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1. What would you like the MBA Admissions Board to know about your undergraduate academic experience? (400-word limit)

Four years of my graduation (B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering) at IIT Delhi was a unique learning experience and something that had a lasting impact on development of my values and skills.

During my early days at IIT, I felt like being in a new world with numerous opportunities. I participated in events such as poetry composition, debates and dramatics during the fresher period. On basis of my performance in extra curricular activities, I was awarded “Most Enthusiastic Fresher” of my dormitory and this motivated me to explore other opportunities. I became an active member of “Fine Arts” and “Hindi Council” clubs at IIT and took part in various events organized by these clubs. My involvement and wins in these activities developed me as a good team player and enhanced my interpersonal skills.

In my second year, I joined Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), IIT Delhi chapter. As a member of SAE, I coordinated and organized various club events including “Hands-On” workshops and industry visits. Seeing my enthusiasm, the operating committee of the society nominated me to become coordinator for the annual SAE event at IIT Delhi. This entailed a huge task in arranging sponsorship, inviting different colleges, deciding the events and arranging for publicity of the event. It was for first time that I lead a team of 15 people to organize an event of such scale. Coordination for this successful event made me realize my leadership abilities.

During the fourth year at IIT, I was required to do B.Tech project, a project that accounts for 10 credits and involves practical work. In order to utilize this opportunity I took up a Supply Chain project with a government organization - Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). This business problem involved designing a supply chain model for organic foods launched by KVIC, with a motive to promote organic farming. The project involved understanding the issues in supply chain for other KVIC products and designing a new model for Organic Foods. During this project I had to convince KVIC officials for implementing the recommendations because some of them involved significant changes in KVIC's old system. These discussions to convince KVIC honed up my negotiation skills and persuasiveness which also helped in my work life.

2. What are your three most substantial accomplishments and why do you view them as such? (600-word limit)

“This is the place I want to belong to” was the dream I had after reading an article in a newspaper about IIT Delhi during my high school education. My academic performance at school also fuelled this desire and I decided to pursue this dream. IIT Delhi is among renowned engineering colleges in the world and I had to find a place among top 0.5 % of applicants in order to get admitted in IIT. My preparations for realizing this dream involved development of problem solving and logical reasoning skills and having a precise understanding of fundamentals in science. After numerous cups of coffee, sleepless nights, and a lot of effort, I stood at 461<sup>st</sup> rank among more than 200,000 applicants across India, and joined Mechanical Engineering course at IIT, Delhi. This marked beginning of a new era in my life which provided me a mire of opportunities in both academics and extracurricular activities. A world class education system helped me develop strong knowledge of fundamentals and analytical skills. Being a part of highly focused curriculum at IIT, I built an ability to work under pressure and developed an attitude of “Never say die”. Also, my participation in various events at IIT enhanced my abilities as a team player and leader.

I view my achievements at Asian Paints Limited as my second substantial accomplishment. At Asian Paints, I was part of a challenging assignment which involved working in a green field project. While working on this dream project for the organization, I lead the production team to achieve design capacity within a span of six months. This experience involved a myriad of challenges. One of the key challenges I faced was that I had a relatively inexperienced team to handle complex operations in the plant. This problem was further compounded by certain system issues faced during the project set-up stage. Under these circumstances I resolved key concern areas of the team by getting directly involved in certain activities. My support to the team in other similar situations increased the team morale and motivated them to achieve stringent targets. This experience has developed my ability to motivate a team in challenging environment which I believe is imperative for an effective leader.

My third significant accomplishment was providing support in successful transition of a process from client to IBM delivery center at Bangalore. During a transition project with an IBM client, in Germany, a process in Finance and Accounting was being transferred from the client end to IBM. As part of the project team, I was responsible for suggesting process improvements. The transition process, however, hit some roadblocks as knowledge transfer was not happening effectively. At this critical juncture, I decided to own up this process and guide the team. I followed a strategy to make best use of resources and to ensure efficient process design in order to make this transition a success. I created “To Be Design” – improved process design after transition - and was also able to build positive relations with the client. This was an important achievement for me as it strengthened my ability to build relations and drive teams in troubled situations.

3. Discuss a defining experience in your leadership development. How did this experience highlight your strengths and weaknesses as a leader? (400-word limit)

“This is not going to be a smooth ride” was the thought on my mind when I was assigned the task of leading the attrition reduction initiative 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. I envisioned achieving 50% reduction in attrition over a span of eleven months.

I created a cross functional team comprising of Human Resources, Training and Recruitment leads. Along with the team members, I put in place a structured approach for the project. This approach included identification of owners for different activities, data analysis, detailed process study and implementation of recommendations. In order to convince the leadership team for implementation of certain key recommendations, I always substantiated the recommendations with analysis and statistical proofs. In addition, I used the approach of conducting pilot implementation to highlight potential benefits of recommendations. Through these steps, I was able to convince and influence the leadership team to permeate the implementation across the organization.

In this project I conducted analysis using 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. 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 an apposite professional aggression. In some situations I gave way to camaraderie where professionally aggressive approach was required. I need to develop further on this skill as I move on to take higher responsibilities.

I have built further on these strengths while driving other projects. In an assignment with an IBM client, a major gas supplier in USA, a critical business problem required cost reduction through improvement in productivity. This project involved complex data analysis and convincing the client for making changes in processes at client end. Using my strengths and learning from past experiences, I successfully managed to drive the team to achieve more than 15 % improvement in productivity and annual cost reduction of \$100,000.

4. In your career, you will have to deal with many ethical issues. What are likely to be the most challenging and what is your plan for developing the competencies you will need to handle these issues effectively? (400-word limit)

Integrity and ethics are important components of professional life. Having my career goal to work in business consulting domain, I have anticipated certain ethical challenges associated with this career path.

In a consulting role, ethical issues related to confidentiality of data, conflict of interest between client and consulting organization, transparent and timely disclosure of information and inappropriate usage of client resources are expected to surface. I

consider ethical dilemmas related to conflict of interest between client and the consulting firm as most challenging. There could be circumstances where client suggests the consultant to make a compromise on quality of diagnosis and recommendations in order to meet its own internal targets. This becomes a tug of war situation with client satisfaction at one end and consultant's commitment to deliver accurate results at the other end. Another point to be considered here is that any wrong conclusions may lead to serious consequences for client and have a negative impact of consulting firm's reputation. Such a case needs objectivity on part of the consultant to highlight probable consequences and present the big picture to the client. However, the situation may still not be resolved if client is persistent on its decision.

I have dealt with some ethical issues during my work experience. At Asian Paints, the management team asked me to terminate services of an employee in my team on grounds of a mistake that led to breakdown of a critical equipment. I knew him as a bright performer and hence decided to convince the management to retain this person. After a month of deliberation, the employee was retained with a warning.

Dealing with such ethical conflicts made me realize the need to enhance competencies for handling ethical issues. These competencies include understanding the complete picture by putting conflicting points together and using prioritization tools to assess alternatives on ethical parameters. In addition, self-awareness and understanding of client's culture are required to make decisions which are in sync with ethics of both client and self. I believe that Harvard education would help me develop these competencies through a focus on studying real life problems. A focus on case studies would provide me ability to deal with conflicting business issues, to consider multiple facets and to arrive at right decisions. Also, a diverse community at Harvard would increase my understanding of different cultures which is imperative while working in multicultural environment for various clients.

5. What is your career vision and why is this choice meaningful to you? (400-word limit)

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. 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 the project, I lead a team of 72 people to achieve design production capacity. These exposures 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.

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 improved my ability to work with cross functional teams, resolve problems in different areas and deal with customer requirements. While resolving issues with IBM clients, I also felt the need to learn more about business strategy 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 and skills. Also, it will contribute in development of additional skills required to pursue my career goals in consulting. Through a focus on case studies, Harvard MBA will provide me ability to consider innovative perspectives about business situations, resolve conflicts and make decisions. Discussions on myriad of business issues with a diverse group at Harvard will teach me how Business Strategy works. This would also develop my ability to align organization objectives to problem resolution, which I believe is a key characteristic in a consulting role.

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 and take on higher responsibilities.

6. What other information do you believe would be helpful to the Board in understanding you better and in considering your application? (400-word limit)

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 such as debating, dramatics, painting and poetry. My interaction with a diverse set of people 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 set of people 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. Developing Graphology as a hobby has enhanced my understanding of people and has enabled me to develop better relations.

IIT experience also provided me an opportunity to go for a Foreign 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, my participation in various extracurricular activities and my involvement in a course on “Inter-Cultural Living” provided me a better understanding of different people and cultures. An entire gamut of events on the campus made me feel like being a part of a global community and developed me as a person.

These opportunities have taught me that interaction is one the finest forms of learning and with this belief I would be able to add value to the Harvard community, not only during the education experience but also for the rest of my life.

