

CAREER LAUNCH



Preparing for a career while earning your degree

A Guide to Getting Started With Your MBA

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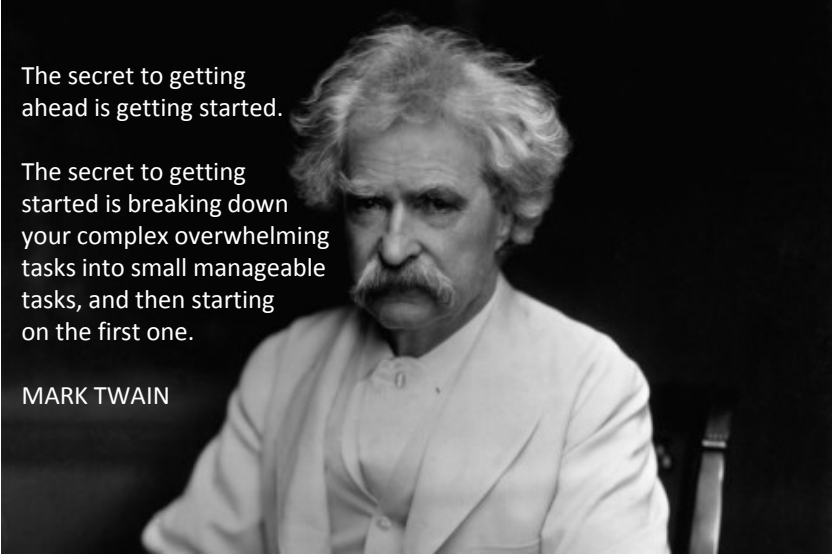
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Getting *Started with Your* MBA





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“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.”
~ Maria Robinson

Why This Guide Is Critical

When you start your MBA program, you’ll be overwhelmed with emotion. You’ll be excited to meet the other students and professors, learn your way around campus or online, figure out the classes you’ll be taking and so on. The novelty of it all will flood your body with adrenaline, especially as you partake in the many orientation events. It’s meant to be an exciting time.

You’ll also be filled with hope as you consider the impact the MBA will have on your career. You know more money and opportunities will be heading your way soon. Dreams of great success encircle your mind as the possibilities seem endless.

In just two short years (or less), you’ll be a graduate who will embark on a whole new future. As an MBA professional, those dreams must take the shape of a vision, requiring sufficient clarity for action. Where will you go? What will you do? Who will you work for? These questions require an answer and are often the beginning of a whole new challenge.

Most professionals wait until they graduate to begin answering these questions. Unfortunately, many are unemployed, leaving them with the only option to take the first job available. That's not planning. It's reacting. It can also create a lot of problems for you in the long run, such as demotivation, defocus and even a loss of career mobility.

For those that are already employed, a failure to plan any post-graduate activities leaves them in the same position they had before earning their MBA. This often leads to years in a job with an MBA that doesn't require one. While you may view your pursuit of the MBA as a desirable characteristic as it makes you appear driven and determined, a failure to plan for the use of your MBA is seen as a lack of vision and even a lack of drive (as you identified a need for a tool to grow your career but you fail to do anything with it).

If you're earning the MBA to change careers, you may not know what to do with it. So, you do nothing in the hopes that merely possessing the MBA will attract opportunity. This doesn't work, so don't wait until you graduate to learn this lesson. A little Planning can go a long way to improving your future.



*“Sixty-four percent of 2012 MBA grads landed in industries that were new to them.”**

Even if you don't know what path you will take, utilizing your MBA to attract future options requires intentional effort. It's more than putting your diploma in a picture from on the wall or updating your resume with a new line under the education section.

No matter what you plan on doing after you graduate, you must show companies that you've already made the transition. For example, if you want to be a leader, you better have been a leader in student or professional organizations, or even some community groups. The point is that you have to possess proof that you're a leader. College gives you opportunities to do that. It's great fodder for your resume and stories for your interview. If you wait until you've graduated, you can prove you're a leader? You can say it, but no one will believe it without some validation.

*Source: BloombergBusinessweek, “More MBA Grads Are Switching Careers as Job Market Improves,” April 18, 2013

Let's breach this topic of validation for a moment, as it is too often missed by graduates and plays a vital role in your ability to negotiate your next opportunity, especially if you're considering changing careers. So you know what new field you want to work in but you have no experience in it. Your MBA will give you new skills and knowledge for this new field. The experience portion has to come from your activities. While many programs engage in case studies, this doesn't get a whole lot of weight from industry. Why? It's still academic. The real world doesn't run into problems that have answers in the back of the book or a professor who'll tell you what's right or wrong. You have to solve real problems.

So here's your charge: **CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR FIELD**. Graduate students are expected to give back to their field of study. Develop the validation of your new skills and knowledge by:

- Participating to professional organizations
- Being heavily involved in student organizations
- Publishing to magazines, books, peer reviewed journals
- Obtaining relevant certifications for your field
- Building a big network of references
- Developing a relevant capstone to your desired field of work



Why is this guide critical to your planning? You'll learn to:

- Define who you will be when you're done
- Identify the key attributes of your brand
- Incorporate messages to support your attributes
- Create validation of your achievements
- Figure out how to reach your target audience
- Establish a strategy for marketing your brand
- Manage your brand throughout your program



“When you see a good move, look for a better one.”
~Emanuel Lasker

Start with a plan

When you think about it, we do a lot of planning in our lives. We plan our wedding, vacations, activities on the weekend, birthdays and much more. Yet, when it comes to a commitment that will cost us two years of our lives and tens of thousands of dollars, we do little to no planning. This activity we're going to sink tons of effort and money into gets little consideration for what you will get out of it. Many accept the fact that they'll get more money and opportunities (and apparently, that's enough). It's insufficient and it will cause you problems later on.

Steve had spent ten years in a seminary, answering a calling from many years ago. But on one shiny day, he felt the urge to take his life in a different direction. He wanted to get out into the private sector and get a job in Private Equity. He enrolled in NYU's MBA program and graduated two years later. His career in private equity was short lived as he didn't realize that he couldn't break into the industry without experience in it. Over and over he was told, no experience – no job. Steve eventually found work but not in private equity. He went into consulting. But how could this happen? Steve is smart and NYU is a great school.

It was the result of a failure to plan and the placement of too much faith in the MBA program. Steve had an idea of what he wanted to do after graduation. But, he got caught up in the program and neglected to focus any effort on his career. By the time he was ready to focus on his career, he had no time to build the experiences and validation of expertise. You see, the MBA is a demonstration of learned knowledge which is sufficient to earn the degree. However, your career must have “earned knowledge” which is the result of trial and error. It’s putting your learned knowledge into practice.

Steve assumed the MBA experience would be sufficient to kick start his career. It wasn’t. Did anyone tell him this would be an issue? The topic never came up in two years. The MBA is not a substitute for a career plan. Don’t get a rude awakening at the end of your program. Start your program off with a plan for what you want to be years from now.

I know what you’re thinking...who needs to waste time planning something that will change? Once you walk through the process, you’ll realize that such little effort can go a long way.



Where do you start to plan?

In the future, of course. All of the effort and money you will expend over the next two years will help advance your career. But what does that look like to you? Think about the people you’ve encountered that initiated your thoughts of an MBA. Who are they? What do they do? How much do they earn? Develop a mental picture of yourself in such a position. This gives your brain a reference of what you’re looking to become. As you add more detail, your brain will create a better map of how to get you there. That’s it. You’re done. Not too hard, right?

Take a minute to jot down a few characteristics of this future you. In the next section, we’ll consider the new you from a different perspective, which will make all the difference in your ability to grow your career.

Why plan?

You won’t put a lot of detail down on paper but a little bit of information is helpful. The image of who you want to be will be stored in your subconscious mind (where the real brain processing is done). Then, as you proceed through your program, your subconscious mind will send you signals when you encounter something that will help you achieve your vision of who you want to be. It’s your personal opportunity alarm system.



What do they see?

So you have an idea who you'll be after graduation. You expect to be a changed person; that is, improved with knowledge, skills and abilities. You'll undoubtedly be happier and more motivated. But what will others see?

Without sufficient thought and planning, you'll look just like all the other graduates. By planning your future image, you'll be able to clearly differentiate yourself from the other graduates and ensure you look just like the person companies want to hire. Remember, career success isn't just about having the proper skills, knowledge and abilities, it's also about looking the part and putting it all in action.

Let's go back to your image of your future self. Hold that picture in your mind. Now, imagine you are interviewing your future self. What would you expect to encounter? What are the key traits of an expert in this field? Don't get too carried away in defining a lot of these characteristics as it will be impossible to manage during your MBA program. So, only consider identifying three (3) characteristics that your future self must possess.

To identify these three primary characteristics, you'll need to do a little research. There are many ways to obtain this information and you'll need to consider several sources. Potential sources include:

- Job listings
- Employers
- Professionals in your desired position
- Professors
- Friends
- Family

The three attributes are extremely important and will become a focus for your development during your program. They'll also become a part of your marketing plan for communicating your own personal brand to potential employers.

Why only 3? It's easier for you to manage, easier for you to market and easier for others to remember.

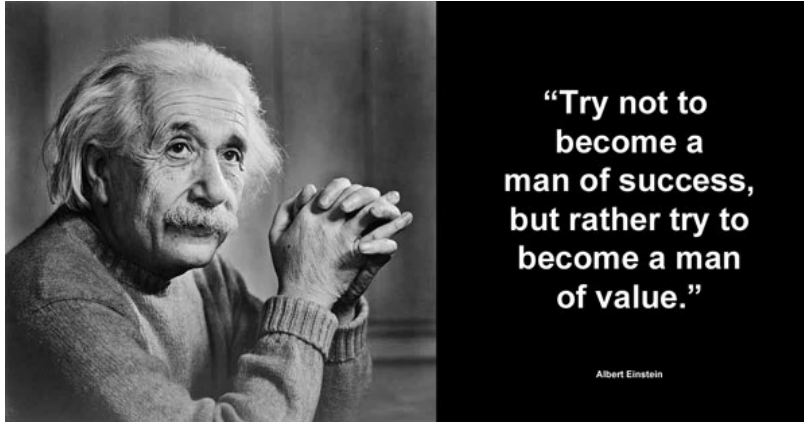
Now, identify your three attributes!



But what if I don't know what I want to do?

We know many students are looking for a change and are hoping that the MBA program will provide a plethora of potential opportunities for their consideration. Our caution here is that "HOPE IS NOT A STRATEGY." You need to plan, especially if you want to avoid taking the first job you get offered. Don't let others control your happiness. Take time To think about what you want.

If you still can't figure out what you want, then you'll to Identify the three attributes you want to be known for. Maybe these are your current strengths or possibly new ones you want to develop. Don't worry if you don't have any experience with them. That comes later in the plan. For now, give your career a little direction and define three attributes that will be the brand for the future YOU.



Building my value

It's hard to think that even though you have work experience and are earning your MBA, you still have to answer the value question. Doesn't the fact that I may be working full time, raising my kids and earning a degree at the same time resolve this question? Short answer....NO! Yeah, it took me a long time To get over this too. What you must understand is that many managers don't have a graduate degree so they won't understand the value of your degree. If you're manager (or potential hiring manager) already has a graduate degree, they will think "Big Deal."

The MBA is not your value statement. **Your value doesn't come from the things you have or have done, it comes from the things you can do or give to others.**

What value do you offer? You answer this question by referring back to your three attributes. In essence, these attributes help communicate your value to any potential opportunity. But its not enough to mention the words. They must have history that is visible and tangible.

What's my value?

(people skills + tech savvy + leadership) **My attributes**



Tangible 1
Tangible 2
Tangible 3

Tangible 1
Tangible 2
Tangible 3

Tangible 1
Tangible 2
Tangible 3

My validation



Message Message Message

My statement

The key to defining value is to make sure it's memorable. By this, I mean, your audience needs to be able to remember it. That's why we only choose 3 attributes. They are strong words that describe our character and abilities. They are not questioned because you provide sufficient validation, or proof, of each attribute. These tangible items of proof include things such as certifications, publications, awards, degrees, etc. The proof isn't questionable. It is up for debate. I'm technically savvy (attribute) because I have a master's degree (tangible) in electrical engineering. Believable? You bet. Why? It's easy to draw the correlation between the attribute and the tangible evidence.

Maybe you consider yourself a leader. What evidence would you need to convince others? Lead a student organization? Start one? Become an officer in a professional organization? Take time to identify your tangibles. Some you may already have and others you may need to develop.

Your tangibles not only need to have value for you, they must also be important to your audience (e.g. potential employer). You can find out what's important to them by asking and looking at what others in their organization have done.



What would make someone pick you out of all the options available?

Communicating my value

The last step with regards to your value statement is creating stories that communicate that value clearly. You don't want to leave any room for interpretation. Once you have identified your three attributes and tangibles, it's very easy to create the conversation pieces to convince people you are what you say you are.

Let's take a look at your "**pitch**." It's one of many tools for telling others about your value.

The elevator pitch is slightly longer than the USP and communicates more value to the audience. When creating your pitch, the most important thing to consider is what you want your audience to remember about you. It must be clear, simple and memorable.

Most people struggle with this simple activity. But, with a little preparation and thought, you'll create a message that shows you know who you are, what you have to offer and what your purpose is.

Here are four steps to creating your pitch:

- 1** *Describe who you are. This should be easy since you just spent considerable time defining that. Think of your three key attributes.*
- 2** *Describe your value to your audience. Your three key messages should help you articulate the value you can bring them.*
- 3** *Ensure the first two steps incorporate the uniqueness of what you have to offer. This is a part of your value statement but goes to prove to your audience that you are the only one who can provide this service, product, etc.*
- 4** *Describe your goal. Your pitch should indicate to your audience what you are trying to achieve (such as solving a particular problem) or maybe what you are asking of them.*

Let's take a look at an example. First, let's combine all the Info in one spot.

Key Attributes:

Entrepreneur, Author, Coach

Key Messages:

- ❖ Started own consulting firm of high achievers to help other professionals achieve more in their career
- ❖ Author of numerous books, colleges classes and creator of an international writing group
- ❖ Collaborates closely with individual professionals, organizations, colleges and professional associations for over ten years.

Goal:

Help entrepreneurs, students and graduates develop a world class personal brand that increases their opportunities for career growth.

With this information, let's try to piece together a pitch.

First, let's tell the audience what I do.

"I help business owners and management professionals develop their personal brand."

Now, let's tell them why I do it.

"They have difficulty growing their business and career as quickly as they would like."

The next sentence should tell them how I do it.

"I teach a fast, simple and inexpensive method for creating a powerful and engaging brand both online and in-person."

Here's the value to them.

"A better brand enhances their credibility, establishes a reputation and enhances their recognition as an expert in their field."

Lastly, I need to tell them about my credentials. So, I refer back to my key messages and attributes.

"As an entrepreneur, author and coach, I've created products and programs that have helped many professionals and businesses around the globe."

With all of the essential elements of the pitch captured, we need to put them all together and modify it so that it meets a desired time requirement of 45 seconds.

As we optimize the pitch, imagine yourself at a networking event and someone asks you what you do. Here's what the combined message looks like (with a few tweaks).

"I help business owners and management professionals develop their personal brand, specifically those have difficulty growing their business and career as quickly as they would like. I teach a fast, simple and inexpensive method for creating a powerful and engaging brand both online and in-person, which enhances their credibility, establishes a reputation and enhances their recognition as an expert in their field. As an entrepreneur, author and coach, I've created products and programs that have helped many professionals and businesses around the globe."

To add a little more splash, I would follow up with a statement of validation, which is the recognition of your expertise from a very well-known source.

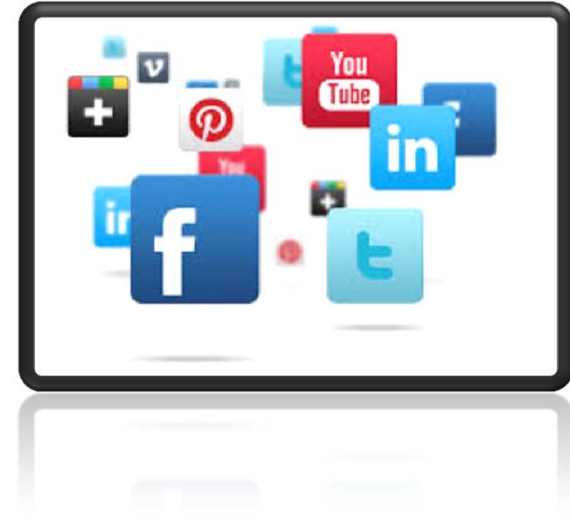
Here's an example.

"You may have read about my programs in the five books we've released through our international writing group."

Obviously, having numerous books published on the topic makes me an expert. It implies that my research is valuable to the publisher and our audience.

In summary, the "**pitch**" is designed to engage your audience and invoke discussion. You'll need to memorize it so that it flows naturally. Use it as much as you can. Pay close attention to the responses you get from your audience. Take their feedback and improve your pitch. Don't be afraid to try it out on friends and family. The more practice you get with it, the more productive it will be.

Of course, this little communication piece is only one of the tools you need to communicate your value in face-to-face meetings. There's a whole new world that requires your attention. It can open your career up to numerous opportunities that would never be found if you focused only on personal interactions.



The Internet has opened up access to opportunities you would normally never have access to. In fact, many opportunities find you, even if you aren't looking for one. Recruiters are scouring the digital landscape looking for talent. Social Media provides numerous tools to communicate your value. The most popular are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. The same value messages you share in person are the same ones you share online.

That’s it for now. We could go on and on but we just wanted to give you a head start on preparing for your career. It starts with having an idea of what you want to become when you graduate. The sooner you know that faster you can begin working on creating the validation that proves you’re already there.

There’s a lot to building a successful career. The most important part is getting your plan in motion, which is best supported by a simple and easy to follow strategy. We study the high achievers to understand what they do and use that information to give you a simple to follow process.



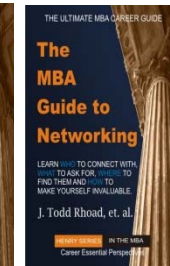
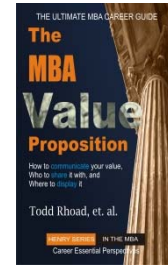
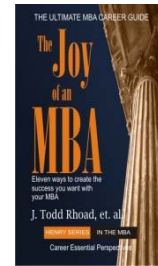
Personal Brand Planning for Life – The best college class on personal branding you’ll find. It’s the only how-to book that walks you completely through the process. The only resource for developing, marketing, managing and monetizing your brand.

Contact us to start your class today!

Additional Resources

We hope you utilize the guidelines we provide in this file.

We’ve also developed numerous other books to help you create the success you need. Here’s a list of resources you can find online at www.blitzteamconsulting.com.



Message from Todd

Today, more than ever, your career is your responsibility. Over the past couple of decades, I've seen many new forces grow that will impede your career mobility. Organizations are flattening out their org charts so there are less opportunities for growth. Some organizations don't have org charts at all, leaving you to figure out where you can move (and how to do it). Organizational training and development programs are on the decline. The average career has 8 jobs by age of 40. And on and on this goes. Your challenges ahead are numerous and your support resources are few. But there is always one utility that will always be available to you; that is, planning.

If you're considering the MBA or are already a student, take time to plan your path. Think about it. Write down what you know now. Don't just build skills for the sake of building new skills. Develop your dream. Bring it in focus and use it to drive your actions. You don't have to provide all the detail. Just give your brain a few things to bound your dream. It will work hard to fill in the gaps. Start your MBA program with the end in mind. It will be here faster than you can imagine.



Todd Rhoad is the managing director of BT Consulting, an Atlanta based career consulting firm who focuses on helping high achievers gain more success in the career. He is the creator of the Henry Series of books for MBAs, developed to address the many career barriers they face. Todd also created MBAWriters, an international team of writers who address many career topics through their writing, research and experiences.

"Your value doesn't come from the things you have, it comes from the things you give."

Todd has traversed both the technical and management career paths, working in R&D, Design, Development and manufacturing industries. He's worked in both public, private, for profit and non-profit and is a military veteran. Todd has earned a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering and an MBA. He did his PhD work at the University of Texas. You'll find his work in numerous journals and conference proceedings.

Todd also believes in the power of collaboration and works closely with many professional organizations and associations. You can reach Todd Directly at todd.rhoad@blitzteamconsulting.com.