## **Business-Minded**: Please reflect on how your experiences have influenced your career choices and aspirations and the impact you strive to make on the businesses, organizations, and communities you plan to serve. (up to 300 words)

### Pre-writing

### First draft

When I was 18, I sat in the lobby of a psychiatry clinic and watched as the local fire department entered the building, found my dad, and escorted him out of the building to be involuntarily committed to an in-patient psychiatric facility. Many years earlier, my dad had suffered a series of mini strokes that had damaged several key parts of his brain and left him with a severe personality disorder. My experiences with my dad instilled into me the desire to alleviate in others the suffering that my family had to endure. It took years, however, for me to develop a roadmap for how I could accomplish that purpose.

One of my life goals is to eventually start a venture. For a long time, I figured the best way for me to start working toward that goal was to get highly specialized in a technical area and the business ideas would sort themselves out later. Out of undergrad, I took a highly technical job in the government contractor digital signal processing space and started my master’s degree in computer science, both in pursuit of deepening my technical knowledge. Not long after starting that job, I began to feel like I was moving in the wrong direction; I was gaining technical ability, yes, but I was making no positive, perceivable impact on people’s health and I was growing ever more specialized in an area that was not really what I wanted to do long-term. I decided to take a big risk and join Dexcom after having been at my first company for only 8 months. I was leaving excellent hygiene factors for a job at the cost of net economic loss, but at least I would be working in a space where I could develop capabilities that improved the health of people with diabetes.

Before long, I decided that I needed experience beyond being a “builder” in an organization. At the beginning of 2024, I asked my manager for opportunities in which I could develop leadership skills. Soon after, my tech lead was pulled away to another project, and I was given his responsibilities. This was a very trying period in my time at Dexcom. I was leading an understaffed development team at a time when our marketers and product manager were pushing for rapid new feature development and a huge upcoming release. I had to juggle the responsibilities of architecting/software design, supporting the production release of our platform, creating and tracking work tickets for my engineers, onboarding a new engineer to our platform, delegating responsibilities to my engineers, supporting team development, and writing my own code.

I learned two key lessons from this experience. First, when there’s too much to do and not enough time, it’s better to focus energy on the few most critical responsibilities and get by with what you can on the other ones. Second, I learned what it meant to drive the production of a software platform product from the perspective of engineering, and I gained some insight into what it’s like to be a product manager.

At this point, I want to become an innovator and a leader as a product manager in the medtech industry. At Harvard, I will gain the general management skillset required to excel as a product manager post-graduation and lay the foundation I need to one day launch a venture that solves a big, complex health problem.

## **Leadership-Focused**: What experiences have shaped who you are, how you invest in others, and what kind of leader you want to become? (up to 250 words)

### Pre-writing

### First draft

At my first job out of undergrad, one of my project managers gave me a toy project to work on while I waited for my government classified clearance to be approved. I didn’t hear from my manager for about a month. I eventually got my clearance, but never heard from my manager for several more weeks. At that time, I didn’t have the confidence to and maturity to know that I should have gone to somebody and said, “Hey, what happens next? What should I work on now?” When my manager did finally catch up with me after about 2 months in total of no contact, he said, “Oh, honestly, I thought you had been moved to a different project because I didn’t hear from you.”

That experience taught me that I always wanted to be actively—not passively—engaged with my team members. A couple years later and at Dexcom, I had one team member that had been exceptionally overwhelmed for a period of several months. At the time, he was both working and doing his undergrad degree in CS full-time. My tech lead and I talked with him, and I discussed how I had recently finished a similar period of my life; I had just finished my full-time master’s in CS program while working full-time. I empathized with him that I knew what it was like to burn out under these circumstances. I told him that the best thing for him to do was not to be like Atlas holding up the entire world but to take some time away from his work responsibilities to rebalance himself. I promised that he would perform better afterwards than he would were he to grit his teeth and keep working. Thankfully, he did take some time away from work and was better for it when he came back.

Had I not decided years earlier that I always wanted to be actively engaged with my team members, I would never have been aware of how severely my team member was burning out. Had I never experienced a similarly trying time in my life, I would not have had nearly as much power as I did to persuade him to take time away from work to restabilize his mental health. The type of leader I want to be is one that uses empathy and personal experience as a source of increased persuasive capability—not for my own gain but for the betterment of both sides.

## **Growth-Oriented**: Curiosity can be seen in many ways. Please share an example of how you have demonstrated curiosity and how that has influenced your growth. (up to 250 words)

### Pre-writing

### First draft

At Dexcom, my software team was tasked with architecting and developing a software solution to make our platform compliant with varying global data regulations; data created in one continent needed to be shared efficiently in another continent but not vice versa. I designed a solution that I thought was pretty elegant. I proposed the design to my team and initially got good feedback. However, one of my more senior engineers proposed a completely different technical solution that I thought was inferior. My solution could be implemented sooner, was more efficient, had low maintenance costs, and provided stronger data guarantees than the solution proposed by my superior. After much team counsel, we decided to go with my senior engineer’s plan and I got to work building.

How could he think this was the right way to go? This engineer had many more years of experience than I and I’m certain he saw the technical benefits of my solution over his. So I had to take a step back and examine the situation. If he had at least as much technical knowledge as I did, what factors led him to devise a solution seemingly orthogonal to mine? I decided to meet with him to dig deeper about his process for arriving as his solution. What I found out was enlightening. He saw further than I did and considered a bigger picture when drafting his proposed solution. My solution, though more performant and agile from a technical perspective, had one critical flaw: it created a dependency on two other teams in the organization. So, while my solution would have been *technically* agile, it would have induced process overhead that would slow down our development and troubleshooting processes. My senior dev understood that a dev team can tolerate a sub-optimal technical solution if that solution still gets the job done while keeping the team agile and not overly dependent on other teams. With that understanding, I felt much less contention in developing his solution as I had been able to be more humble about the situation.

In this situation, I demonstrated curiosity by seeking to understand the actions and choices of a superior engineer when they did not make sense to me initially. By probing deeper into his reasoning, I was able to come to a mutual understanding and build a strong relationship with this engineer. Initially, I felt that his proposed solution was given precedence simply because he was more senior than me, not based on solution merit. But by seeking to understand, I learned to value his experience and feel that this was someone I could learn much from. From this experience, I’ve decided to never get defensive about my ideas. Rather, I seek to first understand the perspectives of those I work with so that we can more effectively arrive at workable solutions.

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One day I will start a venture to deliver a novel medical therapy. Initially, I thought specializing in a technical field was the best way to pursue that goal, so I took a technical job at a government contractor and pursued a master's in computer science. However, I soon realized I was moving in the wrong direction and wasn't making a positive health impact. To align with my goal, I took a risk and joined Dexcom, sacrificing better pay and benefits for the opportunity to improve the health of people with diabetes.

In early 2024, I asked my manager for leadership opportunities, realizing I needed more than technical experience. When my team lead was reassigned, I assumed his responsibilities. At the time, our team was too understaffed to deliver feature demands on schedule, and I was overwhelmed having to manage software architecture, production support, task delegation, team development, and my own coding. This period taught me that to maximize effectiveness, I need to focus effort on the most critical responsibilities. I also learned how to align a development team with product management.

At Harvard, I will gain the general management skillset required to innovate as a product manager in the medtech industry post-graduation and build the network I need to one day launch a venture to solve a large-scale health problem.

## **Leadership-Focused**: What experiences have shaped who you are, how you invest in others, and what kind of leader you want to become? (up to 250 words)

### Pre-writing

### First draft

At my first professional job, my manager gave me a toy project to work on while waiting for my government clearance approval. I didn’t hear from my manager for two months. At that time, I didn’t have the confidence ask somebody, “Hey, what happens next? What should I work on now?” When my manager finally caught up with me, he said, “Oh, honestly, I thought you had been moved to a different project because I didn’t hear from you.” That experience made me always want to be actively engaged with my team members.

Two years later at Dexcom, one of my team members was experiencing burnout. He had been both working and pursuing his degree full-time. My team lead and I met with him, and I shared how I had recently finished a similarly trying period of my life. I expressed my empathy and told him that it would be best to take some time away from his responsibilities to rebalance. I promised that he would perform better after a break than he would were he to push through. I convinced him, and he took a week off.

Had I not decided to be actively engaged with my team members, I wouldn’t have been aware of my coworker’s struggles. Had I not drawn from my own experiences, I wouldn’t have persuaded him as powerfully. I will be a leader that uses empathy and personal experience as a source of increased persuasive capability to the benefit of my reports.

## **Growth-Oriented**: Curiosity can be seen in many ways. Please share an example of how you have demonstrated curiosity and how that has influenced your growth. (up to 250 words)

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### First draft

At Dexcom, my team was tasked with designing a solution to make our platform compliant with various global data regulations. I proposed one design, and a senior engineer proposed a design that I thought was lacking in several critical areas. My solution took fewer development resources, was more efficient, had lower maintenance costs, and provided stronger guarantees than the other design. However, my team decided to proceed with my senior engineer’s design.

I’m certain this more senior engineer saw the benefits of my solution. Why did he arrive at a solution contradictory to mine? I met with him to dig deeper about his logic and discovered that he had considered a bigger picture than I had. My solution had one critical flaw that his did not: my solution created a dependency on other teams, likely reducing team agility. With that understanding, I felt more empowered to develop his solution.

In this situation, sought to understand the choices of my senior engineer when they did not make sense to me initially. By probing deeper into his reasoning, we came to a mutual understanding and built a stronger working relationship. Initially, I felt that his solution was given precedence because he was my senior. But by increasing my understanding, I learned to value his experience and not become disgruntled. I’ve decided to never get defensive about my ideas. Rather, I seek to first understand the perspectives of others so that we can more effectively arrive at workable solutions.

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### Nicole Review

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