

B-SCHOOL DESPITE THE ODDS:

How to Beat the MBA Numbers
Game with a Great Story

Kaneisha Grayson

What You'll Get Today

- My true life story of being admitted to Harvard Business School despite my unconventional applicant profile
- The super-quick timeline I worked under and how I did it
- The real deal on my applicant profile:
 - ▣ my GMAT score
 - ▣ my undergraduate GPA
- My application tips to other unlikely candidates
- The true story of how I got an equally unlikely client into Kellogg (Northwestern Business School)
- Info on how you can work with me to get into a top B-school

More Info

- Tell your Twitter friends about the presentation!
- **@KaneishaD** if you want to follow me
- **#BDO** is the label for this presentation if you want to tweet about it or see what others are saying
 - e.g. “The **#BDO** webinar is going on right now!”
- There will be time for Q&A after the presentation!
- I anticipate this to last 2 hours, but core information will be given in the first hour.

About Me



- 26 years old
- From Austin, Texas
- Currently live in Los Angeles, California
- Graduated from Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School in May 2010
- Founder of The Grayson Group, a network of personal development blogs and coaching services

MY STORY

The Setting

- The summer before my senior year at Pomona College in Claremont, CA
- Majored in Black Studies
- All of my summer internships were in the education and non-profit fields
- No real plan for what I was going to do after graduation.
- Then one of my mentors suggested business school...

Googling “What is an MBA?”



In July 2005, I didn't even know what an MBA was. 8 months later, I was accepted into Harvard Business School.

Why I Decided to Get an MBA

- I knew I wanted to go to Harvard for grad school.
- I had an entrepreneurial spirit but knew little about the nuts and bolts of business.
- I considered myself a leader that wanted to make the world a better place.
- I saw the salary statistics for the HBS Class of 2004.

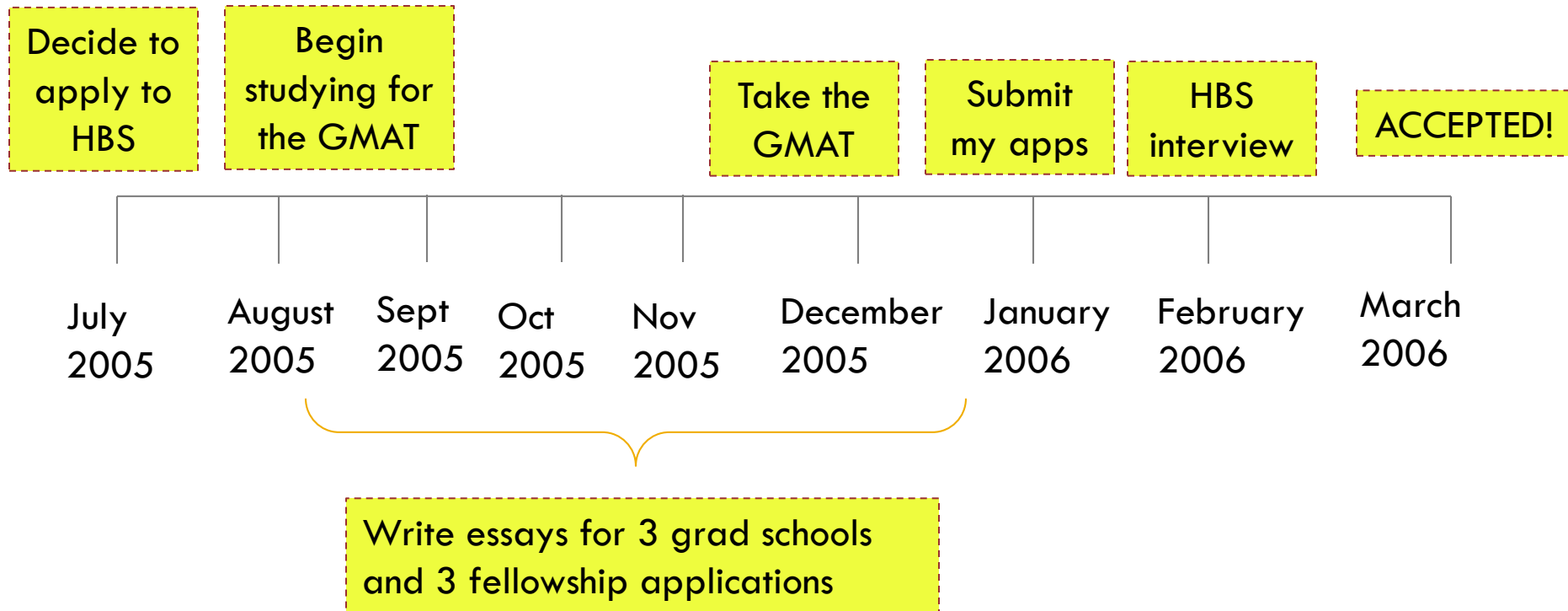
Career Placement

*The following data is as of three months post graduation.

Source: <http://www.hbs.edu/about/statistics/mba.html>

Class of	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Accepted Offer by Graduation	84%	88%	90%	90%	88%	77%
Accepted Offer 3 Months Out	90%	94%	95%	94%	93%	87%
Median Base Salary	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$105,000	\$115,000	\$120,000	\$114,400
Median Signing Bonus	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000

My Application Timeline



What I Did and Didn't Do

DID

- Applied Round 2
- Self-study for the GMAT
- Reached out to an HBS student I knew to give feedback on my essays

DID NOT

- Use an essay coach
- Take a GMAT class
- Conduct a mock interview with anyone

Me vs. The Odds

Me

- GPA: 3.6
- GMAT: 620
 - 39 on Verbal (89th percentile)
 - 36 on Quant (48th percentile)
- 0 years of full-time work experience
- 0 years experience working in the private sector
- Black Studies major with no quant. coursework in college

The Class of 2011 HBS Applicant Profile

- Avg. GPA: **3.67**
- Middle 50% GMAT range: **700-760**
- When I applied, most students had **2-4 years of full-time work experience.**

Why I Think I Got In

- Demonstrated commitment to leadership and service
- Clear and compelling story for why I wanted to get an MBA
- Showed how I would contribute to and benefit from the HBS community
- Awareness of my weaknesses and a plan for how to improve them
- Able to highlight how apparent weaknesses were actually my strengths going forward

What I Had to Do Before Matriculating

- Spend two years gaining life experience 😊
 - ▣ One year spent as a Rotary Ambassador of Goodwill in Ghana
 - ▣ One year spent in Harvard Kennedy School MPA program

- Calculus and Microeconomics and earn an A in each
 - ▣ while in college

- Accounting and Corporate Finance and make a B+ or better in each
 - ▣ while at Harvard Kennedy School)

- Online modules of Statistics, Accounting, and Finance
 - ▣ summer before HBS

- Attend Analytics, a two-week quantitative bootcamp for non-traditional students
 - ▣ summer before HBS

What Happened After I Got There

- I was awarded a **great financial aid package**, including the **George Foundation Leadership Fellowship**
- I earned **2nd Year Honors** (top 20% of students) for my academic performance my second year.
- Harvard Business School Career Services **hired me to coach other students** in how to network effectively for the job search.
- Harvard Business School Entrepreneurship Center awarded my coaching business a **\$10,000 grant**.

So...why are you telling us all this?



It's not just to brag. It's to show you how far you can go in achieving your educational and professional goals from wherever you are now. I did it and you can do it too.

A Recent Client Success Story

- A male over 30 years old
- 0 years full-time work experience in the private sector
- Graduated from a large public university in 5 years
- GPA under 3.5
- GMAT under 640

Our “Despite the Odds” Action Plan

- Careful selection of MBA programs
 - ▣ Focused on his dream schools and ranked them in importance to know how to spend our time
- Self-study for the GMAT (not my recommendation)
- Worked on his essays intensively from September until January
 - ▣ Unearthed buried parts of his story—things he didn’t think mattered to admissions committees
 - ▣ Acknowledged his weaknesses and made an action plan for addressing them
 - ▣ Revised each essay at least 5 times
- Intensive interview preparation

What Happened



He got rejected from every school he applied to...

What Happened

...except for his dream school:
Kellogg Graduate School of
Management at Northwestern
University

Lessons from my Client Success Story

- The odds will beat you most of the time, but **you only need to win once** when it comes to applying to B-school.
- It is important to **keep your standards high** while also being aware of the likelihood of you getting in.
- Your story can't mediate your weaknesses, but it can **highlight your strengths**.
- It's worth investing in a coach if you have **big dreams** but **nontraditional credentials**.

How You Can Beat the Odds

- Do your very best on your GMAT/GRE.
 - ▣ Take a course if you can afford one.
 - ▣ Give yourself at least 2 months to study before each re-take.
 - ▣ Don't torture yourself re-taking it a million times. I say stop at 3 times.

How You Can Beat the Odds

- Take coursework to supplement gaps in your undergraduate coursework or demonstrated abilities.
 - ▣ High school Math refresher course (e.g. Algebra)
 - ▣ Accounting
 - ▣ Finance
 - ▣ Statistics
 - ▣ Microeconomics

Supplementary Coursework

- BYU Online Courses (highly recommended)
 - ▣ can take Basic Arithmetic courses for free
 - ▣ Accounting, Finance, Microeconomics, and Statistics are \$444 each
 - ▣ <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/>
- University of Phoenix online courses
- Your local community college
 - ▣ “Continuing Education” programs

How You Can Beat the Odds

- Understand the nature of competition when it comes to MBA admissions:

You are not competing with other applicants.

You are competing with a lesser expressed version of yourself.

It's big, bold, colorful, ambitious You vs. boring, vague, gray, insecure, unclear You.

How You Can Beat the Odds

- **Present your best self to the admissions committee by writing the most authentic, interesting, and convincing essays you can.**
 - Start writing your essays early—like NOW.
 - Revise your essays several times but not too much. (3-5 revisions)
 - Get a select few people who know you well to look over your essays and give feedback.
 - Someone who knows you well personally
 - Someone who knows you well professionally
 - An alum or two from the school you are applying to

Your Despite the Odds Action Plan

- Start NOW—even if you aren't 100% sure. It's an ever-unfolding learning process.
- Begin your GRE preparation.
 - ▣ Most US business schools accept the GMAT and the GRE.
 - ▣ Almost any graduate degree program will require the GRE, so you can't go wrong taking it.
- Start researching business schools.
 - ▣ Fun starting point: Princeton Review business school rankings
 - ▣ MBA podcaster
- **Consider using an essay coach**—especially if you have a non-traditional background or an unconventional applicant profile.

How You Can Work With Me

1-on-1 Coaching

- Similar to the client story I told today
- Two options:
 - ▣ #1: Essay edits of existing drafts
 - ▣ #2: Intensive essay coaching
- For info and prices, visit my website.
 - ▣ <http://theartofapplying.com/services/packages/>
- Email kaneisha@theartofapplying.com

Group Coaching

- “B-School Despite the Odds”
- Members-only 8-part online program
- A step-by-step easy-to-follow guide to applying to business school
- Pre-registration starts today.

B-School Despite the Odds Program

- Online members-only community
- 2 live video sessions per month that walk you through the process of applying to a top business school
- 24/7 access to a resource library of just-in-time and just-enough information
- If you start now and do all the homework, you will be ready to apply to business schools by the Round 1 deadline
- Pay month-to-month so you can quit anytime

Pre-registration link



<http://theartofapplying.com/bdo/join>

Join the mailing list to stay connected!

The Art of Applying

Personal Statement & Career Coaching for Interesting People

by Kaneisha Grayson



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Upcoming Free Webinar: “B-School Despite the Odds”

JULY 2, 2010

Think an MBA is right for you but not sure if Admissions Committees will think you are right for the MBA? You're not alone!

20
tweets

retweet

Join me on **Thursday, July 8 at 5:15 pm Pacific Time** for a [free webinar](#) where I will share my story of being admitted to Harvard Business School despite not having the traditional applicant profile. I'm also going to share the story of how I successfully worked with a client who was just as “out there” as I was, so that he would have outstanding personal statements and get admitted to his #1 choice B-school.

This webinar isn't going to be just a bunch of vague tips like “Study diligently for the GMAT” and “Know yourself very well.” I'm going to tell you the nitty-gritty details about my own application such as:

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Questions and Answers

- I've categorized the emailed questions.
- I've tried to answer the questions that will be of the most general interest.
- If you want to ask ultra-specific questions, you should join the B-School Despite the Odds group coaching program.
- I'm going to cover them very quickly so we can get to all of them.
- There will be a "Resource List" that I will send you the link to along with the recording of the webinar within a week.

Emailed Questions:

Choosing Schools & Timing

- Where can we learn about business schools in depth?
- Does it really matter which b-school a person graduates from?
- Is it worth it to apply to second-tier MBA programs?
- How did you choose your schools?

Emailed Questions: Framing Your Story

- How do you know if business school is the right choice for you?
- Do I have to know what areas I want to study while in business school?
- What is the best way to market yourself if you did not study business in college or have a business background?
- If you have a number of things you are interested in post-MBA, should you talk about all of them in your essays, or will you sound unrealistic and disjointed?
- I'm 30. Am I too old to be a competitive applicant?

Emailed Questions: Indian Males in IT

- How can a male from India working in an IT firm stand out?
 - ▣ This question came up A LOT!
 - ▣ If this sounds like you, please go to the link below and submit your info. I think we need to do a special webinar just for all of you.

<http://bit.ly/IndianMBAGuys>

- But here's my free advice...

Emailed Questions: GMAT and GRE

- How much math does b-school involve?
- The GMAT/GRE is kicking my butt over and over again. What should I do?
 - ▣ Work with me one-on-one to write fabulous essays!

Emailed Questions:

Recommendations & Visits

- What are important factors to consider when choosing your recommenders?
- What is the best approach to ask your boss for a recommendation?
- When should I ask for my recommendations?
- When should I visit schools?

Emailed Questions: Paying for It

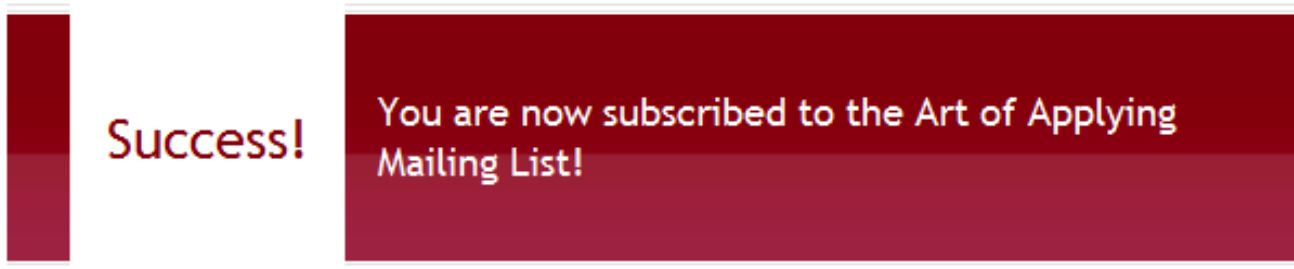
- How do I find scholarships and fellowships to help pay for business school?
 - ▣ There will be some fellowships on the resource list, but if you want a constantly updated list of scholarships and fellowships, you should join the group coaching program.

Pre-registration link for BDO Group Coaching



<http://theartofapplying.com/bdo/join>

Remember to join the mailing list at <http://theartofapplying.com>.
If you have never seen this in your email inbox, you are not on the mailing list:



THANK YOU!

- Twitter name: @KaneishaD
- Twitter hashtag for the webinar: #BDO
- Kaneisha@theartofapplying.com

