



Older Applicants

"Megaron, when can we say a candidate is an 'older applicant'? Why can 'older applicants' face difficulties getting acceptance? I would think otherwise: more experience, more chances to contribute to the class discussions. From what I heard: HBS and Stanford don't appreciate older applicants. Could you say why?"



Harvard prides itself for providing their students with a "transformational experience". In this context, a two-year student is more willing to quest old patterns, and therefore much more flexible to extract HBS values.



Why is that?



I can raise three reasons: (i.) **Lack of Focus:** "Older Applicants" usually hold an irregular career, which might give the school the (wrong) impression of a "lack of focus"; **Resistance to New Ideas:** "Older Applicants" are more resistant to new ideas. According to some schools, this attitude limits what they believe would be a transforming experience provided by the MBA. Generally speaking, younger students bring with them a certain flexibility and willingness to try new ideas and thought patterns. This flexibility tends to disappear with time and years of approaching problems in a particular way; and (iii.) **Employability:** One of the concerns that "Older Applicants" can bring to the AdCom is their employability. Of two applicants with similar qualifications, recruiters usually prefer the younger.



But you can make a drawback look like a benefit, huh?



Through your essays, you must seek to change what would apparently be a drawback and turn it into elements favoring your candidacy. As an older applicant, you must: (i.) Set realistic goals; (ii.) Show openness to new ideas; (iii.) Bring examples that prove your ability to interact with younger people whose ideas are different from yours. The admissions committee asks whether you can relate to young classmates and whether they can relate to you. You must convince it of both; (iii.) Justify the reason for not choosing an Executive MBA; (iv.) Demonstrate how previous experiences have added a broad perspective to your application, mainly if you have gone a long way until you found out your best professional 'fit'. One of the advantages of being an 'older applicant' is that you can market yourself as someone whose experiences in several industries and functions will contribute to the classroom through a multidimensional view of business.



Great.



That's it for the time being.