

30-DAY GMAT SUCCESS

by Meng-huan Brandon Wu

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MY 30-DAY GMAT STORY

Why do you want to go to business school? Why are you studying for the GMAT? Having a clear answer to these questions will help keep you motivated throughout the test preparation and the entire application process, down to the last interviews. Clear answers will also keep your heart pumping during the tough years to come in business school.

I had a hard time deciding on a major in college. Because I was a big fan of video games since I was a kid, I started college majoring in Computer Science, in the hopes of getting a job at a video game company as a software engineer. However, after two years of studying advanced mathematics and programming, I decided that the major was not for me. I was more interested in people, culture, and social interactions than in math and coding. During my junior year, I took various courses ranging from geography to film to try to figure out what was right for me. Finally, I decided on economics and really enjoyed all of my economics classes throughout college.

After college, I started my professional life as a financial consultant in a foreign currency exchange company. Little did I know that the company was a disaster, as it lost two-thirds of my client's money within a month. I left soon after learning more about the company's shady practices, and decided to give video games another try. I join Electronic Arts, the largest video game publisher at the time, as a tester. I was paid a lowly \$10 an hour, or not much more than what you get paid to work at a McDonald's. Soon after I joined the company, I was promoted to lead a small team of testers and worked on a product that eventually became one of the most popular PC games of all time. I worked on a couple more projects before I decided that it was time to accelerate my career by pursuing a graduate degree. Although I really enjoyed my job, my low salary was putting pressure on me. I applied for a master's program in computer science at Carnegie Mellon University and learned in December 2004 that I had been accepted.

In January 2005, I took a vacation and spent a month in my hometown visiting family and old friends before school started. Many of my friends asked me what I planned to do next, and I told them that I would be starting a master's program in computer science. However, after answering that question a couple of times, I began to lose faith in my answer. Hadn't I switched my major in college from computer science? Was computer science really the right choice for me? All of these thoughts came back to me and I ended up spending the majority of my vacation pondering my future. One day, as I was walking through the financial district, I realized that an infinite number of possibilities existed in the world of business. Why limit myself to video games and software? I started looking into business schools and decided that, instead of going to Carnegie Mellon, I would try to get into a business school.

It was February when I decided to apply to business schools, and the deadline for the last rounds of applications was early March. I had exactly one month to prepare the application, get recommendation letters, finish all of the essays, and take the GMAT. The earliest deadline for the schools to which I was applying was March 5th, so I registered to take the GMAT on exactly one day before the deadline, on March 4th.

Early morning on test day, with my notebook in a small shoulder bag, I headed out to the test center in downtown San Francisco. I arrived 30 minutes before the start time, so sat in front of the building to review my notebook. I remember seeing businessmen walking on the street, street vendors selling pretzels and hotdogs, and a couple of tourists trying to find their way to Union Square. What a fine day, I thought, and I had to take this test instead of enjoy the beautiful sunshine!

The computers in the test centers were old, and the monitors flickered at my eyes during the entire test. When I finished the test, I saw the score on the screen and couldn't believe my eyes! 780?! I was hoping for above 700, but never expected to get 780! I was on my way out of the test center when the administrator congratulated me. "Wow, you did really well!" she said. I was still in shocked and replied, "Oh, nah I did just OK..." Hah, I still remember the confused look on her face after I said that 😊.

A couple of months later, I entered one of the top schools of my choice with a tuition grant. My work experience was much shorter than the average, but my high GMAT score helped my application. The hard work that I had put in during the month that I had prepared for the GMAT had definitely paid off!

Where Am I Now?

Fast-forward three years. I now work in Tokyo at the headquarters strategy office of one of the largest consumer electronics companies in the world. My salary is four times what I had been earning prior to business school, and I truly enjoy the challenging and rewarding nature of my job. The best part is that I know that with an MBA degree and the knowledge and skills that I gained in business school, my career options are limitless. Getting an MBA was one of the best investments that I made in myself, and you can also experience this!

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INTRODUCTION: THE GMAT

Congratulations! You have decided to take the time to learn how to master one of the most important tests that you will ever face in your life, the GMAT. The Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) is designed to measure how successful one will be in business school. Business schools use the results of the GMAT, along with recommendation letters, essays, and other application materials, when making decisions on admitting applicants to their MBA programs.

The test is administered on a computer in North America. In some areas of the world outside of North America, it is a paper-based test given at test centers. The fee to take the test is \$250 regardless of where you are taking it. You can schedule a GMAT online at <http://www.mba.com/>.

The GMAT evaluates the verbal, math, and writing skills that you have developed through your educational and professional experiences. The GMAT does not

measure your business knowledge or professional skills, nor does it measure other skills such as creativity, motivation, and interpersonal skills. The GMAT is designed to allow a person who does not have English as his or her first language to still perform well. That said, it may not always reflect accurately the abilities of a person whose first language is not English.

Registration

You can register online at MBA.com and pay your registration fee by credit card, or you may call one of the following numbers to schedule an appointment at a test center:

Americas

Telephone (toll-free within the U.S. & Canada only): 1-800-717-GMAT (4628)

Telephone: 1-952-681-3680

Victoria, British Columbia

Telephone: 1-866-442-GMAT (4628)

Asia Pacific

Telephone: +603 8318-9961

India

Telephone: +91 (0) 120 439 7830