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Matt Gray (A): Choosing a Career Path

Matt Gray wrote this case under the supervision of [Mary Crossan](https://iveypubs.my.salesforce.com/003A000001CqbJq) solely to provide material for class discussion. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.

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Matt took a moment to reflect on not only his reasons for pursuing a master’s degree in business administration (MBA) at this point in his career but also his post-MBA career plans. For a long time, Matt had thought about completing an MBA. He saw it as a way to develop competencies and advance his career. Also, having graduated from a smaller regional university, he was excited by the challenge of testing himself against top students from across the globe at the Ivey Business School (Ivey). He was also attracted to working in the financial services industry, given his exposure to that industry during his consulting career. As Matt started his full-time MBA, he was unsure of the type of role within the financial services industry he wanted to pursue and was considering investment banking, wealth management, and the management rotational program. A rotational program at a Canadian bank would allow him to explore various options before committing to a specific function or role in the financial services industry.

Matt recollected that when he had taken his seat at his first orientation class, he had not been prepared for the pressure he would face to have a defined career path mapped out. Even before the class started, classmates introduced themselves and without hesitation asked, “What do you want to do after Ivey?” As the questions continued over the first two weeks of the program, a sense of competition emerged to see who would target the top jobs at leading consulting firms or investment banks.

As the term progressed, Matt knew that he would need to decide which career path to pursue. The breadth of companies recruiting on campus had not helped Matt narrow his decision, as almost every career opportunity described at information sessions or in career management workshops seemed attractive. Although Matt had at first been attracted to rotational programs, he began to question whether other career paths would be just as attractive and began entertaining pursuing a career in investment banking.

Matt’s decision about which career path to pursue was being influenced by several forces. The MBA program had been a significant financial commitment, and he and his wife knew that it would also impact his focus in terms of job opportunities. The competitive pressure of the MBA program ignited Matt’s desire to be seen as one of the top performers in the program, which to him meant targeting the most selective job opportunities and proving to himself and his classmates that he would be able to obtain such a competitive position.

As the full-time recruiting cycle approached, Matt knew that firms would expect him to be decisive and committed to his career choice. There would be no room for doubt. He wondered how he would perform in first-round interviews, especially when he still had doubts about which career path to pursue. He was unsure how to evaluate the various career opportunities and whether his career focus had changed because he had found a new career path that was more attractive or whether other factors were influencing this change. As the pressures of the program piled up, he didn’t seem to have any time to think. Matt had already cut back his exercise time and could barely find time to buy groceries. Momentum seemed to be carrying him in the direction of investment banking. He paused momentarily to consider whether that choice made sense.