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1. Please discuss your career path, your short and long-term goals.

I have envisioned my goal to be a business leader and drive people towards a business objective. I wish to pursue this goal by becoming a partner with a firm in consulting domain.

After graduating as a Mechanical engineer from IIT Delhi, I started my professional life with Eicher, one of India's leading automobile firms, where I lead short term projects in Manufacturing, Product Design, Marketing and Vendor Development. I learnt dynamics and interrelations between different functions through this vivid experience.

My subsequent experience at Asian Paints Limited, among top 10 decorative coatings companies in the world, involved working at grass root level in a green-field project. As Production and Planning executive for Asian Paints' dream project, I was responsible for material and manpower planning, coordination with corporate supply chain function and leading a team of 72 people to achieve the design production capacity of the project. Steering the team through challenging situations during this project strengthened my people management and leadership skills. As these experiences were focused in manufacturing domain, they made me realize the need to know about business issues in other areas which I believe would be instrumental in developing a career in consulting.

In my current profile as Transformation manager at IBM BTO, my responsibilities include providing support for business transition, synthesizing solutions for clients and driving projects with global teams. Through this experience, I have developed an ability to work with cross functional teams, resolve problems in different areas and deal with customer requirements. I have worked on a myriad of problems with different client processes at IBM. While resolving these issues and linking the results with organizational objectives, I felt the need to learn more about business strategy in order to have a better alignment of business goals to specific problems.

I believe that at this stage, business education would complement my current work experience. An MBA will provide me additional skills, such as knowledge in business strategy and understanding of issues in different business domains, required to pursue my career goals in consulting.

After MBA I want to join a business consulting firm as a strategy consultant. This would act as a platform for getting involved in business problems of a diverse set of companies. In this profile, I would be able to apply learning from my work experience and business education to resolve challenging issues. By growing further in this role, I look forward to become a Consulting partner in future and take on higher responsibilities.

2. Why are you interested in The Duke MBA program and how will it help you achieve your goals? If you are interested in the Health Sector Management concentration or a joint degree program, please address in this essay.

“Balanced Excellence and team culture”, the primary hallmarks of Duke MBA provide the inspiration and reason for being a part of the energetic community at Duke. I believe that management education at Fuqua will complement my current skills and work experience and provide me additional skills required to pursue my career goals in consulting domain.

At Fuqua, I will be able to develop thorough knowledge of business principles through a customizable curriculum with electives in strategy and consulting. In addition, by providing opportunities to work in real life situations, Duke MBA would provide me an interactive real-time environment. This is the type of environment in which I learn and work best. Working on real world problems in various courses such as Small Business Consulting course and Strategic Planning Practicum will complement my learning experience and prepare me for my future role.

With an emphasis on team work and leadership at Duke, I will be able to work with teams on activities like Duke Start-Up Challenge and on practical assignments. This would hone up my people management and leadership skills and equip me to make an influential contribution as a business leader in long run. I also look forward to participate in student organizations such as Consulting Club which would enable me to explore opportunities in consulting domain.

At Duke, I will be able to develop perspective on different business areas by interacting with a community which has diverse business experience. Developing relations with this community would hold prime importance for me. A focus on nurturing the spirit of collaboration as an integral part of Duke Culture would help me build networking skills and is decisive in my choice of Duke

MBA. I believe that making an impact through activities beyond academics is an imperative part of business education. Fuqua experience, with an entire gamut of extracurricular activities, would provide me this opportunity through one of the most active student bodies of any business school.

I believe that this program would help me not only in career goals but also in developing myself as a good human being. I think that I would be able to make a meaningful contribution to the Duke community with my background, education, work experience and ethics.

3. How has your personal history and family background influenced your intellectual and personal development? What unique personal qualities or life experiences might distinguish you from other applicants? How will your background, values and non-work related activities enhance the experience of other Duke MBA students and add to the diverse culture we strive for at Fuqua? *Note: The goal of this essay is to get a sense of who you are, rather than what you have achieved professionally.*

Having been born and brought up in a middle class joint family, I have gained some of my most obvious personality traits from family values and culture. One trait that my family inspired me to inculcate is to make best use of given situation and resources. Reaching my current position, given resource constraints, while getting the best possible of everything would have been difficult without this attitude. This has significantly influenced my way of working and has enabled me to carry an optimistic attitude even in difficult situations. By carrying forward this virtue in Team Fuqua, I will encourage other members of the community to work with this attitude and make things better than they otherwise would be.

Participation in different activities and exploring new areas has always been my passion. During my school life, I developed this passion by taking part in extra curricular activities including debating, dramatics, painting and poetry. Exposure provided by these activities inspired me and I furthered this passion, as president of the school student body, by starting a system of activity clubs in my school. Having discovered art and poetry as an interesting medium of expression, I became an active participant of "Fine Arts" and "Hindi Council" clubs at IIT Delhi. Interaction with a diverse community through these activities motivated me to learn more about people and human behavior. Taking this thought forward I found a new passion and began learning Graphology, a tool for assessing personality traits through handwriting analysis. Graphology has enhanced my understanding of people and enabled me to develop better relations. Through participation in Arts club at Fuqua, I intend to share my interests. I also wish to develop them further and extend to others by creating a Graphology club.

During my graduation at IIT, I was selected for International Student Exchange program with University of Massachusetts, Amherst in Fall 2001. Spending four months with a diverse

community and in a different education system was a unique learning experience. I quickly adjusted in this new education system where my hard work earned me a place in Dean's List for Fall 2001 semester, on basis of outstanding academic performance. My stay in an international dormitory and interaction with people from across the globe added a new dimension to my thinking and persona. Courses at UMass involved working in teams with members from different countries and this enhanced my abilities as a team player. In addition, through my participation in various extracurricular activities and my involvement in a course on "Inter-Cultural Living" I mingled with different people and cultures. An entire gamut of events on the campus made me feel like being a part of a global community. I look forward to enhance these experiences through participation in International club and GATE course at Fuqua.

I feel that making contributing to community development is close to my heart and keeps me humane. When I was in XI standard, I got an opportunity to teach underprivileged children as part of a small campaign organized in my school. I got a feeling of personal satisfaction after teaching in this two day campaign. This motivated me to contribute my bit for benefit of society by devoting some time for social cause. Carrying forward on this idea at IIT Delhi, I was involved in teaching children at the "Central School" located in the campus. At IIT, I also took part in a campaign for creating education awareness in villages. Having a desire to contribute further, I thought of utilizing my hobby of poetry composition for social cause. I wrote some poems for a Non Government Organization (NGO) magazine – "Yuva Samvad" to convey a message on issues such as agricultural development. My association with this organization inspired me to do something more and pursuing this desire I donated my first salary amount, after graduation, to an orphanage run by an NGO. I felt that giving returns from my first efforts in professional life was one of the ways to give something back to society. I have tried to continue such activities in professional life also by being a part of the "Hands of Hope" campaign at IBM in which I was involved in teaching underprivileged children on weekends.

I believe that by sharing these values and experiences with others I would be able to add value to the team Fuqua, not only during the education experience but also for the rest of my life.

4.To be a good team player, one needs to be an effective individual leader and vice-versa. Describe an example of where you were challenged to become a leader in a team-oriented context. What was the challenge you faced, how did you address it, and what did you take away from the experience for your future development as a leader?

Attrition was becoming a big problem for the management at IBM BTO, Bangalore. With 20 % of new recruits leaving within three months of joining, attrition was becoming a major pain area and

was impacting business and overhead costs. At this stage an initiative for reducing attrition was started and the project team included members from Training, Recruitment, Human Resources and Transformation teams. As a Transformation manager and Black-Belt with IBM, I represented transformation team in this project. Having a target of achieving fifty per cent reduction in attrition for a headcount of 3000 people at Bangalore Business Unit, we knew the ride would not be smooth.

The assignment was interesting but preliminary discussions and analysis for attrition reduction did not seem to materialize the thoughts. I insisted that data orientation be the basis for actions in the project. However, due to constraints in data availability the project progressed with an approach in which logically obvious factors like “expectation setting for new hires” were assumed as causes. The team soon found itself in troubled waters when the Business Unit head expressed concern regarding the methodology and lack of drive. At this stage, I realized that what was missing in the project was a structured approach and analytical rigor. I thought I would be able to induce these missing elements and make the project a success and hence decided to lead this challenging initiative.

Having a background in six-sigma and transformation at IBM, I convinced the team members to follow six-sigma methodology for attrition reduction. Along with the team members, I finalized a structured approach for the project. This approach included identification of owners for different activities, data analysis, detailed process study and implementation of recommendations. Subsequently critical factors impacting attrition were identified and solutions for these factors were devised. This stage of the project involved the challenge of convincing the stakeholders and leadership team for implementation of recommendations. The difficulty of handing this challenge was compounded by the amount of resources required for materializing the suggested solutions which meant that strong business cases were required to be built.

Having identified hiring of right profiles – in terms of age, education and work experience – as a critical parameter impacting attrition, I suggested that a new hiring model be created based on analysis of historical demographic data. The proposed outcome was a set of profiles which would lead to lower probability of attrition among new hires. The recruitment head, however, was reluctant to accept the benefit of a new model over the existing one. Similar situations were faced for recommendations corresponding to other critical factors.

In order to overcome the challenge of convincing the leadership team, I always substantiated the recommendations with analysis and statistical proofs. I used six-sigma tools to provide a strong basis for implementation of proposed solutions. In addition, I used the approach of conducting

pilot implementation to highlight potential benefits of recommendations. Through these steps, I was able to present a substantial validation in front of senior management and influence the leadership team to permeate the implementation across the organization.

After a span of eleven months the project was successfully completed and Bangalore Business Unit boasted of lowest attrition rates among other units in India. One key learning from this exercise was that team work is about situational leadership and that a logical approach when used with rigor can be used to overcome all hurdles. In this project I used six-sigma tools which strengthened my analytical reasoning abilities. Moreover, handling of numerous situations which required convincing a cross functional team enhanced my skills in persuasiveness and in leading a team towards a common goal. In this project I was required to get tasks done from different team members, which helped me develop strong people management skills. This project also emphasized certain areas of improvement for me. While working with team members from multiple entities, I observed that some people are impeccable in their deliverables and others require constant supervision and need to be dealt with apposite professional aggression. In some situations I gave way to camaraderie where professionally aggressive approach was required. I need to develop this skill as I move on to take higher responsibilities.

