

## HOW UNHAPPY STUDENTS CAN CUT THEIR LOSSES

**Summary:** *Have you gone to school for a year and are now drawn to another field of study? What should you do? Find out here.*



**Question:** I finished my freshman year as a mechanical-engineering major, but didn't like many of my courses. I am drawn to the business side, and after internships at both an engineering firm and a financial institution, I found myself enjoying my work at the financial institution and despising the engineering position.

In addition, I hope to someday be a top executive and don't see myself getting there through engineering or my current school. Should I transfer to a top business school or stay put and strive for an engineering degree?

**Answer:** There are lots of layers to your question, and plenty of paths to take to the top. Let's start with the engineering quandary. Reassess how you got into engineering in the first place. If you carefully researched, talked to people, and were truly drawn to the field, then meet with your adviser to pinpoint what may have gone awry and consider options for rekindling the attraction before making a decision to move onto another field. On the other hand, if you never had a particularly strong attraction to engineering, all of the indicators from your coursework and internship experience are that you should cut your losses and follow your passion into the business realm.

Business is a vast descriptor that represents a host of functions. Your financial experience was a positive one and may represent the direction in which you would like to go. To avoid jumping prematurely, however, give yourself the opportunity to carefully research the range of business options (finance, marketing, information technology, etc.) and use your findings as a guide to your decision making. Expand your business-journal and online reading, consult with faculty at business schools you are considering and take advantage of family and community/social gatherings to explore your newly discovered interest.

Top business schools certainly provide advantages: the quality of the education; the name recognition and status; alumni connections; on-campus recruiting; all of which help to nudge open the door to opportunity. Certainly, many of the top business schools are well-represented in leadership positions. If you are pursuing your passion, and you have the means and opportunity to go to a top business school, it may be a terrific route for you take on the road to a leadership position. The caveat, of course, is that there is no guarantee. Your motivation, interpersonal skills, and luck will all weigh in, as well.

The other side of the coin is that many motivated and talented people from obscure colleges receive a top-notch education, gain valuable experience through internships and on-campus leadership roles, and end up with stellar careers as top executives.

- See **[Applying to Business School: Checklist for Applying to Business School](#)** for more information.