MBA from Sloan is an essential next step in bringing my dream to fruition.

To achieve this goal, I opted for a career path that embodied the best of what academia, industry and self-employment had to offer. Although I yearned to embark on my own enterprise, I decided to wait

until I had acquired the requisite academic training to succeed. To explore my love for engineering, I completed my undergraduate degree at BITS, one of India's premiere engineering institutes. I later completed my Masters degree at the University of Virginia, where I received an NSF grant to perform research. My findings yielded two conference publications, along with a paper in the prestigious *Journal of Applied Electronics*. In addition to its didactic rigor, graduate school refined my thought process and shaped the way that I solve problems. I loved the challenge of analyzing complex situations and exploring creative ways to achieve a goal. I also learned how to present well-reasoned responses to tough, open-ended questions, and to encourage the same level of critical thinking in others. Years after graduation, I continue to embrace complex engineering problems with the same curiosity and enthusiasm.

Following graduation, my work at Cisco Systems provided numerous opportunities to manage people, projects and resources. The company culture, which combines the benefits of a large firm with the high energy level of a start-up venture, has enabled me to grow, both personally and professionally. My initial challenge was to provide technical leadership. In the summer of 2000, to reduce risks and obtain more competitive pricing, Cisco experimented with new foundries, which gave me a taste of the business side of technology. When Cisco abandoned the turnkey backend model (fabrication, testing and packaging) for building its chips, I assumed a technical leadership role by setting design methodology and driving global tasks across the project. With team members scattered across the globe, my technical challenges were usually amplified by cultural and language differences. On one occasion, to meet a looming design deadline, I lead a multi-team technical discussion at 4:00 am with the help of a Chinese translator.

Later projects taught me how to lead by innovation. I showed my creative flair on the XXX team, when I architected a new repair mechanism for YYY, a cutting edge processor in the low-end internet server space. The first of its kind at Cisco, the design drastically cut the silicon area and reduced the tester time, yielding sizable cost savings. My latest projects have taught me how to motivate people. After just 2 years at Cisco, I led a team of 10 designers that delivered the largest embedded memory in company history. Throughout the project, my job was complicated by morale problems that surrounded Cisco's fresh round of layoffs. As expected, few team members felt secure about their jobs. While encouraging them to remain positive, I also recommended that they mentally prepare for the impending lay-offs by attending resume writing workshops and interview training courses that the company provided. By acknowledging their fears and sharing my own concerns from time to time, I built a strong spirit of camaraderie.

At this point in my career, I have demonstrated key skills as a technical manager in all phases of circuit design, yet I yearn to solve larger, more multidimensional problems. I am particularly intrigued by the possibility of bringing new technology to the marketplace through my own entrepreneurial venture. To achieve this goal, I must augment my technical expertise with fundamental skills in business. Before I initiate my own start-up, I must learn how to lead multifunctional teams in all aspects of an organization, including finance, marketing, strategy, sales and general management. Since people are the cornerstone of a successful enterprise, I must learn the best possible ways to hire, train and motivate them. I also want to polish my communication and negotiation skills. Sloan's program brings together high caliber students from all walks of life to share their collective wisdom in a congenial setting. For me, a Sloan MBA will be an accelerated learning experience to help me answer my call to lead.

Following graduation, I plan to join a venture capital firm that specializes in the hi-tech industry, where I can leverage my engineering experiences and learn to drive a start-up from concept to liquidity. While I explore the intricacies of venture capital investing, I will build the contacts necessary to start my own company. During this period, I will explore the possibility of locating part of the firm in India. As "outsourcing-gone-wrong" stories proliferate in the marketplace, I want to make sure that I can partition the operations in a manner that lends itself to the off-shore model, taking advantage of the cost efficiencies and avoiding the pitfalls. I will also build strong synergistic links with academia through my contacts at the University of Virginia, utilizing their expertise to research the technical depth of the idea. With a soundly researched idea, a firm footing in the venture capital business and a group of able professionals surrounding me, I will be prepared to embark on my venture and fulfill a dream that I have nurtured since childhood.

Since I moved to Chicago in the summer of 2001, I have completed several advanced circuit courses via Northwestern University and have helped my colleague give lectures for the undergraduate version of the course. Additional classes in Kellogg's continuing education program, such as "Global Strategic Thinking Tools" and "From Idea to Reality," have helped me to step out of the engineering mold to view an organization from a business perspective. In 2003, I joined the International Business Development Network (IBD), which provides a forum for high technology professionals, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs to learn from each other and form valuable partnerships.

Located near Boston's famed "technology strip," Sloan offers several unique benefits for aspiring entrepreneurs. In my second year of the program, I will use the flexible course structure to explore classes

in Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship. As an engineer, I will stay abreast of my field by joining the Business Association of Engineering Students (BAES), which will provide continual opportunities to network. The Private Equity Seminar will help me to develop my investing skills among global experts in the field, while I explore my passion for self-employment in the Entrepreneur and Venture Capital Clubs. Combined with the collective expertise of the faculty, which boasts impressive, real-world experience, Sloan is easily the best fit for a technical manager like me. As part of Sloan's distinguished alumni, I will leave a sustainable legacy in the world of technology.

Sincerely,

**3. The cover letter should conform to the standards of business correspondence and be addressed to the Admissions Committee. It should point out the features of your résumé that you believe to be of interest to the Admissions Committee, both in your education and in your work history. Further, please comment on your career goals and those factors which influenced you to pursue an MBA education. Additionally, discuss which management track appeals to you and how it fits your professional aspirations. We are also interested in what you believe you can contribute to the school and your fellow students, and we encourage you to describe your most substantial accomplishment.**

Mr. Rod Garcia  
Director of Admissions  
MIT Sloan School of Management  
MBA Admissions Office  
50 Memorial Drive  
Room E52-101  
Cambridge, MA 02142-1347

Dear Mr. Garcia and the MBA Admission Committee:

My application to Sloan's MBA program is the culmination of nearly a decade of preparation in both academia and industry. My extensive technical training at Peking University, one of China's finest academic institutions, has provided me with the analytical background to handle the quantitative aspects of the MBA program. My graduation among the top 5% of my class, along with my decision to pursue concentrations in both chemistry and engineering (although only a single discipline was required), further demonstrate my ability and willingness to handle the heavy workload for which Sloan has become famous.

After completing my undergraduate studies in 1998, I moved to the United States and joined Hewlett-Packard, the world's leading manufacturer of scientific instruments for the chemical industry. After several promotions, I eventually became responsible for the company's entire line of Analytical Products, which comprises over 54% of the company's \$128 million business. One of my proudest accomplishments was the formation of a strong and effective interdepartmental team. By introducing the idea of cross-functional work teams to my division, and ensuring their effectiveness through open communication, I championed projects that generated a \$9 million sales increase in 2003. My team building skills will be invaluable in my project work at MIT.

Next to my broad professional experience, my extensive career in chemistry, engineering and scientific instrumentation has given me unique insight to three highly competitive industries. In each of these fields, a technical paper in an influential journal, or a presentation by a leading scientist, can make the difference between the success or failure of a product. These are also sectors in which companies are willing to make large capital investments based upon a single promotional demonstration. My in depth knowledge of these unusual industries will enable me to bring an alternative perspective to classroom discussions at Sloan.

I am also eager to share my thoughts about unexplored opportunities in the scientific instrumentation business. For someone with dual expertise in technology and business, there are highly lucrative portions of the market that have yet to be reached by traditional forms of marketing. By targeting several of these "smaller" markets with non-traditional sales methods (including direct marketing and the Internet), a firm could easily develop a lucrative niche without investing significant capital. Opportunities like this will

invariably be interesting to other students at the Sloan School of Management.

Although I have increased my sales forecast each year, my current position as Director of Analytical Sales has helped me realize that I need additional financial, marketing, and strategic management skills to further grow my product group. While investigating my options for formal business training, I found that MIT's program was the best fit for my background and objectives. Sloan's "New Product and Venture Development" track offers exactly the balance of technical and entrepreneurial expertise that I seek at this stage of my career. NPVD courses like "Management of Technological Innovation," and "Marketing Strategy" will introduce me to innovative design and marketing methodologies pioneered by MIT faculty, and will help me understand their use in other industries. Furthermore, courses like "Planning and Managing Change" will advance my leadership skills and help me reach my goals in the rapidly changing technology field. Following graduation, a degree from MIT Sloan's School of Management will help me pursue my dream to become CEO or owner of my own high-tech company.

I am eager to discuss all aspects of my candidacy at a formal interview. Please contact me at (212) 555-5555 or at applicant@yahoo.com to arrange a mutually agreeable day and time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

### **Leadership Experience**

The most important aspect of leadership is setting an excellent example. As a Loan Manager at First National Bank, I encourage my employees to spend whatever time is necessary with a prospective customer, regardless of their financial status. Some employees balk, as they feel that they are wasting their time with unqualified buyers. They prefer to run a credit check first, and only "invest" the time in establishing a relationship when the client has officially qualified for a mortgage.

Through an unexpected example, I showed my staff the folly of this approach. On one occasion, I spent nearly two hours explaining various mortgage options to a young man who was thinking of buying a house. I explained several different ways of borrowing money, along with the potential pitfalls of each. He graciously thanked me and left without completing the application. To a casual observer, I had just "wasted my time."

To my employees' surprise, the young man returned a month later and specifically asked to speak to me. He brought his elderly grandfather, who owned several pieces of prime real estate just outside of town. Remembering my explanation of the power of equity, the young man asked me to arrange a "reverse mortgage" that would allow his grandfather to use his equity in the properties to cover his living expenses. The older man was delighted by our talk, which alleviated a financial crunch that he didn't know how to resolve. Within a week, I had arranged a lucrative reverse mortgage for the grandfather, which was also profitable for the bank. After the older man's death a year later, I also handled the purchase of his grandson's beach house.

Whenever a new employee questions our policy of "service with a smile," I always tell that story. As the group leader, it is my responsibility to set an excellent example of how our customers should be treated. Even if we don't immediately close a deal, we have much to gain by taking the time to get to know potential customers. In my tenure with First National Bank, we have earned the reputation of being a friendly bank with a big heart. What we lose in short-term revenue we more than make up in community goodwill. As a leader, I wouldn't have it any other way.

### **Leadership Experience**

In June 2003, I joined Ralston Purina in a leadership position to manage the construction of a \$50 million pet food plant in Ottawa, Canada. As the Director of Operations, I am responsible for managing the contractors and guiding their timely completion of the project. Right from the start, my job was complicated by legal and bureaucratic red tape. As a matter of corporate policy, Ralston Purina hires local subcontractors to handle the initial phases of construction and installation. In this case, a substantial portion of the work was subcontracted to Premier Construction, a large conglomerate with thirty years of experience in home construction in Canada and the United States. As a strategic alliance between two of Canada's largest companies, we were required to offer the work to Premier, even though they were not experienced in commercial construction. Almost immediately, there were serious problems.

To my dismay, Premier subcontracted out the work to multiple agencies, which created a coordination nightmare. I found it extremely difficult to maintain the project schedule without implementing drastic measures. As an initial step to facilitate coordination among multiple contractors, I held weekly training sessions to teach the project teams how to plan and coordinate their work. I helped each contractor plan and schedule his activities and explained how a delay in his work could impact the completion of the entire project.

Although the tutorials helped, they were not enough to keep the project on schedule. We eventually discovered that that real issue was not with the coordination among second-tier subcontractors, but with the main contractor, Premier Construction. As the leading project planner, I performed several schedule analyses and instructed Premier to increase their workforce to maintain the schedule. Unfortunately, Premier's team did not understand commercial construction and refused to take instructions from us. As the weeks passed, we continued to fall behind schedule.

Because of Premier's continually poor performance, I finally decided to involve senior management. At a critical meeting, we explained our concerns and asked their senior managers to replace several key people on the project. Things did not improve until our executive VP expressed severe reservations about continuing our strategic alliance. In October of 2004, Premier finally replaced their troublesome key project personnel. The new staff, although inexperienced in commercial construction, willingly followed instructions and coordinated well with us. By following our instructions over the last several weeks, Premier has made considerable progress and has caught up with the original schedule.

Tough times call for tough measures. Facing fines of \$65,000 per day for late project delivery, I took strict measures that yielded positive changes. The experience taught me that as a responsible leader, I must occasionally make harsh decisions to meet my team's objectives. Although the project is not yet complete, we are back on track. My tenacious efforts to solicit better performance from Premier has helped my company avoid paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to the client for late project completion.

## **Leadership Experience**

After completing my BA in Social Work at Vassar College, I accepted a position with Planned Parenthood of Pittsburgh. My initial responsibilities were in office management, although I quickly advanced to an administrative role as program director and clinical coordinator. In this capacity, I devoted every spare moment to promoting our services in the community, including reduced-price gynecological exams, pregnancy testing, birth control counseling and programs to prevent and treat sexually transmitted diseases. I also championed a sexual education curriculum that promoted contraception, AIDS awareness and sexual abuse prevention. For many years, our services were heralded in the community as an invaluable resource for women of all ages. Unbeknownst to us, things would soon change.

In the late 1990's, we frequently found ourselves under attack by right-wing activists who did not support women's rights. For many years, we were the only facility in Beaver County to provide first trimester pregnancy terminations. Unfortunately, the local Republican party and their Christian supporters resented our commitment to performing services that they personally opposed. Protestors began to picket the clinic, accost our patients and threaten their lives. They blocked the entrances to our building, which made it difficult for our patients to enter and exit. Several times, we received bomb threats and had our windows broken by demonstrators. Despite my fear, I was compelled to take a stand.

In 1998, I managed Senator Harry Jones' re-election campaign, briefing him on abortion rights and sexuality issues in health care reform. I used my visible position in Planned Parenthood to lobby at the state level against parental notification laws for minors who received abortions. I coordinated grassroots lobbying efforts on pending legislation that would make violent acts committed by the clinic's protestors part of the proposed "hate crime" bill. I also worked as an advocate for the legalization of the RU-486 abortion pill.

After Senator Jones' election, I accepted a position as an Administrative Aide in his office in Harrisburg, which provided greater professional responsibility than I had at Planned Parenthood. I also assumed the presidency of the newly created Pennsylvania Women's Health Advocacy Group, which promotes women's health initiatives on the state level. In my current position, I research legislation, design lobbying strategies and serve as liaison with affiliated organizations throughout the state regarding pending policies and bills.

Although I derive tremendous satisfaction from my work, I yearn to make a greater contribution. An MBA will provide the technical skills and professional influence to better confront right-wing legislation and initiatives.

It will also improve my ability to design and advocate original social policies that benefit women's rights. After business school, I hope to continue working for women's advocacy groups such as Planned Parenthood and the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project. Long before I was born, feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Elizabeth Cady Stanton devoted their lives to ensuring that women received the same personal and professional opportunities as men. I am committed to protecting their hard-won gains for future generations.

**At Wharton, the Learning Team, which consists of approximately five first-year students, are often assigned group projects and class presentations. Imagine that, one-year from now, your Learning Team has a marketing class assignment due at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning. It is now 10:00 p.m. on Sunday night; time is short, tension builds and your team has reached an impasse. What role would you take in such a situation? How would you enable the team to meet your deadline? (Note: The specific nature of the assignment is not as important here as the team dynamic.) Feel free to draw on previous experience, if applicable; in order to illustrate your approach.**

This situation requires a good moderator who can guide the energy of the group in the right direction. I would try to make the best possible use of our eleven hours. I would first propose a cooling-off period to relieve the team's tension. A project can be successful only when the team members acknowledge a strong sense of unity and commonality of purpose. This requires a fresh mood and mutual cooperation. With a fresh start, we could bring a new perspective to the project and examine solutions we previously missed.

I experienced a similar situation when I was on a team that developed a new web site, Success.com. We had just two months to develop the site, and only one week to finalize the technology. With a tight deadline, we couldn't decide between two competitive options to enable our secure server. One was a new technology early in its development cycle, while the other was a proven entity. Part of our team was passionate about using the new technology, while others were more comfortable relying on a tried-and-true option.

When we started our discussion, both groups were adamant about their choice of technology. After a period of acrimonious debate, I proposed a break. I suggested a game of basketball, a favorite pastime of many team members. While forming the two teams, I assigned the most hostile people from opposite camps onto the same team. I wanted to reinforce their feelings of cooperation and melt down the competition and ill will. After a half hour, the game dissolved all of the anger, allowing us to return to our project with a newfound camaraderie.

After the game, each team presented its case without objection or criticism from the other side. As each group spoke, I was amazed at their commitment and confidence. Both sides enthusiastically discussed benefits, drawbacks and essential support tools. With our hearts open to new ideas and opportunities, we jointly decided that we would investigate future uses for the new technology, but we couldn't use it now with our limited time frame. We all united behind our project goal and were able to achieve our objective.

I would use a similar approach in the Learning Team scenario. I would propose a cooling-off period, then encourage each team member to voice his concerns and suggestions. I would reinforce the spirit of camaraderie and our mutual interest in a successful resolution. From my experience with the Success.com

team, I learned that conflict resolution is an essential managerial skill. Whether our business produces gasoline or web sites, we must manage teams that work together and produce effective results.

**At Wharton, the Learning Team, which consists of approximately five first-year students, are often assigned group projects and class presentations. Imagine that, one-year from now, your Learning Team has a marketing class assignment due at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning. It is now 10:00 p.m. on Sunday night; time is short, tension builds and your team has reached an impasse. What role would you take in such a situation? How would you enable the team to meet your deadline? (Note: The specific nature of the assignment is not as important here as the team dynamic.) Feel free to draw on previous experience, if applicable; in order to illustrate your approach.**

In a stressful group situation, I would assume the role of mediator and try to resolve the impasse. My first step would be to solicit each person's input on an individual basis. Then, I would clarify the points on which we all agreed and focus our future discussions strictly on the area of contention.

Our next step would be a brief debate in which each side would take a few moments to calmly present their position. As moderator, I would take notes and keep the discussion on target. After a careful discussion of both sides, we would hopefully reach a workable compromise. If not, I would exercise my authority as moderator to make the final decision. Throughout all phases, I would ensure that the survival of the project remained the primary objective, rather than anyone's individual ego.

I have found myself in similar situations in my work in Student Government and in my job with Chase Manhattan Bank. In both places, I drew upon my interpersonal skills to serve as a peacemaker in team discussions. A great asset is my hobby of studying languages. Whatever a team member's background, I can remove a communication barrier by speaking his language and relating to him on a personal level. Through my international travel, I've grown to respect people from many different cultures. I am receptive to different opinions, and believe that I can benefit greatly from the experiences and viewpoints of others. I don't change my mind easily, but I am open to accepting a new viewpoint if the argument is convincing.

My multicultural background is a particular strength in my job at Chase Manhattan, where I develop and maintain new clients in South Africa. I frequently work on project teams that include members from Ghana, Zambia and the Ivory Coast. With a sensitivity to different cultures and a knowledge of their languages, I easily accept the role of mediator. If I can't attain an agreement or compromise, I propose a practical solution to meet our deadline.

**At Wharton, the Learning Team, which consists of approximately five first-year students, are often assigned group projects and class presentations. Imagine that, one-year from now, your Learning Team has a marketing class assignment due at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning. It is now 10:00 p.m. on Sunday night; time is short, tension builds and your team has reached an impasse. What role would you take in such a situation? How would you enable the team to meet your deadline? (Note: The specific nature of the assignment is not as important here as the team dynamic.) Feel free to draw on previous experience, if applicable; in order to illustrate your approach.**

In my work as a corporate psychologist, I frequently find myself in the role of mediator. It is my job to assume the role of peacemaker during difficult times. After the impasse, I would arrange for a brief break and resume the session by stating the team's goal for the specific project. I would then ask each team member to limit all comments to those that support the final objective.

We would then each take ten minutes to state and explain our positions without interruption. During each presentation, I would record all of the data on a flip chart. After the final presentation, I would summarize the data into arguments for and against the two choices. The written summary is usually a strong ice-breaker, as team members discover that their positions aren't nearly as different as they originally suspected. Seeing the evidence for each side in writing, we would easily identify the few points of actual disagreement. Our

remaining discussion would focus on those.

We would then discuss and resolve the final points, basing our decision strictly on what would best achieve the overall project objective. In the event of a tie vote, I would exercise my power as a tie-breaker to resolve the impasse. Fortunately, this would not likely be necessary. In my fifteen years on the job, I have never had to cast the deciding vote. Teams usually reach an impasse because members don't feel their voices are being heard. By allowing each member to state his/her position, and by assuring each member an equal voice, we would re-build the team's spirit of cooperation and reduce the effects of bruised egos. The team would ultimately agree to a workable compromise that satisfies the primary objective. I've successfully used this actual approach many times at General Electric and can attest to its power and simplicity.

**Your boss has given you the opportunity to write your own annual review. Knowing that your boss wants you to provide an unbiased appraisal, please provide an evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses. List your accomplishments and provide a plan to address areas of improvement.**

I successfully completed all of my objectives for Fiscal 2000 in the Human Resources Department. Under my direction, our department filled three engineering vacancies, two management positions and trained a new office staff for the recently expanded product development group. I am proud of our ability to recruit, train and challenge such a talented and dynamic group of people.

My greatest accomplishment was the design and implementation of the language lab at corporate headquarters. Nearly 40% of our management staff travels internationally, yet few are conversant at even a basic level in the native languages of the countries they visit. Several key managers indicated to me that their lack of fluency hindered their ability to do business internationally. My goal was to provide basic language training in-house in self-paced tutorials. The program's objectives were to provide a basic level of conversational skills in Spanish, Portuguese and Italian at 30% of the current cost for an individual Berlitz class.

Our final product, the corporate language lab, greatly exceeded my initial expectations. I was able to purchase all of the necessary equipment at wholesale prices and utilize the wasted space in the old R&D laboratory. Our new language lab is attractive, functional, well-equipped and soundproof. Three managers from marketing recently completed the basic class in Spanish and complimented my group on the efficiency of the program. I am certain that our lab will improve our managers' performance and reflect well upon our corporate training practices.

The project allowed me to demonstrate my organizational skills and negotiating abilities. I enjoyed interacting with employees from other departments to identify and fulfill their training needs. My goals for Fiscal 2004 include expanding the language lab to include training in German and Japanese and to offer advanced classes in Spanish and Italian. I also plan to provide a model of our program to our Las Vegas facility for possible implementation there.

While I enjoyed developing the language lab, I discovered that I needed better training in accounting and finance to handle the purchasing aspects of the project. I want to be certain that my expenses are cost-effective for the company and the best possible choices available. I plan to enroll in a local college course in the evening to brush up on the basics and be better prepared for the next phase of the project.

**Your boss has given you the opportunity to write your own annual review. Knowing that your boss wants you to provide an unbiased appraisal, please provide an evaluation of your strengths and weakness. List your accomplishments and provide a plan to address areas of improvement.**

My proudest accomplishment of 2004 was solving the processing bottleneck in portfolio management. Recognizing the issue's importance and complexity, the firm previously attempted to fix the problem, but achieved only partial success. I coordinated the team that ultimately eliminated the bottleneck. Leveraging my technology skills and business knowledge, I successfully collaborated with traders, portfolio managers, compliance officers and data vendors. Along with a team of three software developers, I created a system that seamlessly processes trading information. The new system eliminates hours of manual work each day and enables further automation to increase our asset

management capacity. I value this accomplishment not only because of its visible impact on the group's profitability, but also because it demonstrated my ability to lead a cross-functional team to solve challenging problems.

I also initiated a new analyst training program in the asset management group. Through conversations with new analysts, I discovered that they didn't fully understand the underlying issues behind their technical knowledge and how their work fit in with the rest of the firm. I proposed an informal group Q & A session to help them understand the key concepts. I prepared a handout on key terminology, formulas and concepts, and used examples from our work to build intuition and understanding of these ideas. The program received overwhelmingly positive feedback and was expanded into a formal one-week training program. It later attracted analysts from other groups. I was delighted to make a contribution that improved the productivity of these analysts. In their annual reviews, many analysts cited this training program as the most useful and relevant part of their orientation. Through the program's implementation, I learned how to communicate abstract concepts into easy-to-digest ideas and came to appreciate the concepts on a much deeper level.

During 2005, I plan to deepen my knowledge of international finance, improve my communication skills and practice different leadership styles. I will build upon my knowledge of the financial products and institutions in the US and explore relevant issues in international finance. I am particularly intrigued by the differences in accounting standards and the intricacies in the legal infrastructures. I also want to sharpen my presentation skills, to clearly articulate my thoughts to a wider audience. With my increasing management responsibilities, I aspire to develop my unique leadership style, which strikes a balance between democratic empowerment and decisiveness in facing difficult choices.

**Your boss has given you the opportunity to write your own annual review. Knowing that your boss wants you to provide an unbiased appraisal, please provide an evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses. List your accomplishments and provide a plan to address areas of improvement.**

My strengths are best reflected by my diverse accomplishments in both technical areas and in management. On a technical level, I led the project team that developed an e-commerce site for a British telecommunications firm, Alliance.com. Using our client's his initial vision, we developed the specifications and implemented the actual site within a rigorous six-week deadline. In addition to handling the design challenges, I also managed the personnel. My team consisted of fresh college graduates who were full of enthusiasm but lacked sufficient knowledge of implementation. I provided professional guidance and focused their enthusiasm in the right direction. My endeavors paid off when my team met our deadline and delivered a great finished site.

I also managed a successful project to redesign the web site for Ameritrade, adding a new research section as a trading tool. After completing fifty percent of the site, we discovered that the technology they chose was not uniformly supported, which could potentially affect 5% of total users. We opted to change the architecture in spite of our limited choices and imminent deadline. With a concerted team effort, we delivered a finished product that satisfied everyone. I am proud of my contribution to the site's state-of-the-art design and ease of use.

I am also committed to addressing my personal weaknesses. When delivery dates are short and I feel pressured, I can become demanding. I need to develop better stress management techniques to remain calm in the face of pressure. To accomplish this, I plan to take yoga classes at our company's fitness center on a weekly basis. I also want to develop general business skills to augment my technical background. I can make a greater contribution to future projects with a better understanding of finance and marketing. I plan to enroll in undergraduate classes in these areas at our local community college.

**We all experience "defining moments," significant events that can have major impact on our lives. Briefly describe such an event and how it affected you**

After my father's death, I became the president of his fledgling sporting goods business at age nineteen. I inherited three small stores, about half a million dollars in inventory and thirty-five employees

who didn't know how to run the stores in my father's absence. Since my practical experience was limited to my summer employment during high school, we had no "expert" to guide our maiden voyage. With the deck stack against me, I left college to try to keep the business on track.

Through hard work and dedication, I discovered that anyone can be a leader. The primary requirement is that you *want* to do it. Lacking formal management training, I applied the underlying principle of the Golden Rule. In all interactions, I treated people the way I wanted to be treated. I listened to my employees and took their suggestions to heart. I renegotiated my father's credit lines with our vendors, citing my determination to make the company a success. I took risks, made tough decisions and forced myself to solve problems that few nineteen-year-olds ever consider. During difficult times, I sought the advice of my college mentor, who offered his assistance whenever I needed it. After hearing my explanation of the company's status, he assured me that I was doing all the right things.

Although I didn't become a millionaire, the company survived and eventually thrived. I attribute my success to my use of the same management principles my father used throughout his thirty-year career. I was honest, fair and committed to delivering a great product at a great price. I was willing to work hard and take responsibility for my mistakes. I also wasn't afraid to ask for help when I needed it. Being a great manager is less about knowing the answer than finding the person who does. With the unwavering help of my staff, I built a business that would have made my father proud.

**We all experience “defining moments,” significant events that can have major impact on our lives. Briefly describe such an event and how it affected you**

Two sets of clothes, a dictionary and an envelope with \$2500 in cash. These were the items I crammed into my two suitcases when I entered the United States in 1996. Through movies, books and magazines, I always knew that the United States was a country of freedom and democracy. My entire life, I dreamed of enjoying these benefits. My successful relocation to the US, despite numerous financial, cultural and language challenges, remains my greatest personal achievement. It also helped me to develop and exemplify the personal values I hold dear.

My initial challenges involved language skills and money. I knew studying in the United States would remain a dream unless I perfected my English and secured the financial resources for tuition and fees. In addition to my regular classes at the American International University, I took an evening class in English to perfect my skills. My persistence paid off. After months of intensive study, I earned one of the highest TOEFL scores ever achieved by a Japanese student. Money was a more formidable challenge. Although my acceptance to Northwestern University included a partial scholarship, I still needed money to cover my expenses. I borrowed from every friend, relative and acquaintance I knew, including many who earned less than \$100 USD per month. By lending me money, they placed incredible faith in my ability to succeed. I was determined not to let them down.

In my first class, Expository Writing, we had a short writing assignment for every class and six longer assignments throughout the semester. Although I had studied English intensively in Japan, it was very different from the challenge of competing with American students in a writing class. My first graded paper came back covered with red ink and a C grade. I knew that I had a lot to learn. I reviewed each change the teacher made and solicited feedback from my classmates. I also used the wonderful tutoring service

offered by the English department, having upperclassmen review and critique my writing. I was delighted to learn the subtle and different ways they would express an idea. I completed a few rounds of re-writing for each assignment, incorporating the tutor's suggestions to express my thoughts more clearly and succinctly. My grades and confidence increased with every writing assignment. When I realized that I could compete at the same level with American students in an English writing class, I knew I could surmount other challenges as well.

My successful relocation to the United States helped me to develop and exemplify the personal values I hold dear. I learned how to meet commitments with hard work and determination. I developed the ability to focus on an objective, analyze my options and develop a plan of action. By achieving a meaningful goal under difficult circumstances, I gained confidence and maturity.

There is an old Japanese saying that when God wants to assign you an important task, He will first test you. He will make you hungry and tired, and will let you feel desperate and deserted. If you can thrive under these difficult circumstances, you are ready to assume the important task. I know in my heart that my relocation to America repeatedly tested my determination and commitment. My success will always stay with me, and I try to imbue my resulting pride, devotion, and sense of responsibility in all of my professional and personal endeavors.

**We all experience “defining moments,” significant events that can have major impact on our lives. Briefly describe such an event and how it affected you**

For the first several hours, my mind and body were completely numb. Friends told me that "life" would continue, yet I simply couldn't imagine it. No one could have prepared me for the devastating news; my best friend, whose presence had enlightened my world, had used a shotgun to take his own life. Throughout several subsequent weeks, my mind raced with unanswerable questions and inconsolable thoughts. Why had Elliot committed suicide? What unimaginable pain did he hide behind his sparkling eyes and easygoing demeanor? And why couldn't I, his best friend, have somehow intervened and helped him? Consumed with anger and confusion, I wanted to hide from the world. Yet my anger quickly turned to depression, as I questioned the value and purpose of every aspect of my life. Did I still want to become an engineer? Could I somehow muster the concentration to study? As my life quietly slipped from my hands, I desperately needed guidance and direction.

Ironically, my salvation came through a newspaper article about Books Without Borders, which offered international volunteer opportunities for college students. Rather than wallow in frustration, I decided to channel my energy into helping others. Ultimately, my nine months with Books Without Borders provided the journey of a lifetime. With my natural love for children, I taught English, math, science and geography to Somali children and Buddhist Monks. While cutting trails in the rain forest in Brazil, I learned that hard work and sweat do wonders for the mind and soul.

I also learned the power of my own perseverance. While trekking over 100 miles in the Himalayan mountains (elevation > 10,000 feet), I didn't initially think that my knees would make it. Yet, I persisted through the pain and completed the trip. My reward was the amazing view at 13,000 feet, including the majestic glory of glaciers, mountains and trickling waterfalls. Overwhelmed by nature's beauty, I enjoyed one of my first moments of clarity following Elliot's death. By persevering through my pain, I finally felt a sense of overwhelming peace.

Once I returned to the United States, I brought the same perseverance to all of my endeavors. My volunteer work gave me the opportunity to put my life into perspective and to determine my own definition of success. In addition to helping others, I wanted to become the best at something I loved, preferably in the international community. I subsequently completed my degree in humanities at Temple University, where I took every available class in international studies. As president of Temple's chapter of Homes for Humanity, I continued my volunteer work among a group of like-minded souls.

Homes for Humanity attracted my passion because of its commitment to giving a helping hand, rather than a hand-out. By harnessing the talents of people from all races, religions and socioeconomic groups, HH gave dozens of disadvantaged families the gift of home ownership. In my three years as president, our tight knit group brought happiness to many families throughout Philadelphia. I was particularly humbled by the response of a single mother and her children, who cried with happiness when we gave her the keys to their new home. Her joy was worth all of the sweat, sacrifice and frustration that I endured while

trying to complete the project. This feeling of satisfaction is what drives me and makes me feel that my life is worthwhile. No matter how busy I am, or how much money I have, helping others will always be a priority.

As I approach the MBA admission process, I am reminded of the devastating day seven years ago when I learned of Elliot's suicide. Inspired by grief, my subsequent soul-searching shaped the compassionate and persistent man I have become. Although I will never understand why Elliot lost hope for the future, his senseless death motivated me to identify and pursue my own passions. Although I can't save the world, I can use my skills to make a positive difference in every life I touch. That is my legacy to Elliot.

### **Situation in Which You Failed**

As the team leader at Educational Outreach, I was responsible for coordinating Los Angeles Career Day, a two-day event in which 50 students and 10 advisors visited businesses and government agencies throughout the LA metropolitan area. With limited time and resources, I had to coordinate numerous office visits and activities over the two-day period. To provide the students with a enjoyable experience, I arranged a schedule based on age, grade level and academic performance to ensure that each child had maximum exposure to the activities and career area that I believed (s)he would find most entertaining.

Unfortunately, on the first day of the event, my system was so complex that the children and advisors became confused. They didn't know where they were supposed to go and questioned why certain places had been pre-selected for them. The program director asked me to correct the problem and arrange a better system for day two. When I re-evaluated my approach, I remained focused on my true objective, which was to ensure that each student enjoyed his Career Day experience. I abandoned my initial plan to create a custom schedule of what I thought their interests should be.

On the second day, I asked the students and advisors to create a "top three" list of businesses they wanted to visit. Although I could not give every attendee his first choice, each person got the opportunity to visit a business that caught his interest. The event was a tremendous success; the children asked a lot of questions and even volunteered to help around the offices they visited. I received several positive comments from companies about the attentiveness and interest of our students.

Through this experience, I learned the importance of clearly defining the objective of a project. In my initial efforts, I spent too much time trying to develop a system and not enough time developing a solution that would satisfy the students and advisors. What seemed like an innovative approach was just a complicated and misguided way of trying to deliver an enjoyable experience.

### **Situation in Which You Failed**

During a three-day team building exercise at Citi-Bank, we were divided into two groups that competed in various courses, with an analysis session following each. Our first exercise was an obstacle clearance, a standard exercise in which the whole team had to individually clear a series of obstacles. Despite an abundance of technical talent, our eleven-team members possessed a wide range of athleticism. With my help and that of an agile colleague, we got off to an excellent start. Having a tall and lean figure, I found most of the course to be simple and spent most of my time helping and guiding others to clear hurdles. At the midway point, we were leading by fifteen minutes.

Three quarters through the course, we reached a difficult task called a "Swinging Bamboo," in which each team member had to clear the bamboo with nothing to hold onto. Even for those of us who cleared it easily, the bamboo was intimidating. To their embarrassment, several people on our team got stuck. While trying to help, other team members fell, which added to the fear level. Before long, people became argumentative and irrational. After several attempts to help people, I got frustrated and left them behind. At the blow of the final whistle, our team was still stuck at the bamboo.

During the analysis session, I was convinced that we lost because our non-enterprising team members, yet our instructor explained that the failure was the *team's*, not that of any individual. From his perspective, I was as much to blame as anyone else. Although I was a good captain during the easy phase, I lost initiative in the middle, when things got tough. I failed the team by not helping each individual member overcome the obstacle. Rather than embrace the opportunity to help, I didn't want to slow down to invest the time and effort.

Our perils with the swinging bamboo taught me two critical lessons about teamwork: (1) A good leader persists both in good times and bad, and (2) True success can only be achieved when whole team advances, which requires training and helping newer members. I have taken these lessons to heart, and am currently helping a junior colleague who recently joined our department. After following my learning schedule for six months, he has assumed more responsibility and become an important part of our team. I am delighted to share in his success.

### **Situation in Which You Failed**

In 2003, I accepted the responsibility to launch Sensuallé, a moisturizer intended to replace the Helena Rubenstein line in New Zealand. The project launch was the biggest of my career, despite my lack of public relations (PR) experience. Although I was excited about the opportunity, I was plagued by doubts. I sought guidance from my superiors, who failed to establish a clear vision of the launch's purpose and structure. Management seemed unconcerned with my questions and proposed that I decide what was best for my market.

Thinking that I could handle the challenge myself, I bought a book and gave myself a crash course in PR management. Looking back, I should have insisted on PR involvement from the head-office. When we started working on the project, the technical creator for Sensuallé arrived with incompatible expectations. He was very critical of me and created a personal attack. I was devastated, particularly when my superiors refused to support me.

Ultimately, my "failure" was only on a personal level. My press release for the event was outstanding and the launch attracted positive response from the media, retail buyers and local celebrities. Sales of Sensuallé in New Zealand increased exponentially for the entire year following the event. Despite its success, I still remember the launch with mixed emotions. Sadly, I had anticipated the mistake beforehand, yet I did not find the courage to prevent it. I should have followed my instinct and asked for help when I needed it.

The inability to admit failure and "own" our mistakes robs us of the chance to learn. This is hard for those of us who struggle with perfectionism. In my case, I expected success on all levels, including positive feedback from my managers and peers. I worked exceptionally hard on that campaign and earned their acknowledgement. I sadly realised that I can not please everyone. Despite my best efforts, there will always be a degree of dissatisfaction somewhere in the organization. I also learned a second valuable lesson from the experience. At the time, I lacked the courage to say "I need help." Now I have the courage to admit I am not a super woman, even if the realisation still slightly unsettles me.

### **Develop Foreign Markets**

My long-term professional goal is to promote the sale and marketing of medical products in China, where the

pharmaceutical industry is currently its nascent stage. With its large population, China offers tremendous investment opportunities for pharmaceutical manufacturers in western countries. Yet these firms also face tremendous barriers to enter the Chinese market, including price control, protection of intellectual property and the unavailability of basic medical care. One of my multi-national clients determined that only 2 percent of hepatitis patients in China are potential users of their drug, because the rest lack access to a health care program.

With admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO), China will implement a higher standard of intellectual property protection and better access to consumer markets. As the economy improves, more people will be able to afford better medical treatment. In the next 5 to 10 years, China will establish new laws to dramatically improve the market conditions for pharmaceuticals. I plan to play a key role in developing marketing strategies that introduce western medicine throughout China.

My intermediate professional goals are to strengthen my general management skills, to deepen my understanding of sales and marketing and to develop effective global business strategies. In addition to supporting my long-term career in China, these goals will also enhance my current professional performance. As my company expands in size and scope, several teams often serve the same client. To provide optimal service, we must coordinate teams that are led by different project managers throughout the world. With the multicultural experience from Columbia's MBA program, I will be better prepared to manage international work teams.

My current career will also benefit from formal training in sales and marketing. As a manager in forecasting, I share knowledge throughout my organization, which helps other managers sell our forecasting capability to clients. In the past few years, our clients posed questions that are increasingly complex. To continually add value to my services, I need a deeper understanding of the overall sales and marketing issues for the pharmaceutical industry and how different forces cause changes in the marketplace. As a practice area manager in a global company, I already work with clients outside the US. My clients are usually the global marketing function in a multi-national company, with formal knowledge of international business practices. My goal is to provide comprehensive services to my clients, to eliminate their need to seek sales and marketing support elsewhere.

I am particularly interested in Columbia because of its strong reputation for cultural diversity. I am eager to learn from students with different educational and cultural backgrounds, including older students with a wealth of practical experience. Such interdisciplinary interaction will strengthen what I learn and allow me to view problems with a fresh perspective. These educational experiences, which are not readily available in my workplace, will enable me to take my career to the next level.

With its exceptional program in strategy and global business, Columbia is an excellent match for my goals and interests. In addition, its proximity to the financial community in New York and its courses in Health Management will enrich my knowledge in related industries. I am particularly attracted to the small class size and the team approach, which fosters communication among students and faculty. As a Tufts alumni, I have worked with several Columbia graduates who display a strong devotion to their alma mater. I am eager to develop my skills in such a talented group.

## **Develop Foreign Markets**

I like to build my own road. Over the years I have ventured into uncharted territories, which ultimately became the key to my success. Coupled with initiative, risk-taking and perseverance, I was able to achieve my dreams. With a business degree from Harvard, there are no limits to my entrepreneurial potential.

While completing my BA at Stanford, I started an home-based company to conduct risk analysis of finance-markets using artificial intelligence. At the time, most competitive firms were run by large corporations, rather than by entrepreneurs. With the skills I acquired from Stanford's undergraduate finance classes, I won the 1998 New Venture Challenge, which funded my startup costs. At an informal social gathering, I persuaded Joe Monsueto, founder of Morningstar Inc., to join the board of my company. With two colleagues from Stanford, I "went public" with my firm during the stock market debacle of 1999. This was risky, considering I had large debts and no safe returns, yet I was confident of my idea. After two years of hard work and additional debt, we finally made some serious money. In early 2001, I sold my company to Prudential Securities (for \$22,000,000) to pursue my vision of opening a firm in India.

After a six-month break in late 2001, I opened my second company, "Bonicita," a vertically-integrated firm that manufactures, distributes and sells a full line of handmade Indian products throughout the world.

Although handmade Indian clothing and decorative goods enjoy great demand, no single company offered a diversified product line. With my contacts at numerous manufacturing firms in Bangalore, I had access to high quality goods at rock-bottom prices. My challenge was simply to transport and market the goods.

Although it seemed like an easy task, I faced enormous logistical problems. When I began, the goods were produced at many scattered locations by part-time workers who could not meet my minimum supply requirement. In addition, the transportation facilities were bad and the shipping costs were prohibitive. To overcome these problems, I invested a considerable amount of my own money to simultaneously open factories in ten locations. To accommodate my employees' needs for flexibility, I allowed them to work at home, which improved their productivity and morale. I instituted an attractive reward scheme for employees who consistently met their targets for both quality and quantity.

In 2002, all of Bonicita's sales came through our corporate website. Using my US contacts, I opened my first shop in New York City in early 2003. After a favorable review on the *Style Network*, we were besieged with orders from Great Britain, which inspired our second store in downtown London. In 2004, we anticipate opening seven additional branches in Madrid, Paris, Los Angeles, Singapore, Dallas, Buenos Aires and Rio. In addition to increasing our supply requirements, each new country brings a unique set of challenges regarding transportation, employment, import laws and administrative red tape. Thus far, to help Bonicita achieve its maximum potential, I have relied on the services (and advice) of highly-compensated global business "experts." With an investment of this magnitude, I prefer to be my own best advisor. My motivation for attending HBS is to acquire the expertise to handle the increasingly complex needs of my thriving international clothing business.

In addition to my own entrepreneurial expertise, I bring several complex questions to HBS. How do I effectively grow a business in communist countries, where traditional advertising methods are restricted? How do I minimize the graft and corruption (and illegal "tariffs") at ports outside the US? And how do I stay "ahead of the curve" in the fickle world of women's fashion, where an item that is hot on Monday has cooled considerably by the weekend? With the collective expertise of Harvard's faculty and students, I anticipate two years of productive and lively discussions on these (and hundreds of other) business topics.

## **Develop Foreign Markets**

Since graduating from college, I have enjoyed a successful career as an actuary, using mathematics, statistics and financial theory to manage risk and contingent events. As the Risk Manager at Zodiac Pension Fund, I am in charge of the entire risk management cycle, including the identification, control and prioritization of financial, operational and business risk. I also assure the effectiveness of the system that protects the company, by using risk management scorecards and metrics to monitor, report and govern risks. On a corporate level, I am accountable for sustaining and continuously improving the system.

While working at the Institute of Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Madrid, I acquired significant expertise in financial research, model forecasting and testing. During the last five years, I also enthusiastically embraced opportunities to share my knowledge with others. I taught two undergraduate classes in Economics and Statistics at the School of Business. I learned how to communicate theoretical and applied knowledge to my students, and how to motivate them in their studies. In a particularly challenging assignment, I taught economics and finance classes to prison inmates.

In addition to attracting highly motivated, ethnically-diverse students, Wharton's finance program has a faculty committed to excellence in both teaching and research. The small class size enhances communication between students and professors, maximizing opportunities to learn. Graduate school will hone my financial skills through a combination of academic courses (Financial Analysis for Managers), practical experience (Securities and Investment Analysis), and a curriculum that augments classroom instruction with real-world applications. I am particularly interested in the Financial Management course. From studying the corporate strategy of an actual firm and the structure of its industry, I will develop a global vision of multifaceted financial managing planning. Overall, the MSF program offers the perfect balance between theory and practice.

The rigorous curriculum (incomparable in depth, variety and difficulty) will challenge my academic skills and invigorate my love of learning. I plan to complete the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) curriculum and pass the qualifying exam. In addition to providing international recognition, CFA certification will reflect my commitment to the highest standards of professional excellence and integrity. Moreover, recent physical renovations and investment in computer technology reflect the school's commitment to excellence. The business school classrooms offer advanced computer and audiovisual equipment, along with abundant

space for meetings, study groups and gatherings. This new facility provides superior academic support for two intensive years of interaction and learning.

Following the completion of my master's degree, my short-term goal is to pursue a career in international finance. I will be particularly well suited to work in a consulting firm with branches in Latin America. The rapidly-growing Latin American markets have created a strong demand for professionals who combine the detailed technical knowledge in financial planning and risk management with an appreciation of Latin American languages and culture. As a senior consultant, I will help plan, control and monitor joint venture opportunities by designing and implementing financial policies and strategies to manage our customers' risk. I am particularly interested in the evaluation and mitigation of effects of business globalization, the increasing speed of technological advancements (like e-commerce) and the changes in regulatory environment that affects emerging companies.

My long-term career goal is to provide executive-level leadership as a Chief Financial Officer to an organization that competes in global markets. I am particularly interested in leading a financial management and advisory firm, such as Merrill Lynch, Arthur Andersen or JP Morgan. In a global economy, my challenge will be to facilitate successful partnerships that will produce positive changes to my client's bottom line. I will contribute to the strategic planning and implementation of business ventures, including mergers and acquisitions, spin-offs and ownership transition. Ultimately, I will help clients understand the financial 'big picture' of their organization, develop their financial direction and policies, and coordinate their business strategies with their risk tolerance at all levels of the organization.

As a multilingual professional with international work experience, I will bring a unique perspective to the program. While studying with students and faculty from different countries and industries, I will assimilate novel viewpoints and problem-solving techniques. After surviving the recent economic problems in Argentina, I developed the determination to overcome a seemingly endless stream of obstacles to achieve my goals and professional success. Throughout this turmoil, I developed and maintained a strong sense of personal integrity. I am eager to learn from other's experiences and to set a positive example of "grace under pressure."

As a finance major, I am intrigued by the opportunity to live in the Northeast, with its high concentration of educational institutions, investment companies and finance opportunities. I am also impressed by the school's considerable career services, recruitment power within the industry and support of its international alumni network. Through its vast career advisory network, Wharton demonstrates its commitment to its business graduates long after they graduate. As a highly motivated international student, this support and promotion from an outstanding university is particularly desirable.

**Please comment on one of the following quotations, giving relevant reasons and/or examples from your personal experience to support your answer.**

Mistakes are the portals of discovery. James Joyce

As a 4.0 student, I've always had a low tolerance for failure. I've spent my entire academic life studying, memorizing, preparing and practicing in order to succeed. Throughout my life, no subject or exam was ever too big or too complicated for me to master. So it's difficult for me to admit that I've learned my greatest lessons from making mistakes.

My biggest mistakes are impossible to forget. In my senior year of high school, I was the captain of my school's civics team. We made it to the state finals and advanced to the final round, well within striking distance of the state championship. We nervously awaited our final match against Barrington High, who was clearly favored to win. "Nonsense," I told myself, "We've got just as good a chance as they do. We're smart, we're well-prepared, we're ready." Well, almost. My question in the final round was to name the Governor of Florida. Easy, considering I was born there. But the name Lawton Chiles simply got lost in the bowels of my memory and I couldn't retrieve it. Pressed by the buzzer, I stammered an incorrect answer that my conscious memory has mercifully suppressed. That mistake had two long-lasting effects: we lost the match, and I've never again forgotten the name Lawton Chiles.

I've made several mistakes since then and have identified an opportunity to learn from each one of them. Some are small mistakes with relatively minor lessons, while others offered the chance for serious introspection and growth. My lesson from the civics competition was not to choke under pressure. I learned to relax, trust my instincts and go with my gut. Subsequent mistakes have taught me to be honest with

friends, generous with strangers and careful with my heart. Nearly every lesson was hard-won and painful, but I'm convinced I couldn't have learned them any other way.

According to New Age philosophers, the universe offers each of us repetitive opportunities to master life's lessons and advance to a higher level of consciousness. If we don't learn from our mistakes, we will repeat them until the lesson is finally learned. As a sensitive man, I embrace opportunities for growth and development. I've learned to accept mistakes and their eventual resolution as a necessary part of life's journey.

**Please comment on one of the following quotations, giving relevant reasons and/or examples from your personal experience to support your answer.**

Mistakes are the portals of discovery. James Joyce

My parents taught me that I should accept responsibility for my mistakes and try to learn as much as possible from them. When I was very young, I didn't understand how a mistake could bring a positive outcome. As I grew older, my mistakes had a negative initial impact, yet also taught me extremely valuable lessons. I learned a lot about myself, my weaknesses and how to transform them into strengths.

Humans usually find it hard to accept that we are ever wrong. Yet once we acknowledge our mistakes, our initial suffering opens our mind to new views and motivates us to find creative solutions to our problems. People who never make mistakes tend to be inflexible in their thinking. They believe that they know the best way to approach every situation and don't feel the need to improve or change. This rigidity can kill our creativity, as we often need an external factor to motivate change.

Brazil, my native country, provides an excellent example of how a solution can emerge from a mistake. Since the mid-eighties, the Finance Ministers of Brazil have struggled to control inflation. They tried several surprising methods, including changing the currency, freezing prices and confiscating the savings of most Brazilians. None of these plans worked, but after each plan failed, we were certain it was not the right approach. In 1994, Brazil implemented a gradual, consistent plan that did not surprise the citizens or dramatically change our lives. It worked. For the past five years, Brazil has enjoyed stable prices and reasonable inflation. The plan was occasionally adjusted to accommodate a change or crisis in the marketplace, but it achieved its primary goal. Without the experiences of the previous unsuccessful plans, Brazil may not have attained its current fiscal stability.

On a personal level, I learned valuable lessons in time management from making mistakes. I was a typical college student who worked part-time while I attended school. Beginning in my second year, I worked at the Futures and Options Exchange each morning and attended classes in the afternoon. The hectic schedule left little time to study, which affected my academic performance. My personal life also suffered, because I was overloaded with work and couldn't spend much time with my family and friends. I quickly learned that time was precious and that I needed to enjoy every moment. Sadly, I was so hurried that I didn't enjoy anything. I needed to better balance my personal and professional interests to be at my best.

In addition to suffering and frustration, mistakes can also bring us opportunities to view life in a different way. Mistakes allow us to explore aspects of our personalities that we would never otherwise examine. In that respect, a mistake is a gift that allows us to grow, evolve and learn. When we accept that gift, we are truly alive.

**Please comment on one of the following quotations, giving relevant reasons and/or examples from your personal experience to support your answer.**

Mistakes are the portals of discovery. James Joyce

My father often told me never to judge someone unless I walked in his shoes. Until recently, I didn't understand the power of that advice. Up until a year ago, my life had been relatively privileged; I had loving parents, a comfortable standard of living and an excellent education. Although I was saddened by societal problems, I didn't understand how someone's life could suddenly spin out of control.

In September of 2004, an unlikely situation forced me to change my perspective. While riding the subway in New York City, I was mugged by a gun-toting menace. My attacker wasn't much older than me, yet he seemed strangely comfortable threatening complete strangers with a weapon. As he shouted obscenities at us, I viewed him as some sort of surrealistic aberration. Fortunately, several of the victims gave clear descriptions to the authorities, who apprehended the culprit shortly after our attack. We were all witnesses during his subsequent trial.

When I walked into the courtroom, I couldn't imagine relating to my attacker on any sort of level. I was stunned when I heard his name called out by the bailiff, as I immediately recognized it. Although Ted had changed dramatically in appearance, he was the same young man who attended my prep school just four years earlier. How different he seemed from the sandy haired volleyball player I knew from campus! The last I knew, Ted's parents separated and he moved with his mother to Connecticut. How in the world did he wind up here?

Since I last saw him, Ted's life included a series of misfortunes that crushed his spirit; his parents divorced and his mother went on welfare. Ted dropped out of prep school to take a job to support the family, never quite earning enough to make ends meet. His dreams of college were dashed, and he often took his drunken frustration out on his girlfriend. Over the past year, Ted's run-ins with the police had become more frequent and serious. There would be no more chances for freedom after the armed robbery conviction.

Ted apologized to the court for his mistakes and seemed very emotional. Yet I sensed his remorse was self-serving: not because he hurt us, but because he was losing his freedom. I'm not certain what lessons Ted learned from his mistakes, but they were an incredible revelation to me. Ted's dire situation forced me to acknowledge my own blessings as a random gift from God. Without the emotional and financial safety net provided by my parents, my life might be as violent and out of control as Ted's. Five years ago, we were two similar boys on the volleyball court, with wonderful futures ahead of us. Today, our paths couldn't be more different.

I learned many valuable lessons from the mugging: to appreciate my blessings, make the most of my opportunities and never take anything for granted. Second, I learned to take responsibility for my actions, because society depends on me to demonstrate strong personal integrity. Without it, we can irrevocably alter not only our own lives, but those of innocent bystanders. Third, I learned that a person's mistake, even just a split second error in judgment, can completely change his life. This sobering thought is Ted's legacy to me, albeit a tragic one. I don't know if he recognized me that day in court or whether he has remorse for his criminal actions. Yet I will always feel bonded to him and hope that he will discover his way back to a life filled with respect and opportunity.

**If you were a character in a book, who would it be and why? What do you admire most about this character, and how does it relate to you personally and/or professionally?**

If I could be a character in a book, I would want to be Erin Brockovich. Divorced with two small children, with no money or formal education, Erin worked as an assistant in a small law firm. She stumbled onto some questionable medical records in a real estate file and launched an investigation. Erin discovered a cover-up involving contaminated water in a local community, which caused devastating illnesses among its residents. Through her passion and tenacity, she organized over 600 plaintiffs and won the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit in U.S. history.... \$333 million.

I admire Erin because of her passion for doing the right thing and her tenacity in completing her mission. After discovering the cover-up, she was determined to help the unfortunate people who were living on contaminated land obtain justice against the corporation that was responsible. Despite her limited resources and lack of formal legal training, Erin was not intimidated. She found creative ways to gather evidence and manage a case that could have driven her small law firm into bankruptcy. By demonstrating her genuine interest in their well-being, Erin earned the trust of the local citizens. Ironically, by helping others, she reinvented herself.

Like Erin, I also had a humble beginning, arriving in the United States ten years ago with a single suitcase. I also have a big dream, to seek opportunities and overcome challenges to improve myself and the community around me. Although my achievements are on a smaller scale than Erin's, they embody the same dedication and spirit. I established a Mentor Program in the California chapter of National Association of Latin American Professionals to help college students make informed career decisions. In my first ten months, I organized a job search and career development seminar for over

500 attendees. I also chaired a panel discussion with five senior executives to discuss the secrets of their success. Despite the challenges involved, I am committed to the work and take great pride in helping others achieve their dreams. I think Erin Brockovich would be proud of my efforts.

**If you were a character in a book, who would it be and why? What do you admire most about this character, and how does it relate to you personally and/or professionally?**

As an Assistant District Attorney, I have tremendous respect for members of the judicial system. My greatest failures, both personally and professionally, are the violent crimes that I have been unable to prosecute. Although it is not in my job description, I feel a responsibility to provide closure for crime victims and their families. I can't imagine another career with a higher calling or with a greater challenge.

My favorite public figure, who has been the subject of several true crime books, has spent the past six years trying to attain justice for a slain girl. Lieutenant Steve Thomas of the Boulder Colorado Police Department is in many ways a cherished American hero. He's a handsome professional, a devoted husband and father, and a 12-year veteran of Colorado law enforcement. But he's never been a public figure until his most recent, highly-publicized case. Ironically, it may be his only murder investigation that remains unsolved.

Despite the media saturation with the Jon-Benet Ramsey murder mystery, no one focuses on Steve Thomas and his futile struggle to apprehend a heinous killer. As a prosecutor, I share his obsession with the case. I can't imagine why anyone would sexually molest and murder a beautiful six-year-old girl in her own home. I can't explain the logic of the nonsensical ransom note or the elaborate staging of the child's corpse. I will never understand her family's reluctance to co-operate with the investigation and bring the killer to justice.

I am nauseated by this child's death and the pain she suffered. Because of his job, Steve Thomas has been immersed in Jon-Benet's pain for six years. He pursued every possible lead, only to have the Colorado Grand Jury fail to indict a suspect. Despite incredible frustration, Steve Thomas perseveres in his job. He interacts daily with officers, citizens and suspects who do not support his investigation and wish he would stop pursuing it. Not likely. He is committed to solving the Ramsey case and convicting the killer. I thank God every night we have people like him working in law enforcement to protect us. I can't imagine a man more honorable, heroic or worthy of my respect.

**If you were a character in a book, who would it be and why? What do you admire most about this character, and how does it relate to you personally and/or professionally?**

Throughout the years, I have been inspired by hundreds of heroic and adventurous characters in modern literature, yet I would most like to change places with William Kane of Jeffrey Archer's novel, *Kane and Able*. To me, Kane epitomizes the moral, ethical and personal traits of a true hero. In any situation, he has determination and incredible self-confidence. He knows what he wants and is sure he will get it. Never reckless, Kane's decisions are based on careful planning and deliberation. He defies evil, remaining a man of integrity in all business deals. Even when his opponents are using desperate methods to harm him, Kane always adheres to his principles.

Kane is also an inspiration as a personal role model. He is an ideal son who honors his father's wishes. In stressful situations, he considers how his parents would view his options and chooses accordingly. Kane is also a loyal friend to Matthew, remaining devoted to him during his terminal illness. Kane's combination of strong personal integrity and acute business acumen enable him to solve serious problems in an honorable manner.

Although my achievements are not yet as impressive as William Kane's, I can relate to his personality and integrity. Like him, I am also a determined man who is committed to success. I also have a fulfilling and rewarding personal life in addition to my career. During professional challenges, I have been inspired by William Kane's persistence. His example encourages me to stay focused on my goal and not give up during stressful times. I believe that William Kane would support my plan to learn as much as possible to become a great executive.

**Discuss an Obstacle You Have Overcome**

Throughout my lifetime, I have overcome tremendous obstacles to become an advocate for health care in my native Zambia. In the remote village where I was raised, most children had no formal education. Lacking basic learning facilities and financial support, few completed both primary and secondary school. Fortunately, I was blessed with the tenacity to succeed. After years of struggle, I arrived at the "GREAT COURT" of the University of Zambia in 1988 to start an undergraduate course in medicine. After five years of mental and physical torture, I graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery in 1989. After completing an internship at a provincial hospital, I registered as a medical officer and worked in a busy maternity unit for two years.

In 1994, I was recruited into the Zambian Army and deployed as the medical officer in charge of a battalion of soldiers. My stint in the Army was the most exciting period in my life. As the first Zambian doctor to be trained as a paratrooper, I undertook numerous night missions with American soldiers during military exercises. After a three-year stint in the military medical service, I joined the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Zambia for a master's degree in obstetrics and gynecology. After graduating in 1998, I joined the regional military hospital as a gynecologist. I worked in this capacity until 2003, when I started a private consulting office for reproductive health matters in Zambia.

After seven years as a practicing Obstetrician and Gynecologist, I have identified an acute need for research, education and public support for numerous reproductive health issues. Accordingly, I plan to specialize in public health and international policy development. Reproductive health consumes a huge portion of Zambia's health budget, yet the preventive aspects have been neglected in favor of curative medicine. The most pressing issues in Zambia include drug abuse, contraceptive use, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV-AIDS) and the outcome (and effects) of early pregnancies. My goal is to develop a comprehensive preventive reproductive health plan that educates children, teenagers and young adults about the effects of teenage sexual activity upon their health and longevity.

To achieve a long-term community impact, I will assume a role at the government level to formulate appropriate public health policies and to deliver reproductive health services. The non-governmental organizations that currently provide community-based healthcare in Zambia lack professional support. Working with them on a grassroots level, I will develop and conduct workshops that convey technical knowledge and new developments about reproductive health issues. I will serve as a conduit between the district administrators and the members of the medical fraternity to develop the workshops, train the facilitators and re-train current medical personnel.

To achieve lasting success, Zambia must make immediate improvements in the curricula for doctors, nurses and public health technicians. I will coordinate the university departments that train healthcare providers to emphasize the importance of preventive reproductive care. Research efforts will investigate better ways to educate our youth about their sexuality and to prevent disease and unwanted pregnancies. With a business degree from the United States, I will have the tools to make a lasting contribution to the health of my nation. Ideally, I will share my success with future generations of Zambians, who will enjoy better health and increased longevity via informed reproductive choices.

### **Discuss an Obstacle You Have Overcome**

For a split second, I was terrified. As I crossed the Georgia state line with just two hundred dollars in my pocket, I realized that I was completely on my own. I had no job, no friends and few prospects for the future. As I embarked on the long journey to my parent's home in New Mexico, I was desperate to reach the one place where I felt safe. I simply couldn't endure another day in my abusive marriage.

Like many abusive relationships, ours started out lovingly. We met after college, dated for a year and got married. To accommodate my husband's military career, we moved from New Mexico to Georgia and Virginia, which prevented me from finding stable employment. Within a year, my husband felt pressured by being the only breadwinner in the family; he became possessive and critical of me. In my naivety, I attributed his constant threats and verbal attacks to the demands of the military. I convinced myself that since he didn't hit me, I wasn't abused. Because his verbal attacks left no visible signs, they were easy to conceal from my loved ones. The abuse became a secret that I even hid from myself.

My volunteer work at a woman's shelter forced me to face the truth about my marriage. As part of my training, I attended group meetings in which the women explained how the abuse began, how it escalated, and why they did not leave. Some stayed because of their children, others because they were uneducated and had low self-esteem. While listening to their stories, I was frightened by how similar they were to my own. In a moment of revelation, I realized that my husband's behavior was not healthy or even remotely acceptable. I was in an abusive relationship. Not surprisingly, my husband refused to enter

couples therapy and denied that he was abusive. Although I desperately wanted our union to succeed, I refused to remain his victim.

Thanks to my family's support, I have always been a strong woman. When my father refused to allow me to go away for college, I stood up to him; I was the first family member to challenge his wishes. My education was a source of great pride to my parents, who were denied the chance to pursue their own dreams. As a teenager in the Philippines, my father dropped out of high school and enlisted in the US military during World War II. Likewise, my mother left school in Mexico with a sixth grade education to help support her family. Risking the security of their life in Mexico, they came to the United States when I was four years old to give their children the chance for a better future.

Sadly, my abusive marriage was my first experience with failure. Like many women, I did not understand the ramifications of emotional abuse until I had survived it. Eventually, with my parent's support, I realized that the situation was not my fault. I regained my confidence and began to plan for the future. In addition to helping my mother care for my elderly father, I continue to work as an advocate for children. I also started the application process for my MBA.

As a volunteer, I've discovered that abuse plagues all types of families, regardless of their age, educational level or social status. In my job as a case assessor for Save the Families, I help the Juvenile Courts find appropriate placements for displaced children. I am honored to give back to an organization that helps other women survive such a tumultuous time.

Looking back, I am proud of my decision to leave my abusive marriage and re-claim my future. Despite the stress of re-building my life, I never wavered in my passion to obtain my MBA. In fact, by overcoming a profound personal disappointment, I found an internal source of strength that I never knew I had. By surviving a difficult time with grace and dignity, I have developed the skills to handle whatever obstacles the future may bring.

### **Discuss an Obstacle You Have Overcome**

As a freshman at Emerson College, I was on top of the world. I had just moved to the United States after receiving a full-tuition scholarship, which provided me a chance to go to college in America. At the end of my first semester, I excitedly called my parents to tell them how well I had done on my final exams. My mother's shocking news, that my father had not survived his heart transplant surgery, left me too shaken to speak. In a split second, everything in my life had permanently changed.

Back in Russia, my father had greatly encouraged me, through his own interest in foreign countries and cultures, to discover and experience the many new things that the United States had to offer. He had an enormous appreciation for such an opportunity, after raising our family in the bleak days of the communist regime. After earning a chance to study in the U.S. earlier that year, I was determined to make the most of every personal, educational and professional opportunity that came my way, particularly in a thriving democracy, where the freedom to explore the limits of my potential was simply too precious to waste. As my mother's voice quivered in grief, I wondered for a moment if I could go on. The loss of my father, who was so dear to us, was simply beyond comprehension.

Since that day, I have confronted emotions and issues that few of my peers have ever faced. Losing my father to congestive heart failure forced me to take responsibility for all aspects of my life. My first decision was to complete my education; losing or wasting my scholarship was not an option. While reading the book *Win Yourself*, by the brilliant Japanese businessman and professor Kyutaro Hashimoto, I was captivated by one of Isaac Newton's famous quotations: "if you want the strength to take new initiatives and be a person with character and courage, dedicate yourself completely to what you can accomplish today." In the aftermath of my father's sudden death, these words became an incentive to approach my life one day at a time. I focused only on the most critical daily tasks in school and work, completing them systematically, but to the best of my abilities. At 18, I became an expert at managing my time, to accommodate the hundreds of tasks that my insane schedule required.

While still in college, I also accepted an adult role in my family, providing emotional and financial support to my relatives in Russia. They depended on me a great deal over the years, both for the example I set, and for the hope of a better future. By prioritizing carefully, I completed my B.A. degree in Business Management, in addition to working a part-time job. I also landed a challenging position as an auditor for Microsoft, where I have quickly advanced to a management role. In all endeavors, I have applied myself

intellectually and produced results that were commensurate with my strength of character and passion for learning. These difficult moments, along with my close relationship with my family, have shaped the person I am today.

Nine years later, I acknowledge my father's death as a turning point in my life. By overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles, I discovered a resiliency and strength of character that I did not know I possessed. In a time of crisis, I became a survivor.

**If you were given a free day and could spend it anywhere, in any way you choose, what would you do?**

I would gather my family members in one location and spend the day with them. Sadly, we haven't all been on the same continent at the same time for over fifteen years. As the eldest child in a large Chinese family, I took to heart my mum's advice: "You must stick together like a bunch of chopsticks during hard times - it's harder to break a bunch of them than to break an individual stick." Our strong family unity taught me the meaning of devotion, loyalty and love. With my family's support, I had the confidence to start my own business and pursue my dreams. By observing their resourcefulness, ingenuity and unwavering determination, I learned to apply the same principles to my own pursuits.

On our day together, we would have a large, leisurely brunch and visit our childhood home. Through photographs, stories and videotapes, we would catch up on each other's lives and re-hash cherished childhood memories. We would enjoy the comfort and trust that only comes with unconditional love. That is our family legacy. No matter what I do, where I go, or what I become, my family will always be there for me. We are the ultimate team.

**If you were given a free day and could spend it anywhere, in any way you choose, what would you do?**

I would spend the day with Jarvis, the smartest young man I know. I met Jarvis through my work as a tutor with the Chicago Outreach Program, which is designed to give disadvantaged children a head start in school. When I first became his reading tutor, I wasn't prepared for the bond I would form with this eight-year-old angel.

At first, Jarvis lacked interest in his schoolwork and was too hyperactive to concentrate on a single task. I quickly realized that his troubles had everything to do with circumstance and nothing to do with ability. The discouraging signs were impossible to ignore. His school was under-funded, with poor instruction, minimal resources and facilities in disrepair. Like many kids in his class, Jarvis came from a single-parent home that did not encourage education.

With no incentive to learn, Jarvis thought that college was a pipe dream that was beyond his reach. I knew better. As I helped him learn how to read, I worried that the negative influences in his life would later undo my efforts. My fears were eased the day that Jarvis's mother paid me an unexpected visit at his school. I welcomed her reassurance that the time I was investing in her son was making a difference.

Over the past three years, I have tutored Jarvis at his school every Saturday morning from nine until noon. In addition to helping him read and write, I listen to his hopes for the future. What an amazing contrast to our first few sessions! Jarvis is now reading with confidence and is excited about learning. According to his teacher, he got the highest score in the class on his last English exam. Whenever I am having a bad day, thoughts of Jarvis make me smile. I am honored to have made a positive difference in his life.

**If you were given a free day and could spend it anywhere, in any way you choose, what would you do?**

I would spend a leisurely day exploring Istanbul, Turkey, a city renowned for its historic museums, shopping opportunities and exquisite cuisine. For breakfast, I would visit a simple tea garden to enjoy Simits (sesame covered ring-shaped bread), feta cheese, rose jam and tea. As I ate, I would absorb the breathtaking

scenery of the Bosphorus, the strait that separates Turkey's Asian and European half. Although it is now a tourist district, the narrow streets, old shops and distinct architecture provide visitors with a rare glimpse of centuries past.

Later, I would visit the Topkapi Palace, which was the home of Ottoman Sultans over 400 years ago. Its large garden, extravagant harem and many displays, including one of the largest diamonds in the world, would inevitably bring back old stories that my grandparents had shared with me. I would then make my way to the Yerebatan (sunken) Cistern, the largest underground aqueduct in the world, which was also the setting for *From Russia With Love*.

For lunch, I would visit a seaside *patisserie* (bakery) that offers delicious Profiterols. I would take my seat on the oceanfront courtyard, where diners are frequently splashed with sea water. For an afternoon jaunt, I would explore the Grand Bazaar, where 4000 shops sell spices, carpets, jewelry and leather goods. I would finish fulfilling day at an upscale seafood restaurant, followed by a quiet walk back to my hotel. Gazing into the night sky, I would ponder the Istanbul of centuries ago, when sultans reigned and the city was a very different place.

**You are the CEO of a consumer electronics company (product lines include Home Appliances, portable internet access devices, MP3 players) and have to formulate an e-commerce strategy for your company. The problem you face is that most of your top level employees have been with the company for a long time and have little e-commerce experience. How would you get your company ready for e-business and what will be some of the key facets of your strategy? What will you do and how will you do it?**

The Internet has revolutionized the way people work and conduct business. All employees can learn and understand the Internet, regardless of their age and technology background. My first step would be to create an Internet training group to teach our employees how to use the latest technology. This group will include teenage music lovers, twenty-something wireless-phone users and on-line baby boomer shoppers, who will demonstrate how the Internet and e-business will benefit our company. Most importantly, this diverse group will provide confidence to our aging employees that the Internet is not limited to the young technology wizards.

Once my employees are comfortable with Internet, my next strategy will be to mandate a paperless office. I will issue all corporate announcements via e-mails and conduct business meetings through video conference. Our recruiting efforts will be accomplished through on-line career services. The marketing and sales departments will provide demonstrations and product information directly from our website. These changes will improve corporate efficiency and transform the way our employees view the Internet. Ultimately, the combination of technology training and Internet usage will spark additional new and ingenious ways to integrate the Web into our business.

The proliferation of business-to-business (B2B) websites will also revolutionize our corporate buying strategy. The Internet is a huge online marketplace where companies can negotiate and purchase supplies from thousands of vendors. My strategy is to immediately redirect our purchasing group to utilize this media. Whether we are comparing electronic devices or ordering office supplies, B2B commerce will save time, money and energy. Once we determine a particular electronic component or notebook size, we will capture

the manufacturer and item numbers into our ordering database. This way, we can accurately and automatically replenish our inventory without losing productivity and qualifying new suppliers.

The Internet also will allow us to sell to consumers directly through our web site. For hurried consumers, online shopping is fast, convenient and economical. Using a computer or wireless Internet device, customers can research, compare and purchase products at any hour from any place on earth. My strategy is to develop an e-business website to provide these benefits to our current and future customers. First, customers must be able to quickly navigate to a product of interest, unlike the chaos of traditional holiday shopping. Second, the website will incorporate 360-degree views of our products with interactive features simulating the browsing and inspecting shopping experience. Third, fault-tolerant computers will be used to ensure our website is functional 24/7/365 even during virus attacks and the busiest shopping days. This creates a store that is “always open”, selling our products during off-hours, weekends and holidays. Fourth, I will implement a pricing strategy that is competitive with traditional department stores. The reduced cost of e-business will allow us to offer better products at lower costs, creating an on-line bargain store. Fifth, the worldwide access of the Internet will allow us to create specific products and services targeting a specific country or culture.

I am confident that if employees are properly trained to use the Internet, they will embrace it for its groundbreaking conveniences. My job as CEO is to guide the company into the twenty-first century as a leader in a technologically driven company.

**You are the CEO of a consumer electronics company (product lines include Home Appliances, portable internet access devices, MP3 players) and have to formulate an e-commerce strategy for your company. The problem you face is that most of your top level employees have been with the company for a long time and have little e-commerce experience. How would you get your company ready for e-business and what will be some of the key facets of your strategy? What will you do and how will you do it?**

Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, successfully overcame the same challenge. He is the 64-year-old technology leader who suddenly “discovered” the Internet in 1999 and transformed GE into one of the most wired companies in the world. His strategy was to systematically convert his managers and employees into experienced Internet users. He instituted corporate-wide Internet usage including buying, selling and customer service. Just two years later, GE's employees enthusiastically embrace the technology and the company is a leader in the business-to-business (B2B) marketplace. I will employ the same strategy used by Mr. Welch to prepare my consumer electronics company for e-business.

My first step would be to create a new department dedicated to e-commerce training and implementation. I would hire the best available talent to bring my current employees up to speed with twenty-first century technology. Colleges and universities are filled with dynamic, talented newcomers who can bring a fresh perspective to our company about how the technology can be used. I would recruit heavily at top universities for candidates with experience in training neophytes. I think that combining their technological expertise with the practical experience of our current management staff will give us the best of both worlds.

Fortunately, many of the necessary steps are simple to execute. We would purchase computers for every manager and provide exhaustive training in how to use the Internet. Eventually, we would adopt electronic solutions to functions currently done offline. E-mails would replace faxes and written memos, and

teleconferences would replace costly staff meetings. Raw materials can be sourced online, and our competitive intelligence efforts will be enhanced by the wealth of public data on the Internet. The most difficult aspect of this project is step one: getting our people online. Once our employees see the benefits of the Internet, they will become its greatest advocates.

The Internet will also allow us to sell products directly through our state-of-the-art web site, which will provide customers with a full range of products that satisfy all of their electronic needs. Yet our corporate mission will succeed only if we focus on customer satisfaction. We want our customers to return for future purchases and refer friends and family members to our products. No sale will be final unless we exceed our customer's expectations, including packing, shipping and delivery specifications. In addition, former Internet hackers and security experts will be hired to implement and maintain the most sophisticated security on our website. This will assure our customers that personal information will be kept for internal use.

E-business is a new economy with huge opportunities for a leading consumer electronics company. My strategy is to train our employees with the latest technology and embrace the Internet for all business communications. As new and more efficient ways to deliver quality products emerge, we will be prepared to seize them. We will heed the advice of Jack Welch, who cites the Internet as "number one, two, three and four" on his list of priorities to expand GE into the 21st century.

**You are the CEO of a consumer electronics company (product lines include Home Appliances, portable internet access devices, MP3 players) and have to formulate an e-commerce strategy for your company. The problem you face is that most of your top level employees have been with the company for a long time and have little e-commerce experience. How would you get your company ready for e-business and what will be some of the key facets of your strategy? What will you do and how will you do it?**

My first step would be to create a new division dedicated to e-commerce implementation. The new group would have its own Vice President, who would report directly to me. In such a highly competitive market, I would recruit this VP from one of the current e-commerce leaders by offering an attractive compensation package. My ideal candidate would have the ability to train our existing staff in all aspects of technology.

Second, I would invest in top quality PCs for each manager and provide the most efficient form of Internet access. After a comprehensive training period, I would systematically convert many administrative functions to the Internet. We would communicate by e-mail rather than by more traditional methods. We would also use the Internet to monitor our competitors, buy our office supplies and hire our new workers. Many functions, including routine office work, would be performed by telecommuters, whose "face time" would include many hours in the privacy of their own home offices. These steps would enhance our bottom-line and impress even diehard technophobes.

Third, I would develop a comprehensive web site for our company that provided one-stop shopping for the consumer. I would put our entire catalog online, complete with full product descriptions and comparisons between competitive products. I would provide a toll-free customer service line, staffed by knowledgeable personnel, to answer consumer questions in real time. I would make our online shopping experience safe, easy, affordable and informative. Customers would leave our site confident that we are leaders in our field.

Fourth, once the web site was running successfully, the e-commerce division would be responsible for continually updating and training our employees. In such a highly competitive market, retaining our market share will require a long-term investment in the constantly changing training, equipment and software that e-commerce requires. From an executive perspective, the project is actually quite exciting. Rather than viewing the Internet as an obstacle, I would demonstrate to my employees that it is a unique tool to help us satisfy our customers while simultaneously improving our profitability. Who could resist that?

#### **Tell Us Something That Will Help Us Get to Know You Better**

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

*- Martin Luther King, Jr.*

As I stepped onto the West Side Highway, I shot my first photo. Because of the heavy smoke, I couldn't see

that the first tower had already fallen. I only knew that a single plane had crashed through the World Trade Center, forcing an immediate evacuation. As a freelance photographer, I couldn't resist the urge to take some close-up shots for possible publication. Dodging the thick veil of smoke, I ran furiously to get the best vantage point. Just as I raised my camera, the second tower began to fall. As the building collapsed, an ominous black cloud filled the sky and enveloped everything in its wake.

As a former volunteer firefighter, I felt compelled to help. I ran into the dense smoke to what it now called "Ground Zero" and attempted to find a command center or fire chief. The scene was in total chaos. With most of the fire trucks either crushed or burning, the command post was buried under debris. In the first initial moments of shock, even the firefighters didn't seem to realize what had happened. Most were searching for their friends or trying to help survivors. At that moment, I decided that my photos would have to wait. My services were clearly needed as a volunteer.

Within minutes, the thick smoke and burning ash inhibited our ability to breathe. With stinging eyes and a constant cough, I searched furiously for drinking water. Most store owners had closed their shops and evacuated the area, except for a single deli a few blocks away. I made several trips there, purchasing dozens of water bottles to distribute to people at the site. When I depleted the shop's water supply, I asked the owner for donations to help the firefighters. Despite his initial resistance, he knew that his perishable goods could not survive a prolonged lack of electricity. He gave them to me, along with all of his dairy products. When I told the firefighters, they asked me to solicit other needed items, including dust masks from an abandoned hardware store. Upon my return, I donned a NYFD t-shirt and kept working.

While the firefighters searched through the debris, I served as a coordinator for new volunteers at the site. It wasn't hard to keep people busy. As piles of paper caught fire, the water pressure in the area was too low to put them out. With the aid of a police officer, I assembled a group of volunteers to search for available fire extinguishers in the surrounding buildings. We picked up empty S.C.O.T (Self-Contained Oxygen Tank) pack bottles and brought them to filling stations. With assistance from firefighters, I put out small paper fires and salvaged equipment from burning fire trucks. I cleaned ash out of people's eyes and gathered scattered equipment. Whenever I saw civilians, I confirmed that they were fine, then asked for their help. Amid the devastation, our burgeoning team of volunteers made the stress a little easier to bear.

We were evacuated several hours later, when it became apparent that Building 7 was about to come down. Only then did I notice that my pants were burnt and that parts of my boots had melted while I walked through smoldering ash. In my haste that day, I didn't realize the severity of the burns on my feet and ankles. After limping for another hour, I was ordered to get some rest. As I left the site, I took some final photos of the firefighters and a few "landscape shots." Like other Americans, the surreal images of Ground Zero became permanently etched in my heart.

As I walked home that day, I realized that I still had over seven rolls of film left to shoot. Normally, I would regret not spending more time getting "great shots." Yet the situation I encountered on September 11 was different from any concert, wedding, corporate party or movie I ever photographed. Normally, my job required a single-minded focus: to observe events and deliver award-winning shots. Not on September 11.

On 9/11, my primary responsibility was not to document the event, but to become an integral part of it. My challenge was to be a compassionate, effective volunteer under a highly unusual set of circumstances. The devastation at Ground Zero pushed my skills, endurance and emotional stability farther than I ever dreamed possible, but I pushed back just as hard. Faced with a life-threatening challenge, I served the needs of others. Looking back at the split-second decisions I made that day, I am confident that I did my best to help as many people as possible. I did what any compassionate American would do.

### **Tell Us Something That Will Help Us Get to Know You Better**

My life is guided by my continual pursuit of success as a professional, citizen, son and friend. Before undertaking an endeavor, I ask myself three questions: (1) Is the activity worthwhile? Does it require the application of my best self to benefit those around me? (2) Is the activity consistent with the values instilled by my family? (3) Will the activity allow me to grow, challenge myself and learn something new? Only if all three answers are "yes" will I proceed with the endeavor.

Surprisingly, many of my peers make life-altering decisions without ever asking themselves those three critical questions. They seek a smooth daily existence, comforted by the tangible rewards of money and material goods. Yet I have never been particularly motivated by physical things, preferring to follow an inner

guide when I make big decisions. I usually choose the path that offers the greatest opportunity for emotional growth. Over the years, I have left excellent companies in Singapore and Los Angeles to advance my career and embrace new challenges. To enroll at Harvard, I will leave another successful position at Prudential Securities. Although some people may view this as risky, it is a necessary step on my path to leadership.

My parents taught me to dream big and to follow the correct path. Through personal example, my father taught me the power of honesty and integrity. As the head of the purchasing department, he was often threatened by corrupt business owners who tried to bribe him into buying their shoddy products. He refused to cave in to their demands. As a teacher, my mother taught me how to balance work with home. Despite her responsibilities at the school, she was always available to attend to my needs. After nine years away from home, my mother is still my best friend, my guide and never-ending source of love. I feel a deep responsibility to honor my parents' wishes and be the ethical and accomplished man they nurtured.

Over the years, my commitment to improving society has become the most important factor in my life. For the past several years, I have served as president of Pennsylvania's chapter of the American Red Cross, which provides food and medical help to people in need. I gain tremendous joy from giving to others and making meaningful contributions to the communities in which I live. As I mature and gain meaningful life experience, I hope to become the leader of a social or humanitarian group that promotes equality throughout Singapore. I am eager to learn how other nations and cultures achieve success and prosperity. As a future leader, I want to be prepared to use the best ideas from around the globe to improve my community.

At the end of each day, I ask myself: "Did I take a positive step to help society, my company and my family?" As long as I make progress in a way that honors my values and beliefs, I am satisfied with my day.

### **Tell Us Something That Will Help Us Get to Know You Better**

Years ago I became fixated on picking locks. I bent paperclips into different shapes and jiggled them furiously in every door in my house. One frustrating day, I locked myself in my father's office, hoping that the added pressure would force me to figure it out. Success! With the addition of a second paperclip and my "magic" technique, I opened a relatively simple five pin lock in just two hours. My method employed basic physics; I used one clip to pull sideways on the keyhole and the other to brush back-and-forth on the small vertical pins inside the cylinder. Although my reasoning was primitive and inefficient by adult standards, it was fairly sophisticated for a ten-year-old.

As a child, I knew that my rampant creativity made me different from other kids. Long after my friends lost interest in how something worked (like a television or radio), I continued to ask questions. Once my mind focused on a task, I wouldn't quit until I accomplished it. Thirty years later, nothing has changed. During college, I realized that my childhood tenacity was a powerful predictor of my adult personality. In all things, large and small, I like to make plans and follow through. As a college student, I enjoyed a natural affinity for the arts and hoped to pursue a related career. Yet my parents paid for my education, and they didn't support my desire to go to "art" school to study film and photography. My compromise was to remain at Temple, where I gravitated to every design and photography class in the curriculum. I refused to settle for anything less than top grades or having my work prominently displayed in showcases on campus.

After completing every photography and design course at Temple, I started a student film club. The campus didn't have any video equipment, so I was forced to improvise. Using borrowed items (and a little ingenuity), I assembled my "movie making equipment," including three VCRs, a video camera, two CD players, four halogen lamps, a stopwatch and several switches and dimmers extracted from electrical appliances. Making an actual "movie" took serious work. By strategically stopping and starting the two CD players and VCRs, a third VCR continuously recorded the "master track." After three tries, I recorded a master tape complete with an audio soundtrack. Ah, success! Just like my childhood lock picking exploits, I

was engrossed in every phase of the process.

After graduation, I began a small company called Epitome.com (a.k.a Epitome Design), which offers a full range of services, from creating websites to editing video. The company allows me to flex my entrepreneurial muscles in all stages of the business. Each new project brings unique challenges, requiring me to develop effective solutions within rigid time and budget constraints. I enjoy both the diversity of projects and my ability to promote "high tech" services to other small businesses.

Two decades after my childhood lock picking experience, I retain the same tenacious spirit. In all endeavors, I bring an insatiable curiosity and a commitment to succeed. After several years of entrepreneurial success, I am ready to obtain formal business training at Columbia, which will enable me to learn and implement new ways to express my creative energy. Who knows where my combination of talent and education will take me?

### **Addendum To Explain a Low GMAT Score**

Despite my best efforts, I have been unable to achieve the exceptional GMAT scores that are expected at a business school of Georgetown's caliber. Over the Christmas holidays, I took a leave of absence from my job and spent long hours every day preparing for the test. My extensive preparation included a GMAT prep course at Temple University, along with private tutoring sessions with a faculty member. Even with personal coaching, I have been unable to exceed a score of 650. I am frustrated by these results, as they clearly do not reflect the academic excellence I have consistently displayed in the classroom (undergraduate GPA of 3.92).

Despite my difficulty with the GMAT, I am convinced that I am an excellent candidate for your program. Over the past decade, I have developed myriad practical skills that cannot be assessed by standardized testing. I am fluent in four languages and a successful marketing manager for a Fortune 100 company. In challenging business situations, I have proven myself to be an excellent manager of people, projects and resources. Between 1999 and 2003, I published four academic papers on cross-cultural marketing in peer-reviewed journals in the United States and Japan. Clearly, my GMAT scores do not accurately reflect my fluency in English or my reasoning skills.

Although I respect your use of the GMAT as a screening tool, I hope that you will consider the "full picture" of my academic, professional and cross-cultural training in making your final admissions decision. I have worked very hard to achieve aggressive professional goals, and I will bring a wealth of practical experience to the classroom. If given the opportunity, I will be a tremendous asset to Georgetown.

### **Addendum To Explain a Low GMAT Score**

As a primary care physician, my father devoted his life to running a free clinic in rural Alabama. As a consequence, my only educational resource was a chronically under funded public school system. Unlike affluent cities, my hometown did not provide a comprehensive liberal arts background for students with higher educational aspirations. Consequently, I was not able to take classes in art, music, psychology or the physical sciences. As you might expect, I later found myself at a significant disadvantage in a competitive college environment.

Although my university grades are excellent, I still have difficulty taking standardized tests. Nevertheless, I have done everything possible to improve my GMAT score, including individualized tutoring in all sections of the exam. After three tries, I finally raised my overall score to 610, which does not reflect my true academic potential; the mediocre scores are an unfortunate byproduct of my poor high school education.

When reviewing my application, I hope the committee will view my disappointing GMAT score in the context of an otherwise exemplary life. Since age sixteen, I have dedicated my life to a career in business; I have completed the most rigorous curriculum possible, volunteered at a pro-bono health care clinic and become a highly visible advocate in my community. My reference letters will certainly attest to the sincerity of my motivation and drive. By navigating the difficult transition from a poor school system to a top-tier MBA program, I developed the confidence to weather even the hardest storms. With your support and

understanding, I will conquer this one as well.

### **Addendum To Explain a Low GMAT Score**

Throughout college, I attained a 3.9 GPA without special accommodations for my learning disabilities (dyslexia and ADHD). By employing hard work, dedication and effective study techniques, I achieved excellent grades under the same testing conditions as my peers. For philosophical reasons, I chose not to inform my professors or academic advisors of my "special needs." Despite the underlying challenges, I opted to keep the focus on my talents, not my limitations.

Few people supported my position, including my parents and family doctor. In fact, they unanimously agreed that my efforts to compete with "normal" students were doomed to fail. Yet my decision ultimately provided a wonderful sense of empowerment. By thriving academically, I confirmed my ability to succeed in difficult situations, which inspired my commitment to other aspects of personal growth. Contrary to what my high school guidance counselor told me, there isn't anything I can't do.

In the same vein, I am justifiably proud of my "average" GMAT score (600), which I also achieved without special testing accommodations. Although it may not seem particularly impressive, it proves that I can perform at parity with other candidates under extremely stressful circumstances. After all, after graduation, I will be expected to demonstrate the same skills as my peers in myriad professional situations. Why not start now?

### **Drawing on current events, discuss the relevance of market forces and government regulation on corporate values. Stake out your position on this issue and support your argument with specific details and examples.**

At first glance, they were the perfect family. Dad had a top job at a high-flying company, while Mom, a wealthy debutante, had her own solid career at the same firm. Then the company, and their lives, crashed because of illegal schemes that made multimillionaires of Andy and Lea Fastow, among many others at the Enron Corporation. In a deal that requires prison time and a forfeiture of over \$24 million to the government in ill-gotten gains, the Fastows eventually plead guilty to charges of fraud and tax evasion. As expected, the Fastows generate little sympathy among the thousands of Enron employees who lost their shirts, retirement accounts, and eventually, their jobs. Few will ever earn back what Ken Lay's merry gang of thieves have stolen from them.

Enron's problems began with revelations that its chief financial officer was running partnerships that allowed the company to keep half a billion dollars in debt off its books. The precipitous fall in Enron's stock price was the result of fraud, as executives cashed out their stock positions while falsely reassuring shareholders that business was booming. Arthur Anderson also engaged in deceptive behavior by helping Enron hide hundreds of millions of dollars of losses and by destroying documents that would have been helpful to the subsequent criminal investigation.

Many people are now questioning how in the world this could have happened. A better question is why the government didn't implement better regulations to *prevent* it. Considering the behind-the-scenes practices at both firms, the debacle was inevitable. After beginning as a traditional energy producer/seller in 1985, Enron gained permission from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to trade energy futures and derivatives. Unfortunately, Enron opted to cheat, rather than play by the rules. Instead of letting the free market decide energy future prices, Enron set up nearly 3000 offshore companies, many of which they treated as partnerships.

These offshore companies provided Enron with the perfect ruse to manipulate energy prices and, at the same time, hide its own debts. When states like California came to Enron to lock in energy contracts, Enron would show them contracts it had signed with its offshore "partners" that locked them in at increasingly astronomical prices. Viewing what appeared to be legitimate contracts with others, Enron's customers had no choice but to submit to Enron's extortive energy prices.

For many years, Enron circumvented the magic of the marketplace and set its own price for energy, wildly inflating the stock price. Greedy Enron executives saw no end to the possibilities for its offshore entities. By transferring its obligations to some of these shell companies, they were able to show Wall Street profits, when in fact the company was being looted into insolvency by its top managers. When the

uncontrollable meltdown of Enron's scheme began in December 2001, the world learned that Enron's apparent success had been little more than a complex illusion.

To restore the public's faith in corporate America, the federal government needs to quickly undo every "loophole" that Enron exploited in its convoluted scheme. Offshore partnerships should be banned. Government investigators should be granted free access to a firm's books and audit them on a regular basis. Firmer laws must be in place that govern an accounting firm's relationship with its clients. No single company should ever be in a position to set the price for energy, nor should they be allowed to show non-existent profits to Wall Street.

As devastating as the Enron scheme has been to thousands of displaced employees and millions of bilked stockholders, it has taught the entire world a cynical lesson about the power of greed and the need for governmental regulation in the minutia of everyday corporate life. Thanks to Enron, many potential investors will never be willing to invest a dime in a publicly held company. Worse than their tarnished reputations and their prolonged jail sentences, this is the sad legacy that the Fastows have left us.

**Drawing on current events, discuss the relevance of market forces and government regulation on corporate values. Stake out your position on this issue and support your argument with specific details and examples.**

As I sat down to our family's Thanksgiving dinner, my father grumbled at the lead story on CNN. "That Martha Stewart," he scowled. "She's a crook, just like all the rest of them." As the only "businessman" of the family, I felt a keen sense of responsibility about how Martha was perceived. I was, after all, one of "the rest of them." As an accountant for Ernst & Young, my firm had played a large role in the investigation of the Inclone stock trading debacle. For several weeks before the official news broke in the media, I had painstakingly copied, collated and organized cartons of records for a team of SEC investigators. Sure, I was familiar with the concept of "insider trading," but until the past few years, the general public certainly wasn't. Martha Stewart's plight, along with that of Sam Watchel and the gang at Inclone, has evoked an unprecedented anger and distrust in the American public.

The stock market is driven by the basic laws of supply and demand, which are predicated on a stock buyer's hope that the value of his shares will increase. So many factors affect a buyer's confidence in a company before he buys even a single share of stock: quality products, a viable market, an excellent business plan, a highly recognizable spokeswoman. In many ways, Martha Stewart had it all. Yet her vast consumer product empire now hinges on a single stock trade that saved her from losing \$40,000 in her personal account. Recent estimates suggest that her \$40,000 "savings" has subsequently cost her over twenty billion dollars in her firm's equity value, along with the ongoing costs of litigation. Regardless of the outcome of her appeal, the personal loss of Martha Stewart's reputation will remain immeasurable.

What, then, is the lesson to be learned by corporate America? How can companies preserve their reputations, both in the stock market and in the perception of average Americans? By being honest. By reporting their income and expenses honestly, even if more "creative" accounting methods are available. By adhering to federal laws on insider trading, even if they don't think that anyone is looking. By ensuring that those in positions of authority have the integrity to put the stockholder's needs ahead of their own personal greed. Ultimately, this hinges on elements of personal character that are decided long before a crime is committed.

As a future business leader, I support the development and implementation of stronger government regulations for how companies do business. I am eager to open my books to anyone who is interested in seeing them. Until the individual investor believes that he has the same chance of success as those "in the know," they won't trust us or invest in our companies. They will stifle any opportunities for markets to grow in every sector of the economy. Thanks to situations like the Martha Stewart case, only those companies who stand for honesty and truth will have a chance to survive in the cynical 21st century economy. And perhaps that's the way it should be.

**Drawing on current events, discuss the relevance of market forces and government regulation on corporate values. Stake out your position on this issue and support your argument with specific details and examples.**

Enron. Tyco. WorldCom. By the time the dust settled, even Martha Stewart had gotten into the act, serving five months in federal prison for her role in an insider stock trade. The sad lesson to the American public from all of these debacles is that business is dirty. Over and over again, we've seen that CEOs are liars and thieves who will exploit their hard-earned investors' dollars to satisfy their own greed. Is it any wonder that Generation X has shown little interest in investing in the stock market? And can anyone blame them?

As a prospective MBA student, I am humbled and saddened by the acts of these "role models," who have cast a negative shadow on their respective industries. Ironically, they all, at least superficially, claimed to have "solid corporate values." In all of my years of working and investing, I have never seen a prospectus, mission statement or annual report that didn't claim the highest of moral and ethical standards. Yet the rampant corporate corruption of the past decade clearly suggests that these "solid values" cannot be taken for granted in any company or industry. Consequently, I have concluded that the only way to boost consumer confidence is to increase government regulation of specific industries and to allocate enough money to ensure proper compliance.

The fraud at Enron was facilitated by its unusual ability to set the price for energy in a market in which it enjoyed a monopoly. The US government can prevent similar fraud by enforcing relevant antitrust laws and by limiting the price the firms can charge for energy. At Tyco and WorldCom, the fraud remained undetected because accountants and auditors used "creative means" of hiding and mislabeling expenses in a manner that allowed millions of dollars to be misused without detection. To prevent similar fraud, the government must better regulate the accounting practices of publicly traded firms and increase the frequency and extensiveness of audits. Only by ensuring compliance will prospective customers and stockholders regain their faith in big business.

With my background in technology, I am most interested in the laws that affect technology. Amazingly, in just fifteen years, the internet has become an integral component of our everyday lives. Online commerce, which provides convenience and luxury at the click of a mouse, now generates \$25 billion in annual sales, with unlimited growth potential. Yet these vast technological developments have sparked a quagmire of unresolved legal, moral and ethical concerns with far-reaching implications.

The unprecedented growth of the internet requires careful delineation of cyber-rights and obligations regarding fair-business practices, regulation and jurisdiction, consumer rights and liability. Since the internet is a "human" environment, users conduct myriad interactions in cyberspace, anonymous and legitimate, devious and wholesome. The UCITA (Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act), FTC, SEC, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and National Consumers League have each become a recognized presence in the effort to dictate fairness, prevent fraud and define the level of accountability within the digital realm. Despite their best efforts, the advancements in global technology continue to evolve at a faster pace than the laws required to regulate them.

Bringing global harmony to online activity (via universally accepted "Cyber-Law") is an astoundingly complex process in which all governments must participate. In the nameless, faceless, "anonymous" world of cyberspace, in which a consumer never truly knows with whom (s)he is dealing, government regulation is critical to build confidence and to protect consumer rights. My primary motivation for getting my MBA is to make a meaningful contribution to this endeavor.

As I write this essay, I am reminded of a remark by Bill Gates at the 2001 Global Technology Forum. When considering the assertion that the market was saturated with MBAs, he noted, "...there may be too many MBAs, but there aren't too many *good* MBAs." As a tenacious man with incomparable skills, I consider this statement a direct challenge to my psyche: a wager against my character, maturity and tenacity. Yet it is also a bet I am vehemently inspired to win. Despite the proliferation of corruption and greed in American business, I am confident that with proper regulation and ethical leadership, the best firms will remain on top. I am excited to be part of the solution. Armed with a lifetime of passion and intellectual curiosity, I will defy the perception of "abundant mediocrity" and become an MBA worthy of Bill Gates' pride.

### **Describe something you feel passionate about....**

When I feel overwhelmed by professional stress, I indulge in my passion for rowing. I've been a dedicated athlete since high school, pursuing sports such as football, lacrosse and bicycling. In addition to providing great physical benefits, exercise diffuses the physical and emotional stress of my marketing career.

I discovered my passion for rowing at age eighteen, when I joined Princeton's lightweight crew team. I quickly discovered the intensity of the sport and the rigid training regimen. Although initially overwhelmed, I was inspired by the dedication and discipline of my teammates. My competitive spirit enabled me to focus on my diet, sleep habits and training schedule, choosing the proper combination to improve my performance and avoid injuries. I developed an acute awareness of my body and how to maximize its potential under difficult conditions. During college, I spent more than 30 hours per week training, developing the discipline, determination, and respect to pursue my sport. Although my competitive rowing days are over, I continue to row recreationally and apply the lessons I've mastered to other personal and professional challenges.

Living in the city, I can not indulge my passion for rowing on a daily basis. Yet on a clear weekend morning, following a week of deadlines, personnel issues and campaign strategies, nothing is more relaxing than an exhilarating row across Lake Geneva, using my physical strength to gently tread water and become one with nature.

**Describe something you feel passionate about....**

I am passionate about solving crime. Since 1995, I have conducted over 200 autopsies in the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office, where I work as a forensic pathologist. In criminal cases, our results are invaluable to the police and prosecutor, who seek justice for the murder victim. During a post-mortem exam, we confirm how, where and when a person died. We can match a bullet or knife wound to the exact weapon that was used in the crime. Amazingly, recent advances in DNA technology allow us to definitively place someone at a crime scene with just a single strand of hair. Despite their protestations of innocence, murderers seldom elude our grasp, because they leave behind critical forensic evidence to support a successful prosecution.

The most difficult cases involve children. In one particularly poignant case, we discovered extensive intracranial and retinal hemorrhages, which are consistent with shaken baby syndrome. Upon microscopic examination, we documented that the axons in the child's cerebral white matter were sheared, most likely from the repetitive force of being shaken. In several cases, the ends of the infant's cerebral axons had retracted into globoid shapes called "retraction balls." Although the baby's father denied shaking her, our evidence suggested otherwise. Based on our testimony, the jury found him guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced him to forty years in prison.

**Describe something you feel passionate about....**

After growing up in a poor neighborhood in south Boston, I am passionate about giving back to my community. Over the past several years, my local neighborhood continues to struggle with the devastating effects of poverty, crime and illegal drug use. For far too many kids, the lifelong benefits of a college education remain an elusive dream. As a successful professional, I am one of the lucky ones. By completing college, I escaped the dead-end life in which many inner city children are trapped. Yet I understand the frustrations of the working poor, who lack the support of an encouraging role model. Without a mentor, I was forced to rely on my own perseverance to finish high school, apply to college, arrange financial aid and juggle the competing demands of school and work. With each success, I confirmed my personal responsibility to help others navigate the same road.

Whenever possible, I work as a volunteer at the Little Tyke Day Care in Boston, where I help to organize recreational events, such as movies and visits to the zoo. I also work as a reading tutor at Midtown Elementary School in Fairhaven. In addition to teaching the children to read, I try to be a positive role model. I emphasize the importance of education in building a successful future. I tell each child that he can accomplish anything if he is willing to work hard enough. In the children's young eyes, I see a reflection of my own dreams from two decades ago. My goal is to keep their hope alive, through the power of a positive example. If I can help a single child stay in school and fulfill his potential, my efforts will be a success.

**1. What is you most valuable intangible possession?**

My mother kept hers to preserve history, as did my grandmother. Even as a young girl, I thought it was a wonderful idea. I have subsequently kept my own journal since the fifth grade, taking a moment each day to

recount events, discussions and meaningful issues. My father's attic contains a box that is filled with every journal I've kept during the past fifteen years. Each Christmas, I randomly select a volume and read through several entries. By doing so, I become immersed in the details of my past, miraculously transported back to my high school days and the seemingly insurmountable problems of adolescence. As much as I prefer to think that I've evolved past my childhood feelings, a quick review of my own words confirms the consistency of my emotions. Even then, I had a passion for writing and teaching. I was always a sensitive girl who loved to be surrounded by friends. My journal provides more than just memories; it is a creative expression of who I am and who I hope to become.

My journal is as helpful today as it was during my high school years. In my daily life, I often encounter confusing events that initially seem overwhelming. By keeping daily notes, I confirm the importance of specific issues and reinforce important life lessons. My journal reveals areas where I need to develop, feelings I need to resolve and thoughts that I have never shared with another human being. My journal is my own private haven for releasing emotions in a therapeutic manner. On an intrinsic level, my journal shapes the woman I am today, both professionally and personally. Whenever I feel off-track, I read my past entries about similar events. My heartfelt thoughts in my journal reinforce my career path, my personal values and my commitment to my family and friends.

### **What is your most valuable tangible possession?**

My most valued possession is a small, black rocking chair, clad with a thick set of velvet cushions that were hand-sewn in the late 1950's. The chair was a fixture in my grandmother's living room, where I spent many happy days as a child. As a toddler, my parents had to lift me into the chair, as my tiny legs were not long enough to reach the floor. Later, as an adolescent, I dragged the chair onto my grandmother's large wrap-around porch, where I quietly rocked as I threw peanuts to the seagulls and inhaled the salty ocean air.

When I visited my grandmother during college, I always sat in my favorite rocking chair. By this time, however, the chair was in her bedroom, where she often slept after receiving chemo. Some days she never awakened during my visits, and the only sound in her quiet room was the creaking of the old black rocker.

When my grandmother died last year, my mother sold her rambling Victorian that had been filled with furniture and antiques from the 1800's. My parents meticulously detailed which grandchildren took which items, determined to keep the financial disbursement as equitable as possible. My only request seemed odd, because I didn't want the Tiffany lamps, the original artwork or the priceless china and crystal. I wanted the one piece that would always remind me of my grandmother and the magic of her home: her small, black rocking chair, clad with the hand-sewn velvet cushions. It now sits in my living room, a lovely reminder of the woman who played such a kind, supportive role in my childhood and adolescence.

## **2. What is your most valued intangible possession?**

My most valued intangible possession is my faith in God, which is the guiding force in my life. Although I was not raised in a religious family, I always knew that my life was created for a purpose beyond physical satisfaction. Despite my young age, I have already achieved significant financial and professional success in a highly competitive field. Although our culture worships money and physical possessions, I don't derive personal satisfaction from these pursuits. I feel most at peace, and most alive, when I align my work and decisions behind God's purpose.

My calling is not in the ministry or as a representative of any organized religion, although I respect each person's right to believe or not believe in a higher power as (s)he sees fit. I will never totally understand why or how God calls each of us and reveals His plan; I simply know that God called me to be an honorable man, a loving husband and father and an ethical businessman. He continually places me in situations where I can use my natural gifts to help others, whether at work, in church, or through volunteering in community enterprises. My acceptance into an MBA program will also be guided by His will and plan.

Friends often comment on my calm personality, even during times of crisis. This "grace under pressure," or ability to survive horrific situations, is the direct personification of God's will. My faith is strongest not during good times, but during bad ones, because I know that He walks with me and provides the strength and resources to learn from the experience and eventually help others through my accumulated wisdom. Nothing on earth compares to the serenity and happiness of surrendering my life to Him as I awaken each day.

### **What is your most valuable tangible possession?**

When I graduated from high school, my father was between jobs in the aerospace industry. Consequently, he didn't have the money to buy me an expensive gift or to send me on a summer vacation with my friends. Instead, his graduation gift to me was an antique watch that was passed down to him from his paternal grandfather. Although it kept accurate time, the watch was never aesthetically pleasing; the gold had tarnished and the hands were extremely ornamental and difficult to read. Yet I cherished the watch as a family heirloom and as a symbolic acknowledgment of my adulthood.

At the time, I hoped that the gift was just the first of many from my father as I began a long and happy life. Sadly, he was killed in a car crash during my freshman year in college. As a result, the gold watch he presented to me at my high school graduation was the last gift I ever received from my father. It now symbolizes much more than my impending adulthood; it represents all the missing gifts that I will never receive from a loving man who died far too soon.

### **3. What is your most valuable tangible possession?**

My most treasured possession is my mother's wedding ring, which I received as a gift on my eighth birthday. I don't remember my mother, as she and my father were killed in a car accident just before I turned three. Yet I grew up surrounded by love, hearing wonderful stories about my parents and their devotion to us. My older sister told me that my parents' marriage was perfect and I hoped to someday achieve the same happiness.

Our home was destroyed by a hurricane when I was a teenager, leaving us with just the clothes on our backs. Fortunately, my mother's ring was on my finger that day and remained in my possession. I always wear the ring, either on my right hand or on a chain around my neck. Although I have not yet found marital happiness, I still view my mother's ring as evidence of its infinite possibility. It also represents a permanent connection to my mother, a tangible piece of her life that I know far too little about.

### **What is your most valued intangible possession?**

My most valuable intangible possessions are my sense of optimism and humor, which have helped me to survive even the most difficult situations. New friends often tell me that my life sounds like a soap opera, but that gives soap writers far too much credit. Not even Erica Kane can match some of the trials and tribulations my family has survived.

My parents died in a car accident when I was three years old, leaving me in the care of my older sister Jenny. At the time, Jenny already had three children of her own and was married to an Air Force man who relocated our unruly brood every eighteen to twenty-four months. I don't know if I am extroverted by nature, but I certainly became so by necessity. I changed schools each year and had to quickly make new friends. When I didn't know an answer in class or got into trouble, I diffused the teacher's anger by making a joke. I wasn't always the best student, but I was certainly the funniest and easiest to like.

Life became more challenging in high school when my uncle left the service. We lost our home in a hurricane in 1993, along with all of our personal possessions. Because my brother-in-law ran a home business, he also lost our primary source of income. We were homeless for almost a year, sleeping on sofas and daybeds in the homes of family and friends. I once again assumed the role of comic relief, being supportive of my family by finding (and illuminating) the bright spot in any situation.

Although my life is settled now, I survived numerous stressful situations en route to nirvana. I put myself through college, worked multiple jobs to make ends meet and survived an early unhappy marriage. I also assume full financial support and medical responsibility for my younger brother, who is autistic. But I never lost hope that I would emerge as anything but a successful, well-adjusted person. I also hold no grudges against life, God or anyone who has hurt me. Life throws everyone curveballs that we can play any way we choose. I personally choose to be happy. Life is too short and filled with too many good things to waste even a moment's time thinking about the bad stuff.

### **What does it mean to you to live in a global community?**

As the child of Mexican immigrants, I grew up in a bilingual household on the south side of Chicago. Our sprawling neighborhood had many working class families who came to America to build a better life. Despite our racial, social and economic differences, we were a thriving global community. From my earliest memory, our primary challenge was to retain our cherished ethnic traditions within our larger blended environment. Until I moved away to attend college, I didn't realize the unique value of this experience. Looking back, my childhood in Chicago was excellent preparation for the diversity on campus, where I thrived in a talented group of international students.

With the rapid advances in communications and technology, the US economy is increasingly intertwined with those of other nations. As a consequence, the businesses most likely to succeed are those that are committed to creating synergy among different cultures. Established American companies like Apple Computer quickly discovered the competitive benefits of "going global" by outsourcing numerous functions to companies in less expensive parts of the world. While many Apple components are produced in Indonesia, the units are assembled in China and their customer service lines are answered in India. In a highly tangible way, each sale by Apple Computer reflects the collective efforts of a highly organized global village.

As a future corporate leader, my challenge will be to identify and use the best combination of available resources in a highly competitive international economy. My success, to a great extent, will hinge on my comfort with cultural diversity and multi-nationalism. Those in charge of strategic planning for a company like Apple must be as familiar with labor laws in New Delhi as they are in San Francisco. To succeed in the twenty-first century, each part of the global community must work in cooperation and harmony. Firms that try to exist in a vacuum will be doomed to failure.

### **What does it mean to you to live in a global community?**

Thanks to my parents' insatiable wanderlust, I was raised in a global community. After my birth in the United States, we spent several years traveling through Greece, Turkey, and the Central American countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Shortly after I turned five, my parents accepted faculty positions at the Global International School in Taiwan, which necessitated a permanent relocation to Asia. During the ten years that we lived in Taiwan, I spent my summers exploring the well-known parks, coast lines and vibrant valleys that contribute to Asia's wondrous natural beauty.

From traveling and living abroad, I developed a passion for exploring cultures and traditions that are dissimilar from my own. I took the initiative to develop strong friendships with locals my age, who helped me to speak their native language. During the New Year's Eve celebrations, my family was invited to participate in a traditional ritual of prayer at one of the most famous private temples in Taiwan. The event provided great insight into the participants and their values. These diverse experiences taught me to embrace and honor the sacred meaning of a nation's cultural traditions.

Through diverse academic and professional experiences, I have cultivated strong skills in financial research, which will enhance my success as a corporate leader. Yet my greatest asset is my multicultural background and humanistic approach to solving problems. After living and traveling on different continents, I have become passionate about international relations and cultural diversity. With my ability to understand and converse with different types of people, I will be well-positioned to look beyond the technical aspects of a firm and understand the people who comprise it.

Businesses can only thrive on a global level if they acknowledge and appreciate the essential differences of every market they penetrate. I am uniquely qualified to do this. To date, I have used my skills to adapt to a new culture, thrive in academia and successfully navigate the corporate ladder. My long-term professional goals are to build on these strengths, challenge my intellect and my humanity, and make a lasting contribution to my local and global community.

### **What does it mean to you to live in a global community?**

Living in a global community means that every person on earth is a potential customer of a company's goods and services. Thanks to the benefits of technology, geography is no longer a barrier to

any type of transaction or commerce. On a theoretical level, living in a global community means that there are unlimited opportunities for a person or firm to succeed. On a practical level, it means that the most competitive players must possess a deep appreciation of cultural differences.

Through my international experience at Citi-Bank, I feel well prepared for the challenges of a global community. After working for Citi-Bank's San Paolo office for two years, I was invited to join their Business Development Team in Boston. This invitation acknowledged my contribution to the success of the Brazilian Office, which enjoyed a 200% increase in institutional assets during my tenure. My new position in the Business Development/ Latin America Team in Boston offered new challenges in Costa Rica, Chile and Mexico. The position also expanded my Marketing responsibilities to include Strategic Planning and International Management.

My cultural diversity, along with my fluency in Spanish and Portuguese, enabled me to communicate with our clients and colleagues throughout Latin America. My relocation also accelerated my personal growth. Prior to living in Boston, I spent my entire life in Brazil, among a fairly homogenous group of people. By moving to the United States, I learned how to live alone and how to adapt to a different culture. I developed a heightened sensitivity to the subtle differences between Brazil and the United States, which define how we think, feel and make business decisions. This knowledge is invaluable to any firm trying to serve both markets.

Thanks to this experience, I have a better understanding of the business needs of other cultures and am developing specific investment products to suit them. By taking a global approach to asset management, I have demonstrated my ability to handle managerial projects of increasing responsibility and complexity.

**If you could change one characteristic about yourself, what would it be?**

After watching *National Velvet* as a child, I wanted to become a jockey like Elizabeth Taylor. With dedication and skill, I was convinced that I would one day win the Kentucky Derby. Sadly, my dream of becoming a jockey was dashed by age 10, when I was already six feet tall. Although jockeys could be young or old, male or female, they were all well under five-foot-six.

As a self-proclaimed "amazon," I've never appreciated everyone's obsession with being tall. Maybe because my stature was genetic and unwanted, I was especially reluctant to embrace it. Throughout adolescence I was taller than most boys and was never asked to dance at parties or social events. Boys seemed to prefer the short girls, who wore adorable clothes and tiny, cute shoes. Trust me, it's impossible to look even remotely cute when you tower over the boys by a good six inches and wear a size ten shoe!

Since early adulthood, I've learned to embrace my height and do everything possible to accentuate it. I wear slimming, sophisticated clothes and usually appear more mature than my 25 years. My superiors tend to take me seriously, somehow equating stature with wisdom and experience. I'm also a killer basketball player, a starter for all four years for the Kansas State Lady Cats. In my more honest moments, I'll admit that I actually enjoy being the center of attention when I walk into a room. As a six-foot-four, natural blonde, I always get noticed. People are usually delighted to discover that the "willowy" woman is also funny, smart, hard working and talented.

Yet a small part of me will always be 10 years old, dying to be short like everyone else. In my childlike fantasies, I am a jockey, a gymnast or simply a small, cute girl. Who knows? Maybe if I had been short, I'd have become a "diminutive rock star" like Madonna or Gwen Stefani. Yet destiny obviously had another fate in mind, blessing me with a tall stature, an intelligent mind and a devastating sense of humor. If that means forfeiting my win at the Kentucky Derby, so be it.

**If you could change one characteristic about yourself, what would it be?**

As a young girl, my parents frequently praised my soft voice as a "ladylike" quality. Small in stature and infinitely feminine, I grew up thinking that my voice was an appropriate fit for my shy personality. Yet as I matured and became more independent, I yearned for a stronger, more powerful voice to match the assertive woman I hoped to become.

For someone with a powerful voice, my "issue" must seem trivial, yet struggling to be heard has been a challenge my entire life. I'll never forget giving oral book reports in grade school. No matter how relaxed and self-assured I felt, when I opened my mouth, a pathetic, squeaky chirp emerged. On good days, the class looked at me with subdued pity, while on bad days, they'd burst into laughter. Thankfully, the support of a few close friends helped me endure the momentary embarrassment. In my heart, I knew that the pathetic voice the class heard wasn't the "real" me.

Vocal classes in college brought some improvement, along with judicious practice at public speaking. In 2003, I joined Toastmasters, which gave me additional tips to amplify my voice. I'd love to say that I've gotten miraculously louder over the years, but that would be an exaggeration. In public settings, I tend to command the attention of my audience with my poise and intelligence, rather than with my decibel level. I'm more confident than I was in grade school, but my volume increases significantly only when I clip a microphone to the front of my blouse.

**If you could change one characteristic about yourself, what would it be?**

Because of my natural curiosity, I am always seeking ways to broaden my horizons. I was voted Most Versatile in high school because I participated in a number of hobbies and clubs that transcended different skill sets. Ten years later, nothing has changed. On any given weekend, I may run 10 miles, volunteer at the community center or practice the clarinet. The following weekend, I'll take a class in tile repair and redo my kitchen wallpaper. Friends jokingly call me the "gal for all seasons," because they can never guess what hobby I will pursue next. They often question my motivation, which is simply to live life to the fullest.

From my perspective, my natural curiosity is an inherently positive attribute that opens my world to new experiences. Yet it occasionally diverts focus from my primary interests, leaving me overcommitted with recreational activities and half-finished projects. Although I enjoy being well-rounded, I need to focus my energy on one or two pursuits that truly matter to me. This past year, I have made a conscious effort to choose my hobbies more selectively, rather than taking a scattershot approach. Unfortunately, I've learned that I can't experience everything, no matter how many hours I have each day.

**If you had four extra hours per day, what would you do with them?**

Four extra hours would allow me to engage in satisfying personal activities that I cannot currently squeeze into my schedule. For one hour each day, I would teach weightlifting classes at Gold's Gym, where I hold a lifetime membership. I would also volunteer to teach nutrition classes to beginning bodybuilders and workout enthusiasts.

In a perfect world, I would devote two hours per day to my Internet business, WeFixIt.com. The site is a marketing tool for my consumer complaint business, which writes letters on behalf of wronged consumers who have been cheated by large corporations. I am passionate about helping others protect their hard-earned cash and devote as much time as possible to writing complaint letters. Sadly, the demand for my service will always outstrip my available writing time.

In my fourth additional hour, I would meditate silently in my bedroom, relaxing every muscle and tendon in my body. I achieve maximum performance at my job when I release stress on a daily basis. In addition to aerobic exercise, yoga and spiritual meditation provide essential respite for my body, mind and soul. I emerge from my meditative breaks feeling refreshed and ready to tackle the challenges of a new day.

**If you had four extra hours per day, what would you do with them?**

I would devote four extra hours each day to my son Jesse, who was born during my year-long internship in

China. Although my wife sent me dozens of photos and videotapes, I missed the joy of his birth and the first three months of his life. Now that I am back in the United States, nothing compares to the magic of being an integral part of Jesse's everyday life.

My favorite memory is the day I first saw Jesse at the Los Angeles airport. He and my wife waited hours for my delayed flight, eager for our small family to finally be complete. Although my first glance at his sweet face is forever etched into my memory, Jesse's initial response wasn't as enthusiastic. He cried, fussed and couldn't be consoled by his father, who was a virtual stranger to him. Fortunately, we've bonded since then, spending nearly every evening and weekend together, playing and getting to know each other. I promised my wife that I would never leave them again for any reason, and I fully intend to honor that promise.

Any additional time in my schedule, whether four minutes or four hours, belongs to my wife and Jesse. Professional success is sweet, but not nearly as important as the continual love and support of my family.

**If you had four extra hours per day, what would you do with them?**

As years pass, I increasingly find myself relying on the old cliché "not enough time" as a handy excuse for avoiding an assortment of low priority tasks. I'd love to claim that I'd devote four extra hours a day to promoting world peace, but that would be disingenuous. I haven't got a clue how to solve international problems, nor am I politically inclined.

If I had four extra hours per day, I would probably invest them in my sideline business, which sells custom-made jewelry over the Internet. Art has been my passion since I was a young child, yet I never thought I could earn my living selling beads or hand painted T-shirts. Instead, I took the "safe" road by majoring in investment banking, which sparked my successful career on Wall Street. Yet I've always had a yen to explore my entrepreneurial side, to market my custom-made belts, earrings and necklaces worldwide. Although my web site has only recently become profitable, I am convinced it could grow considerably with additional time and attention.

With four extra hours per day, I would make more samples, print a glossy catalogue and solicit interest from local wholesalers in my area. I'd promote my work at trade shows and craft fairs, where national buyers often search for unique, one-of-a-kind pieces. I'd also beef up my web site, advertise on eBay and become a moderator for jewelry-related chat rooms. I would exhaust every possible step to achieve entrepreneurial success and go to bed each night with the satisfaction that I gave it my best shot.

**Do you feel that your academic record (i.e. grades, course load, etc.) is an accurate reflection of your ability and potential? In comparison to your college friends and classmates, do you feel that you were particularly advantaged or disadvantaged?**

My academic record shows my ability to succeed in the rigorous dual major of Computer Science and Communications. More impressive than my excellent GPA is my simultaneous participation in many outside activities. As a freshman, I started my own T-shirt business on campus to pay tuition and fees. As the business grew, I eventually devoted over 20 hours per week to my entrepreneurial venture. I also lent my writing expertise to our college newspaper, the *Herald*, serving as General Editor during my senior year. In addition, I was an active participant in the Tri-Delt sorority and the Big Sisters Association of Baltimore.

Few other self-supporting students maintained such a busy schedule or attained a stellar GPA. My assumption of such enormous responsibilities and mastery of essential time management skills are valuable tools for my graduate school career and my professional future.

**Do you feel that your academic record (i.e. grades, course load, etc.) is an accurate reflection of your ability and potential? In comparison to your college friends and classmates, do you feel that you were particularly advantaged or disadvantaged?**

Although my recent academic performance is excellent, I wasn't always able to devote my complete energy

to my schoolwork. I was enrolled in the South American University of Engineering during the collapse of the Brazilian government, when the country underwent unprecedented economic turmoil and uncertainty. In a short period of time, my country experienced hyperinflation, millions lost their jobs and the cost of living skyrocketed. My family and I lost our life savings. Rather than focusing on school, I found myself struggling for survival.

I'm proud that I was able to exercise the enormous energy required to balance my schoolwork and part-time employment. Yet the stress of the economic overhaul made it impossible to concentrate on my studies. Many days, rather than preparing for exams, I stood in line for hours to buy food. My grades from the South American University of Engineering reflect the stress of these dire circumstances, rather than my actual ability. Yet the stressful situation helped me to re-evaluate my beliefs, aspirations and plans. Although my grades suffered, surviving such a traumatic experience clarified my goals, challenged my time-management skills and provided the strength to overcome future obstacles.

**Do you feel that your academic record (i.e. grades, course load, etc.) is an accurate reflection of your ability and potential? In comparison to your college friends and classmates, do you feel that you were particularly advantaged or disadvantaged?**

My 4.0 GPA reflects both my mastery of Chemistry and my strong enthusiasm for science. In addition to achieving a perfect grade point average, I also conducted independent research during my junior and senior years, culminating in two publications in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*. During my senior year, I presented my research at the annual meeting of the ACS in Phoenix, winning first prize in the undergraduate paper competition.

My chief advantages are my natural affinity for the field and my willingness to take summer and evening classes. I completed a full course load throughout each traditional academic year, and graduated a semester early, due to my accelerated coursework.

**What do you feel makes a person a good leader?**

Since early childhood, I have taken several calculated risks that have made me an excellent leader. While others were paralyzed by a fear of failure, I demonstrated a **venturesome** spirit and incomparable drive to succeed. At age sixteen, I launched my first home business, selling hand-painted T-shirts in a local mall. My success inspired other entrepreneurial ventures, including the sale of OVB (on-line venue booking system for lectures) over the internet. Many people thought I was too young to run my own company, citing a lack of credibility and experience. Yet my research, commitment and networking skills more than compensated for my youthfulness. With each small success, I learned valuable lessons about marketing my products and working with people.

My venturesome spirit also extends to academia. After spending eighteen years in Germany (where I was an excellent student), I accepted a scholarship to study in Beijing. In addition to leaving my family, friends and homeland, I had to quickly master English, in which all of my classes would be taught. Despite the formidable challenge, I was **passionate** to succeed. For two years, I immersed myself in classical literature, modern science fiction, historical novels and business periodicals. Within two years, I was named Best Student of the Year on my college graduation day.

In all areas of life, my passionate nature forces me to aim high. Whenever I feel ill-prepared to accept a challenge, I consider the words of Michelangelo. "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it." By embracing each day with an open heart and committed mind, I am determined to produce my own masterpieces. Living with passion brings me great creative joy, through the ecstasy of writing, starting a business, and acting in a school play.

According to Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, mercy or **compassion** is "mightiest in the mightiest." Indeed, my personal blessings are of little value if I do not use them to help others. Thankfully, the compassion in my heart helps me to find a loving and practical solution to many of life's problems. Rather than being immobilized and angered by starvation, I helped to educate and feed the poor. Rather than pitying a poor local artist, I helped to sell her wares. While I cannot single-handedly

change the world, I am committed to doing my part to share my success with those around me.

Thanks to my early professional success, I am committed to creating a bright future through entrepreneurship. In addition to building my own personal and financial satisfaction, I am eager to help others find their own paths to a bright and satisfying future. Throughout difficult times, I've made **adaptability** my guiding principle, **independence** my armor and **courage** my sword. I know that success in business doesn't mean winning, but taking calculated risks to achieve an ambitious goal. Success often means risking, failing and risking again, enjoying each moment of life's incredible journey.

### **What do you feel makes a person a good leader?**

My CEO, Frank Walters, is an excellent leader. Since the company's startup in 1993, Frank assumed responsibility for sales, marketing and systems administration. Thanks in large part to Frank's diligence and creativity, we have enjoyed continual expansion and revenue growth (\$1.7 million to \$23 million annually).

From the very first day we were in business, Frank was willing to do "whatever it took" to make Styler Systems succeed. He invested his own money, along with his heart and soul, to make his dream come true. During difficult times, he refused to give up. When one of us was faltering, he was the cheerleader who kept us going. Long after anyone else would have thrown in the towel, Frank was in there fighting. His enthusiasm was infectious, as was his perseverance.

Under Frank's direction, Styler Systems has evolved into a profitable computer services firm in a rapidly consolidating industry. Frank created his department from the ground up, setting the standards for our products and handling all aspects of troubleshooting and quality control. He also works "in the trenches" in the desktop department, where he sets an example of efficiency and productivity. Frank is a quintessential "team player" who is always willing to help the people who work for him. Whenever possible, he offers guidance and training to those who want to learn more. By employing these strengths, Frank's commitment to service always surpasses our clients' highest expectations.

On several challenging projects, Frank has found creative ways to overcome obstacles. He troubleshoots complicated situations with ease, quickly identifying a viable solution. To a lay person, it seems like Frank simply "knows" the answer, when he is actually applying years of training and skill. On a personal level, Frank has a relaxed, outgoing personality that immediately puts people at ease. He is equally comfortable talking to a corporate president and a cafeteria worker. In team meetings, Frank listens carefully to his subordinates because he values their opinions; he knows that his people are his greatest asset.

Frank responds positively to suggestions and is always looking for ways to grow and mature. As his employee, I have developed an appreciation for his strong character, as well as his professional skills. I know that Styler Systems is his first priority and that he will do everything possible to help us succeed. I also know that he will generously share that success with those of us who have loyally supported his vision. What better leader could anyone ask for?

### **What do you feel makes a person a good leader?**

In the entertainment business, a good leader manages to bring out the best in his cast and crew under extremely rigid conditions. Although the authoritative and coercive styles of leadership have their place, they aren't the only way to make a good film. Sometimes a more democratic and "touchy feely" approach works best. In my most significant leadership role, I directed the independent film "Bias" in just twelve weeks. With a limited budget and only two other films to my credit, this was a huge challenge that was potentially beyond my reach. From the second I received my funding, I was determined to prove my critics wrong. I not only finished the movie on time, but received "best picture" nominations from Robert Redford's Sundance Festival and the Screen Actor's Guild. A handful of critics said that "Bias" was the best documentary they had ever seen.

The best part of using an affiliative leadership style is that it promotes solid friendships. On my set, people came first. With our insane schedule, we often worked 20-hour days and socialized together at night. I did everything possible to keep my cast and crew motivated, and they ultimately helped to improve each other's performances. On the last day of shooting, my two narrators claimed that they had never had a better time on a film. My editors praised my warmth and sensitivity. By using an affiliative leadership style, I

created a supportive and nurturing environment with a common set of goals. We all had a vested interest in each other's success.

Yet my success was also due to my judicious use of a democratic management style, which builds buy-in from every member of the team. Acknowledging my youth and inexperience, the crew offered their advice on aspects of production that I knew nothing about. I intentionally hired good people who would be generous with their expertise. During meetings, I praised original ideas, even bad ones, because I knew they would eventually lead to creative solutions. When working with my actors, I intentionally played to each one's strengths. If a scene wasn't working, I changed it to fit the performer's needs. The final product shows a wonderful synergy in all aspects of production.

In filmmaking, few directors have the innate confidence to take such a bold approach. To many, asking for help shows weakness, not strength. But I know better. My willingness to consider different perspectives lead to better decisions because it allowed me to choose from a wider range of possibilities. This is crucial in show business, which honors the creative spirit. Looking back, I could never have completed the film without the positive benefits of "group think." By respecting each other's opinions, we accomplished our goals and enjoyed the most satisfying professional experience of our careers.

### **Describe Your Most Difficult / Challenging Relationship**

"Code blue! Code blue!" The emergency room doors blew open and a gurney whisked by, surrounded by a sea of white lab coats. Amid the trauma room confusion, all energy was focused on 3-year-old Devon, an adorable boy whose huge brown eyes were filled with unspeakable fear. His dried tears and horrific expression revealed the pain he suffered before his arrival.

Maybe it was denial, but the last thing I expected to hear was the doctor's somber announcement. "It's 3:06 am. Do we all agree to call this?" A murmur of "yes" and nodding heads bespoke Devon's death on the cold metal gurney. At that moment, I wanted desperately to save him, but there was nothing to do. Sadly, Devon was a victim of child abuse who met his untimely death at the hands of the person who was supposed to love him unconditionally. Instead of nurturing and protecting her child, Devon's mother beat him to death in a fit of uncontrollable rage.

Although I will never forget Devon's death in the Trauma Room, I was equally distraught by the subsequent investigation by local police. As the on-call nurse for three of Devon's previous admissions, my deposition was crucial. I reviewed all of my notes and was thoroughly prepared to document the tragic events. At the last moment, however, I was removed from the witness list and not allowed to testify. For liability reasons, the hospital decided to have their attorney testify at all legal proceedings. He would read strictly from the doctor's charts, not my notes. I was crushed by that decision, as my documentation was more thorough than that of the attending physician. I had not only seen Devon during his earlier ER visits, but I had followed his case throughout each subsequent hospitalization. I could offer valuable insight into his troubled relationship with his mother.

I appealed the hospital's decision to the Vice-President of Human Resources, and sent a copy of my concerns in a letter to the district attorney. My motivation was not to undermine the hospital's policy, but to obtain justice for the little boy. Ultimately, the case was resolved out of court, when Devon's mother agreed to plead guilty to a lesser charge. No one from the hospital was required to testify, nor were we consulted about the decision.

Although my determination to testify on Devon's behalf ruffled some feathers at the hospital, I am proud of my decision to take a stand. Granted, the hospital has liability issues regarding everything that happens within its walls and our attorneys are committed to protecting us. But my oath as an RN to protect my patients supersedes any potential legal ramifications. Poor Devon never had an advocate to protect him in life; I was honored to assume that role after his violent death.

### **Describe Your Most Difficult / Challenging Relationship**

I faced a difficult challenge at Ralph Lauren, where my boss was an untrustworthy tyrant who

motivated through fear. In one case, I endured the embarrassment of being the company's "scapegoat" when I defied his order to substitute a lower quality silk on an order to a top retailer. Although the unethical substitution would have saved us nearly a million dollars, it was a clear violation of our original agreement with the buyer. Worse, the difference in quality was noticeable enough to have damaged our reputation in the marketplace. I refused to go along with the ruse. Although I was comfortable with my decision to honor my conscience, I suffered the consequences for several months. I felt betrayed by my boss, who I clearly could not trust. Without solid leadership, our morale suffered and our team dynamic disintegrated.

This negative experience challenged everything I previously understood about teamwork, honesty and doing my best for my company. I felt that several of my sacred values had been defiled. Sadly, despite his technical strengths, my boss was willing to risk the long-term loss of our brand to achieve a short-term gain. Fortunately, he was fired from the company within a year of the incident and I no longer had to report to him. I later discovered that he had tried similar substitutions in the past, but that I was the first person to stand up to him. Word of my "insubordination" had slowly trickled into the executive suite and prompted closer scrutiny of the tyrant's unethical practices.

Ironically, as a poor leader, he taught me several important lessons. I learned to be detailed and specific in my communication, and to leave no room for misinterpretation. I also confirmed the significance of being ethically correct and fully accountable for my actions. As a team leader, I work very hard to be the antithesis of my unethical former boss.

### **Describe Your Most Difficult / Challenging Relationship**

Sitting across from my classmate, I could tell that she was struggling with the math problem. Every few seconds, she looked up from her paper and chewed her nails in frustration. Although I had never spoken to her before, I wanted to help.

"Can I help you?" I asked. The girl looked at me in confusion. "With the math problem, I mean," I clarified. Annoyed by my concern, she responded sternly, "My dad said black people are stupid. You can't help me."

I replied, "Let me try." She hesitantly gave me her paper and watched in silence as I worked. To her surprise, I solved the problem. In a split second, I had challenged her preconceptions about black people. After that day, the girl's whole attitude changed. We looked beyond our differences and became good friends. For the first time in my life, at age fifteen, I realized the satisfaction of helping someone. More importantly, I was determined to do it again. I knew in my heart that I was going to make a difference in the world.

Over the years, I've met many students who struggled with school and I have never wavered in my commitment to help them. Superficially, many people assume that educational gaps are a racial issue, but I know better. Students of all races, from all communities, fail to succeed in school because education is not a priority in their homes. Lacking role models, they fall behind in the classroom and cannot catch up without remedial help. In our overcrowded, under funded schools, that help is hard to find. That's where volunteers can make a valuable difference in a child's life.

In addition to excelling in my own classes, I have been a tutor for four years at Saturday Kid's Club, an organization for underprivileged kids. My students come from overcrowded schools that lack the funding for computers, books or writing paper. Their parents are usually too busy working to offer any type of emotional

or educational support. In most cases, these are incredibly smart kids who never learned the value of education. Nothing they see at home or in their neighborhoods suggests the possibility of a better life. That's where I come in. I am determined to give my kids an opportunity to challenge the typical preconceptions about what "poor" kids can accomplish.

Knowing the critical role that a mentor can play in academic and personal success, I am determined to help these kids fulfill their potential. I've learned to measure "success" in small doses, one step at a time. Last spring, I improved a boy's math grade from a D to a B and I taught another boy how to read. After hearing me play, I inspired a young girl to learn the piano, and she now is preparing for her first recital. Eventually, these achievements will lead to lasting goals, like passing a class, graduating from high school or enrolling in college. With a little luck, my kids will come back someday and teach someone else the importance of education and success.

#### **I wish the Admissions Committee Had Asked Me.....**

I wish the committee had asked me to discuss my love of basketball. From the time I could carry the ball, shooting hoops has been my passion. I played forward for my varsity high school team, leading the state for total points and recoveries per game. I also played for the University of Kansas Jayhawks, who reached the Final Four during the 1998 NCAA competition. Basketball provides a terrific physical challenge, along with the camaraderie of working on a team of like-minded players. Throughout my years on the court, I never met a fellow basketball player I didn't like.

Since college graduation, I've pursued my love of the game as a volunteer coach for the University of California summer basketball camps. Along with seven other volunteer coaches, I work with a group of about 200 teens from around the state who share my love of the game. Although they vary in raw talent and individual skill, they are determined to attain their personal best. My goal is to provide support and direction in a non-intimidating manner. I also coach players between drills, pointing out problem areas and providing positive feedback for things they do well. In addition to reviving my own love for basketball, coaching lets me be a part of the sport's next generation. With our strong cooperative effort, the summer basketball camp is mutually rewarding for both the coaches and the players.

#### **I wish the Admissions Committee Had Asked Me.....**

I wish the board had asked me to discuss my technical expertise as a scientist and researcher. Since graduating from high school in 1995, I have published over 65 papers in the area of forensic science. My doctoral project at Yale University yielded a patent for "GeneTropy," a home-based DNA analysis kit. The practical implications of the kit are enormous to law enforcement groups, as GeneTropy makes a positive DNA match in just thirty minutes, compared to the minimal three-week period required by previous testing methodologies. Since GeneTropy's introduction, federal, state and local law enforcement agencies have used the test to solve over 400 rapes and 6,100 property crimes. In Illinois, our test has also been used to reverse the wrongful convictions of eleven prisoners, including three on Death Row. With each new case, I feel a profound sense of pride; seldom does science provide a more meaningful application than convicting a violent felon.

The burgeoning market for home-based paternity testing offers another revenue stream for GeneTropy that I am eager to explore. During our initial promotional work, we discovered that traditional lab-based tests cost over \$650 and offer results in three weeks. Of the five accredited labs in the United States, backlogs are usually so severe that the turnaround time can be five weeks or longer. In contrast, GeneTropy costs just \$100, provides reliable results in 24 hours and can be used in the privacy of a buyer's own home. Our primary goal for 2004 is to get FDA approval for the over-the-counter distribution of the test. From my perspective, the potential financial and psychological benefits to families in America are too important to ignore.

#### **I wish the Admissions Committee Had Asked Me.....**

I wish the committee asked me to discuss my passion for classic and vintage automobiles. Like most boys, I was always fascinated by cars, but my knowledge about mechanics was miniscule. Everything changed at age seventeen, when I got my first car, a 1968 Ford Mustang. I wanted to understand the

intricacies of my engine so I could modify the car and increase its performance. When I couldn't find the information I needed from the Internet, I searched dozens of "motor head" magazines to understand the functionality of each part of the engine.

Always a researcher, I compiled and catalogued the information, creating a useful guide for understanding and evaluating my vehicle. I learned how my cold-air intake can increase my car's horsepower and how various modifications will improve its handling. I progressed to studying the Mustang's engine parts, learning how to make small improvements to reduce stress. I occasionally visited a local modification shop to learn about new products and engine designs, becoming close friends with the shop's owner (also a Mustang enthusiast).

My love for cars ultimately led to a lucrative small business. In partnership with the owner of the car shop, over the past seven years, we have bought, fixed up and re-sold eleven classic Mustangs for a considerable profit. Although I may never earn my living as a mechanic, I have developed a fun, lucrative hobby and have become a more confident, capable driver.

### **Political Activism**

When I graduated from Rhode Island College in 1968, I looked forward to a lucrative career in real estate. My plans were delayed, however, by the military draft notice I received just a week before graduation. Although I had serious misgivings about the Vietnam War, I wasn't the type to protest. When my country called, I answered by enlisting in the army's officer candidate program. Nine months later, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, I came to the anguished realization that war was impossible to justify. To honor my conscience, I filed as a conscientious objector and received an honorable discharge a year later.

After that experience, like many in my generation, I became disillusioned with government. Consequently, for more than 30 years, I ignored politics on the national, state and local level. While friends and family lauded a particular candidate's promises to champion their pet causes, I knew it my heart it was overly optimistic tripe. Fortunately, during a prolonged period of peace, the issues at stake were not particularly compelling or life-threatening. I was one of many baby boomers who abandoned our youthful idealism and stuck our heads in the sand when it came to saving the world.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, everything changed. Unlike the healthy discourse about the environment and women's rights, the threat of terrorism inspired a new kind of cold war mentality. For nearly a year, I watched with growing alarm as the government used our collective fear to justify militarism and civil rights abuses. I felt compelled to speak up. My first efforts were tentative; I joined the Libertarian Party, signed antiwar petitions and contributed money to advertising campaigns that promoted peace. On the first anniversary of 9/11, I wrote a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, which was later published in *USA Today*. Every Sunday since, I have written a piece for the local paper about our "progress" (or lack of it) in the "war on terror." So far, thirty of my letters have been published, many as editorials. To be honest, my topics are not particularly profound; I simply ask the questions of the current administration that I think Americans deserve to have answered.

My boss calls me a political maverick, while my wife likes to say I'm a rabble rouser. Neither is correct. I am still the same person I was in 1969; I'm not going to stand on a bridge with a sign, go to a rally, or walk door-to-door for a political candidate. But I am happy to write a letter each week from my home office on the quiet coast of the Narragansett Bay. Compared to those in public service, my contribution is minimal; I reach a few thousand people with an alternative point of view two or three times a month. But when I imagine there are thousands of others, scattered all over the country, writing, petitioning and giving a few dollars to the cause, then it becomes a big deal. Eventually, as we overcome the fear-based mentality of 9/11 and re-focus on the true meaning of democracy, we can change the country for the better.

### **Political Activism**

As an unpublished author, I fell into a pit of depression in December of 2001. As if eighty-six rejection letters weren't enough, I was appalled by the impending war in Iraq, which I was feared would lead to global warfare. Unwilling to remain passive, I took several small stabs at political activism; I attended rallies, wrote letters to the newspaper and put a "No War" bumper sticker on my car. Unfortunately, nothing felt like it was working.

During a particularly dark period, I got an email from a fellow author who invited me to attend a meeting of WJAR, Writers & Journalists Against War. The group was actively soliciting manuscripts about pacifism for presentation at a fundraiser. I'd been working on a screenplay adaptation of Josh Davis's book, *Later*, in which a group of Los Angeles mob girls denied their men sex until the guys laid down their guns. Although my adaptation wasn't ready for publication, I offered to do a rough reading of the material at the next meeting.

When Teresa Handler-Young (WJAR's local chairwoman) rehearsed the reading with me, something magical happened. We launched into a passionate conversation about our ideals that culminated in our joint commitment to do *Later* as a benefit for humanitarian aid in Iraq. Within 48 hours, we had built a website to advertise our plans and invited everyone we knew to the event. People thought it was a great idea and forwarded the invitation to everyone they knew. Within a week, WJAR chapters all over the country asked if they could do their own readings of *Later* to raise money.

By March 3, 2003, we'd had 86 readings in 5 countries and all 50 states, which were covered by major newspapers, magazines, radio programs and TV news programs. WJAR hosted readings in every type of environment, from living rooms and tiny community theatres to major venues with famous Hollywood stars. I later heard that there were secret readings in Korea, Jerusalem and northern Iraq, which were organized by anonymous members of the international press corps. Clearly, my screenplay adaptation had struck a chord with pacifists across the globe.

Obviously, we did not stop the war, but we provided a megaphone for the worldwide voices of dissent. Participants needed to find a safe environment in which they could share their anti-war sentiments. They needed to make it clear to other nations that George Bush wasn't speaking for all Americans when he waged this un-winnable war. Everyone who wrote to us afterward gave the same feedback; in the midst of tension, fear and frustration, their reading of *Later* a powerful blessing. It remains, to this day, my greatest accomplishment.

## **Political Activism**

Like many Americans, I was upset by our government's violent response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. By the fall of 2002, the Bush Administration's "preemptive" invasion of Iraq had left me overwhelmed by feelings of outrage, fear and powerlessness.

Although I expressed my opposition by distributing posters at rallies, contributing to Greenpeace, writing letters to the editor, and participating in peace vigils, I needed to do more. The 2003 World Series games in Boston presented a unique chance to legitimize and broaden a then-controversial peace message at an all-American event. On a lark, I called an aerial advertising company one week before the final game and discovered that there were still planes available.

Major advertisers ignored the medium because the coveted airspace over the stadium would be closed for security, but that didn't bother me. Fans from all over the country would be in Boston that week, and rates had dropped to a relative bargain: \$175 an hour. I immediately sensed the value of this opportunity to spread my antiwar message.

A city like Boston was perfect for aerial advertising, as the numerous outdoor World Series exhibitions and parties provided captive audiences who would easily see my plane. Another benefit was that I remained personally anonymous. I asked several friends to contribute, so the sponsors of the effort could legitimately be described as "a small group of private citizens."

The most daunting task was selecting my actual "message." A week before the game, Greenpeace had launched a national ad campaign with the tag line "Let the Inspections Work." I liked this pragmatic, hopeful appeal and believed it was an appropriate message to promote at the World Series. I wanted to help legitimize the peace movement for the American mainstream and perhaps nudge the public dialogue toward moderation and sanity.

Thankfully, Greenpeace gave me its blessing, so I booked the plane and added an American flag to the banner to emphasize the patriotism behind our message. The weather in Boston was beautiful, and people were outdoors everywhere. Our little plane flew over several times throughout the final game, for a grand total of three hours. We even circled the stadium before the game, reaching many corporate tailgaters, early arrivals and gawkers.

Ironically, although I promoted and organized the event, I'll never know how many people actually saw my message; the potential audience, including secondary media coverage, was in the millions. Thanks to the Red Sox's historical win, the news footage of my ad persisted for weeks. For just \$525, I enjoyed the same exposure and association with the World Series as multi-million-dollar national advertisers.

My conclusion? With resourcefulness, creativity, and a small budget, you can leverage big events and big crowds to get your message out in ways that have a disproportionately large impact. I dropped a pebble into the pond that weekend, having faith that its ripples would go wherever they were needed.

### **Discuss Your Two Best Personal Attributes**

My personal and professional success are chiefly attributable to my tenacious personality and my willingness to take risks. Without tenacity, I would never have graduated from college. My parents did not qualify for financial aid, and they refused to subsidize my education. For four stressful years, I bore the sole burden for my tuition and fees, along with my living expenses. I completed my BS in four years by taking out student loans and by working full-time over summers and holidays. I frequently worked over 30 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters while simultaneously juggling a full-time course load, miraculously attaining an overall GPA of 3.75. Although friends dissuaded me from working so hard, I was determined to graduate with my class, regardless of the personal sacrifices.

During my senior year, I decided to test my entrepreneurial spirit by opening a mail order business for computer software. Armed with just my classroom experience and three hundred dollars, I advertised my screensavers over the Internet and orders quickly poured in. Despite an urgent financial crisis, I continually pumped all of my profits back into the business, running more ads and improving my site's position in the search engines. Despite the competitive nature of the software business, my firm continues to grow each year. Since 1999, my daughter and I have survived strictly on the profits from my Internet business.

Looking back, many of my best decisions were considered ill-advised by my well-meaning family and friends, who thought I should "play it safe." A true risk-taker, I am always willing to put my money, time and reputation on the line for a cause in which I believe. In my spare time, I volunteer at Odyssey House, a shelter for abused women and children in the Dallas area. As a successful single mom, I am a realistic role model for women who question whether their professional dreams can come true. I am living proof that with tenacity and a willingness to assume calculated risks, anything is possible.

### **Discuss Your Two Best Personal Attributes**

1) Community Service Work. As a child, I made all types of excuses to avoid working at the soup kitchen on Sunday afternoons. I would fake a fever, headache or a homework emergency to dodge my family's four-hour shift in the pantry. My father's patient response was always the same: "You must give back to the community whatever blessings you have." Although I didn't appreciate it as a child, my commitment to humanitarian causes is directly attributable to my father. His altruism inspired my greatest achievement, the Learning Cove, a free mobile library that serves rural, underprivileged children. Acknowledging the world of opportunities afforded by reading, I wanted to provide the gift of books to children who did not have ready access to a public library. The Learning Cove started on a shoestring budget and grew into a thriving, community enterprise. Starting the program was a challenging experience that improved the lives of hundreds of rural children. I am committed to continuing community service work throughout my life, both to benefit others and to honor my father's fine example.

2) Memory. I attribute my academic success mostly to my powerful memory. Since early childhood, I've been blessed with a photographic memory that affords immediate recall of most facts and figures presented in the classroom. I didn't understand until junior high school that my memory was a rare gift and should be cherished accordingly. Throughout high school and college, I challenged my memory skills by taking the most rigorous classes available. I completed a dual major in history and government while tutoring dozens of students in the university help center. I am also a voracious reader, consuming books on diverse subjects the way others consume water. I delight in learning about new fields and keeping up with local, national and world events. While my photographic memory is a unique gift, I am certain it will be a valuable asset in Harvard's rigorous MBA program.

## **Discuss Your Two Best Personal Attributes**

**Writing Skills.** From the first moment I laid eyes on a typewriter, I knew I would be a writer. While other kids played softball and collected Barbie dolls, I tapped away short stories on my mother's old Smith Corona. By participating in collaborative writing workshops like Themestream and Fiction Fest, I express my creativity in a nurturing environment of other student authors. We share our vision of a concept, creating a synergistic blend of different strengths and skills. Since my freshman year in college, I have also participated in the annual Fiction Fest International Challenge, competing with peers from around the world. My short stories placed second nationally in the 1996 competition and third in 1997.

**Entrepreneurship.** My passion for writing also inspired my entrepreneurial success, Letters Unlimited, which creates resumes and cover letters for job seekers in my local community. More than a mere recitation of facts, a creative resume and cover letter illuminate a candidate's unique strengths and potential contribution to an employer. When I write a great cover letter, companies yearn to interview my client and discover his unique potential. Since my sophomore year in college, Letters Unlimited has been profitable and is now my primary source of income. Through savvy marketing techniques, I am currently franchising the concept to other budding entrepreneurs throughout the United States. I am honored to use my natural talents as a writer and a businesswoman to help others achieve their professional dreams.

## **Describe a situation when you questioned your values and/or beliefs**

In 1998, I was elected to a four-year term as a member of the Palm Beach County Municipal School Board. At twenty-seven, I saw myself as a "young turk" who would bring a new perspective to the town's problems. Although I was warmly welcomed to the board, I quickly discovered that my opinions were not valued by the other four board members. In their mind, my role was simply to preserve the status quo and learn from their example.

Unfortunately, I quickly discovered that their motivation and sincerity was questionable. Although they paid lip service to the teachers and community members, they refused to raise teacher salaries. On several occasions, they refused to lobby for millions of dollars in state funding for computers in the classroom. They also rejected an offer from the Gates Foundation to update the software in the administrative offices. When I questioned these decisions, the board members cited our need to preserve "control" of the educational system. Any money from an outside source, including a charitable foundation, was viewed with suspicion. The board was clearly willing to let the students suffer, rather than consider alternative ways to achieve our goals.

In my mind, the problem could only be solved through open communication. At that moment, I knew that defying the wishes of my fellow board members was a risk, but it was one I was willing to take. The public needed to know about these issues and have a chance to respond to them. My first step was to get our meetings televised on our local cable access channel. At the same time, I opened all meetings to the public, who had never been privy to actual board discussions. For the first time, I had an audience for my views besides the other four committee members, whose ideas did not represent those of the average citizen.

Within three months, community advocacy reached a fevered peak, as residents began to attend meetings and present their thoughts to us. They demanded higher teacher salaries and computers in the classrooms. They were willing to accept money from the Gates Foundation, even if it restricted us to Windows-based software. To the surprise of my fellow board members, the community was willing to make intelligent compromises to provide the best possible education for our children.

Looking back, my victory was primarily psychological. For the first time, my fellow board members were held accountable for each decision that they made on the community's behalf. Rather than impose their own beliefs on the citizens, they took direction from the taxpayers who paid their salaries. In my mind, that's what a democracy is all about.

## **Describe a situation when you questioned your values and/or beliefs**

When one of my colleagues took an extended vacation, I assumed the responsibility of carrying his design through release. At the time, I was assured that his design was stable and needed only minor

tweaking. Unfortunately, when I started to work on the project, I discovered that this was not the case. Although some of the design problems were trivial, others required a slew of simulations to fix. As the project deadline drew closer, I found myself investing more time on my colleague's design, which jeopardized the timely completion of my own projects. Since management placed a high value on efficiency, I feared that the project would have a negative impact on my performance review. I pondered how to explain my dilemma to senior management.

In a dark moment, I considered presenting myself as a victim: I could attribute the delay to the past owner's mistakes and position myself as the hard-working hero who could save the project at the last minute. This rationale would not only enhance my performance review, but would also strengthen my position on the design team. Fortunately, I quickly acknowledged that there was something very wrong with this line of thinking. After working so hard to build project teams, I could not sacrifice my peer's reputation simply to promote my own. Clearly, I needed to resolve the situation in a manner that benefited the entire group. I also needed to acknowledge my own role in the situation. By accepting the project at face value, I assumed the accompanying risks. My frustration, although understandable, did not permit me to violate my own sense of personal honor. After all, if I was willing to accept credit for the design, shouldn't I also be willing to accept responsibility for its problems?

After some deliberation, I opted not to make the previous owner the scapegoat to further my own agenda. Instead, I apprised my manager of the situation and its implications on the schedule of my other deliverables. During our schedule roll-up meetings, I presented all of my deliverables on a single slide to ensure that the entire team understood my workload. As a result, my schedule push-out didn't come as a surprise, nor did it hurt my reputation as someone who delivered on time. I also made a conscious effort to take ownership of the project, suggesting fixes for its flaws without insulting the past owner's design. By taking this position, I assumed my rightful credit for the design without playing the "blame game."

### **Describe a situation when you questioned your values and/or beliefs**

"Courage, Honor, Conquer." As a cadet officer at the Fort Riley Military Academy, these words empowered my actions and shaped the man I have become. Despite the competing demands on my time, I never lose sight of my values or goals. In all endeavors, the same principles of courage and honor continue to govern my life.

My values were seriously tested in my work as an Emergency Medical Technician for Los Angeles County. After a series of violent incidences in the Briarwood subdivision, my supervisor announced that our unit would no longer respond to calls in that area. In a two-week span, two of our men had been injured after a shooting and a third was badly burned trying to treat a drug addict who resisted arrest. To my supervisor, our well-being was a higher priority than that of the citizens in Briarwood. Without soliciting our input, he made a controversial decision. Any further calls from that area would be referred to the county sheriff's department, which handled all unincorporated areas.

Despite the potential danger, I disagreed with my supervisor's decision. The sheriff's department was overwhelmed by calls and couldn't possibly offer a competitive response time. Referring the calls to them would seriously compromise the level of care that the patients received. Furthermore, only a small number of calls from Briarwood posed any significant threat. In fact, many of the residents were elderly people who relied upon my unit in times of crisis. I couldn't refuse to respond to their calls.

Fortunately, by the time I broached the subject at our weekly staff meeting, I wasn't the only technician to have similar thoughts. During an hour-long brainstorming session, we agreed to a satisfying compromise. We would still respond to calls from Briarwood, but only with a police escort. The officers could ensure our safety without delaying our response time by more than 80 to 90 seconds. The police escort would also provide a calming influence during difficult times. Thankfully, no one resented the additional deployment of resources.

Although I understood my supervisor's concerns, I was appalled by his rush to implement such a misguided decision. After all, danger is an integral part of life as an EMT. Without hesitation, I provide emergency assistance in harrowing situations in which most people would recoil. To deliver anything less is an insult to the citizens we work so diligently to serve.

## **Discuss Your Approach to Team Building & Selection in Your MBA Classes**

As an entrepreneur, I tend to assume a leadership position in group situations. From my success as the owner of a "one man" web design, video and photography business, I have considerable experience organizing, planning and executing large projects. I once used a restaurant analogy to explain the scope of my skills to a prospective client; before I serve the salad, soup and entree, I build the room, unfold the chairs, light the candles and make sure the hot fudge on the ice cream isn't too hot. As an MBA student, I will bring the same "full service" approach to my class participation.

Ironically, my clients have helped me to cultivate most of my skills in planning and organizing. Although some are well-prepared and clear about their expectations, others are not. I occasionally receive a rolled-up wad of paper and a few loose photographs under the guise of "web site content." To service an unfocused client, I must carefully elicit the message he wants to promote. Then, I apply my organizational and technical skills to deliver a product that accurately captures his vision. I will bring the same skills to organize the collective work of my team and convey our message effectively.

I will also volunteer to be the moderator during our final presentation. Long before I ever made professional sales calls, I was an excellent public speaker. After hearing my jokes, my co-worker dared me to try my hand at standup comedy. Surprisingly, the audience responded so well that the club owner invited me back. I will utilize this confidence during our group presentation. From making sales calls, I learned the power of an excellent speech in closing a sale. Standing in front of an audience and personally answering their questions is more persuasive than any video, brochure or website.

My most significant contribution to the project will be creativity: my ability to breathe new life into an idea. Throughout history, creative thinkers have identified opportunities that others could not see. The prototype for our modern Frisbee was actually the pie tin from William Russell Frisbee's small pie company. What most people considered to be trash, a few creative thinkers identified as a fun toy. If I saw Frisbee's pie tins back in 1871, I'd like to think that I would have seen their potential for a novel use. My professional success hinges on my creative thinking: finding ways to stay ahead of the burgeoning technological curve that drives our economy. In group discussions, I would share my ideas on ways to take a fresh approach to our assignment.

I also would lend my project management skills to ensure our timely completion. After delegating tasks to each participant, I would assemble the pieces in a coherent manner that reflected the group's consensus. I have perfected these skills by working on large projects that required the coordination of work from several freelancers. My flexible management style enables me to handle diverse projects and work well with different types of people.

The team environment will also enable me to overcome potential shortcomings. Stifling my natural inclination to lead, I would take a subordinate role on some aspects of the project, allowing others to develop their own managerial skills. I would also assimilate new perspectives from students of different cultural and professional backgrounds. Because Harvard attracts high caliber students from around the world, my team would inevitably include members who have a wealth of experience in areas very different from my own. By taking a synergistic approach, we would generate a solution that reflected the best of our individual contributions.

Group discussions would also help me overcome my tendency to "over think" situations, which is an occupational hazard of providing "ongoing customer satisfaction." In most of my long-term business relationships, my clients depend on me to make improvements and to be alert to shifts in technology. My work is not done until my client is completely satisfied. Yet not every project is open-ended; knowing when to finish a job is just as important as doing it. I would rely on my teammates to reign in my natural tendency to evaluate every angle of a project before taking action.

As an entrepreneur, I embrace the opportunity to learn from others and to develop solutions based on collaborative strengths. A primary motivation to attend Harvard is its reputation for fostering such skills. Ironically, most undergraduate programs discourage collaboration. In traditional classrooms, students view each other as competitors rather than as valuable sources of information. My professional experience refutes such "traditional wisdom." In the business community, those who cooperate and share information enjoy the greatest success. My faculty and peers at Harvard will be the smartest, most accomplished people in their respective fields. I am eager to merge my own skills with their collective experience on challenging class projects.

## **Discuss Your Approach to Team Building & Selection in Your MBA Classes**

As a relationship manager at JP Morgan Chase, I develop and lead cross-functional teams to provide client solutions. As the project leader, my first objective is to define each person's responsibilities and to explain their inter-relationship. My team members, which often include specialists in technology, operations, business and the law, require clear guidance and structure to work on a multi-faceted project. To alleviate uncertainty, I prepare a flowchart presentation that outlines each person's contribution.

My second objective is to develop solutions to leverage the team's strengths and weaknesses. To improve our communication, I schedule weekly meetings to discuss issues and acknowledge major milestones. By fostering an environment that promoted feedback and teamwork, I encourage the team to draw from their diverse perspectives to arrive at an effective solution. Whenever possible, I acknowledge superior performance and give each member the opportunity to shine. By implementing a clear and measurable set of objectives, measures and rewards, the team eagerly takes ownership of the project.

Working with a cross-functional team is challenging because of the limited viewpoint of each member. By communicating effectively and drawing from diverse perspectives, I help the team to develop and share a common vision. As a result, the team members feel accountable for the success of the project and not just for their individual contributions.

From working in a multicultural organization, I have a wealth of team building experience in which members have different nationalities, styles, expectations and reward systems. As a result, I am able to recognize and use individual differences and cultural norms to motivate team members. By building relationships based on respect and cooperation, I have championed several high performance teams at JP Morgan Chase and I plan to do the same at Wharton.

Throughout my experiences, I discovered that my managerial tools are only successful in an environment of honesty and trust. For team members to achieve a common objective, they must be willing to build ethical relationships in which all parties share their concerns and opinions. Without exception, all of the intangible strengths of a great team, including creativity and cooperation, depend on open communication. As a result, I am passionate about creating an environment that nurtures these strengths.

I pride myself on developing teams that are strong enough to handle the pressures of large egos, conflicting agendas, external resistance and negative feedback. I am excited about the possibility of using my skills to advance the entrepreneurial plans of my fellow students at Wharton. Once team members are committed to achieving a common goal, and are confident that they have the unconditional support of their peers, the possibilities for collaborative innovation are limitless.

## **Discuss Your Approach to Team Building & Selection in Your MBA Classes**

A successful team must direct their collective energy to achieve a mutual objective. To ensure successful results, I try to create teams with a high level of interdependence. By design, my team members bring diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences to the challenges at hand. With my strengths as an entrepreneur, I actively seek members who can create new ideas through group interaction. As team leader, I ensure that the best ideas are implemented and that my people are rewarded for innovative risk taking.

I faced a challenging team-building exercise when I worked for the "Daily Bread," a charity that raises money for disadvantaged children in Dallas, Texas. Our idea was simple; buy food in bulk and sell it at a nominal markup to retail customers. After a great start, we had to negotiate a revised sales plan to compensate for an unexpected drop in volume. Because the Daily Bread was a charity effort, loss was unimaginable, which eliminated several high-risk proposals.

Ideally, in a three-member team, I would choose highly dedicated members to achieve a common vision. They would be masters in different fields, but possess enough knowledge of each other's areas to contribute to team discussions. My team for the Daily Bread came very close to this ideal. My volunteers believed in our cause and worked passionately to make it a success. As team leader, I worked closely with each member to generate several potential solutions and their inherent risks. Originally, we disagreed on the correct solution, but through mutual trust and respect, we stayed focused. We developed a relaxing climate that inspired direct and open communication.

Each team member approached the solution differently. While some were dreamers, others were more realistic; some were ready to rush out and try the proposed solution, while others were more cautious. Ultimately, our different approaches sparked a dynamic exchange of ideas. My job was to merge our different styles and clarify our final vision. While young blood brought high energy to the group, the experienced guy (me) kept things in perspective. In maturity and professional backgrounds, the Daily Bread team members complimented each other perfectly. By soliciting input from all members, we eventually agreed on the best solution.

Whenever possible, I considered each person's intrinsic motivation, assigning work that was meaningful to them as individuals. I've discovered that people do a better job when they believe in what they do. Since the Daily Bread was a volunteer effort, our goals were perfectly aligned with our responsibilities. By scheduling regular group events, I built camaraderie between members and increased their loyalty to the project. I also provided sincere public recognition for their good work, which kept their spirits high. Our passion and commitment were boosted ten-fold when the management of the Daily Bread thanked us publicly on their web site.

Our successful experience with the Daily Bread inspired my team to tackle challenging new projects. With positive initial response to our new menu, we enjoyed increased sales and profits. Within the next year, we plan to re-invest our profits in a new location. By harnessing the power of our shared talents, we will earn even more money to support a worthy cause.

### **Why Our School?**

Like most entrepreneurs, I discovered my passion for achievement during my childhood. My first business experience was as marketing manager for my father's firm, at a time when the economy of the former USSR was undergoing major changes. My primary responsibilities were developing new clients, finding suppliers, and offering new product lines. I received invaluable experience working in this newly established company that was trying to find its place in the emerging market economy. The firm quickly became one of the major suppliers for marine ports on the Black Sea coast with tremendous growth potential. Despite my success, I yearned to prove myself as an individual, rather than as the president's son.

At age 17, I flexed my entrepreneurial muscle by opening an ice cream business with a few friends. In addition to learning as much as possible about ice cream, I researched and implemented several creative sales techniques that were successful abroad, but new in the Ukraine. After a month of hard (but enjoyable) work, we paid back our loans and enjoyed the biggest market share in the area, fulfilling my goal of financial independence. Two years later, I enjoyed similar success when I opened a bar on the Black Sea coast. My partner and I worked diligently to develop creative marketing and advertising techniques to attract new customers. Within a few months, our bar became one of the most popular places in the area, and the only one allowed to remain open after 1 a.m.

In addition to providing financial independence, my first business experiences taught me that entrepreneurial success is impossible without knowing the basics. In any profession, education is paramount. After I arrived in the U.S., I completed a degree in accounting at Stanford University, passed the CPA exam, and opened my own tax consulting and accounting practice. Within three years, I had 75 clients in addition to my full-time work at Fleet Financial Group, where I was quickly promoted to Manager of Domestic Taxation. By juggling both responsibilities, I grew to understand the financial structures of different businesses and the needs of a diverse group of clients. During this time, I never lost track of my long-term goal of running my own financial company.

In my mind, a successful business enterprise is a building, in which accounting comprises the foundation. Ideally, the company's structure will be strong enough to absorb market shocks, but flexible enough to take advantage of positive regulatory winds. To succeed as an entrepreneur in an emerging or developing market, I must have a comprehensive background in all aspects of business. I can't imagine a better place to learn the fundamentals than Stanford.

Stanford graduates currently lead several Fortune 500 companies, including behemoths like Cisco and Hewlett Packard. Yet I am most impressed by [www.HumanityFinancial.com](http://www.HumanityFinancial.com), which was founded by Stanford Professor (and Nobel Prize Laureate) Horatio Clarke. His flawless implementation of the mathematical model to manage 401K accounts is unsurpassed in the financial world. Three years ago, my firm unsuccessfully tried to sell a similar system. While Professor Clarke's company calculates risk management based on mathematical models, our system used artificial intelligence to make predictions.

The success of Dr. Clarke's financial engines gives me the confidence that my training at Stanford will open my mind to new thought processes and avenues for success.

While completing my BS at Stanford, I worked closely with Professor Harold Faulkner, former CEO of Applied Materials. I am eager to re-connect with Dr. Faulkner and explore a potential joint venture in eastern Europe. With Dr. Faulkner's prior experience in the Ukraine market (and his encouragement that I pursue an MBA), I am certain that I can develop a program at Stanford that is an exceptional fit for my background and interests. In addition to my entrepreneurial pursuits, I am eager to learn the intricacies of global business transactions from the distinguished international faculty and diverse student body. In addition to providing a solid academic foundation, the MBA program will show me how to use my synergistic skills in accounting, law, and management to build and develop successful businesses in the 21st century.

Stanford's commitment to community enrichment is also a good match for my goals and interests. Over the years, I have volunteered in several social and charitable organizations, in which I hope to eventually assume a leadership role. Certificates like PMP (Public Management Program) will be ideal preparation for my long-term political career, while initiatives like PMI (Public Management Initiative) will help me to apply my business skills in the social world. This year's topic, "The Double Bottom Line: Promoting Profits and Public Service" is an ideal match for my plan to open a social enterprise. Seminars like "Borderless Giving a Success" will help me to start thinking creatively towards solving social problems across the globe.

To succeed as an entrepreneur, I need formal training in finance and management with a global perspective. While in business school, I yearn to broaden my focus and work in an environment that balances my role as technical visionary with that of manager, communicator and teammate. Stanford's focus on social leadership, philanthropy and public management makes it a perfect fit for my entrepreneurial, political and humanitarian goals.

### **Why Our School?**

My long-term goal is to advance to a leadership position in the financial services industry, where I can better utilize our most sacred resource: our people. In my work as a Deputy Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Deutsche Bank, I have observed several cases in which a neglectful corporate culture has caused excessive employee turnover. From my experience, an analyst rarely leaves for additional money, but because his managing director does not know his name. Ironically, the bank will later spend six months and nearly ten thousand dollars to replace a valued employee who simply needed a more nurturing work environment. These operational inefficiencies, which dramatically increase costs, also have a devastating impact on employee morale. My demonstrated ability to build strong working relationships suggests that I am an excellent fit for a leadership position in our industry, which requires a rare combination of analytical skills and interpersonal strengths.

After completing my MBA, I plan to join the deal execution group of a financial services company, where I can deepen my product knowledge and establish credibility in the industry. Eventually, I hope to provide executive leadership to a financial management and advisory firm that competes in global markets. In this capacity, I will help clients coordinate their financial and business strategies with their risk tolerance at all levels of the organization. My career path thus far has provided a unique perspective of the industry's many challenges and opportunities.

After completing my bachelor's degree in 1999, I worked for three years as a mergers and

acquisitions analyst in the Financial Institutions Group at both Wasserstein Perella and Lazard, where I developed a solid background in finance and analytical modeling. Both boutique investment banks offered smaller deal teams than larger competitors, which allowed me to handle transactions from start to finish. Through significant client interaction, I gained valuable insight into the motivation for financial services mergers and the analytical justification behind them.

In 2003, I accepted an opportunity to work under the COO of Deutsche Bank U.S. Investment Banking, which broadened my understanding of the daily operations of a financial services firm. As Deputy COO, I execute management decisions that impact the lives of thousands of employees across all front-office and back-office functions. This daily exposure to the inner workings of one of the world's largest financial services organizations, including their strategic planning initiatives, has been exceptional preparation for my long-term career goal. Although I enjoy my work as Deputy COO, the position will end in the summer of 2005. Rather than continue at Deutsche Bank, the time is right for me to pursue an MBA. In addition to developing my skills in finance, business school will accelerate my career progression by providing a solid background in all aspects of management, marketing, strategic planning and information technology.

For a variety of reasons, Columbia Business School is my first choice for my business education. With my interest in finance, I am particularly attracted to Columbia's world-class reputation and demonstrated commitment to financial research. Through a combination of classes, workshops and team-building exercises, I will hone my financial skills and learn how to apply my knowledge in challenging business situations. Columbia's use of real-world market data systems and analytical tools will enhance my decision-making skills through optimization, modeling and managing uncertainty. With my goal of leading a financial services firm, these simulated problems with real-time financial and economic data are essential to my learning experience. Other core and elective courses, including Leadership, Top Management Processes and Negotiation, will allow me to develop the "softer" skills of management.

With its diverse, highly motivated student body, Columbia offers a rich environment to evaluate business situations from an international perspective. I am eager to work on collaborative team projects with other talented students from across the globe. Columbia's close proximity to global banks, insurance companies and financial firms, along with the major stock, bond and commodity exchanges, offers valuable opportunities to network with seasoned professionals in the field. By utilizing the Executives in Residence program, I can discuss leadership issues with Professor Feiner and gain insight from Susan Balloch about her experiences as Co-COO of investment banking at Credit Suisse First Boston. I also hope to draw from the experiences of Donald Waite, the head of McKinsey's consulting activities for financial institutions, whose

insights into the management challenges facing financial services companies are highly significant to me. With my own expertise in the financial services industry, I will be well-prepared to take a leadership role in the Investment Banking Club, where I can mentor classmates who have an interest in the field.

My close interaction with top management at Deutsche Bank, coupled with my experience as an analyst at Lazard and Wasserstein Perella, has taught me that the cornerstone of the financial services industry is relationships; top leaders use a rare combination of analytical and interpersonal strengths to retain the best people and provide impeccable customer service. I am eager to develop these skills in an community of talented, like-minded professionals. With its commitment to creative thinking and hands-on learning, Columbia will enhance my managerial and problem solving skills, allowing me to meet the changing demands of a global marketplace.

### **Why Our School?**

As I prepare for a career in financial law, the JD / MBA program at the University of Chicago is an ideal place for me. The school's location on the Magnificent Mile offers a unique perspective of the challenges and opportunities in the volatile commodities market. During my campus tour, I noted the close proximity of the Chicago Board of Trade, along with numerous government centers and cultural hubs in the center of the city. The Metro stop on campus makes this entire world easily accessible. I was also impressed by the vibrant international feel of the campus and surrounding metropolitan area, where global decisions are made each day. What better place to begin my career?

As one of the few top universities to offer a dual JD / MBA program, Chicago acknowledges the need to provide comprehensive training to candidates with career aspirations in financial law. The benefits to the students are immeasurable. While I pursue my coursework in torts and contracts, I can compete for an internship at the IMF or Chicago Board of Trade. Upon graduation, I will be conversant in all aspects of financial management and forensic accounting, and will be qualified to investigate cases of investor fraud, improper accounting and SEC violations. Exposure to a government agency at this stage of my life will provide a solid foundation for my eventual career.

My final motivating factor to attend the University of Chicago is its unparalleled reputation in the academic, business and political communities. Several of my colleagues at JP Morgan are Chicago alumni, who have cited their satisfaction with their classes, professors, internships and campus life. During my visit to the school, I was impressed by the first-class facilities and demonstrated commitment to graduate teaching. I am also excited about the opportunity to pursue relevant volunteer activities on the Chicago campus.

For several years, I have worked as an advisor to the Lexington chapter of Entrepreneurial Kids, a non-profit agency that locates funding for viable student businesses. I have also enjoyed considerable success mentoring high school students who are eager to pursue an entrepreneurial career. While in Chicago, I will lend my support to the local chapter of Fast Start, which has an excellent reputation for its community education program for the self-employed. Through the local Big Brothers program, I can also continue my volunteer work as a mentor for teenaged boys with special needs. Chicago offers an unparalleled opportunity to work in these areas and to share my expertise with a new generation of talented kids.

After I graduate, Chicago's business and legal community will offer intriguing challenges for my skills in business law. With its large concentration of publicly-held companies, the area struggles to attract and retain qualified candidates who specialize in forensic accounting. Following graduation, I hope to work in this area, where I assist with SEC investigations. Armed with an exceptional education from Chicago, I will be well prepared to keep abreast of the rapidly-evolving technology that is used to solve white collar crimes. I am eager to take my place in this vibrant intellectual community.

### **Addendum to Explain a Job Loss**

In early 1998, I became General Manager for Tropical Gardens, a \$25 billion dollar natural produce business that supplies fresh fruit and organic vegetables to restaurants and food service institutions in northern California. In early 2000, I became engaged to the owner's daughter, who coordinated the firm's public relations work. For almost three years, we enjoyed working together in a family business that we hoped would eventually be passed on to our children.

Everything changed in the spring of 2003, when my fiancée had second thoughts about our impending marriage. Over a period of three weeks, her "uncertainty" morphed into a realization that she preferred to sever our relationship. I later discovered that her reservations were due to her budding relationship with one of our suppliers. Rather than lead me on, she opted to defer our marriage plans to explore another romantic relationship. Needless to say, I was personally and professionally crushed.

To his credit, my fiancée's father (the president of our firm) never took sides or demanded my resignation. In fact, he continually praised me for doing a commendable job under increasingly stressful circumstances. Yet I found it impossible to ignore the strained relationships in the office. I sadly concluded that such a small company could not thrive with all of us trying to co-exist together. With mixed emotions, I submitted my resignation in August of 2003 and stayed onboard long enough to train my replacement. Fortunately, during that time, I located a similar position with Sunkist Foods in San Francisco.

Looking back, I am grateful for my professional success at Tropical Gardens and for the mature way in which I handled a difficult situation. Yet I learned a painful lesson in not mixing business with pleasure. Whatever the future holds, I will think long and hard before I become romantically involved with a colleague. After my experience at Tropical Gardens, I am extremely reluctant to risk losing another excellent job to the whims of romance.

### **Addendum to Explain a Job Loss**

On the afternoon of September 11, 2001, the students in my International Policy class lingered for nearly an hour after our formal session was over. My students, who were primarily Arab-Americans, spoke with fear and sadness about the day's events. They expressed concerns about retaliation against their family and friends in the Middle East, and for their own safety on campus. One student, originally from Palestine, had been called a murderer by another girl in her sorority. Still shaken with emotion, she wept quietly in the corner of the room.

As an Arab-American woman, I had lived for nearly twelve years in the United States without enduring a single incident of discrimination. Everything changed after September 11. My student's humiliating assault was entrenched in my mind as I tried to comfort other Sikh students on campus. By the end of the day, I was also taunted by profanity and told to "burn in hell." Needless to say, I was horrified by these acts of aggression toward my friends, students and peers. As an Assistant Professor at the university, I hoped to do my part to confront the hostility and prevent others from being victimized. Unfortunately, my efforts could not stop the misdirected hostility of shell-shocked students. For several weeks, I questioned my decision to remain in the United States.

The point became moot by December, when the university opted not to renew my annual teaching contract. The dean stressed that my performance was not the issue, rather, the situation was a direct result of "decreased interest" in International Policy classes on campus. Considering the immediate need for soldiers and government workers with a cultural understanding of the Arabic culture and languages, I considered the administration's explanation to be disingenuous. Yet, without tenure, I was in no position to protect my job.

Ironically, losing my faculty position gave me a once-in-a-lifetime chance to serve my country. In January of 2002, through a grant from the State Department, I traveled to the American embassy in Jordan to teach Arabic to thirty US government employees. I was honored to educate others about my native language and culture, and to provide a friendly face during a stressful time. Thankfully, my reception in Jordan was significantly friendlier than that on the Yale campus. My students in Jordan understood that patriots come in all races and wear all styles of clothing. Although I am proud of my Arab heritage, I love being an American and I am committed to preventing further acts of terrorism. I am honored to serve my country in any way possible.

Throughout my year in Jordan, I re-committed myself to a legal career and recovered from the shock of the discrimination I faced in America. When I returned to the United States, I embraced my future with an optimism and clarity I never dreamed possible. As I plan my future and set new goals, I am proud to have made a difference in my own unique way. It was my honor and responsibility as an American.

### **Addendum to Explain a Job Loss**

After five years of marriage, I gave birth to my daughter Emily in 1999. Originally, I intended to return to my position at Quaker Oats, Inc., but I had a last minute change of heart. Acknowledging the importance of my baby's first year, I opted to be a stay-at-home mom. Thankfully, my husband's income as a prosecutor was enough to cover our expenses for my one-year sabbatical.

During my time off, I acknowledged the need for a pregnancy resource center for other young women in the Warren area. Located sixty miles from the nearest major city (San Francisco), local mothers lacked convenient access to counseling, well-baby care, infant and toddler play groups and basic lactation support. I started Madonna & Child Ltd to address these needs.

Our program provides free and low cost services to all mothers in the Warren / Barrington area. I raised awareness for the program by making presentations at high schools, college campuses and women's groups in the city. I also solicited donations from local businesses, who were generous with their time, expertise and money. After a slow start, Madonna & Child Ltd developed a great reputation around the city. After four years of continuous growth, we now have 46 volunteers and over 500 new mothers participating in the program. We provide a comprehensive array of services (GED classes, instruction in baby care, nutrition classes, job hunting skills, anger management classes, etc) in a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

Although I started Madonna & Child Ltd as a volunteer resource, it soon became my professional calling. My commitment to the group enables me to enrich the lives of young women and their children in a unique manner. Since 1998, I have served as the company's president and CEO, overseeing all aspects of administration and management. After completing my MBA, I plan to pursue similar opportunities in the public sector.

### **If you could pick three guests for a formal dinner, who would they be and why would you choose them?**

I would dine with three contemporary spiritual leaders who provide comfort and inspiration worldwide: Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul and the Dalai Llama.

Mother Theresa inspires me because of the selfless manner in which she chose to eradicate hunger. An educated woman, she abandoned the wealth of her native homeland to live among the poor citizens of rural India. Mother Theresa suffered greatly in her quest to provide food and proper medical care to millions of lonely, forgotten souls. I'd like to understand why she chose such an austere path and how she persevered throughout decades of poverty and strife.

As the leader of the Catholic Church and the authority on religious doctrine throughout the Christian world, Pope John Paul is arguably the most powerful man on earth. Many disagree with the Pope's militant stance on contemporary issues such as abortion, birth control, gay rights and women's role in the clergy. I'd like to discuss his interpretation of the Bible and why he remains so conservative in an increasingly liberal world.

The Dalai Llama is one of the greatest philosophical minds of the 20th century and the most prolific author in the Eastern world. His philosophy of living life to the fullest and making positive use of negative emotions resonates deeply within me on a personal level. In my work as a counselor, I frequently recommend his books to clients who are inspired by his hope for world peace. Although I am not Buddhist, I'd like to discuss how I can promote spirituality in my everyday life.

All three of my dinner guests offer a living example of using God's will to enhance humanity. As I pursue my own quest for spiritual fulfillment, I would like to be a similar inspiration to others.

**If you could pick three guests for a formal dinner, who would they be and why would you choose them?**

I believe the strongest leaders are those who recover from devastating setbacks and resume their quest to fulfill their dreams. I would assemble three highly visible and inspirational examples to discuss their amazing turnarounds and how they achieved them.

My first choice is Magic Johnson, who retired from the NBA after he was diagnosed with HIV/ AIDS in 1991. In the subsequent fourteen years, Magic married, fathered two healthy children and established the largest foundation to lead and direct international AIDS research. Magic could teach me what it means to overcome adversity and transform a profound personal tragedy into a motivating example for others. I want to learn how he maintained his commitment to humanity during the bleak days of his illness.

I would discuss business strategy with Lee Iacocca, whose his unique leadership and initiative revitalized the bankrupt Chrysler Corporation and increased its market value by \$100 billion. I relish his insights on current economic issues, along with his advice for others who face obstacles on their road to international success.

My final dining partner would be Donald Trump, whose financial successes and failures made headlines in publications as diverse as *Time* magazine and *Entertainment Weekly*. Due to the financial upheaval in New York real estate, Mr. Trump has made and lost billions of dollars over the past twenty years. Through creative financing and partnerships, "The Donald" always manages to salvage victory from failure, long after his competitors have given up. I want to learn how he remains emotionally healthy during times of public disgrace and financial hardship. I want to develop similar perseverance, to survive hard times with optimism and grace.

All of these men exemplify tenacity and perseverance in the face of very public failures. A dinner with them will enable me to interact with true winners, who understand that the only true failure is giving up.

**If you could pick three guests for a formal dinner, who would they be and why would you choose them?**

As a fledgling female entrepreneur, I would dine with professional mentors who could describe how they managed to succeed in a traditionally male world. Helen Gurley Brown, the editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* magazine for 25 years, proved that a female CEO can be strong and feminine at the same time. I'd like to brainstorm with Ms. Brown, who is known for marathon ideation sessions with her junior staff. I'd like to hear her "war stories" about her early days in publishing, when women were limited to positions in the secretarial pool. Over a three-course meal, I'm certain we would both learn a lot about our respective generations.

Martha Stewart is a one-woman cottage industry who turned a flair for decorating into a multimedia conglomerate. While Ms. Brown celebrates the single-gal lifestyle, Ms. Stewart emphasizes the importance of home and hearth in maintaining a balanced lifestyle. I'd like to discuss brand management with Martha, whose diverse product lines appeal to vastly different consumer groups.

My final guest is Sherre Lansing, the head of Columbia Pictures, who has the final say in which movies are made in Hollywood. By controlling our entertainment choices, Ms. Lansing actually has the power to change society. I would ask her several questions about the entertainment business in the twenty-first century. How does she decide whether or not to make a violent movie? What are her personal values regarding pornography, graphic violence and changing societal mores? What advice would she give to young women just starting out in the business?

My three dinner companions are all successful, dynamic woman who have succeeded in a man's world. They collectively possess more knowledge than I ever hope to assimilate. My greatest challenge at dinner would be to retain all the nuggets of wisdom they would collectively offer.

**What Would Most Surprise People About You?**

My job as a mortician is decidedly serious; few clients (living or dead) visit my office in a positive state of

mind. So many people are surprised to discover that I have a wicked sense of humor. In virtually every situation, I love to make people laugh. When surrounded by friends, I often pepper our casual conversation with funny associations and lighthearted quips. I'm also blessed with the ability to recount past experiences in a way that preserves the original hilarity. Several years ago, my friends encouraged me to share my raucous comedy at our all-time favorite spot, the NYC Improv in Greenwich Village. On Fridays, the cast members invite audience members on stage to participate in acts with them, and I am always an enthusiastic volunteer. After three years, I became a semi-regular, both for fun and to cheer myself up on nights when the Yankee lost. Although I can't claim to match wits with the cast members, I hold my own, providing instant satisfaction for myself and everyone around me.

Standup comedy also helps my performance at work, which is arguably one of the saddest professions imaginable. Although nothing will ever be funny about death, maintaining my sense of humor is essential to my ability to provide excellent service on a daily basis. I've learned how to relax under difficult circumstances and cheer up the family and friends of deceased clients. I've learned the value of a smile and a warm gesture during life's desperate moments. I also appreciate the necessity of genuine laughter, a common bond that we all can enjoy every minute that we are alive.

### **What Would Most Surprise People About You?**

A dedicated athlete, I placed tenth in the 1999 Boston Marathon. Surprisingly enough, my participation was actually something of a whim. Prior to the race, I ran four miles every day, but I was not in the same league as those who competed internationally. A typical training regime required an aggressive eighteen-week period and a minimum of four days a week: a high commitment. On a dare from my boss, I decided to enter the race.

Although the physical training was tough (due to an old athletic injury), managing my time was tougher. At the time, I was the spokesperson for Loreal Cosmetics, which required travel to both France and London. My professional commitments were as intense as my running schedule, which stretched my organizational skills to the limit. Yet I embraced the training with gusto, gradually building my strength and increasing my distances. With just four weeks to go, I could run twenty miles. To juggle my dual commitments of work and running, I became a master of efficiency, developing organizational skills I continue to practice today. Unfortunately, my left knee was also beginning to trouble me at these longer distances.

On the day of the race, I covered my knee in pain-relieving gel and walked to the starting point. After the first twelve miles, I found it difficult to increase pace due to the mass of runners in front of me. Forced to slow down, I contained the pain in my knee and continued to run at a comfortable pace. With about three miles to go, the pain was excruciating, yet I was determined to cross the finish line. Many of my fellow runners had fallen back or dropped out of the race, sidelined by injuries, dehydration or exhaustion. The crowd's good-natured support erased any concerns about my injury or knee pain. As I crossed the finish line in a rush of adrenaline and sweat, someone even encouraged me to spurt. I honestly did not know whether to laugh or cry.

At the time, I did not appreciate the enormity of my success. My knee injury took months to heal and I was physically exhausted for weeks. Although my tenth place finish didn't lead to product endorsements or national television interviews, it changed my life. My confidence soared by successfully competing head-to-head with many well-known athletes and runners. I also reaped the benefits of planning, training and pursuing a seemingly unattainable goal. Thanks to the Boston Marathon, I am an accomplished woman who approaches all tasks with enthusiasm, confidence and dedication. Not bad for something I did on a whim!

### **What Would Most Surprise People About You?**

Most of my peers do not know that my compassionate personality is a result of surviving a life-threatening illness. During my senior year in high school, I was stricken with Bell's Palsy. Within a few days, I lost all voluntary control of the right side of my face and all feeling in my right arm. These sudden physical changes were traumatic, yet the emotional consequences were equally compelling. Before my illness, I was an excellent student and the popular captain of the football team. After my symptoms emerged, friends looked at me differently and were obviously uncomfortable. I became unbearably self-conscious and withdrawn. When my condition failed to improve over time, I wondered if I would ever be my "old self" again.

My family doctor had only limited information on Bell's Palsy and no guaranteed treatment regimen.

Unwilling to wait for the symptoms to subside, I investigated the disease on my own. As I perused the medical literature, I discovered that the experts didn't seem to fully understand Bell's Palsy. There was no known cure, yet I found information about a new drug that hastened the recovery. I presented with my findings to my neurologist, who approved the drug. With the aid of the medication, I recovered fully within several weeks.

My depression eventually lifted with help from my family and close friends. Throughout my ordeal, I continued my normal routine and tried not to get depressed by the reaction of strangers. In private moments, I ignored my reflection in the mirror and developed my inner strengths. Despite my illness, I was still the same hardworking student, dedicated athlete, loyal friend and son. My illness forced me to mature and rely on an internal compass that I didn't know existed. I demonstrated patience and perseverance by continuing to attend school. I became less focused on external appearances and more appreciative of people's feelings and inner beauty. I also developed a tolerance for strangers, whose quizzical looks were not evil or judgmental, but simply an indication of their own lack of understanding. Although I recovered from Bell's Palsy after five difficult weeks, I will retain the lessons I learned from the experience for my entire life.

## **Resume: Applicant with a Military Background**

### **JACOB L. WIDENER**

98 Tanglewood Road  
Warren, OH 44221  
(555) 555-5555  
E-Mail: JWide98@xxx.com

## **EDUCATION**

**Ohio Tech University**, Masters in Industrial Engineering, emphasis in time management systems. August 2002

**U.S. Military Academy, West Point**, Bachelor of Science, Engineering, May 1992

## **EXPERIENCE**

**Construction Superintendent**, Anderson Construction Company. Responsible for all facets of construction including scheduling, coordinating and supervising the work of all subcontractors. Approved monthly fund distributions. Superintendent of a 92-unit, \$20M condominium complex. Completed a 198-unit, \$22M, condominium complex in 28 weeks (from ground breaking to completion). The project was under budget, two weeks ahead of schedule and a high-quality product. (May '97 to Nov. '99)

**Facility Engineer**, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Captain. Responsible for developing long-range construction programs; reviewing plans and specifications for all new construction, and the allocation, utilization and maintenance of over 3.4M square feet of existing facilities. Developed and gained approval for a construction program involving over \$60M worth of new construction; planned a successful reorganization of commercial and residential facilities to accommodate the needs of a newly formed unit consisting of 2,100 soldiers. (March '95 to May '97)

**Support Platoon Leader**, U.S. Army, 8th Engineer Bn. Supervisor of 45 soldiers, responsible for the utilization and maintenance of over \$45M worth of heavy engineer equipment and mobile bridging. Heavy weapons training officer responsible for running integrated multi-weapon live firing exercises. (May '94 to March '95)

**Company Executive Officer**, U.S. Army, 2nd Engineer Bn. (China). Responsible for the maintenance, training, mess and supply operations of a 180-man combat engineer company deployed in the Republic of China. Developed and implemented a maintenance program which led to a 13% increase in on-line operating time. Won a Maintenance Excellence Award. (Nov. '93 to May '94)

**Platoon Leader**, U.S. Army, 2nd Engineer Bn. (China). Responsible for maintaining the combat readiness of a platoon of 42 construction and demolition specialists in the Republic of China. Unit explosives officer responsible for training and safety on live explosive ranges and missions. (Dec. '92 to Nov. '93)

## HONORS AND ACTIVITIES

Teaching Assistant, Finance Department, Ohio Tech University. I teach a class in Time & Motion Study to Junior level engineering majors.

Licensed Professional Engineer (Ohio -Mechanical).

Distinguished graduate, U.S. Army Engineer School.

## Resume: Applicant is a Computer Specialist

### ISABELLA Z. CARTER

Local Address:  
92 Smith Street, #6  
New Haven, CT 02885  
(213)-555-5555

E-Mail: ICar@xxx.com

Permanent Address:  
435 Wilson Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60063  
(613)- 555-5555

## EDUCATION

### YALE UNIVERSITY

B.S. in Quantitative Business Analysis; Emphasis in Operations Management  
G.P.A. in major: 3.75/4.00; G.P.A overall: 3.98/4.00  
Graduated in December 2000  
President, Women's Business Network, Yale University, 1993-1994  
Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges

### SIGNIFICANT COURSEWORK

**MATERIALS MANAGEMENT** In-company project  
Analyzed inventory control consequences of a paper machine for the Weist Company

**FACILITIES MANAGEMENT** Case study  
Analyzed facility location, facility layout and capacity planning problems using past history of companies

**SIMULATION OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES** Individual project  
Designed computer program to simulate present sorting production line at U.S. Post Office in New Haven, then altered program to represent future technological innovations and evaluated the expected effects

## COMPUTER SKILLS

SIMAN Simulation Programming  
LINDO Linear Programming  
STORM Software Package  
PASCAL

Lotus/Symphony  
Minitab  
Microsoft Word  
WordPerfect

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**Operations Management**  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT August 1999- May 2001  
Acquired and outlined research material on Computer Design in Manufacturing

Evaluated books from student's perspective to aid in Professor Wood's textbook writing  
Graded homework and quizzes for computer simulation class

**Yale University Research Support Center**

LIBRARY AIDE

May 2001 -Present

Helped patrons use business indexes and reference guides

**The Bagel Dome**

SALES ASSISTANT

July 2001 -Present

Handled money and communicated with the public when selling bakery products

**ACTIVITIES**

Orientation Leader for Freshmen  
Intramural Sports Chairperson

Red Cross Volunteer  
Dormitory Social Historian

**Resume: Applicant is an Accountant with Experience**

**TARA J. PERKINS-KYLE**

1301 Warren Road  
Lancaster, PA 17402

TPK@xxx.com

Home: (555) 555-5555  
Work: (555) 555-5555

**WORK EXPERIENCE:**

**1999 -Present**

**UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL COMPANY**

International Financial Coordinator, Corporate Headquarters, Lancaster, PA (2001 -Present)  
Direct interface between company's corporate headquarters and the European International locations to ensure timely and accurate financial results and business performance data.

- \* Consolidation of eight companies with 2000 revenues of \$738M and gross profits of \$92.8M.
- \* Forecast and evaluate currency exposure of international operations and hedging contracts.
- \* Direct corporate funding process to provide working and investment capital to region.
- \* Annual budget preparation and monthly comparison reports and forecasts.
- \* Coordinate all updated policies and business procedures in accordance with US GAAP and company policy.

Sales/Marketing Services Supervisor, Specialty Chemical Division, Miami, FL (2000 -2001)  
Direct and manage staff of three handling marketing operations, international and domestic distribution, establishing production and inventory levels for manufacturing. Prepare and monitor operating and capital budgets and handle financial analysis for specialty chemical business servicing crude oil pipelines.

- \* Establish and maintain \$5M program tracking equipment location and costs, saving 20%.
- \* Perform economic lease/purchase evaluations of contract proposals.
- \* Negotiate \$4M annual sales and service contracts with vendors and equipment leasing firms.
- \* Present sales/marketing proposals to prospective pipeline companies.
- \* Implement and manage new order entry system to accommodate \$90M annual sales volume.

Senior Inventory Coordinator/Analyst, Specialty Chemical Division, Miami, FL (1999 -2000)  
Monitor \$6M of inventory consisting of over 150 products, generate monthly inventory level, location and bad-order reports, special studies and analysis as required.

- \* Volume planning and coordination.
- \* Set up/directed physical inventories for 39 domestic chemical stocking locations.
- \* Design, implement and manage reporting system for senior management identifying all bad-order domestic products.

\* Eliminate un-reconciled inventories backlogged for over two years, completed project independently in less than one year. Nominated and received distinguished company award.

**1995 -1999**

**PETROLEUM PRODUCTS CORPORATION**

Assistant Group Controller, Fairgate Refineries, Dylan, LA (1995 -1999)

Consolidated and reported financial results for two refineries. Directed and monitored capital and operating budgets. Acted as corporate liaison between refineries and parent company.

- \* Assisted in design and implementation of new financial reporting and cost accounting systems.
- \* Developed and maintained cash management and forecasting program to maximize use of company funds.
- \* Successfully handled division divestitures when business units were sold to private investor groups.

**EDUCATION:** B.A., Accounting, University of Chicago, December, 1994

**COMPUTERS:** Symphony, Lotus, dBase, Windows '98, Freelance, AS400, MS Office 2002

**Resume: Applicant with a Marketing & Sales Background**

**JOSHUA F. DAVIS**  
943 Clover Terrace  
Albany, NY 32994

OFFICE: 555-555-5555

HOME: 555-555-5555

E-MAIL: HFG@xxx.com

**Marketing and Sales Executive** with extensive experience and a progressive track record within the pulp and paper industry. Strong technical and organizations orientation and an ability to work closely with manufacturing to optimize the fit of mill capabilities to customer needs while maximizing profitability.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**SCOTT PAPER COMPANY**, Albany, NY

**1995 -2002**

Manager, Product Development and Strategic Planning

2000 -2002

Guide the pulp and coated paper divisions in developing a five year strategic plan for recycled paper

- \* Developed a full line of recycled coated paper grades to support new de-inking plants in three mills. Imports dropped 38% in 2000, 14% more in 2001.
- \* Directed work of mills and marketing groups for new five-year plan for 675,000 ton, \$290MM business. Organized and wrote plan and board presentation.

Manager, Marketing and Sales

1997 -2000

- \* Added 7 new positions to serve new sales volume and service needs. Increased sales 48% to fill new lightweight coated machine started in Washington in 1999.
- \* Reversed plan to shut down Oregon mill in 1998 by adding new products that fit the machines better than prior mix. With 53% of sales in 1999, mill had 57% of profits.

Product Manager: New Products

1995 -1997

- \* Reorganized product development activities to eliminate poorly researched products. Coordinated expansion at Atlanta mill and developed new in-line calendering process.
- \* Developed new business proposal for \$19MM plant to make nonstructural building

panels from recycled fiber.

\* Led marketing team of joint venture with major petrochemical company in development of synthetic pulp for paper making. Directed all field studies.

## EDUCATION

**B.S.** Pulp and Paper Engineering, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI (1995)

**Resume: Applicant is an Engineer with Experience**

**FRANK D. FOSTER**  
2014 Seaward Trail  
Vail, Colorado 78739

Phone: (555)- 555-5555

E-mail: Fos@xxx.com

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Management professional with significant experience building and leading high-volume, high-profit sales, marketing and product management teams. Combines sales, marketing and technical expertise with an excellent knowledge of industrial markets and products to gain a competitive advantage and win major market share.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### **COLORADO MINING COMPANY**

**1995-Present**

*A worldwide leader in the forest products industry (\$14 billion sales).*

#### **Product Manager: Plywood & Lumber**

1999-Present

Broad-ranging authority for developing strategic business plans, innovative product offerings, training field sales teams, developing product pricing and distribution channels, launching nationwide advertising and marketing campaigns, investigating acquisition alternatives, generating a TQM program and implementing all phases of the business plan. Led the entire new business product development cycle from initial concept and management approval through full-scale roll-out.

\* Increased sales 55% and profits 28% within two years.

\* Spearheaded the development of a nationwide network of over 30 distributors during a two-year period which accounted for over 50% of product sales.

\* Developed and introduced eight new products and systems in 2000. Five-year sales are projected to exceed \$115 million with a solid 21% gross profit margin.

\* Initiated a new job title, job description and incentive program for specialty products sales representatives which helped fuel aggressive growth.

#### **Regional Sales Manager**

1995-1999

Directed all sales and business development activities for Southeast Region (22 sales representatives, \$30 million sales volume).

\* Received the 1998 and 1999 Sales Management Awards for outstanding performance.

\* Successfully penetrated Lowes during account's entry into market.

\* Achieved significant 19% sales improvement during a period with flat market opportunity by capitalizing on specific markets with demonstrated growth potential.

\* Trained and sponsored a sales representative who received the 1997 International Lumber Award.

## EDUCATION

**Bachelor of Science.** Civil Engineering, Oregon State University, 1995

Golden Key National Honor Society

Eta Kappa Nu Engineering Honor Society

### **Addendum To Explain a Gap in Employment or Education**

My parents divorced during my freshman year of high school, leaving my mother as the sole support of three small children. As the oldest, I felt a strong responsibility to help her. Just fourteen years old, I got a job as a waitress in a neighborhood diner and contributed my earnings to the household. Between school and work, my schedule left little time for homework, hobbies or extracurricular activities. After a year of virtually no sleep, I realized that I could no longer continue to juggle so many responsibilities.

Sadly, my family's needs had to come first. After withdrawing from high school, I worked full-time at the diner, along with a second job at Variety Print Shop. I took evening classes to prepare for the GED exam, which I passed in October of 1996. After seven long years of night classes, I finally completed my BA in Psychology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2003. No victory was ever as sweet as walking across the stage to receive my diploma!

As I complete my application for business school, I am painfully aware of how different I am from your traditional applicants. I have nothing to discuss in the sections of the application form that ask about hobbies, sports or campus affiliations. My priority was always providing for my family and completing my education; I rarely had the luxury to dream, to follow my passions or to consider "what if." Compared to more financially secure candidates, I probably sound like a "charity case."

But I much prefer the term "winner." At first glance, I haven't had much of a chance to demonstrate key leadership skills, yet I have certainly succeeded at building my own life. I persevered in situations in which most people would have given up. I found solutions to difficult problems that seemingly had no answers. I provided for my siblings, to ensure that they would have the chance to find their own success and pursue their own dreams. And I never, EVER complained about the hand that life dealt me, either financially or socially. I am, after all, a self-made woman with the power to transcend seemingly insurmountable challenges. Isn't that what superior leadership is all about?

### **Addendum To Explain a Gap in Employment or Education**

Following my junior year of college, I took a one-year sabbatical to assist with a critical public health crisis in my native South Africa. After a three-day riot destroyed Capetown's impoverished Zenatta Hospital, the government requested that all available medical personnel report for duty. As a registered nurse with Medivac experience, my services were in particularly high demand.

Between August of 2002 and July of 2003, I worked nearly eighty hours per week as a primary care nurse in the Capetown facility. Because most of the surgical theatres had been destroyed by the riots, I often assisted with surgeries in temporary facilities. Doctors postponed all elective and non-critical procedures, yet we were still overwhelmed by the need for medicine, caregivers and preventive health measures. With few practicing physicians in the community, our emergency room was the only available health care resource.

Throughout my year at the hospital, I heard disparate reports about the causes of the nation's national health crisis. The staff reported widespread misuse of funds, while the national newspaper accused the government of abusing international aid. Whatever the root causes, I found myself in the untenable position of losing patients to potentially curable illnesses because of a lack of money and pharmaceuticals. Sadly, government corruption and media restrictions prevented public appreciation of the issues or the implementation of effective remedies. I was frustrated by my inability to improve the situation.

I returned to college in August of 2003 with a profound skepticism regarding the future of South Africa. As a student of international policy, I have discovered that government secrecy and adherence to the rule of law is not confined to third-world hospitals. Yet my hopelessness in South Africa is occasionally replaced by a newfound confidence. With a strong educated response, I can help change the system. With the skills I will gain from studying in the US, I am confident that I will make meaningful changes in the administration of health care, medical charities and other public aid funds in South Africa.

### **Addendum to Explain a Gap in Employment or Education**

In the spring semester of my sophomore year at Sarah Lawrence College, my brother died of AIDS. Chris had contracted the disease five years earlier from a tainted unit of blood he received during emergency surgery. Although my family had known of his diagnosis for years, we were emotionally unprepared for his death. Unable to return to college after Chris's funeral, I wound up taking two years off.

If left to my own devices, I probably would have moped in my room for most of that time. Fortunately, Chris's friends had other ideas. Within a week of his death, his best friend from the local AIDS hospice asked me to participate in a new program designed to promote AIDS awareness in the community. At the first meeting, I realized immediately how much I was needed. The other advocacy groups in town were largely ceremonial in nature; they organized fundraisers, solicited donations and provided financial support for uninsured patients. No one was working on the most urgent need, which was education.

I became the official liaison between the group and the local high schools, where we agreed to present free seminars on AIDS prevention. Our first classes were somewhat awkward, as I could not discuss sex without embarrassment, but the message was so powerful and so important that I never lost my focus. My youth definitely worked in my favor. The kids started to ask relevant questions about how to stay safe in both casual and committed relationships. They helped me to see that I had valuable information to share, even if the topics WERE intimate and embarrassing.

After returning to Sarah Lawrence in 2003, I continued to teach classes and train new participants in the program. During the past year, I have given speeches on AIDS awareness to both the regional and national Sigma Tau sorority conferences. Four years after losing Chris, I feel closer to him than ever. I think he would be proud of my work to prevent others from suffering from HIV. My commitment to educating teens is his legacy to me, which I am honored to share with anyone who will listen. With education and awareness, we WILL win this fight.

#### **Addendum to Explain an Arrest / Criminal History**

On March 15, 2002, I drove three friends home from our spring break vacation in Daytona Beach, Florida. After nine grueling hours, I didn't realize the magnitude of my fatigue. When I reached the Ohio border, I encountered the worst snowstorm I had ever seen. Although I was tempted to stop at a rest area, I didn't want to delay our arrival. Against my better judgment, I continued driving.

Less than an hour later, I hit a patch of ice and crossed the center line of Route 55, hitting the driver's side of a Federal Express delivery truck. Fortunately, since both vehicles were traveling at reduced speeds, there were no injuries (other than emotional trauma). Unfortunately, my bad decision had immediate legal repercussions. The Ohio State Trooper cited me for hazardous driving and for failure to maintain control of my vehicle. Three months later, I plead nolo contendere at my court appearance in Columbus, Ohio. I received a \$500 fine and was ordered to complete a driver education class.

Looking back, I am extremely embarrassed by the incident and my poor judgment. While trying to appear "cool," I caused a horrible accident that jeopardized five young lives. Since that day, I have been an exceptional driver who is reluctant to take chances. The accident gave me an increased appreciation for the long-term effects of bad driving. I will never make a similar mistake.

#### **Addendum to Explain an Arrest / Criminal History**

On my seventeenth birthday, my boyfriend invited me to dinner and a movie at our local shopping mall. While we waited for the show to begin, we took a casual walk through the neighboring stores. Unbeknownst to me, my boyfriend slipped an expensive watch into his pocket while we browsed through a small jewelry shop. When we tried to leave, the security tag on the watch triggered the alarm system and we were immediately surrounded by security guards. We spent the next two hours at the police station, answering some very embarrassing questions.

Although I did not know about the watch, we were both charged with shoplifting and were released to our parents' custody. Ultimately, the store agreed to drop the charges if we would pay for the watch. Needless to say, we apologized profusely to the store manager and paid full retail value for the timepiece.

Although the charges may not appear on my criminal record, the experience changed my life. I faced an

evening in jail, along with the embarrassment of having to call my parents. I'll never forget the look of shame and disappointment on my mother's face. After spending a lifetime teaching me right from wrong, she never thought that I would steal. I let her down. I also lost respect for my boyfriend, who was clearly not the honest person I thought he was.

The incident taught me a powerful lesson about the importance of character. Since then, I have been extremely selective in who I choose to befriend. At the same time, I faced the formidable challenge of earning back the respect of my own family. Fortunately, over time, my parents acknowledged that my mistake was not being a thief, but trusting the wrong person. We have subsequently worked very hard to heal as a family.

### **Addendum to Explain an Arrest / Criminal History**

On October 11, 1993, I was pulled over by the police and charged with improper lane usage. While inspecting the car, the police found 8 oz. of cannabis, which resulted in an additional charge for possession. On December 1, 1993, the cannabis charge was suppressed; the final disposition was "Motion state stricken on leave to reinstate." On January 4, 1994, I received supervision and a \$50 fine for the traffic violation. The case is logged under San Diego Police Dept. - Complaint #9618-93.

Ten years later, I am still embarrassed and humbled by this experience. At age nineteen, I made the mistake of experimenting with something that was illegal and dangerous. I do not use drugs today, nor do I condone their use by others. I deeply regret the pain and embarrassment that my mistake caused my family.

Looking back, I wish that I had possessed the maturity and insight to have made a better decision. Unfortunately, I made an error in judgment. When evaluating my application, I hope that my committee will consider this incident as an aberration in my otherwise happy, healthy, successful thirty-year life. It was a regrettable mistake that does not in any way reflect the maturity and integrity I will bring to your program.

### **Personal Background**

My parents separated when I was in elementary school and quickly formed new families. Rather than live in either household, I moved to a small town to live with my paternal grandparents, whose fifty-year marriage provided an essential source of warmth and consistency. After their deaths six years later, I lived alone in their house until I graduated from high school.

Assuming full responsibility for my own needs made me extremely self-reliant at a young age. At the time, I did not understand the risks of living alone or the impact on my education. I simply did what I had to do. Fortunately, the years I spent living with my grandparents helped me to understand many of the responsibilities of running the household. I knew how to cook, clean and take care of my personal needs. To a casual observer, I functioned quite well in my isolated existence.

Yet I was completely unprepared for the emotional toll that accompanied my loneliness. Many times, I was too depressed to study, yet I knew that education was my only way out of such a difficult life. I learned how to inspire myself by dreaming about the future and by setting achievable objectives. Eventually, I faced my challenges and adjusted to my unusual situation.

To create a social network, I established friendships in the village that allowed me to barter for essential goods and services. In such a small town, the intimacy of my neighbors was particularly helpful and supportive. Many times, friends invited me to visit and spend the holidays, which further alleviated my loneliness. Thanks to my excellent performance in school, my teachers also provided nurturance and support.

Although my parents visited every month, they did not provide any guidance or direction for my future. Hence, I acknowledged at a young age that my success or failure hinged on my own dedication and commitment. Fortunately, I was motivated enough to make education a priority. I ranked among the top 10 high school graduates in Japan, which qualified me to join the Kyoto Engineering Institute, one of the best technical universities in the world.

As a result of my unusual childhood, I am an extremely responsible and self-reliant person. I

embrace challenges with confidence and find creative solutions to life's problems. During my years alone in the village, I learned how to make friends and adapt to any situation. These skills helped me to adjust to college life and have contributed greatly to my performance at Ciba Geigy.

Looking back, I am proud that I handled my parents' divorce with maturity and skill. By becoming a functional adult at age fifteen, I learned critical life skills that I could not have developed any other way. As an adult, I acknowledge that problems and challenges are natural part of life; our success is not measured by the number of setbacks, but by the way that we choose to handle them. By taking charge of my life at an early age, I learned how to tackle any obstacle that came my way. As a result, I feel well prepared for whatever challenges the future may hold.

## **Personal Background**

It took me many years to realize the extraordinary influence my mother has had on my life. From an outsider's perspective, she might appear to be just another ordinary working-class woman; there is little in her dress or position to distinguish her from other mothers in town. Yet her modest possessions and demeanor are a sharp contrast to the extraordinary gifts and wisdom that my mother possesses.

My father left our family before I was three years old, leaving my mother with three small children in a small apartment in North Chicago. Nothing in my mom's background prepared her for having to accept the awesome responsibility of raising us by herself. She was raised in a loving home with two decent, God-fearing parents who taught her that love and marriage were forever. The one thing she always said about her abandonment was that she was grateful that her own parents did not live to see it.

Thanks to my mother's efforts, I somehow managed to grow up without knowing we were "disadvantaged." She was always a sweet, fun-loving woman who enjoyed every minute she spent with us. She worked hard as a legal secretary in Chicago, but always made it home by six o'clock to eat dinner and hear about our day. It never occurred to me that by the time she began cooking pasta for us, she had already endured an exhaustive sixteen-hour day. We just knew that she loved us and that we were very special to her. She enjoyed all of the simple things in life, like ice cream and fresh-baked brownies, and taught us to do the same.

Our favorite family activity came every Sunday morning after church, when we spent the afternoon volunteering at the soup kitchen. My sisters and I wrapped large white aprons over our Sunday dresses and chopped vegetables, competing to see who could chop the most celery. As an experienced volunteer, my mother assumed an administrative role; she trained volunteers, monitored inventory and made sure that everyone had enough to eat. Our regular patrons were my "second family," who let me know that I was a special and talented young girl.

I never thought my life was unusual until I enrolled in the gifted program at St. Charles Academy. When I was awarded a full scholarship, it fulfilled my mother's fondest dream; she wanted so much for me to have a good education and make a better life for myself. Yet when I arrived for my first day of classes at St. Charles, I knew automatically that I didn't fit in. I didn't wear the "right" clothes and was considered a nerd because I took the bus. My peers, who took exotic vacations in places like Antigua and Vail, thought that my "fun night" eating ice cream with my mother was the dumbest thing they had ever heard.

Thankfully, I didn't cave into the peer pressure of this group, because I already knew in my heart that they were wrong. They had nice clothes and cars, but they weren't nice people. Rather than be intimidated, I continued to seek out friends in my own neighborhood, who didn't have a lot of money, but cherished everything they had. My "kindred spirits" were other kids who delighted in getting an extra scoop of ice cream and who celebrated another's success as strongly as their own.

In hindsight, it was not *my* family that was disadvantaged, but those of my privileged tormentors at St. Charles. Although they had a lot of money, they didn't have the sense to enjoy it. While chasing designer goods, they failed to appreciate the small things in life, like a beautiful flower or a cool breeze, which didn't cost a penny. By refusing to associate with anyone who had less than they did, they missed many wonderful opportunities for true friendship.

Years later, I am proud of the person I have become, which I attribute exclusively to my mother's example. Indeed, her simple life lessons continued to empower me throughout my successful academic career at

Stanford. Despite my frantic schedule, I volunteered at a health clinic and always made time to tutor freshman science students. I sang in the church choir and didn't feel deprived living on my meager budget. Like my mom, I have never lost sight of God's gifts and the beauty that surrounds me every day. By teaching me the value of life's truest blessings, my mother has been the best teacher I ever had.

## **Personal Background**

Some say I am a glutton for punishment; others say I am a risk taker. I say they are right – through an unusual series of personal experiences, I discovered that risk and sacrifice are prerequisites for success. In hindsight, I wasn't always so bold and daring. As a teenager, I often felt defeated by the seemingly insurmountable challenges of acne, shyness and doomed high school romances. Yet I always knew that life had much to offer, if I was only brave enough to chase my dreams. The summer before college, I stunned everyone by making a "now or never" decision; I decided to sell books door-to-door as an independent contractor.

On the surface, company's proposition was insane: re-locate to Florida, establish a new sales territory, and pay for my own living expenses while working 80 hours per week on a commission-only basis. My friends and family thought I was nuts for even considering it. *What a scam!* But I looked past the 80 hour weeks; I saw an opportunity to break out of my shell, develop social skills, gain real life experience and become financially independent.

I also recognized the risk of failure, which complicated the decision. While evaluating the opportunity, I examined the company's product and realized it was actually very good – the type of study guide I wish I had when I was growing up. If given a chance, I knew that the product would sell itself. After careful contemplation, I realized the decision was not about faith in the company, but about faith in myself. Despite opposition from my friends and family, I took the risk.

Looking back, it was unquestionably the toughest experience of my life. After a full week, I had door after door slammed in my face and had not sold a thing. Someone even called the police to investigate me! No wonder each year nearly a third of new salespeople quit within two weeks. But I remained undeterred and eventually prevailed by setting ambitious (but realistic) daily goals. I studied the target market and tailored my pitch accordingly. As I began to better understand my customers' needs, sales picked up. I finished the summer with \$15,000 in my pocket and ranked in the top 1% internationally among 3,100 independent contractors. I was promoted to Student Manager the next year.

The experience offered me far more than I ever envisioned. I learned key principles of time management, goal setting and commitment. I learned to communicate better by listening to customers' needs. I learned to anticipate objections and became better at influencing people. I also learned that I could

accomplish anything if I put my mind to it. In a single summer, an awkward, insecure teenager blossomed into a confident risk-taker who embraces everything that life has to offer.

Afterwards, I developed a reputation for capturing the opportunities that others avoid. I challenged my fear of heights by skydiving in South America, hang-gliding in Switzerland and zip-lining in Mexico. After college, while my friends pursued jobs at large investment banks, I targeted small mergers and acquisitions boutiques, which has reputations as sweatshops. Despite the heavy workload, I saw the benefits of increased responsibility. Upon joining Bank One, I was the only analyst to choose the Financial Institutions Group, where two interns had supposedly collapsed in exhaustion. Where others saw unrealistic expectations, I saw a great learning opportunity from the group's high deal flow.

Looking back, my open-minded attitude toward life has rewarded me with significant personal development over the years. So, despite doubts I will likely face, I will continue to seize opportunities in my life. The road less traveled by others will always be my most common path.

**What is the best mistake you ever made? What important lesson did you learn?**

As the child of two intelligent, highly educated parents, the world was always my oyster. From my earliest memory, my family did everything possible to nurture my academic, emotional and spiritual growth. I attended private schools, traveled around the world and explored different cultures and religions. In addition to providing a strong foundation, my parents gave me the tools to build whatever future I wanted.

Unfortunately, for much of my life, I had no idea what I wanted to build. Blessed with a strong native intelligence, I fared well in high school without exerting much effort. I subsequently invested more time in extracurricular activities than in developing solid study habits. Like many teenagers, I entered college without a clear sense of purpose or direction. I was also completely unprepared to handle the amazing amount of freedom on campus. After four years of skipping classes and not applying myself, I graduated with an embarrassingly low grade point average. At the time, I did not have the maturity or foresight to realize that my actions would limit my future aspirations.

In my first financial job, I discovered my aptitude for a business career. As an analyst for Citi-Corp, I have developed an enviable ability to summarize complex financial data in a format that our customers can understand. I have also cultivated the requisite interpersonal skills to attract and satisfy large institutional clients. Thanks to my demonstrated commitment to the firm, I have enjoyed a rapid series of promotions in a highly competitive industry. I finally decided where I wanted to build my professional "house."

Unfortunately, during the 2004 application season, my undergraduate GPA prevented me from being admitted to business school. For a brief moment, I wondered if I had destroyed my chances to pursue my professional calling. Yet a poignant quote by the eccentric Zelda Fitzgerald inspired me to apply again: "By the time a person has achieved years adequate enough for choosing a direction, the die is cast and the moment has long since passed which determined the future." At 26, I am unwilling to abandon my pursuit of a satisfying future.

Since graduating from college, I have learned many difficult lessons. I learned that the choices I made as a carefree teenager can affect me forever. I learned that the things of real value in life rarely come easily or without sacrifice. Most importantly, I learned the true value of opportunity. Although I regret the poor decisions I made in college, I am thankful for what they taught me. My victories and defeats have made me a person who "has achieved years adequate enough for choosing a direction." I will not squander this chance to succeed.

**What is the best mistake you ever made? What important lesson did you learn?**

Early in my engineering career, I learned the hazards of "clinging to the old paradigm." An individual (and a company) must quickly embrace new possibilities and initiate changes to improve worker safety. In 1997 I worked as a Senior Engineering Manager at a Canadian strip mine that was regarded as the least safe in the world. Early in my tenure, one of my workers was permanently disabled by an underground accident. Concern for worker safety became my highest priority. I began to investigate the cause of most accidents on our shaft and to contemplate possible preventive measures.

I immediately discovered a logistical problem; the workers going to and from the extraction field shared the same underground tunnel with the clay being transported to the surface. Although our safety regulations greatly reduced the chance of accidents, they still occurred. The close proximity of the fast traveling cars and the workforce in a narrow tunnel was a recipe for disaster. Under the time pressures of our typical workload, we often neglected the regulations and risked fatal accidents. My proposed solution was to substitute a conveyor belt for the old rail cars, which continuously transports the clay to the elevator. The belt required less space in the tunnel and was much safer. Yet the change required a financial investment that management initially resisted. They were comfortable with their current method of doing business, which maximized output rather than safety.

Realizing the importance of my proposal, I became a vocal advocate for the change. I initiated research to support the new method, gathered data and calculated the cost/benefit options. I explained my idea to people from different departments and secured their support. Driven by my commitment to worker safety, I presented a plan to management that maximized both output and safety. The new conveyor belt provided a continuous flow of clay to the elevator and increased the quantity of clay being transported. It also provided more space for the workers who traveled through the tunnel. My dedication to the plan ultimately convinced management that the change was in the company's best interest. We implemented the new system and I carefully monitored its acceptance.

My fulfillment from this success is bittersweet. I will forever regret that one of my workers was seriously injured on the job. I cannot change his fate or reverse his disabling injury. Yet as a manager, I used my skills and energy to prevent another life-threatening situation. I was proud to improve the working conditions for my employees and to be an advocate for safety.

### **What is the best mistake you ever made? What important lesson did you learn?**

One of my most challenging roles at Exxon was as coordinator for an internally resourced improvement program focused on cost, throughput and quality. The project had multiple objectives: establishing performance baselines, setting stretch targets, ensuring robust end products and developing an implementation plan. Yet my greatest challenge was convincing the combined team and their supporting plant personnel to review the current working practices and develop the best, unbiased business solutions.

Inspired by the challenge, I initially didn't understand the reluctance of senior staff to objectively evaluate their current practices. In their minds, any improvement we identified was a criticism of the current system, rather than an opportunity for progress. My challenge was further complicated by the directive to properly adjust headcount, which plant personnel flatly refused to consider. They considered my presence as "another greedy corporate ploy to generate cash" and "an excuse to cut numbers." Clearly, the project was in danger of failing, along with our corporate success. Despite my best efforts to gain plant support, the presiding mantra became "Why should we recommend ideas that will either make us work harder or even cost us our jobs?"

As project coordinator, I needed to properly communicate the importance of the initiative and the potentially dire consequences of our failure. Since I couldn't gain the necessary support using my original strategy, I quickly revamped my approach. I developed a new message that focused on plant-specific issues. My discussions addressed what the results meant to each worker, his family and his community, rather than the general effect to the shareholders. I positioned our project as a mutual initiative to prevent a potentially dismal outcome. My new message, personalized for my plant audience, began to alter their mindset and generate inventive ideas for improvement. I still had to use careful and reasoned persuasion to move the team out of their comfort zone, but I finally felt we were all on the same team.

This project taught me that effective communication skills can mean the difference between success and failure. The plant's strong resistance challenged my managerial and interpersonal skills. At the outset, I became frustrated by the audience and responded too aggressively. Yet my confrontational style was

ineffective and didn't help my audience understand the needs of the business. By placing myself in the worker's shoes, I found a better approach. I listened, empathized with their concerns and gave positive feedback when we made progress. My project was easier, more satisfying and more effective when I had people working with me, rather than against me.

I apply the lessons I learned from this project to all of my professional objectives. Corporate visions, strategic briefings, restructuring programs and all other methods of generating improvement will fail in the implementation stage unless the "doers" are personally stimulated to perform. This requires empathy for those most affected, to place myself in their position to understand their concerns and motivations. Only with the support of the workers can a corporate directive succeed.

**Describe a situation where you introduced and/or managed change in an organization. Tell us how you influenced others in an organization (business, school, extracurricular activity) and comment on the professional and/or personal attributes you used to do that and how these attributes (and others) might be important to the attainment of your career goals.**

In 2001, Cachet Software Inc. was a company without engineers. When I became the Director of Development, despite my lack of previous managerial experience, my primary challenge was to build a dynamic product development group to handle our software issues.

Before I joined Cachet, all product development services were outsourced. My first step was to create a development team to maintain and transfer knowledge internally. We developed written technical specifications and created a database to log product defects. Second, I organized a testing group that worked closely with the developers. This improved our product quality and reduced the development cycle. Finally, I coordinated a group of documentation writers to revise our product manuals to include greater detail. As a result, product support calls decreased and customer satisfaction increased.

My strategy quickly paid off. Six months after I began, we successfully released our most important product four weeks ahead of schedule. The product quickly seized valuable market share away from two competitors who are ten times larger than Cachet in size and revenue. After achieving profitability in 2002, we are on target to double our sales from \$1,500,000 to \$3,000,000 with over 500 customers. By 2004, we had expanded our staff by 350% and had already started working on new projects for 2005 to stay ahead of our competitors.

My leadership experience was enhanced by the support of my talented, multi-cultural team. I hired and trained the best people available, including a young Wyoming college graduate, a sociable African-American communications major, an adopted Korean native and a gifted Nepalese immigrant. Despite our diverse backgrounds, we bonded quickly and formed a strong co-operative team. I provided many incentives to improve our work environment, including two-on-two basketball games, books for internal professional development and flexible working schedules. I also assumed a human resources role by explaining the importance of 401(k) plan and by creating a company-wide recycling program.

I attribute my success at Cachet to several factors. My engineering background provided the

organizational and technical skills to co-ordinate the product development and bring new ideas to the process. My interpersonal skills enabled me to comfortably interact with different employees and to motivate them to achieve their potential. And my previous work experience allowed me to learn from the successes and failures of past managers. These diverse skills enabled me to overcome a lack of managerial experience and successfully overcome a a great challenge.

**Describe a situation where you introduced and/or managed change in an organization. Tell us how you influenced others in an organization (business, school, extracurricular activity) and comment on the professional and/or personal attributes you used to do that and how these attributes (and others) might be important to the attainment of your career goals.**

When I joined Fleet National Bank in 2001, my group was an eight-member entrepreneurial team that managed \$4.8 billion in portfolio assets. We each wore several hats, doing whatever was necessary to serve our clients, develop better models and trade more efficiently. Our hard work allowed the group to grow rapidly. In less than three years, we increased our assets under management to \$45 billion and our group to 35 people.

Although thrilling, the rapid growth created many challenges. The existing trading system that had been developed half a decade ago could not cope with the sharp increase in trade volume. The traders and portfolio administration staff frequently worked late at night to manually process the trades into our accounting system. Working side-by-side with them and seeing all the manual steps involved to check and match the orders, I was determined to develop a more efficient solution. I talked to traders, portfolio administrators, compliance officers and risk managers to document their roles in the portfolio trading process and how they interacted with the trading system. Armed with my analysis, I proposed a new modular system that could automate many manual steps and could scale up to accommodate even higher volumes.

Developing a new trading system is a highly complex and costly endeavor. To convince senior management of my plan's worth, I need to demonstrate its benefit, feasibility and support from all key users. I developed a prototype and a key module that addressed a major deficiency in the current system. I arranged another round of meetings with key users to present my plan and solicit feedback. Before proceeding, I need to be certain that I captured their process flow accurately and that the new system would help them do their jobs better. Responses were mixed. Some were skeptical because they saw many previous attempts fail, while others were cautiously optimistic. They liked what they saw, yet wondered whether I could make it happen. A few colleagues were really helpful: they not only answered my questions, but gave many constructive suggestions and referrals. I worked patiently with each group to address their concerns and incorporate their suggestions into the proposal.

This painstaking preparation made my presentation to senior management much easier. Their only key question was the transition plan. We got the budget and head count requested. With assistance from my newly recruited software developers, we successfully rolled out the system in June 2002. Since then, the system has enabled us to efficiently handle our increasing assets under management, which provides us with a strong competitive edge.

My communication skills have contributed greatly to my professional success. Regardless of the challenge, I am always alert to areas that need improvement. To gain support for my initiatives, I use team-building skills as early as possible. I initiate meetings, clearly articulate our goals and solicit input from my peers. I've discovered that people invest more in a project when they are personally and emotionally empowered. To handle the inevitable doubt and question that accompany change, I commit to action, focus on the issue, address concerns and win them over. I have been challenged by the rapid growth at Fleet National Bank and am proud of the initiatives I have taken and the successful results. Throughout the process, I have greatly enhanced my teamwork, communication and leadership skills.

The entrepreneurial spirit at Tuck will challenge my ability to "think out of box" and develop innovative solutions for a changing world. I am exhilarated by the thought of developing my leadership skills in such a talented group of people.

**Describe a situation where you introduced and/or managed change in an organization. Tell us how you influenced others in an organization (business, school, extracurricular activity) and comment on the professional and/or personal attributes you used to do that and how these attributes (and others) might be important to the attainment of your career goals.**

I was at my friend's home when his grandmother died. Within a half hour, a team of doctors arrived to harvest her eyes. My friend's grandmother was an organ donor who wanted her corneas to be used to provide sight to a blind person. I was amazed by the number of organ donations and the tissue-matching process. I learned that there were far fewer donors than needed and that many people remained sightless for no reason. I contacted an eye donation bank in (city) run by the XXXXX Club to see what I could do to help.

Religion is the greatest challenge to corneal donation in (country). A majority of people are (name of religion), which requires a body to be cremated after death. No provision is made for giving away part of your body. People also were hesitant to commit to the process. Although they understood the urgent need for corneas, few would commit to the actual donation.

Another problem was converting pledges to actual donations. Although many people pledge their eyes, few are actually harvested. A donor's family must agree to the donation at the time of death and make the necessary arrangements. Without their co-operation, the donor's wishes will not be honored. I took two steps to improve the situation. First, I asked all donors to get the written consent of their family members. Second, I gave all participants the contact information for every eye donation bank in India. Whatever their location, the nearest donation bank was just a phone call away.

Within a few months, I had convinced my friends and my parents to donate their eyes for the cause. I also solicited my friends to promote the cause with me. I took them to the hospital where I was conducting my campaign "The Lions Club XXXXX." When the doctor told them about the high incidence of blindness in (country), they enthusiastically joined my cause. Starting with a modest target of 100 corneal donations, I later increased it to 500, and finally to 1000.

After some time, I realized that this activity changed the thinking of many people around me. Most of my friends and colleagues who donated their eyes also convinced their families to donate. Some of my colleagues organized an organ donation camp, which was dedicated to increasing donations of other body parts, particularly the heart, lung and liver. Another group of my colleagues organized a blood donation camp. Their positive outlook toward these activities and their pledge for continuous support of these organizations made me very proud. I was delighted to be the catalyst and initiator of such a worthwhile endeavor.

This cause was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate my persistence, my organizational skills and my dedication to helping other people. I am certain that my professional and personal experiences at Sloan will further develop these skills.

**The goal of the \_\_\_\_\_ MBA Program is to prepare graduates to be effective and innovative leaders in the global economy. As technology, innovation, globalization, and entrepreneurial opportunity become more important, managers need to understand how to develop new management models and methods and to make them work. Explain how the \_\_\_\_\_ MBA Program's focus on innovation will help you achieve your career goals.**

The Internet revolution has had a dramatic impact on my career in Human Resources. Although the technology was originally designed to share information, it has revolutionized the way companies do business. Today, many people assume that e-commerce giants such as amazon.com and eBay will have the greatest impact on corporations. However, I am convinced that online service companies, including

placement agencies hellobrain.com and guru.com, will eventually have as great an impact on business as e-commerce.

As a Human Resource specialist, I constantly struggle to attract and retain the most talented technical workers. With a low national unemployment rate, the United States faces a serious labor shortage in the technology area. Congress recently drafted a bill to increase the number of H-1B high-tech visas to 585,000 over the next 3 years. This will allow US companies to hire foreign workers for technical positions, to keep pace in our fast-moving economy. Yet, the procedure is not simple. Hiring foreign nationals is a complex, time-consuming challenge, and the emigration experience can be difficult. The Internet, which transmits information anywhere in just seconds, offers an intriguing solution to these issues.

In my work as Human Resource Director for Ecosys Investments, I use the Internet to hire, train and manage the best technical staff in the world. Ecosys Investments is a US corporation that employs foreign engineers who telecommute from their own countries. These highly-skilled employees develop and transmit technological solutions from home, eliminating the need for international relocation. Ecosys avoids complex immigration and unemployment issues, while the employee continues to enjoy his native language and culture. As an added benefit, my company reduces costs by utilizing inexpensive labor from undeveloped nations while maintaining a domestic corporate office. This trend for increasing use of foreign workers mimics the shift of the manufacturing industry to Asia in the 1980s. As the economy becomes international, the global workforce enables an efficient 24/7/365 schedule; as US workers begin the day, their counterparts in India will be retiring for the evening. This unified international workforce gives Ecosys the competitive edge that elevates us to our position as a market leader.

The technological leaders of the twenty-first century will be those who continually strive to develop innovative solutions to management problems. I chose the MBA program at Johnson because of your demonstrated commitment in this area. Your dynamic programs in the Park Center for investment research offer real-life problem-solving applications using state-of-the-art technology. Just as Ecosys uses technology to build an international workforce, Johnson has integrated the latest technologies into its curriculums, classrooms and job placement centers. This daily exposure to changing technology will better prepare me for future developmental challenges and opportunities.

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Innovation: the introduction of something new / a new idea, method, or device (Webster). In the fast-paced technology field, where an idea like personal mail (Hotmail.com) can create a 10 billion dollar behemoth

overnight, innovation is the key to success. During the course of my career, I have been struck by many innovative ideas, including one to open an investment web site, Currency.com, that provides stock market predictions. Although there are many competitive sites that research stock market behavior, none use technology as their enabler. The industry focuses most of their research on collecting and analyzing data, which specialists use to make predictions based on gut feelings. This research is expensive and generally inaccessible to small investors. My goal was to make a prediction tool that was available to everyone.

I launched the site in the fall of 2002 and survived my first full year with only 200 paid subscribers. Although money was tight, I received positive feedback from my clients and glowing testimonials about how my information improved their trading performance. After a positive write up in the *Wall Street Journal*, my tiny company had all the attention it could handle. My subscription based quadrupled within three weeks to over 900 subscribers and I received over 300 e-mails a day. By January of 2003, my small home-based business employed seven people and had literally made me a millionaire.

I measure the power of technology not by the amount of wealth it can generate, but by its ability to level the playing field in nearly every aspect of business. My web site demonstrates this in many ways and provides an excellent example of how business models must adapt to a constantly changing economy. First, my site delivers valuable financial data that was formerly unavailable to small investors, which improves their chances for success in the currency market. Second, the low cost of launching the site provided me the same international exposure to clients as billion dollar investment behemoths.

Technology increases the speed at which I innovate and allows me to distribute products and services to a global community in a matter of seconds. Yet my success will continue only as I adapt to rapidly changing competition and consumer expectations. As traders become more savvy, their demand for better, faster, lower cost information will increase, challenging my company and all of my competitors. Ultimately, technology will provide our clients with a better choice of products and services at a lower cost. As more companies fully utilize the power of the Internet, these challenges will require practical resolutions at a breakthrough speed. This is the challenge of a twenty-first century manager.

While I am certainly a successful "techie" with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, I acknowledge the importance of an MBA to my professional success. I am committed to pursuing more ventures in the fast-evolving e-commerce industry that utilize my technical background. Sloan offers a wonderful facility to nurture my dreams. Your research centers, which specifically focus on e-industry innovations, will help me develop and share ideas for future businesses. With a flexible and innovative business program, Sloan will expand my vision and enable me to create better companies that provide better solutions to my financial clients worldwide.

**The goal of the \_\_\_\_\_ MBA Program is to prepare graduates to be effective and innovative leaders in the global economy. As technology, innovation, globalization, and entrepreneurial opportunity become more important, managers need to understand how to develop new management models and methods and to make them work. Explain how the \_\_\_\_\_ MBA Program's focus on innovation will help you achieve your career goals.**

In my engineering career, I've observed first-hand the challenges of being an effective technical manager. At Cachet Software Inc., I was promoted from a technical to a managerial position and quickly realized its dual challenges. The best technical leaders understand the X's and O's of a technical problem and can develop an appropriate business strategy. They must "speak the language" of both groups to bring conceptual ideas to the marketplace. Exceptional technical managers are rare, but I want to be one of them. Through my MBA, I plan to develop the business and communication skills to interact effectively with both engineers and managers.

I've been amazed by the transformation of managers who have completed challenging MBA programs. Compared to their peers, these managers appear more experienced and competent, with a strong

intellectual inclination. I admire their confidence in making clear decisions, along with their leadership and marketing skills. These managers develop and motivate teams and articulate business ideas in a clear and concise manner. Managers with MBAs are seasoned professionals prepared to tackle today's complex business world.

My goal is to become a strong technical leader who can bring conceptual ideas to the marketplace. This combination of skills is already in demand. Many innovative companies are started by young technology wizards who have great ideas but lack the business experience to transform them into a commercial success. My short-term goal is to continue as a development manager at a small information technology company. My long-term goal is to become a Chief Technology Officer and help build a small company into an industry leader.

The Johnson school appeals to me for three reasons. First, my learning experience will be enhanced by the small intimate environment and two-way communication between students and faculty. Second, the school responds to student concerns by quickly updating programs and resources. Third, the Johnson program emphasizes leadership, a skill I've started to develop in my job and community service work. I'm eager to share my ten years of solid technical experience with others from different backgrounds. My professional experience will allow me to contribute positively during project work and classroom discussions.

### **Discuss an Improvement or Change You've Made at Your Organization**

After working for three months as a paraprofessional with Fleet Financial Services, I was promoted to Tax Specialist. Although I quickly mastered the complexities of international taxation and compliance, an internal personnel change forced me to accelerate my learning curve. My immediate supervisor left Fleet to begin her graduate studies, leaving me in charge of her responsibilities for the upcoming tax season.

My job was complicated by Fleet's implementation of a web-based personal data organizer. In addition to my work in compliance, I had to help our existing clients learn to use the online system. This required sending explanatory letters, helping clients complete the questionnaires, and referring them (when necessary) to our technical support group. In addition, I helped to resolve any issues regarding the preparation and filing of our clients' tax returns. As always, our corporate goal was to file at least 85% of client returns before April 15.

Before the tax season began, I carefully analyzed the previous problems associated with the web-based pilot program. The first challenge was to deliver invitation letters (containing secure password and

instructions) that clients would actually read. Since our international clientele was fairly mobile, we often had to send letters several times before we received a response. This inefficiency raised our mailing expenses and labor costs to a prohibitive level. Furthermore, once our clients learned about the program, we had to convince them to invest the time to learn the new technology. Most clients were top-level executives who were quite happy with their paper-based organizers. Their resistance to the program was exacerbated by the inability of our technical support center to expeditiously (considering VIP clientele) handle the volume of calls received.

On my own initiative, I implemented a radical change in the program: I notified our clients about the web-based organizers by e-mail, rather than by sending traditional letters. This change eliminated the time we previously spent gathering addresses, printing and sorting letters and confirming their receipt. Upon consulting with our IT department, I decided to use a special function in Microsoft Outlook to send the letters as personalized e-mail attachments. After we sent each e-mail, I received an electronic notice when the message was read. The benefits of this change were two-fold: (1) Because most tax work was based on a fixed fee arrangement, the reduction in mailing costs resulted in higher per-client profit margin; (2) I decreased the time spent sending invitation letters from 40 hours to less than 5 hours. Once the process succeeded, I implemented it for other project teams, which saved significant time and labor throughout the department. Two months later, I used the same technology to decrease the process time for W-2 preparation from more than 40 hours to 6 hours.

My next challenge was to help clients properly complete the web-based organizer. The delay at our support center was frustrating to our international clientele, who were forced to call us from overseas. I addressed their concerns with a "personal touch" by sending a friendly e-mail that asked them to call me personally if they had any problems submitting data. Although I ultimately spent the anticipated "time savings" on the phone, the program was a terrific success. By mid-February, most of the organizers were completed and received, which helped me to exceed our goal of 85% compliance by April 15. Also, by conducting these one-on-one "help sessions," I converted the clients' initial anger into cooperation, which made my job easier and more efficient. By developing personal relationships with our clients, I ultimately enabled our team to receive the highest customer evaluation rating. On my last day on the job, I received over 40 unsolicited personal e-mails from clients (including several from top-level management) thanking me for my work. According to my manager, they had not seen such a positive client response for a very long time.

**Discuss an Improvement or Change You've Made at Your Organization**

Following my graduation from Princeton, I accepted a position as International Event Planner for Walt Disney World in San Diego, California. In addition to developing my leadership skills, I created the company's first international marketing plan, which included corporate sponsorships, direct mail campaigns, press releases and magazine articles. As our marketing efforts expanded, I assumed responsibility for coordinating the activities of seven marketing groups scattered in different cities across the globe. Our seven-member team planned, managed, budgeted and ran all Disney events, including trade shows, classes, seminars, customer events and sales kick-offs. With a budget of nearly \$4.6 million, I shouldered a huge responsibility for our international marketing efforts.

Despite the cordial rapport among the seven marketing managers, our communication was hindered by our geographic separation. To whatever extent possible, we kept in touch by email, telephone calls and via monthly video conferences, yet I never truly felt that we "connected" beyond a superficial level or shared each other's individual successes. In 1999, I initiated a formal team-building program for the marketing groups in Canada, Spain, England, France, Japan, China and the United States. In this cooperative program, we each agreed to spend one month per year at each other's base location, learning as much as possible about that unit's problems and opportunities. Whenever possible, we agreed to offer insight and solutions from our own Disney experiences.

After an awkward start, the program became a tremendous success. Thanks to our shared corporate vision, we quickly overcame language and cultural barriers to focus on our common objectives. I was particularly proud of the improved cooperation and understanding between the US group and our Japanese office. During my time in Tokyo, I conducted several team-building exercises that fostered trust and communication between the groups. Whether singing "Yesterday" at the karaoke bar or eating Uni (a Japanese delicacy of raw sea urchin), we each broadened our perspective of the world and walked away much more comfortable with each other. On a practical level, this camaraderie resulted in a shared vision, along with more efficient events and budgets. After receiving accolades from my peers and superiors (including the President and CEO of both the Japanese and US headquarters), I conducted similar exercises with the financial teams in the same seven countries. These experiences reinforced my passion for international business and confirmed my ability to thrive in diverse, multicultural environments.

### **Discuss an Improvement or Change You've Made at Your Organization**

Since age sixteen, I have worked for Sunkist Gardens, my family's natural produce business, which supplies fresh lettuce, bell peppers and tomatoes to restaurants and food service institutions in the tri-state area. In early 2003, the national news media reported a number of stories about children in California whose learning disabilities were at least partially attributable to hexazone, a common pesticide used for citrus. Through the misguided efforts of an overzealous consumer reporter, the names of every citrus farm in California that used hexazone was published in the *Los Angeles Times*. Unfortunately, the name Sunkist Farms was mistakenly included on the list.

As expected, the outraged public demanded answers to impossible questions. How could we endanger the lives of our customers? Why didn't we issue a warning about the chemical's toxicity? How many lives were we willing to sacrifice in the name of profits? Within a matter of days, the reaction bordered on hysteria. Sadly, my entire family wound up doing emergency "spin" to minimize the damage to our reputation. The economic ramifications were quick and severe; in a six-week period, our sales dropped by almost 65%.

As the president of the company, I assumed full responsibility for handling the bad press. Determined to set the story straight, I took out a full-page ad in the *Los Angeles Times* to assure our clients that our products were 100% hexazone-free. I also agreed to absorb the costs for each customer to confirm our products' purity at a lab of their choice. After speaking to each customer directly, I called the newspaper reporter who wrote the initial inflammatory article and demanded a follow-up piece that presented our side of the story. Thankfully, she agreed to my request and presented a balanced perspective in her next article.

Probably my greatest contribution to the dilemma was converting to an alternative pesticide that was 100% food grade. When the initial hysteria died down, the media began to inquire about our novel solution. In a series of interviews with local television, radio and newspaper reporters, I became a media "expert" on organic farming, which lent an air of credibility to our business. Within a matter of months, Sunkist Gardens was cited as the "gold standard" in fresh produce by the California Restaurant Association.

Although I'd love to take credit for being a technological maverick, the truth is that I was simply doing my job. I responded to a crisis situation with empathy and logic, which led to a viable solution. By balancing my own professional goals with the concerns of our valued customers, I set a public relations example for the rest of the industry. The benefits to Sunkist Gardens, and our satisfied customers, have been overwhelmingly positive.

**What do you consider to be your greatest professional talent?**

My greatest talent is fundraising on behalf of cancer research. My inspiration comes directly from my heart. As a child, I watched helplessly as my mother waged a long battle against breast cancer. Armed with a strong spirit, my mother survived a grueling cycle of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. I quickly learned that her "pathology" results revealed the success or failure of her treatment regimens. Like my parents, I feared "bad" results (metastasis) and rejoiced when she received "good" reports (tumor shrinkage). Despite my initial trepidation, I was determined to understand as much as possible about the disease. I read voraciously about cancer and the prevailing theories about its causes. Ultimately, my mother's illness inspired me to pursue a career as a public health advocate.

As an adult, I have raised funds for several charities that promote cancer awareness throughout my community. Between 2003 and 2004, I raised over \$4 million for the Dallas chapter of Gilda's Club, which offers free services and educational programs for cancer patients, survivors and their families. I am currently organizing a gala benefit on behalf of Los Angeles Oncology Associates, which offers free and reduced price services to indigent and uninsured patients. I also volunteer at the center, where I draw blood, conduct lab analyses, take vitals, assist with bone marrow procedures and provide emotional support to chemotherapy patients. Thanks to my early experiences as a caregiver, I understand the challenges that patients endure on their uneasy road to recovery. I can't imagine a better use of my time or energy.

**What do you consider to be your greatest professional talent?**

My greatest talent is entrepreneurship: the ability to identify and seize an opportunity. After six years of corporate experience in the financial industry, I moved to London last fall to start a small export food business that specialised in self-rising gourmet pastries. Lacking knowledge and experience in the sector, I embarked on a self-education program, devouring all available materials about the baking industry. Nearly a year later, I am convinced that I have discovered a lucrative niche market with numerous ways to grow.

My partner and I commenced the business by developing a new "concept" product that is tailored to accommodate a consumer's busy lifestyle. Our challenge is to simultaneously ensure the quality and authenticity of our pastries. After nine months of hard work, we launched the product under the "Rolls in a Minute" brand name. Our strategy is to simultaneously build a solid business base in Ireland, UK and France before expanding to other markets. With no similar products on the market, we currently enjoy a competitive edge.

Working on my own business means working around the clock at something that is amazingly stimulating and rewarding. As a director of the company, I am involved with every aspect of our business, including corporate registration, product quality regulation, partnership agreements, accounting systems and

other organizational matters. On a daily basis, I must excel at both high-level professional activities (pitching for new accounts) and seemingly mundane tasks (filing and cash flow management). My primary challenges were learning a new industry, financing the venture and building a brand with limited funds. In each market, we must create and insert a presence with an “unknown” or newly-built brand amidst a highly competitive, sophisticated and price-sensitive sector.

Through entrepreneurship, I learned how to take risks and endure daily setbacks. In difficult situations, I learned how to stay positive, disciplined and flexible. My vision for this company is to develop a solid European brand within our initial targeted markets. With the insight and advice from Sloan's faculty and students, I will learn how to achieve my goals with minimal risks and mistakes.

Entrepreneurship gives me the “all-round” challenges that I crave as a highly driven professional. In some ways, I feel like I am a bridge connecting the gap between my parents' generation and my own. By providing quality convenience food, I am continuing the traditions of an old generation to meet the demands of a new generation (tailoring to today's fast-paced global lifestyle). This venture allows me a rare opportunity to utilize my creativity and realize my own vision.

### **What do you consider to be your greatest professional talent?**

Throughout my tenure at Citi-Corp, I have demonstrated my talent for leadership in several volunteer and community organizations. In the fall of 2000, I formed a non-profit group in New Orleans called Relief Point, to educate the public about emergency disaster preparation. At the time, I had no idea how urgent our mission would be.

Just two weeks after completing our paperwork, before a single volunteer could be trained, Hurricane Doris hit the Gulf Coast. Relief Point had only a few thousand dollars in seed money and the manpower of its four founders to apply to the situation. Nevertheless, we committed our collective resources to doing everything possible to help the community survive the storm.

Exploiting my connections at a local television station, I delivered on-air advisories to the general public on topics related to evacuation and safety. I went door-to-door in the community to move elderly residents to nearby shelters and found a safe place to house over one-hundred abandoned pets. After the eye of the storm had passed, I accompanied my fellow volunteers on a “disaster run” through the city, removing detached tree branches from roads and bridges. The following day, I led a group of six volunteers who collected 6,000 pounds of nonperishable food for the displaced residents.

Looking back, our actions were not outstanding or even remotely heroic. We simply did what good citizens *should* do during a crisis. Nevertheless, our commitment during Hurricane Doris set the tone for what Relief Point ultimately would become; a group of concerned citizens committed to helping each other through difficult times. Since our frenzied start in 2000, we continue to provide emergency relief assistance after natural disasters and to hold canned food drives each summer. We now boast forty members, who range in age from seventeen to sixty-seven.

Thanks to my initiative in creating Relief Point, New Orleans has an additional safety net for the weather hazards that haunt the coast. For me, the greatest benefit is being part of a tight knit community who takes great pride in protecting their own.

### **Raised Outside the United States / Cross-Cultural Background**

I attribute my successful career progression to a combination of good planning, calculated risk, great opportunity and a little luck. After spending my entire life in Japan, I received an unexpected chance to work in the United States, the world's largest economy. Since arriving in America, I better understand the cross-cultural challenges of global business. My current position requires constant interaction with teams of various cultural backgrounds in different parts of the world. My success in business development and international sales has inspired me to pursue a career in international business management.

Like my father, I knew from an early age that I had a talent for sales. During my twelve-year career at various computer companies, I rapidly advanced into leadership roles. I began in front-line sales, increasing my company's revenues and customer base. I later advanced to large accounts, single-handedly closing multi million-dollar contracts. While at Hewlett Packard, I grew the Pacific Rim Region PC division by 200% in just three years, generating 40% of the region's revenue. The increased profits resulted from the implementation of my ideas to use channel partners to better cover the territory and to package value-added solutions. Through aggressive selling, we bundled software and services along with the PC's, greatly increasing our profits. After my promotion to Account Manager, I accepted the challenges of management, including the development of my direct reports.

As a Sales Manager with Tyson Electronics, I managed the financial and administration of my own region. With limited experience in operations, I learned on the job. After three years, the region grew from a single-man operation to a 20-member team that contributed 40% of the company's total revenue. With consistent annual growth of 35%, Tyson became one of the preferred brands in the region. As Sales Manager, I upgraded my skills in marketing, recruiting, human resources and finance. Through strategic planning, I maximized revenues, handled P&L management and mentored key team members. I designed and implemented a matrix organization structure for the region, defining the individual roles and responsibilities of all support staff. In 2000, we were named the firm's "best region", with eight team members (including me) selected to the President's top performers club. I was promoted to Regional Manager-South the same year.

Despite my successful life in Japan, I couldn't resist the opportunity to expand my skills in the challenging US market. In 2001, I joined Affinity Inc., a US-based internet consulting company, as Associate Sales Director in San Diego, CA. My responsibility was business development for the Southwest region of the US. Using the global delivery model, Affinity offers customers a fast, low-cost method to develop application software. To leverage costs and penetrate global markets, our development was split between centers in the United States and Japan. When I arrived in the US, the old economy was experiencing a paradigm shift to the Internet age. At Affinity, I helped corporate leaders from different industries re-define and migrate their business models to the Internet. I developed domain knowledge of certain industry verticals, resource management skills, project management oversight, technology understanding and account management skills. In 2002, I won a fixed-price contract of \$2.5 million from Discovery Infosystems for the development of a clinical information system portal in the healthcare space. In mid 2004, I was promoted to Director of Sales.

After years of professional success, I am eager to acquire the training that will open the doors to senior level management. Upon completion of my MBA, my short-term goal is to work in the international business division of a Fortune 100 company. To lead an organization effectively, I need a comprehensive understanding of finance, operations and global management. In an increasingly competitive business environment, effective leaders must be champions of change, which requires an in-depth understanding of core business fundamentals. A Harvard MBA will enable me to achieve my goals.

### **Raised Outside the United States / Cross-Cultural Background**

After obtaining my undergraduate degree in Singapore, I accepted a position at a US firm in 1997. My arrival in America dramatically expanded my perspective of opportunities and pitfalls in the world market. As a Software Manager for Goff Industries, I sold the concept of offshore-based software development to US clients. I quickly discovered the need to "sell" my native country in addition to our software solutions. Despite the international scope of technology, decision makers at Fortune 100 companies were apprehensive about awarding contracts to an offshore entity. Even after hearing our best presentations, clients questioned the quality of the work we did in Singapore. Initially, nothing could convince them, including glowing credentials and references from satisfied customers. We secured new clients only after I stepped in to bridge the gap, assuming the role of liaison between the two cultures.

No presentation or proposal can adequately convey Singapore's style of working, professionalism or sense of commitment. My role was to provide the "human touch," to answer questions and ease concerns on both sides. I began by coaching the offshore Project Manager about the customer, his interests and his apprehensions. With this information, we decided how the manager should present himself to the client. We held conference calls and video conferences to discuss project preliminaries and to break the ice between team members. By "putting a face to the name," we maximized the human element of the transaction, which landed our initial sales.

Although the introduction process was not unique, my effectiveness was enhanced by my bicultural appreciation. In any interaction, I could articulate the feelings of either side. By selecting the right team members and introducing them properly, I cleared the first critical hurdle; we got our foot in the door. We then negotiated the client's technical issues and demonstrated our strengths. In most cases, once our customers saw positive results, they wondered why they ever doubted us. After my first few sales, I understood the power of my personalized approach. While Goff Industries enjoyed increased sales, many of my counterparts who lacked work experience in Singapore found it impossible to sell offshore-based solutions

We often invited our prospects to visit our facility in Singapore, using my skills as a native tour guide. A few days before the client's arrival, I traveled to Singapore to make all travel, lodging and recreational plans. I accompanied the prospect on tours of the plant and region, explaining the benefits of the community and workforce. A well-executed tour was a crucial phase of the sales process that required the skills and fluency of a native. I provided similar guidance to consultants from Singapore who came to work on projects in the US. From the moment they arrived in San Francisco, I helped them interface with project managers and find their way around town. I provided a knowledge and perspective of both cultures that others could not.

Most resistance to doing business in Singapore stems from America's outdated vision of the region. Cultural life in Singapore is a constant negotiation between strongly held traditional values and emerging modern business practices. Yet this dynamic is quickly changing. Under the economic reforms of the last two decades, Singapore has become one of the most intriguing and potentially profitable markets of the developing world. The IT industry, in particular, has progressive business practices and large opportunities for international trade. For savvy partners, great profits are possible. Singapore has the largest youth market in the world, including millions of highly educated, computer-literate people under age 15. These consumers have benefited from the liberalized economy and show great interest in foreign products. In purchasing practice, they tend to be more experimental consumers, who are receptive to US advertising. In my classes at Wharton, I am eager to propose and explore possible business ventures to target this largely untapped market.

I am also eager to augment my knowledge of American culture and become more savvy about doing business in the US. With my background in international trade, I can help others establish global corporations that embody the best aspects of both cultures. In turn, I hope to enjoy a rich dialogue that promotes understanding and tolerance between two very different cultures that have much to gain from each other.

### **Raised Outside the United States / Cross-Cultural Background**

After living in Thailand for nearly fourteen years, I survived a profound culture shock when I returned to the United States. My transition was mitigated by my academic success at UC Berkeley, where I studied classical Chinese literature under the direction of Professor Zion Zhang. After completing my BA in Mandarin (with honors), I managed purchasing and database projects in the computer industry for two years before I decided to bolster my career with a few classes in business. I subsequently enrolled in night school at California State University to learn more about purchasing and supply management.

During my first class in finance, I found myself mesmerized by the complexity and elegance of the material. Finance seemed like a foreign language that was filled with challenging new terms and unusual acronyms. I was so eager to become fluent in this wonderful new language that I completed a second degree in business administration. In addition to my full-time job as purchasing manager at CBY Computer, I was also offered a teaching assistantship from my professor of quantitative business. By immersing myself in the complexities of finance, I developed indispensable analytical skills I could not have gained otherwise.

My classes in international finance were particularly appealing. I scrutinized case studies, carefully

identifying and interpreting meaningful facts to assemble a financial model that would allow for scenario and what-if analysis on key variables. I was captivated with foreign exchange risk and political risk, as these issues have tremendous impact on the outcome of a financial analysis project of international scope. My finance classes taught me to read critically and to incorporate unwritten implications into my overall analysis of a case or situation.

After graduating with honors, I was solicited by Microsoft, which valued my dual background in purchasing and financial analysis. After playing an exciting game of compensation negotiation, I joined the firm and have been pleased with my progress within the company. On several occasions, I researched internal problems and presented my oral and written recommendations to executive management. I recently jumped at the chance to re-write of our company's purchasing policy manual, which gave me the opportunity to showcase both my writing skills and my purchasing knowledge.

After adapting the academic manuals for corporate use, I created a forty-page document that is posted on our website for company-wide reference. I continually improve my analytical and interpretation skills by managing a national contract project that involves the collection and capture of over one thousand domestic contracts into a centralized repository. As project manager, I must read each contract thoroughly to identify key pieces of information for recording and classification. Because the contracts are long and complex, my success hinges on my ability to understand the language and subtle nuances of each document.

Although I enjoy my success in an industry-respected firm, I am eager to advance to a leadership position that will use my background in finance. I also miss the vibrancy of a multicultural environment. As I approach the MBA admissions process, I am eager to create a career that balances my need for achievement with the fulfillment of my personal passions. Professionally, I am compelled to intertwine my corporate experience and higher education with my passion for international relations and intercultural communication.

With its intriguing classes, global focus and overseas study programs, Stanford offers an excellent opportunity to acquire a solid business education in a community of like-minded professionals. I am eager to embrace all relevant opportunities to increase my knowledge of the global economy. Eventually, I hope to lead my own financial services organization, serving corporate clients and small investors in the Pacific Rim. Stanford's real-world education will enable me to develop the skills and understanding to become an accomplished leader in the world economy.

### **How Do You Define Success?**

During the past eight years, I have learned that personal success includes more than simply being wealthy. In fact, I was at my most confused and least fulfilled as a 24-year-old self-made millionaire. When I first graduated from college, I valued success strictly in monetary terms. My short-term goals were exclusively devoted to improving my financial status and living conditions. In May 1996, I joined a small Internet startup, hoping to learn fast in a dynamic environment. The company succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. A year later, it went public as one of the most successful IPOs at that time. Suddenly, at the age of 24, I was a multi-millionaire.

Being rich brought financial freedom to my life, along with unexpected challenges and frustrations. At first, I relished my good fortune by indulging in previously unattainable items, like a big house and a great car. Yet once those tangible things were easy to obtain, they lost their luster. Although getting rich satisfied my short-term goal, it didn't change who I was or give me direction. I felt lost for a time, uncertain of what I wanted to achieve with my life. I also felt powerless, as my financial future was tied to the volatile ups and downs of the stock market.

When I considered my aspirations, I was particularly inspired by people who used their gifts and blessings to discover their life's purpose and pursue their own unique path. I became committed to finding mine. I developed new hobbies, such as running and tennis, pushing myself to my physical limit. By testing and building my strength under difficult conditions, I became both physically and mentally healthy. I participated in community activities, working for a foundation and organizing a food drive at work. By helping others improve their lives, I discovered the ultimate source of my fulfillment.

The transformation left me energetic and passionate. I recovered from the "sudden rich syndrome" and focused on new goals. I eventually realized that the power of my success wasn't what I could buy, but what I could offer to others. In 2003, I left my lucrative position at the Internet company, losing nearly a

million dollars in stock options. My new position, paying a fraction of my former salary, is as marketing VP for a small, fledgling wholesale company that sells Bibles, candles and other religious artifacts to rural churches in the Southwest. I lead an energetic team of 20 people who love what they do and feel connected to their life's purpose. My leadership role now includes the design and implementation of effective fund raising programs. I also keep a good balance between my work and my personal life.

Most acquaintances thought I was insane to leave my previous lifestyle to pursue a risky, alternative venture. To them, success was defined strictly by financial standing. I know better. By focusing on what I can do for others, rather than myself, I have found a joy I never dreamed possible. By setting my expectations higher than my current knowledge and experience, I am always growing, changing and evolving. I consider my success not having money, but having the freedom and dedication to serve and help others. Because of my young age, I am blessed with many years to confidently meet new challenges and goals. I will contribute my appreciation for rigorous self-examination and my value-based approach to life to Wharton's diverse community.

### **How Do You Define Success?**

After growing up without amenities, I initially defined success in monetary terms; I wanted to beat the competition, reach the top and acquire significant fame and fortune. As a young adult, I pursued every goal with an eye on material success. After completing my bachelor's program with distinction, I obtained my graduate degree from Ohio State University and landed a high paying job. Ironically, I was not satisfied once I attained the financial success that I had always coveted.

After working with people from different backgrounds, cultures and viewpoints over the last five years, my perception of success has changed dramatically. I discovered that successful people share a common characteristic – an immense passion for their pursuits, regardless of material gain. After witnessing their joy, I realized that my initial definition of success was not my own, but that inherited from others. As an adult, I have redefined what it means to succeed on my own terms. I no longer focus on how others perceive me or how my performance compares to someone else's. Success is doing what I love and making a positive impact on the world around me.

Increasingly, I derive more satisfaction from serving my community than from toiling long hours at work to receive a larger bonus. In my current volunteer activity for the Kansas Cancer Society, I am responsible for recruiting teams of 200 volunteers and coordinating their activities to support Relay for Life. This fund raising program plans to raise \$250,000 to support cancer-related research and education. By using my skills as a manager to benefit cancer victims in my community, I feel successful.

As I re-direct my goals toward self-improvement, I place a high value on situations that broaden my perspective of life and force me to re-evaluate my place in it. As a result, I am more inclined to seek new hobbies and experiences, regardless of whether I will excel at them. True joy comes not from my performance, but from the satisfaction of exploring a new challenge or horizon. In this respect, success is a process that encourages me to expand my life to continually discover the limits of my potential. Success in

no longer a goal, but a way of life.

### **How Do You Define Success?**

"You're too young. Why don't you just enjoy being your age?" Rebellious and ambitious, I started my own business just to show everyone how wrong they were. At age sixteen, I sold hand-painted T-shirts from my own kiosk at our local shopping mall. Six months later, I triumphantly paid back my father the money he had loaned me for startup capital. I felt less jubilant a year later, when a national discount chain leased an anchor store in the mall and quickly put me out of business. Looking back, Newton's law taught me to know better. What goes up must eventually come down. The crux is how to maintain a sustained upward motion.

I have always defined success as having the courage to pursue my own ambitions. With my strong entrepreneurial spirit, I have always been the dreamer, the inventor and the doer. In my native China, where entrepreneurs are considered greedy capitalists, I maintain a dramatically different perspective. To me, entrepreneurs are agents of change. Those of us who start our own businesses see (and act upon) opportunities that others do not. With a wing and a prayer, we risk our reputation and somehow manage to create something from nothing. Even at age sixteen, I considered failure a small price to pay for the fulfillment of a personal dream.

After high school graduation, I made my first international relocation, moving from China to India to attend college. Studying in a multicultural environment has dramatically broadened my personal perspective, my business contacts and my understanding of the world economy. In four years, I have established friendships with people from a dozen countries and formed an "India office" in my bedroom at the dorm. My management team includes a financial analyst from India, a high-tech consultant from Japan, and me, the visionary. Combining our diverse strengths, we design web sites for college students who are marketing themselves to employers in the United States. With our diverse skills, we form a special blend that is versatile, open-minded and dynamic: traditional Confucian team spirit with Gandhian perseverance and Japanese diligence.

Following business school, I plan to return to my native China to pursue a venture of premier social relevance. The demographic shift that resulted from China's "single child policy" has created huge opportunities in the elder market. I am currently investigating this area, conducting interviews at Peking University and the National University of China with students who major in gerontology, psychology, law, urban planning and public policy. I've discovered that most elderly people in Beijing have a dire need for proper housing, medicine, recreation and companionship. Part of my motivation for obtaining an MBA in the United States is to investigate the steps that Americans have taken to profitably serve the needs of the elderly.

The cross-cultural program at Harvard will enable me to become a multidisciplinary problem solver and to launch my future ventures on a global scale. In your superior learning environment, I will further develop my intellectual capabilities and entrepreneurial drive, adding luster to the distinguished program. As for success, it is always within my reach; as long as I am learning, growing and reaching for my dreams, I am a success.

### **Role Models**

I often accompanied my mother to work when my after-school babysitter called in sick. Encouraged to be quiet, I sat under her office desk, unnoticed by the steady stream of clients who came and left. A family law specialist, my mother worked three days a week at the Hartfield Legal Clinic in South Detroit. Because good child-care was always hard to find, it became my playground on many late afternoons.

As a child, I didn't know that the clinic was considered the "bad" part of town or that my mother was considered crazy to practice there. To an outsider, my mother was a talented attorney who could have secured a partnership at one of Detroit's finest law firms. But she was never motivated by the trappings of success. As a self-made African-American woman, my mother took great pride in escaping a life of poverty and graduating from law school. But she never forgot where she came from or the people who helped her along the way. Rather than use her education as a "ticket" out of South Detroit, my mother viewed it as a resource to help revitalize the community. To her, working at the free legal clinic on South Main Street was a calling that she simply could not ignore.

On any given afternoon, she'd see up to twenty clients who wrestled with a wide range of problems. Some were being evicted, while others were fighting for child support from irresponsible ex-lovers. Many were unable to read the simplest legal documents. My mother would calmly and slowly read each line to them and make sure that they understood their rights. She encouraged them to assert themselves in unfair situations and demand what was rightfully theirs. After working hard for everything she had, my mother didn't take kindly to disrespect and abuse. Regardless of the complexity of a case, she fiercely protected the interests of her clients.

As I grew older, I began to volunteer at the clinic and do my part to help the community. By age 18, I was more aware of the misfortunes that ravaged many of our client's lives. Most used illegal drugs; several supplemented their welfare checks by engaging in prostitution. Although they gave my mom lip service about trying to be healthy, we both knew that their addictions precluded making positive lifestyle choices. Many times, my mother worked behind the scenes to find a bed for a client at a public hospital or rehab facility. Although she rarely saved anyone, she never stopped trying.

My mother is an inspirational role model for many reasons. Although she could have pursued a lucrative career in private practice, she dedicated her life to helping the poor residents of South Detroit. She treats all people with respect, regardless of their race, income or social status. Amazingly, as a single mother, she also managed to instill those same attributes in me. Throughout my career, I will continue to volunteer in my community and share my blessings with those who lack the benefits of a good education. After completing my MBA, I plan to work in public service, developing policies to help inner city residents. In every way possible, I am my mother's daughter.

## **Role Models**

As a social worker for the city of Detroit, I am committed to rebuilding our city and banishing illegal drugs from our streets. That isn't simply idealistic rhetoric. For the past twelve years, I have fought vigilantly to protect our poor, neglected children whose parents are drug addicts. It's a stressful, often thankless job that is huge in scope and sometimes unbearably painful. Yet my motivation is inherently personal; I believe that the social worker who intervened with my family saved my life.

I was born to a single mother in South Detroit and lived alone with her in an abandoned old building. My mother was mentally ill and began to disappear from our room for extensive periods of time. Finally, when I was 4, she disappeared for good. I was taken by a social worker named Mary to an intake facility and subjected to the first physical exam of my life. Mary stayed with me while her colleagues scrubbed my lean black arms and pulled dozens of lice off my head. For three long months, I lived in a county rehab facility where I was fed, clothed and taught to live as a functioning human being.

For several years, I was the poster child for the "hard to place" adoptee. Yet, miraculously, I was taken in by an older African American couple who were up to the challenge of raising an abandoned, hyperactive 7-year-old boy. Joe and Vivian Fox loved me unconditionally from the moment our eyes met and they gave me the only home I've ever known. I lived with them until I graduated from college and I consider them my family. I will always be grateful for their love, support, and nurturance in my life.

Yet I continue to be haunted by the thought of where I would be if the social workers were not called to rescue me from that abandoned building. I could easily have died from neglect, starvation or a violent encounter. I might never have found a home, attended school or had a chance for a normal life. No one knows how many other kids are living in equally dire circumstances. We have serious problem with societal breakdown in our inner cities that must be exposed, assessed and solved.

After college, I returned to South Detroit to work as a social worker. The problems are as severe as I remember, yet I am committed to being part of the solution. My position as a case worker for the Department of Human Services requires me to intervene in situations that are very similar to my own as a young boy. I remove children from dangerous and neglectful situations that usually originate from their parents' addictions. Although we always try to repair the original family unit, that is usually not possible. Parents die, are imprisoned or do not want to reclaim their children. Happy endings are rare.

When I feel overwhelmed by my job, I am inspired by Mary, my mentor and role model. After all these years, she is still working at Social Services to make our city a better place. Mary personalizes a system that is infamous for being overworked and detached. I'm not sure social services realizes the rare gem they have in her.

Mary and I often discuss the best way to solve the problems in Detroit. With a JD / MBA, I will be able to write successful grant proposals, develop programs and lobby for money. I also plan to acquire the communication skills to articulate our needs to the lawmakers who represent us in Congress. Most of our benefactors lack the personal perspective that I have acquired from growing up in the system. They don't understand the root problems. From my work, I know our critical needs and how to best approach them. I want to rise to a position where I can allocate resources to where they will make the most difference. Although I can't save the world, I am committed to doing my part.

## **Role Models**

As a young boy in Brooklyn, I was crazy about the New York Yankees. I followed every game on television and radio, paying close attention to the play-by-play commentary. At age six, during my first trip to Yankee Stadium, I watched Ron Guidry pitch a game for the very first time. He quickly became my hero, both for his amazing ability to throw a curveball and for his obvious love of baseball. Watching him dazzle a stadium of 20,000 rapturous fans, I couldn't imagine a better role model.

Looking back, I favored the flamboyant Guidry over the less famous players because of his ability to energize the crowd. From my childish perspective, he was like a firecracker that could go off at any moment, striking out his competitors at an inconceivable pace. A media darling, Guidry won five straight Gold Glove awards, along with the coveted Cy Young Award. Once, after an unexpected victory, he left the field to play the drums with the Beach Boys. At that time in my life, sports were mostly for entertainment. Competing to win was secondary to the dazzling show that Ron Guidry put on.

After two decades of watching and playing competitive sports, I now view athletics quite differently. Unfortunately, despite my passion for the game, I never shared Guidry's ability to strike out batters or to hit a grand slam home run. Yet I thoroughly enjoyed playing on a softball team. Some of my headiest college memories involve the adrenaline rush that accompanied a great hit and the lump in my throat when we unexpectedly lost. Even when my team was outmatched, I took great pride in fighting a good fight and exceeding my own standards.

Although my primary goal was recreation, sports ultimately taught me a lot about working on a team. Even with a "star" player, the game was rarely won or lost by just one person's skills. Keeping the other team at bay required split-second timing and collaboration; every man in the outfield had a vital job to do. Likewise, when the going was tough, it was the persistence of my team mates that kept me going. We gelled together as a cohesive unit, playing to our strengths and concealing our weaknesses. Although I was thrilled by our hard-fought wins, the true victory was in our special camaraderie.

In team events, a maverick like Ron Guidry is no longer my idea of a hero. Looking back, his priority was not helping his team mates, but in promoting his own career. Although there is a place for showmanship in athletics, the need for restraint and controlled aggression is equally important. Today, in both business and baseball, my heroes are the clutch performers who play within their limitations, but push their potential within that framework to achieve the team's objectives. They may not be the most graceful or talented players, but they come through when the team needs them most. They are the unsung heroes behind every so-called "superstar."

## **Most Valued Accomplishments**

(1) My three-week financial training program at Bank One involved several areas in which I had no previous experience, including financial modeling, financial analysis and computation and business simulations. As the youngest member of the class, I struggled to develop my analytical nature. Throughout the course, I pored over the examples and instruction manuals, which were more intense, challenging and voluminous than any textbook I had ever used. After studying my financial and accounting books each evening, I arrived early before each day's class to practice what I had learned the night before. My hard work paid off, and as the training program proceeded, I became more skilled and knowledgeable. Conquering the training program was critical to my success at the firm, where I must analyze business processes and develop solutions with confidence and skill.

(2) As the President of the Armenian Student Association (ASA) at New York University, I worked diligently to promote the Armenian culture and heritage on campus. My primary goal was to foster a greater sense of

cohesion among the members and make the club successful. Before I assumed the presidency, the ASA had been inactive for two years and needed an influx of energy to attract and retain student interest. To compete with other extracurricular activities on campus, I changed the nature of the club's traditional activities. I organized the first Armenian exposition on the NYU campus, which featured Armenian artwork and literature, along with Armenian food. By sharing the richness of the Armenian culture, we attracted the interest of twenty new members and helped to restore the quality of the AS.

(3) During the summer of 2001, I joined the XXXXX, a non-profit group that organized a summer enrichment program to support and nurture "average" students. For three two-hour sessions each week, I tutored and mentored Eliot James, a young man of great enthusiasm and intelligence. Despite his bright smile and exceptional memory, Eliot struggled to learn basic vocabulary and math. All too often, he became frustrated in class and was distracted by the disruptive students around him. As a result, he was removed to the hallway – away from distraction, away from instruction.

As I began to work with Eliot, I discovered that he primarily needed my emotional support. I encouraged him to resist the tendency to doubt himself, to discount his achievements, or to critically compare himself to other people. Ironically, these were the same behaviors that I had suffered when I was Eliot's age. With someone to believe in him, Eliot made significant strides that summer and continued to work with me after the program ended. Today, in his first year of college at the University of Florida, Eliot is a confident and successful business major.

Since that rewarding summer, I have invested considerable time and energy mentoring other talented students who were at risk of falling through the cracks of the public school system. Each child has taught me valuable lessons about teaching and motivating people to achieve their personal best. After reading Eliot's recent e-mail describing the intriguing and challenging course he is taking next semester, I wondered why anyone had ever labeled him "average."

### **Most Valuable Accomplishments**

**Championed an Innovation at Work.** As a research scientist for Nestle, I developed a new method to artificially accelerate the ripening of cocoa. By combining a pre-harvest carbon dioxide spray and a post-harvest acid wash, I yielded the same full-roasted taste as fully ripe beans. I later implemented the method at Nestle's experimental cocoa farm in Brazil. With a few minor equipment modifications, the pilot run confirmed that the artificial ripening method is viable on a commercial scale. I received a US Patent for the method and was named Nestle's 2003 Researcher of the Year.

**Completed a Marathon.** My second accomplishment was completing the Boston Marathon in 2002. After years of being a casual runner, or "weekend warrior," I made a personal commitment to fitness. Every morning, I ran five miles and cross-trained with a rigorous program of swimming and bicycling. Although the training was solitary and unfulfilling, I refused to abandon my goal. Simply participating in the marathon was an exhilarating experience. During the famed 26-mile run, I experienced a wide range of emotions: sadness, fear, rage, exhaustion and occasional delirium. When I crossed the finish line, the satisfaction was better than I ever expected. Although I didn't take home a trophy, I returned with a newfound sense of confidence about all of life's possibilities.

**Overcoming My Fear of Flying.** My final accomplishment was overcoming my lifelong fear of flying. At twenty-three, I managed to silence my inner demons long enough to enroll in American Airlines "Curb Your Fear" class with ten other white-knuckled flyers. Under the guidance of three American Airlines crew members, we completed three weeks of lectures and demonstrations about aviation safety. Although the program was well-done, the real test was the actual graduation flight, a short jaunt around San Francisco with the comforting guidance of our three teachers. To my amazement, we didn't crash, no one vomited and my stomach quickly recovered from its strong attack of butterflies. Although the achievement may seem minor to others, it made a huge difference in my life. I conquered an irrational fear and opened my mind to a new world of travel possibilities. As a result, I know that I can face future fears calmly, rationally and without undue emotional distress.

### **Most Valued Accomplishments**

1) As the daughter of a cancer survivor, I have always felt a strong affinity with patients who struggle with the disease. After completing my degree in nursing, I channeled this interest into a series of rewarding

positions as an oncology nurse and public health advocate. During the summer of 2003, I volunteered in the oncology ward at the International University Clinic in Beijing, which is known for its aggressive experimental treatment regimens. In addition to working with patients, I served as a translator for doctors from the United States. Over a three-month period, I learned about several promising experimental techniques that are being evaluated in Asia. On a personal level, I made several long-term friendships with the patients who obtained chemotherapy at our facility. Using my fluency in both English and Mandarin, I shared my experience of being the daughter of a cancer survivor. Throughout the summer, we enjoyed several long discussions about my patients in the United States, who struggled with similar side effects and treatment regimens. Many times, I simply listened quietly as patients shared with me their hopes and fears for the future. Although my patients in Beijing were from a dramatically different culture, we shared a powerful bond in our fight against a common disease. By making these personal connections, I discovered the power of friendship and compassion in a patient's recovery.

2) My second major accomplishment was starting my own thriving internet business, [www.newenglandnurses.com](http://www.newenglandnurses.com), an employment matching service for medical personnel in the New England area. I began the project with an idea, a few hundred dollars and a vision for cost-effective advertising. Using my local contacts, I quickly obtained my first listings and arranged 20 placements in my first month. I then re-negotiated my fee structure to a sliding-scale, depending upon the salary of the position and the subsequent tenure of the applicant. After its first year of operation, [www.newenglandnurses.com](http://www.newenglandnurses.com) surpassed \$100,000 in gross receipts and became my primary source of income. I continue to enjoy the success of my business, acting as liaison between qualified applicants and desirable jobs. I am eager to obtain formal business training to expand my current venture.

3) My final accomplishment was hosting a Costa Rican exchange student during her academic year in the United States. Fifteen-year-old Juanita was an absolute dynamo, full of questions about our country, our educational system and our government. After growing up in a small town, she was amazed by Boston's subway and skyscrapers, along with our penchant for shopping and junk food. For the entire year, I saw my world through the fresh eyes of a non-cynical, non-judgmental observer. Juanita made me appreciate the small blessings in my life and warmed my heart with unconditional acceptance. Despite our geographical, ideological and cultural differences, we made a powerful connection that dramatically improved the value of our lives.

