

Ryan Patterson's

The 7 Secrets to Creating Harvard Business School Applications that Get You In !

A Free eCourse

(To receive all lessons in this eCourse, go to

www.HowToGetIntoHBS.com/e-course)

©2004 Ryan Patterson & Innovation Press

GIVE THIS LESSON AWAY FREE! You have permission from the Author of this Lesson to give it away free. This lesson must remain unaltered.

Lesson #3

"The Most Common Trait Among Winning Harvard Business School Applications"

In the previous lesson we discussed the importance of writing unique essays. We also discussed a simple rule you can use to determine if your essays are unique enough.

In this lesson, we'll talk about one of the most common traits of winning Harvard Business School applications.

Before I continue with this lesson, I must admit that I'm a little hesitant to do so.

Here's why.

What I am about share with you can be an **incredibly effective way** to distinguish yourself from your competition. The problem is you may feel emotionally uncomfortable doing so.

BUT... this is good news.

Why?

Because it may be uncomfortable for you to do what I suggest, it will also be uncomfortable for your competition to do the same thing..

Some of the best HBS essays I've read were...

Some of the best HBS essays I've read were...

EMOTIONALLY REVEALING & INTIMATE

Let me explain.

When I read a winning SET of essays, I almost always find the applicant has revealed something very personal about him or herself.

Notice my emphasis on SET of essays. Any single essay may or may not be that personal. But... successful applicants invariably write a set of essays that are revealing about themselves.

Oftentimes it involves sharing one's personal feelings about a career OR personal life experience.

Let me repeat that.

Successful applicants invariably write a set of essays that are revealing about themselves. Oftentimes it involves sharing one's personal **feelings** about a career OR personal life experience.

To do this well, you need to create a sense of intimacy with your reader. It's like you're sharing one of your **deepest, darkest secrets with a trusted friend** and confidant. That's the tone you need to aim for in your essays.

As you can imagine, this is not such an easy thing to do emotionally. It's hard enough sharing a deep dark secret with your best friend... but to do so with a complete stranger is even more uncomfortable.

You may wonder why it is so important to write intimate essays. What is it about intimacy and allowing yourself to come across as vulnerable necessary? And why does it matter, if all of your answers are already unique?

There are two reasons.

- 1) **It makes you seem very human to bare your soul to a complete stranger**
- 2) **It's harder to reject someone you know than a total stranger.**

Let me give you a very unusual illustration.

Imagine you're sitting on a plane. You sit down to a really nice person next to you... a gentleman named Scott. You two end up talking for most of the flight.

After a while, you discover that Scott is flying to meet his daughter who he hasn't seen in over 10 years.

It turns out he made a huge mistake 10 years ago... a mistake that his daughter could not forgive him for... until now or so he hopes.

As Scott tells you what happened, you can help but notice how he is holding back tears thinking about how he hurt his daughter emotionally so long ago... you can't help but notice the sound of regret in Scott's voice.

As your conversation shifts from recalling the past to today, you notice a hint of hope in Scott's voice. You can tell he's grateful for the opportunity to re-establish ties with his daughter. Maybe he can make some amends for the mistakes of his past.

As the conversation draws to a close, you wish Scott the best of luck.

Several hours later, you notice that he pulls out a folder to do some work. On the cover of the folder is the name of the American Red Cross. It turns out Scott happens to work in the fundraising department for this well known charity.

Before you land, Scott asks if you would make a \$100 donation to the American Red Cross.

STOP !!

How do you **FEEL** right now about donating the \$100? Would you do it?

I'll be that you feel one of two things.

- 1) **You donate without hesitation, or**
- 2) **You don't really want to donate... but you feel an immense pressure to say yes.**

What just happened?

Scott succeeded in making you see him as a person and you've just discovered...

**It is much harder to say No to someone
you know than someone you don't.**

That's EXACTLY what you want the reader of your Harvard Business School application to feel.

You want the reader to **FEEL** an **IMMENSE PRESSURE** to admit you to Harvard Business School.

You see Harvard Business School does not make any admission decisions what-so-ever. It's the PEOPLE that work at Harvard Business School that makes these decisions.

Lets face it. People have emotions and emotions always influence decision making.

At the end of the day, the people at Harvard Business School admit people and rejects applications.

You need to keep this in mind.

Now, this alone does not get you into Harvard. However, if you're a borderline candidate than this kind of competitive edge can make the difference between just barely getting rejected vs. just barely getting admitted..

A good friend of mine is a direct marketer and has spent his career studying the psychology of human decision-making. He once explained human decision making this way.

**People make decisions based on emotions...
and use logic to justify their decision.**

Going back to my example with Scott on the airplane. Most people in that situation start looking for reasons to say, "yes". They feel an emotional connection to Scott and frankly don't want to let him down.

The same is true when you write your application.

When you engage the application reader at an **emotional level**, something very **important happens**. He/she starts looking for reasons to **LET YOU IN...** instead of looking for reasons to **KEEP YOU OUT.**

Again, when you're a borderline candidate... this can make the difference between getting in or not.

There is an easy way to do this.

Your competition will write essays citing specific life and career experiences.

In your essays, you will do the same... BUT, you will be sure to mention how you FELT about those experiences.

Many applicants have the same experiences on their resume... but how they FEEL about these experiences can be utterly unique.

That's the **hidden secret** of why many somewhat average looking applicants can get into Harvard. They had incredibly thoughtful and intimate feelings about **otherwise ordinary events** – even the same events other people have experienced.

When you do this, you're able to convey to the reader that you're a real person.

The trick is to be honest and write as if you are talking to a very close friend. Someone you trust.

Revealing some of your deepest and most intimate thoughts about your life achievements and failures... your **insecurities, hopes, dreams and goals** is an indispensable tactic that will help you stand out of the gray mass as an individual.

At the same time, it's my belief that this kind of writing provides a much more complete picture of you as a person.

Here's one final test to make sure you're on the right track.

You should be able to take your complete set of essays and have your mother and your best friend read it. If they BOTH don't say "Wow... I had no idea"... than your essays were not revealing and intimate enough.

Yes, you do need to be that private. You need to give them the feeling that you are writing to your best friend. A person you trust, a person you can rely upon. You need to show them that you are someone they will feel comfortable with as a student, but also as a close friend.

There are 3 kinds of people who apply to Harvard "Superstars", "Well Qualified", and "Totally Unqualified".

The middle group, the "Well Qualified" is by far the biggest group. You will often hear words like "it's a crap shoot" to describe what it feels like for people in that group.

In those situations, **most people who get in... get in by a small margin. Most people who get rejected, get rejected by a small margin.**

When you're THAT close to getting in, the cumulative effect of all the little things makes a big difference.

Writing emotionally revealing and intimate essays is one of those "little things" that can make a big difference.

In the next lesson of this eCourse I'll show you how to handle your weaknesses the Harvard Business School way and to use them to help you get in.

You'll receive your next lesson in your email inbox in a few days.

If you received this lesson from a friend, get all of the lessons in this eCourse by going to:

www.HowToGetIntoHBS.com/e-course