

Vlerick Leuven Gent MBA Admissions Essay

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What is motivating you to seek an MBA education at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School? Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School's MBA provides the right balance of practical learning and theoretical analysis through interactive lectures and group projects. This suits my learning style as I engage best with real-world based approaches. Electives in "strategic management" and "international business" together with the in-company consultancy project will have an immediate impact on my employment upon graduation by providing directly relevant knowledge and experience that I can draw on during client work. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School attracts high calibre students and this peer group will challenge and stretch me. I feel that that level of stimulation and growth is what makes the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School MBA an excellent investment. Whilst my knowledge of business and management techniques will undoubtedly improve. I also expect to make life-long friends and build a strong, international network to help both my business and political career and their careers. What are the motives that lead you to ask to be admitted to the MBA programme at this point in your life?

My promotion at x company has seen me transition away from a predominantly technical focus, where accounting principles and the analysis of numbers were paramount, to strategy development, line management and project management. I have begun to recognise that these non-technical areas appeal to my interests and have engaged my strengths, from communications skills and leadership to problem-solving. Moreover I have demonstrated an ability to learn from and adapt to new situations and to take a pragmatic approach to the realities of a small organisation with limited resources. The Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School MBA will help me refine these existing skills and help me make a career change to a top-five consultancy, such as McKinsey, where I will be given the opportunity to make a real impact by analysing problems, framing hypotheses and making recommendations in areas that directly and positively affect the client firm.

This short-term goal to change the focus of my career is determined by my long term goal to be a politician, a member of parliament and ultimately a minister. More than political experience alone, I strongly believe that a solid grounding in business, leading large teams, analysing complex issues, developing long-term strategy, championing innovation and implementing change, will give me skills needed to run a government department. What other possibilities will you consider if you are not admitted to the MBA programme to reach your goals of personal and professional growth? If I am not accepted onto the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School MBA this year then I will request feedback on why my application was not successful. In light of this feedback I will then apply to my second choice business school. An MBA is an important component and the most direct way for me to achieve my goals. However, it is not the only way and I would attempt to bolster my skills and experiences in areas where I am deemed to have any short-comings. The non-MBA route to achieving my goals would mean that I will take longer to achieve those goals and will be challenging, however, I am focused on my future and aim to fulfil my potential, irrespective of the route I have to take. What do you think you gained from your university studies? Conversely, what important things do you think your studies lacked? At the University of Leicester I read Electronic & Software Engineering. In my professional career I have found this knowledge of engineering practice has helped provide a dimension of understanding that was lacking in some of my colleagues. This was particularly apparent in my role as a Technology Strategy Consultant developing business strategy at M company where I was regularly requested to analyse competitors and technology trends so that the business implications for M company could be better understood. Whilst at university I met people from all over the UK and from other parts of the world. This experience helped broaden my perspectives beyond my experiences in Wales and India as I was faced with new cultures and perspectives on life. Some of my closest friends were from Asia and Africa and learning about their life experiences showed me that there was another world outside that in which I lived. However, my studies lacked focus. This was due in part to a lack of experience, as I knew very little about the world of work and as such I made decisions on specialisation based on literature and advice from academic staff, without being able to see for myself what the consequences of these decisions might be. I also failed to focus effectively on my workload. In hindsight I believe this was due to the fact that I did not choose to go to university, indeed it was a familial expectation. As such I was easily distracted by my new life as a student and did not achieve my potential. I hope to build upon my academic and professional experience at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School by living and studying with my international classmates and using my existing knowledge to make career decisions that are informed by my own experience and advice from classmates and staff. Studying for an MBA at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is my choice and I remain focused on successfully completing the course and fully achieving my potential, both academically and professionally. Describe your strong points, personal and professional, explaining why you see them as such. In a team setting I often take on the role of the coach who ensures that agreement and harmony are maintained in order to create a positive team atmosphere and reach a consensus. This has proved to be a valuable skill, especially during my voluntary work with x voluntary organisation where I am currently leading a project. As all of the team members are volunteers my seniority is notional and, whilst in a professional setting I can take an autocratic approach where appropriate, it is not an option in voluntary work so reaching a consensus is crucial. Whilst at x company I have developed risk management strategies and IT policies from scratch and without any experience of having done similar work before. This has required me to develop and use my research skills as well as my negotiation and team building skills as well as being able to sell a vision of the strategy to ensure that stakeholders understand and accept the need for change. During these projects my action-oriented mind-set have come to the fore and I have been successful in large part because I have been willing to take suitable amounts of time to research and plan the work, take action in developing strategies and reviewed and refined outputs. Without these skills and my attitude to the work I would not have been able to successfully complete

these projects. Describe your weak points, personal and professional, explaining why you see them as such. My project work is often time-constrained. Whilst at M company it was always the case that when analysing market trends, if I had waited until I had perfect information the company would have missed the opportunity to capitalise on the trend. As a result I have had to control my instinct as an engineer to aim for perfection and be more comfortable making decisions based on the incomplete information to hand. In my voluntary work at x voluntary organisation I have found that I get very frustrated if desired results do not happen in the timescales that I have become accustomed to in my professional career. In the voluntary sector resources are severely limited and often dependent on the time commitments of a volunteer. This means that delays can occur if a colleague has to go away on a business trip or if partner organisations do not deliver when they have promised. Whilst this is a frustration I have learnt to accept this situation as a reality of voluntary work. I have tried to address the issue through outlining an inspirational vision for the project and by being pragmatic and understanding of volunteers other commitments. This has engendered a “family feeling” within the project team and has resulted in people increasing their time commitment to the project. What will you be able to contribute that is unique and would make you a valuable addition to the class? I believe my professional, voluntary and political experience will allow me to make a valuable contribution at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, I have leadership experience of private and public sector enterprises as well as political organisations and the groups that lobby them. These multidimensional perspectives should allow me to provide a different perspective in class-room discussions and project work and I hope to be seen as someone who can provide refreshing and challenging input. I also have an understanding of both Western and Eastern cultures. This has been valuable during my political campaigning. I stood for election in an ethnically diverse seat where up to 40% of voters are immigrants, many of which have escaped significant hardship in their home countries. I was able to address the worries of these potential voters more instinctively than my colleagues because I had a deeper understanding of the outlook of these groups. I was also able to deal with the needs of the indigenous population as I have grown up amongst them. This ability to get along with and understand people of other cultures has also been of use with my voluntary work for x voluntary organisation. X voluntary organisation attempts to represent the British Muslim community, however this can be a difficult job as it is ethnically heterogeneous and there are sectarian divisions. My focus has been leading a youth focused project that is working towards addressing the need of young British Muslims, particularly the disenfranchised. Whilst anyone can lead a project, an understanding of the influences on these young people, as well as the ethnically diverse project team is a must. I have managed to address some of the issues these young people are facing by simply being able to ask and understand their point of view.

Describe your idea of a dream job for you three years from now. My goal is to become a consultant for McKinsey working and managing projects of strategic importance for multinational companies. The role would give me the opportunity to make a real impact on clients by analysing problems, developing hypotheses and making and implementing recommendations. I believe the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School MBA would be an excellent foundation for achieving this goal, not just because of the in-company consulting project but also because of the international nature of the course. What do you consider to be your single most important achievement so far and the reason for its importance in your personal growth? The 2005 terrorist bombings in London where a wake-up call for me. I was not directly affected by the bombings but they forced me to reconsider my involvement in the community around me. I came to the conclusion that I had to take action if I wanted to ensure that the point of view of mainstream Muslims was to be represented. It is this realisation that has driven me to become active in x voluntary organisation, to become active in local politics and to become active as an advocate of moderate politics on the x Channel. This involvement has allowed me to see for myself the problems faced by socially-deprived communities of all races and faiths which in turn has given me a greater understanding of peoples motivations in life. I have also learnt about the basics of political campaigning and have had the opportunity to engage with politicians and civil servants. Whilst this maybe an unusual answer to the question, the conclusions I reached in 2005 have led me away from a hedonistic focus on myself to evaluating what I can do for the wider community. This I feel is my greatest achievement to date. Please comment on a situation where you failed to reach an objective and what you learned from it. I stood for election in the May 2006 local elections. I was tasked with reducing a safe opposition seat to being a marginal seat so that it could be targeted as a winnable seat in the 2010 local elections. During campaigning I found significant levels of support and made it my personal objective to get elected. I succeeded in achieving the party objective but unfortunately I did not achieve my personal objective. I have learnt two important lessons from this experience. I learnt that objectives set by those with more experience, ie experts, should always be considered, even if the facts on the ground appear to indicate different. And secondly, I learnt that in politics it is often better to bide ones time and build support incrementally rather than attempting to change peoples attitudes in one go. Both of these lessons are directly translatable to the business world where the views of domain experts is often crucial and where large scale projects are often better implemented in a simple and working form then grown to meet the needs of the organisation. Optional question: Is there any additional information that is critical for the Admissions Committee to know which has not been covered elsewhere in this application? After the terrorist bombings in London in 2005 I felt that British Muslims were not being effectively represented, and it was my duty, as a young Muslim, to become more engaged in the world of politics. After meeting with party activists and the leader of my local council, I was invited to stand as a councillor at the next elections. I felt that being elected as a councillor would help me to represent my religious and ethnic communities as well as allowing me to fulfil my civic duty. I am a volunteer at x voluntary organisation. X voluntary organisation is an umbrella organisation representing four hundred groups around the UK. My focus at x voluntary organisation has been on youth issues and I am the project leader of the Youth Unit. Initially the project team worked to understand the life experiences of young Muslims. The research culminated in a youth conference in Manchester. We are currently looking at methods of bolstering support services specifically aimed at young Muslims, with an emphasis on mechanisms for funding these services. I am a regular contributor on x Channel as a political commentator on a live prime-time programme that digests the week’s major stories. The second half of the show

allows viewers to telephone with their questions and comments. This is always challenging and I am now better able to deal with quick-fire and unscripted questions and can provide solid rationale for my opinions. As the channel is viewed by a very mixed group of people I have to ensure that the language I use is both professional and understandable. I am a CIMA accountant (passed-finalist)