

Personal Statement - Masters of Science Candidate

I have a deep interest in technology driven innovation and entrepreneurship. I have always maintained this keen interest, despite the fact that my education and work experience have always leaned towards economics and finance. One can even check the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to find the website that I created in the 90s dedicated to computer fonts. Two years ago, I left the world of consulting for banks and insurance companies behind in order to perform an experiment in self-education using only freely available tools on the internet. I wanted to explore the nascent but exploding number of online learning resources to build my own opinions about the online learning space, to theorize how I could improve these tools and to ultimately transition my career into this space. I have developed a deep understanding of the space from the user's perspective and now find myself looking to move into the strategic/development side. The Management, IS, and Digital Innovation master's program at the LSE would give me the tools to make this transition in the smoothest possible manner.

The program's tight focus on management relating to technology and innovations intrigues me more than a general management education. Rather than pursue an MBA, which casts a wider net, I want to concentrate on the area of study that most interests me. From an education perspective, the fact that this is a one year program rather than a two year program will allow me to quickly jump back into the real world. From the perspective of building a professional network, I would prefer to make meaningful contacts in the industry where my interests lie. With regards to my educational background, I went to high school at Harvard-Westlake, a top prep school in the US, and then received my bachelor's degree from Emory University, a top 25 university. One of my specific interests in your program is that while I have a prestigious educational background that background is entirely based in the US. A degree from the LSE would open up more opportunities outside of the US as potential business partners or employers would recognize not only the LSE brand, but my ability to succeed in an international environment.

Some of my strengths academically and professionally include my problem solving ability and my ability to think outside the box. Before leaving the consulting world, I decided to explore pursuing a traditional MBA, so I took the GMAT. My score of 760 on my first attempt placed me in the 99th percentile and demonstrates my exceptional problem solving ability. On the outside the box thinking front, I believe my life since leaving consulting demonstrates this very well. Although I have many examples of this, I want to discuss my English teaching program at the Rütli Schule, a rather notorious high school in Berlin. Through connections that I developed while in Berlin, I was given free reign to create my own course to teach English to students in the 11th, 12th, and 13th grades at this school serving the underprivileged students in the area. The challenges were two-fold. First, I had to teach English to students with an incredibly wide range of experience, skill, and confidence. Secondly, I had to keep the students engaged in what was a voluntary class for them. My solution was to use online language learning tools to not only improve their study habits, but also to foster discussions in English. Using sites such as Quizlet.com, I was able to accommodate students across all levels of English ability and provide individual help to any student as

needed. I love tackling these sorts of open-ended problems.

While I have significant experience as a consultant working with large companies, a stronger educational foundation of technology and management would suit me well. Information systems management is among one of my responsibilities at my current role at Cygnus Association Management (heretofore Cygnus). The lessons learned with this experience has been invaluable, but I am always excited to explore different perspectives in the field. Time commitments would allow me to continue my role at Cygnus, I could implement ideas from courses such as Management and Economics of E-Business and Innovation and Information Systems: Concepts and Perspectives directly into practice as I learn them. Additionally, I look forward to learning via the case method used extensively in the program. My personal learning style has tended towards application of ideas rather than rote memorization of theory. The case method caters to my strengths as a creative problem solver, and would also help me improve some of my weaknesses.

Finally, my research interests are also in innovation and specifically in the area of online education. I want to analyze the usage of online education platforms and gain insights into how they can be improved. In fact, as a pet project, I have begun to develop my own online language learning game. The game focuses on character recognition and pronunciation rather than vocabulary. The inspiration for this game came to me as I was walking through the streets of my new neighborhood, Neukölln, in Berlin. Here there is a strong arabic community and thus many business signs are written in Arabic language. These signs piqued my interest. Casually, I wondered what they meant, but more deeply, the idea that I had no frame of reference to begin to understand Arabic began to consume me. So I set out to create a simple HTML5-based game to learn the Arabic alphabet. The game is not by any means feature-complete, but at this time there is a playable version at arabic.da3.net. For my research project, I would love to analyze the systems that support the creation, hosting, and data-analysis of online learning tools such as this one.

Hopefully, this overview of myself and my interest in the program piques your interest and I would be delighted to matriculate into the LSE's incoming class of 2015. Thank you for your time and consideration.