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

Client Name: John
Target School: Wharton
Essay Question: Original Essay with Editor’s Comments:

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

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

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

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

Comment [Editor4]: Maybe say “varied” instead.

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

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

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

Comment [Editor8]: While it was obviously horrible to have your life turned upside down by situations beyond your control, it does not come across well - you were fortunate to get a position ...

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

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

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

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

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

Comment [Editor14]: It is sufficient to say the receptionist was physically handicapped or just handicapped - the reader will know that this is a job usually filled by attractive women.
Mid 2004 will witness my department’s consumption completion of a worldwide business transformation project, to which I have been contributing from the operations perspective. I devout an optimal time to start pursue my MBA, which, at this stage, will be constructive to my career aspiration. **Comment [Editor15]**: Make it clear that you are choosing to leave at this point, rather than start a new project that you won’t be able to finish.

Upon graduation, I will intend to join a top-tier IT corporation with a renowned management development program at mid-management level. In ten years I aspire to be a senior executive and strategy-setter.

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

Concurrently, I will devote myself to helping the underprivileged in China. Consequently, I plan on establishing an IT-based NGO in the long run. My business acumen will render me better positioned to contribute to this scenario—applying cost-effective technologies (only possible through my experience with an elite technology firm) to drag the poor out of the social and economic abyss plaguing generations for decades, if not centuries. After all, the betterment of the entire nation cannot hinge upon the prosperity of but a number of regions or cities. **Comment [Editor17]**: The end of my achievements in business will ultimately find their way in the social cause. Admittedly, financial standing is an important yardstick, against which personal success is judged; however, it will be even more fulfilling if I can share this success with the needy and bring benefits to them.

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

Content:

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

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

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

Where I have substituted wording, it is only meant to be taken as an example of a simpler, more straightforward way to the top of the company? I believe that managing an NGO shares much synergy with running a for-profit business: leadership experience developed and social connections established in the business arena should be most conducive to my long-term career aspiration. **Comment [Editor18]**: Try to find a simpler, less dramatic way to say that you believe technology has the potential to reverse a lot of deeply rooted societal problems - portray it as an important part of the solution, not the entire solution, because that is more likely how the reader will see it.

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

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

Content Rating: 3 out of 5

**Parameters / Structure:**

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

**Parameters / Structure Rating: 3 out of 5**

**Grammar:**

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

Grammar Rating: 4 (out of 5)

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

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

Reflection on Target School:

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

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

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

Reflection on Background:

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

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<td>Content</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>The essay adequately answers all elements of the essay and utilizes a fitting experience / example for the question at hand.</td>
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<td>The essay does not completely address the essay and / or the experience / example used is not compelling.</td>
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<td>The essay fails to adequately answer a critical portion of the essay and does not use a fitting experience / example for the question at hand.</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>The essay has minimal grammar flaws, including syntax, sentence structure and use of idioms.</td>
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<td>The essay exhibits grammar flaws that detract from the essay and do affect “readability”.</td>
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<td>The essay flows well, is concise and meets the word limit criterion.</td>
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<td>The essay surpasses the word limit by a noticeable margin and the essay would benefit from structural improvement.</td>
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