**Q1: Describe a time when you took a great risk**

Upon graduation, I joined the Enterprise Risk Services department at Deloitte Nearshore Casablanca. I was first attracted to Deloitte for its brand name, the career opportunities it would offer, and the nature of the work I was expected to perform. As a matter of fact, my job required extensive use of data analysis, which is a field I am passionate about. Although I learnt a lot during the first few weeks, the job quickly became repetitive, limiting the kind of growth I was looking for. The accounts of my colleagues at my department didn’t make me optimistic about an improvement any time soon. One day, I was approached by one of my professors at Al Akhawayn University who was hired by OCP Group to launch a business school. We met for a coffee and he exposed to me the projects of the school and I found them promising. He needed a person to help him set up the foundations of the school and knowing my entrepreneurial spirit, he suggested me to join him. I was tempted to accept but the conundrum was big: The project looked ambitious and was backed by the most powerful company in Morocco, but it was a risky adventure to join as the school had yet no physical facilities, permanent staff or faculty, and was not yet authorized by government authorities to open with the deadline for such authorization being only a few weeks away. I had no guarantee the project would have any success. I had a well paying job in one of the major consulting companies worldwide on the one hand but a great opportunity for learning on the other. All my friends, family, and peers advised me against joining this risky adventure but I believed the value I would get is immense even if the endeavor proves unsuccessful. It was a unique opportunity to develop my entrepreneurial skills and learn everything from operations to marketing to business development. I took the call and after a series of successful case studies and interviews, left Deloitte and joined this organization. I was very excited to participate in the development of such a promising project with far-reaching impact for Morocco and Africa. The first thing I worked on was the authorization of the School, which deadline was less than two weeks away when I joined. I took a few days to fully comprehend the process, and the rest to compile the paperwork. Because of my proficiency in French, my manager trusted me for writing all letters and required documents. After long hours spent at night in the office and a few sleepless nights, I took the file and deposited it at the Ministry of Higher Education in Rabat, 350kms from Ben Guerir, the city where our temporary offices were. Later, I was involved in the implementation of partnerships OCP Groups had signed on the behalf of the school, especially the one concerning the Executive MBA in collaboration with Columbia Business School. For a few months, I had to coordinate with the Executive Education Program Manager at Columbia Business School for the launching of the first cohort of the program, which first session after orientation had to take place in New York City. I also coordinated with a consulting company hired by the IT department to develop our website, setting the specifications, checking these were duly respected and writing the website’s content. Finally, I led the marketing efforts of the School, setting a Facebook page, managing its content and participating in the elaboration of the programs brochures. This wide breadth of experiences helped me develop my skills in several areas and explore the challenges of management under entrepreneurial environments.

**Q2: Cite at least one example of when your leadership had an impact on or changed a certain situation, and justify how an IE Master’s Degree program would help you to strengthen or improve this competence.**

Back in high school, an interest in electronic music motivated me to produce new songs and mix songs together. In college, I collaborated with peers to launch a DJ Club. The university possessed high-end DJ equipment that was used only rarely and we wanted to allow the community to benefit from the availability of such equipment. We hired a professional DJ with the budget I had negotiated with the university and set up DJ classes for interested students. These classes, which hosted around 15 students every session, got the club known on campus, helping it double the number of active members in one semester. The club changed campus life as other clubs started calling upon us to animate their events. We were as a matter of fact selected to animate the Fun Run, an annual fund-raising event attended by hundreds of people. Despite all of these successes, a shortfall in time management skills forced me to leave the adventure on the second semester. I had registered in some challenging courses and I was having a hard time dedicating enough energy to the club. I was greatly upset for letting go a venture I helped build and an opportunity for sharing my passion with the community. I have therefore decided to work on my time management skills over time by learning to prioritize tasks and manage deadlines more effectively. That proved especially useful when I was working at Africa Business School, yet a start-up organization, having to manage multiple projects with different scopes, priorities and deadlines.

To increase cohorts’ diversity, the Dean of Africa Business School entrusted me with the responsibility of attracting students outside of OCP Group and more generally Morocco. As the school had no online visibility at the time, the first thing I did was to collaborate with the IT department to create a website for the school. While the IT department was responsible of developing the website, I had to set the project's specifications, and later write the website's content and make sure the project's specifications were rightfully implemented. It was my first experience having the responsibility over a project which result depended on the work of several other stakeholders. For such projects right communication is key, especially that stakeholders were from distinctive cultures. Not being adaptive in my communication or overlooking to communicate elements that do appear as minor are likely to result in setbacks. Even though my communication skills were still basic at the time, my experience traveling and discovering a breadth of cultures helped me be adaptive enough in my communication. It took me time however to learn to instruct specifications in a comprehensive manner and I am looking forward to further harnessing my communication skills as I believe they are of critical importance for success in business. In parallel with that project and in order to complete my effort to increase cohorts’ diversity, I created a page for the school on Facebook, populated it with marketing messages and managed its content; and collaborated with graphic designers to create program's brochures. This effort helped the school received around 20 external applications, increasing the number of external and international students by 10% and 67% respectively.

IE Business School with its entrepreneurial orientation provides the right environment to develop not only functional competencies (finance, marketing, logistics, etc.) but also the necessary soft skills to grow up as a successful business person. With the numerous clubs, workshops, real-life projects and networking opportunities in the program, I have no doubt I will be able to take my communication and planning skills to a higher level, becoming a better leader.

**Q3: Show us an activity you enjoy doing. Tell us how you think it contributes to your personal and professional development**

Traveling is something I always had enough energy towards. It not only allows me to discover new places but also to meet a variety of people, getting a better understanding of cultures so I can be more adaptable in social environments. A primary element in communication I learnt in traveling is that different people require different ways of interacting. That was particularly helpful when I was working at Africa Business School as I had to collaborate with people from different cultures. For instance, while I supervising our website development, I had to take part in meetings in which people from different countries were participating. Because the IT department hired an American consultant to develop the website, and the consultant subcontracted parts of the project to an Indian company, I often had to make sure that I am adaptive in my communication so people from these different cultures are able to understand the specifications of the project and so I can check with them whether these specifications were respected. Although I have been to 12 countries and 4 continents, the thing that amazes me the most about traveling are the cultural differences within countries themselves. The arts scene in Madrid is so different from that of Barcelona, which looks like it has received some mediterranean influence to it. Andalusia is similarly different from Barcelona, as Islamic influence competed with mediterranean influence to create a unique set of cultural elements spanning architecture, food and music. Traveling has made me a better co-worker and friend as I am now duly taking into consideration my partner’s perspective in any one of my relations. That helped me create strong lasting friendships during my exchange program at Yonsei University in South Korea with people all around the world. Collaborating and socializing with people from East Asian cultures was quite difficult in the beginning. As a matter of fact, during projects I had a hard time solving conflicts that usually arise during teamwork. I soon realized that East Asians require a softer approach to conflict resolution. In fact, if one is too direct about his/her feedback, he/she will put his/her partner on the defensive, making it harder to converge to a solution. Being more open minded about the different ways to resolve conflicts was particularly helpful while I had to manage the international MBA executives at Africa Business School. Most international executives were coming from French-speaking and English-speaking Africa and they each had their specific manner of communicating and approaching a problem. I tried to adapt each time to each one’s own personality, which got me much appreciation from them but also from the cohorts in general. This appreciation spanned not only the participants but also the multi-cultural faculty we used to host and our international partners in the U.S. The exchange program in South Korea was unique in his kind as I was immersed during 4 full months in a totally foreign culture. During these 4 months, unexpected events happened. Some were enjoyable, others much more painful. I had to study for a course half of which was in Korean while I did not speak any word of Korean. I chose the country to push my boundaries and I was not disappointed. I believe that growth takes place outside of one’s comfort zone. This eye-opening experience taught me not only social skills but also skills that are primordial for one’s success in the business world, especially as an entrepreneur. South Korea taught me resilience, the value of risk-taking and trusting your purpose and the process you are going through to achieve that purpose even if early results are discouraging.