

Dean's dilemma: initial understanding of the problem

Brief overview:

Easwaran Iyer, Dean of Jain University's business school, faces the challenge of selecting the right students for the MBA program. With rising application numbers, the university can be selective, but must ensure that admitted students are employable after graduation to maintain placement rates and institutional reputation. This business problem explores how factors such as academic performance, entrance test scores, work experience, and communication skills might predict student success. It's essentially a classification problem, and Iyer's challenge is to decide which applicants are likely to be "placeable" or "non-placeable".

Importance of this case study in understanding business analytics:

This case study highlights how business analytics transforms decision-making by using data to solve real problems. The Dean's challenge selecting MBA applicants likely to succeed and secure placements is framed as a classification problem. Rather than relying on intuition, the case encourages analyzing past student data (academic scores, entrance tests, work experience) to identify predictors of employability and build a data-driven admissions strategy. It demonstrates the value of combining quantitative and qualitative data, applying predictive models, and using insights to improve outcomes such as placement rates, school rankings, and future admissions. Importantly, it also raises strategic and ethical considerations, reminding us that analytics supports but does not replace human judgment. The case offers a hands-on opportunity to practice exploratory data analysis, build predictive models, and present actionable recommendations.

Identification of Stakeholders

At Jain University's Business School, stakeholders play a crucial role in the MBA admissions process. At top rank is Dean Easwaran Iyer, the senior administrative head of B School, monitoring student success and admissions quality. He is responsible for balancing the intake of students based on their employability potential; his role affects placement records and the school's reputation. Supporting him is the Admissions Committee, which comprises faculty and administrators ranked as mid-academic decision makers. This group evaluates grades, test scores, interviews, and diversity which reflects the overall way the school would be perceived.

The primary customers of the program are the students, who represent both applicants seeking admission and those admitted to the MBA school. Their academic preparation and placement success shape the brand perception of Jain University's MBA program. Employers would be ranked as industry partners, and are essential because they provide placements to various corporations and signal the program's value to the job market. Meanwhile, the All India Council for Technical Education is ranked as a national statutory authority that influences admissions through its policies, intake, and quality controls.

Finally, industry ranking agencies, ASSOCHAM and CRISIL hold the rank of external evaluators and influencers. Their reports, surveys, and publishes shape public perception and impact applicant demand. The importance of all stakeholders lies in the fact that together they form an ecosystem; this concept correlates with analytics because it supports this cycle by helping decision-makers at every level make evidence based judgments that align admissions strategy with employability outcomes.

Business Model Analysis: Jain University's MBA Program

Industry and Sector Breakdown

Jain University's MBA program operates within the **Higher Education industry**, within a subsector of Business education (MBA programs) of India. This program is part of a larger scope of business schools (B-schools) in India. The sector includes top-tier institutions - premier B-schools that are highly selective and have strong placement records. Private universities and standalone B-schools; Institutions like Jain University, which focus on providing quality management education to a wide audience. Many of these institutions struggle to balance growth and quality.

Core Business Processes and Operational Insights

- Admissions: Jain University admits approximately 400 students annually to its MBA program. The admission process involves several factors such as undergraduate academic performance, entrance test scores (CAT, MAT, GMAT), work experience, communication skills, and personal interviews.
 - Operational insight: The university faces the challenge of increasing admissions while maintaining quality. This requires strong analytics to identify candidates with high potential for employability.
- Career Placement:
 - Campus placements are a critical measure of success for B-schools in India. Jain University has historically achieved an 80% placement rate, but the remaining 20% are a risk to the reputation of the school

- Operational insight: Placement success is heavily influenced by industry perceptions of the university's brand and the quality of its graduates. Strong alumni networks can help enhance the placement outcomes by nurturing industry relationships.

Subsectors Involved and Their Interactions

- Standardized Testing Providers: Entrance exams like CAT, MAT, and GMAT are filters for student admissions. High scores are a good indicator of the quality of a candidate.
Interactions: Jain University uses these scores to shortlist candidates which creates a dependency on the importance and reach of these tests.
- Corporate Recruiters:
 - Companies hiring MBA graduates play a big role in the perceived value of the program. Corporates prioritize schools with strong track records and alumni performance.
 - Interaction: Jain University ability to attract top recruiters impacts its reputation and student demand.
- Alumni Network:
 - Successful alumni enhance the university's brand equity and provide networking opportunities for current students.
 - Interaction: Alumni engagement is critical for establishing corporate relationships, helping to drive placements, and attracting high-quality applicants.

Jain University's MBA program operates in a highly competitive environment. Success depends on its ability to balance scale and quality, leveraging data-driven admissions processes to identify employable candidates while maintaining strong industry ties for placements. By focusing on

differentiation through curriculum innovation, alumni engagement, and corporate partnerships, Jain University can strengthen its position as a mid-tier B-school with a reputation for producing industry-ready graduates.

This business model analysis highlights the key elements of the industry, sector, and subsectors involved. It also emphasizes the importance of effective student acquisition, admissions process management, and program delivery in ensuring the success of an MBA program

Pain Points Identification

Jain University is striving to balance scaling class sizes while maintaining the quality of its candidates, to ensure that as many students as possible gain employment upon graduation.

Furthermore, although the university boasts an 80% post-graduate employment rate, this is not *sufficient* among top schools, which could further lower their ranking. Thus, the primary challenge is to matriculate more high-quality candidates who possess/will possess the skills employers are seeking. This is an opportunity for Jain University to employ a predictive analytical approach.

The University can use data to develop stronger evaluative criteria for predicting the future success of students by utilizing predictive analytics. Thus far, Jain University has relied on traditional qualitative and quantitative criteria to screen students, such as test scores, grades, and candidate interviews. Applying a more analytical approach by wrangling past student data and

prospective student data may help them develop a more holistic approach to evaluating potential students. They can then determine which criteria are more or most predictive for future employability, and eventually solve the Dean's Dilemma.