

WHAT TO DO 8 MONTHS BEFORE YOU APPLY TO BUSINESS SCHOOL



Given the time crunch you'll face when placing your applications for your MBA in October, you will want to have prepared yourself thoroughly and well in advance. As much as can be gotten out of the way should be, and that includes beginning your GMAT preparation in March in order to take the test in June. Taking it in June will allow you to retake it in July, if your results weren't stellar. Taking it twice is generally a smart idea anyway, since schools look at your best score, and the second time you will know what you are getting into.

Having the GMAT preparation and test out of the way will free you to focus on time-intensive things. You will have a lot of other things to do to prepare for submitting your application, such as taking some business courses, if you want to take the focus off a previous low GPA.

Further, get on volunteer work or whatever it takes to get in a leadership role. Beginning this early will give you sufficient time to make a difference in the organization, which could require the larger part of the year. Having made that difference can give you interesting references and juicy topics for your essays, two of the things that will most make you stand out to the schools you are interested in.

If you are working at a firm, seek out if they offer scholarships for your MBA. Many of them do, but require a lengthy time period before you can start. And even if they do not offer such a scholarship, they might be persuaded to change their policy, which will also take quite some time for them to work out the details.

Since your essays and subsequent interview will differentiate you from other candidates, finish up any outstanding goals that will give you an advantage. If you have any projects half done, this is the time to finish them.

Meanwhile, familiarize yourself with the schools you want to attend, considering not only their U.S. News & World Report ratings, but especially the fine touches such as what style classrooms they have and what sorts of teachers teach there. You should visit some schools and sit in some classrooms to get a sense of what you are getting into. Not only will these experiences clue you in to where you want to go to school, but they will give you inspiration when writing in your essay why you chose their particular school over the others.

Finally, some early preparation for the application process is to get on with reconnecting with old advisors or whoever you want to write your references. Meet up with them and talk things out. Remind them of key stories that will sound good in a letter and get them enthusiastic about backing your decision to get your MBA. By actually meeting up with such people they are more likely to follow through on deadlines in submitting the letter of recommendation and also on writing a letter that will make you stand out.