Business school students face a uniquely difficult challenge, because most programs require a series of essays rather than a single, comprehensive personal statement. This fact alone should indicate the importance that business schools place on your written responses. Part of the reason for this extra required writing is that business schools also place a stronger emphasis on practical experience. Academic ability may still be the number-one factor, but it’s not enough to get you into a school, just as it’s not enough to guarantee your success in the business world. Business schools pay close attention to personal qualities, including your leadership, communication skills, initiative, vision, and many more. Grades and scores do not explain this side of you, and neither does a resume.

Thus your admission will depend largely on your ability to convey your experiences and goals in written form. Self-assessment is a significant part of this process, as is a careful review of both your life and what you have done professionally. Many successful professionals have simply never had to articulate their accomplishments before and now for the first time must communicate this information in a very clear, concise, powerful manner that is accessible to anyone, even without knowledge of their field. Being able to convey both the substance and significance of one’s work life is crucial for all applicants.

This article has been written to help you avoid the most common essay flaws. If you remember nothing else about this article, remember this: Be Interesting. Be Concise. Nearly all applications will feature a question that asks about your reasons for wanting to obtain an MBA at this stage of your career. Some will explicitly ask you to tie these reasons into your background and your goals. Even for schools that don’t offer this specific direction, you should plan on such a discussion of past and future, as it provides essential context for your application.

“Why MBA?” is often the first question asked and without a doubt the most important essay you will write. It includes essential information about whether you’re qualified, whether you’re prepared, and where you’re headed. The other essays fill in details about these fundamental points, but a strong answer about, for example, how you overcame a failure will not revive a candidacy that failed based on a lack of career focus.

Every answer should contain the following elements, unless the application has separate questions addressing them individually:

1. Your long- and short-term goals.
2. Your relevant past experience.
3. An assessment of your strengths and the gaps in your experience/education.
4. How an MBA program will bridge your past and future and fill in those gaps.
5. Why this particular MBA program is a good match for your needs.

There are no groundbreaking reasons for pursuing an MBA. This is not a place to aim for bold originality. Rather, you should focus on articulating detailed reasons that are specific to your situation. Moreover, there is plenty of room to distinguish yourself when discussing past experience and future goals; the reasons themselves, however, come from a more limited set. That said, you should not try to drop buzzwords for their own sake. Make sure you tie your specific objectives to other aspects of your application.

John Pollard is a freelance writer.
**The Cal Lutheran Executive MBA**

Every program prepares you for success. This one prepares you for immediate impact.

The Executive MBA from California Lutheran University’s School of Management is designed for mid-career professionals who have already experienced some success and want to identify and achieve bigger goals in their careers. The program presents issues faced in today’s business environment, making the studies immediately relevant and impactful to each student’s current role.

“...The idea is to focus experienced professionals toward bringing their peak potential to their career path,” explained School of Management Dean, Gerhard Apfelthaler. “Beyond the functional skills you might expect from any business school program, our students also learn how to lead through change.”

Students develop an excellent portfolio of business knowledge and competencies, enhance analytical abilities and gain strategic leadership expertise to influence the direction of organizations.

**FORMAT**

Designed with busy lifestyles in mind, the Executive MBA begins each Fall and Spring and is delivered over 18 months to a cohort of professionals from diverse backgrounds—each delivered in a hybrid model: 7 online courses, 8 on-campus courses in a compressed weekend format, and 1 International Travel course.

**CURRICULUM**

The interdisciplinary, experience-driven curriculum is organized around five key areas:

- Leading Operations
- Managing Process
- Leading Strategy
- Leading People
- Professional Advancement

Each includes relevant course topics, including: Innovation and Organizational Entrepreneurship, Global Economics for Executives, Strategic Decision Making for High Performance, Organizational Design, and Global Operations.

**KEY BENEFITS**

The Executive MBA program prepares students for top leadership positions in public or private organizations and new ventures by providing opportunities to:

- Focus on what matters most.
  - Develop an excellent portfolio of business knowledge and competencies.
  - Focus on personal development, especially communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills.
  - Develop and apply analytical abilities to business issues.
  - Gain strategic leadership expertise to influence the direction of organizations.

- Work on issues faced in your professional environment as part of your coursework, making your studies immediately relevant and impactful.
- Prepare for a lifetime of learning and continuous personal development.
- Put what you learn into practice, as you learn it.
- Develop a network of professional peers.
- Learn exclusively within a cohort of experienced professionals with diverse backgrounds.
- Build a network of colleagues, including Cal Lutheran alumni, faculty members, and business leaders.
- Receive personal attention, every step of the way.
- With a strong emphasis on teamwork, participation, and communication, the program features a world-class faculty, small class sizes, professional skills workshops, and personalized assessments and coaching sessions throughout.

With a Cal Lutheran Executive MBA, you can:

- Speed your career progression
- Boost your earning potential
- Transfer your skills or switch careers
- Unleash your inner entrepreneur

“The Cal Lutheran Executive MBA program has allowed me to step away from the day to day operations and rethink some of our strategies at Blue Microphones,” said John Maier, CEO of Blue Microphones. “The program’s faculty and curriculum focus on real world scenarios and techniques. It’s a refreshing approach that doesn’t spend too much time on textbook or scientific theories.”

Learn more at CalLutheran.edu/emba.

**EXECUTIVE EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT**

‘The idea is to focus experienced professionals toward bringing their peak potential to their career path. Beyond the functional skills you might expect from any business school program, our students also learn how to lead through change.’
Shape the future of business, starting with your career.

Reach your peak potential.

The Executive MBA from California Lutheran University's School of Management is designed for mid-career professionals who have already experienced significant success in their careers and want to identify and achieve bigger goals.

The program is delivered by top professors in a hybrid format of in-person compressed weekend and online courses with a schedule that respects your professional and personal commitments. The interdisciplinary curriculum presents issues faced in today's business environment, making the studies immediately relevant and impactful to your current role. Alongside a cohort of motivated and like-minded professionals, you'll focus on developing skills in:

- Leading Operations
- Managing Process
- Leading Strategy
- Leading People
- Professional Advancement

Learn more at CalLutheran.edu/EMBA
Global Perspective: A New Era in Business Education

Last year, AACSB International (AACSB), the world’s largest global business education network, launched a new face for the future of business education through the rollout of a new brand identity.

The effort culminates a more than two-year transformational journey that was driven by the organization’s new mission and vision as well as market input from key stakeholders—students, the business community, employers, and a global membership network—and accelerated by major organizational milestones, including the appointment of a new CEO, the celebration of AACSB’s centennial, and the announcement of an industry-wide vision for business education.

“The world is changing at a tremendous rate, and it is our job as educators to lead and shape that change,” said Thomas R. Robinson, president and CEO of AACSB. “The industry identified this imperative through the launch of the Collective Vision, and since then, momentum has been building. AACSB knew more was needed to unify the industry and demonstrate the value, relevance, and impact of business education—and to have a voice globally and locally in the regions we serve.”

Over its 100-year history, AACSB has consistently evolved to champion high-quality business education. Through a new strategy and identity, AACSB is expanding on its global presence, with a renewed commitment to transforming ourselves, together we can prepare the leaders of today and tomorrow for whatever lies ahead.”

Information for this article was provided by the AACSB. Learn more at AACSB.edu.

Education and Accountability in the Workplace

Organizations coping with smaller staffs and fewer resources need greater personal accountability from their employees, but it’s often difficult to achieve. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) is offering tips on how to foster this valuable workplace skill in its 50th practical and easy-to-read leadership development guidebook – part of its long-running series of educational guidebooks and tools for the workplace.

The recently published “Accountability: Taking Ownership of Your Responsibility” is the newest in the Center’s series of Ideas Into Action Quickbooks, which offer practicing managers information on topics including coaching, active listening and managing conflict. CCL, published its first Ideas Into Action Quickbook in 1998, and the series has been distributed globally.

In launching, a senior faculty member at CCL and the lead author, said the newest guidebook in 1998, and the series has been distributed globally.

“Trust is built slowly, and when it is lost, it takes a long time to rebuild.” Browning said. “The best advice is to build it consistently over time. As we note in the guidebook, when there is fear, people tend to hide, hold back and do only what is expected.”

When there is fear, people tend to hide, hold back and do only what is expected.

The accountability guidebook clearly and concisely explores why employees often don’t take ownership of their decisions, play the blame game or are to become part of the movement. It offers ways for organizations to develop a culture of accountability — a willingness to face the consequences that come with success or failure — that begins with top management and spreads to all levels of managers and employees.

The guidebook, based on five years of study with major companies around the world, also features an accountability scorecard that can help managers figure out the problems in their organizations. Browning and his co-authors outline five major strategies for creating an environment that encourages accountability:

• Offer support to employees from senior leadership, direct supervisors and their work teams. Create an environment that tolerates mistakes and individual differences.

• Give employees freedom to accomplish a goal or task, promoting ownership in the process or results.

• Provide access to all information needed for decisions.

• Offer some control over resources.

• Be clear about whom an employee is accountable to and for what outcomes.

Ultimately, according to the guidebook, “A culture of accountability is one that provides a free flow of information, works to secure viable resources, keeps fear to a minimum, rewards risk-taking and treats mistakes as learning opportunities and not career-ending events.”

The Center for Creative Leadership is a global provider of executive education that accelerates strategy and business results by unlocking the leadership potential of individuals and organizations. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit educational institution focused exclusively on leadership education and research, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership — the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries — through an array of programs, products and other services.

CCL is headquartered in Greensboro, N.C., with campuses in Colorado Springs, San Diego, Brussels, Moscow, Singapore, Pune, India and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its work is supported by 500 faculty members and staff.