

## **What to Do After You've Submitted Your Application?**

### **Hurry up and wait**

After the frenzied blur of GMAT prep, essays, school research and getting your applications in on time, potential business school students are faced with something even more unsettling: waiting for the school's decision. Once you've submitted all your materials, the situation is out of your control, and you and thousands of other hopefuls are at the mercy of a faceless admissions office.

Luckily for the proactive applicant, there are still steps to be taken in the pursuit of your dream school. Here are a few strategies to survive the waiting game. And that doesn't mean thumb twiddling!

### **Know the course**

According to Sara Neher, Director of MBA Admissions at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business, the more you know about the school, the better. Universities are looking for a student who genuinely wants to be there, so having a solid answer as to why you want to be there is imperative. The best route is through insider scoop. "Continue your outreach to current students and alumni to better understand each school--but be professional and not demanding," says Neher. If you have exhausted your resources, there are other, more covert ways to listen to students. Read the school blogs and check out student surveys.

Evan Bouffides, Admissions Director of Washington University's Olin School of Business says that throughout the process you should improve your understanding of the program, show continued interest and passion for the school and continue to stay connected to the admissions office. "All of this can be done without continually calling or e-mailing," he says.

While you may want to call the admissions office every day to check on your application, resist the urge! Most schools will automatically let you know when they have received your application, so phone calls and e-mails are unnecessary, and, frankly, annoying. Admissions offices are dealing with thousands of applicants, and the last thing they want are thousands of people checking in. However if you have received no confirmation that a school received your application materials, a quick, polite e-mail will be tolerated.

### **Follow the rules**

While it may seem obvious, if you are offered an interview, take it! If they offer you two, take them both! Moreover, Neher recommends that potential students be as accommodating as possible with scheduling. She says to follow the school's policy and procedures for scheduling if at all possible, as asking for exceptions can put you in a negative light.

Kevin Kiley from WashU's Olin Business School has seen the interview from both sides. He is an Olin alumnus as well as the current senior associate director of MBA admissions. Kiley says that there has to be a pretty extreme reason for the prospective student to forgo the interview. "I once had a phone interview with an applicant who was stationed in Iraq at the time. If he can do it, pretty much everyone should be able to work it into their schedule." Although most schools prefer face-to-face interviews, many will be flexible for out-of-state and international students; but rarely will the process be waived altogether if it's the school's policy, and you shouldn't want it to be.

### **Run through**

There are numerous resources available to help you prepare for an admissions interview. Like any interview, you want to do your homework and come prepared with questions to show your interest in the school. But as Kiley points out, not all questions are created equal. He says that one of the biggest mistakes an interviewee can make is asking a question that has an answer readily available. "I've had a lot of applicants ask about the international opportunities when all of the information is already on the web site. The best thing you can do is say 'I read about your exchange program,' and then ask specific questions that can't be found elsewhere." And if you don't already have a solid idea as to why you are applying to a specific school, brush up on what makes that MBA program unique, and how you and the school can be mutually beneficial. A Wharton

student writes, "For the interview, the applicant definitely has to have a good understanding of why he/she wants to go to business school and concrete reasons to attend business school now."

### **Game day**

When it comes time for the interview, admitted students and admissions staff across the board unanimously stress the importance of authenticity. A Stanford admit writes, "The interviewer asked me a series of behavioural questions. The only advice I have is to be yourself. Reflect on what you have done and then think deeply about why you want to go to business school and what you want to do with your MBA." Business schools across the U.S. are placing a major emphasis on diversity; so don't try to fit into a mould. In fact, if you seem too much like a majority of other applicants, this can actually hurt your chances. Business schools look for a diverse class that will have differing opinions and make for lively, robust classroom discussions and extracurricular offerings. So make sure that you stand out, but in a positive way. "I had one applicant ask me out after the interview," said Kiley. "I thought it was very unprofessional."

Kiley 's best advice is to treat the interview as you would a job interview. He says he looks at applicants as though they are going out into the working world. "One of the main things we are looking at is how this person will represent WashU when they graduate."

### **Take a breather**

When all is said and done, don't overdo it. Sit back and relax. All the work you put into the application you submitted by the deadline was not all for nothing. Do not try and contact the office of admissions unless you have some important new information to share. Neher says that a new GMAT score, a grade in an accounting or statistics class that you are taking now, or a significant promotion would all qualify, but not much else. However, with differing acceptance deadlines, sometimes it becomes necessary to know where you stand with Dream School when Backup University needs an answer. In this special circumstance, Kiley says that admissions offices understand the urgency, and will usually be accommodating. "It's just like everything else; it's not what you say but how you say it." If you write them a very polite e-mail, explaining the situation and conveying that this school is your first choice, they will listen.