

Client Success Story

FROM REAPPLICATION TO ADMISSION

How a Chartered Accountant
Secured Admits from HEC Paris
and IESE with Scholarships

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INTRODUCTION

This case study follows the journey of a Chartered Accountant with over eight years of experience across audit, accounting, reporting, cost analytics, and business partnering functions.

She had previously applied to leading European MBA programs but did not receive any interview invitations. When she approached us, she was preparing for another application cycle and wanted to understand what needed to change.

While her profile included strong professional achievements, multiple promotions, international exposure, and people management experience, her previous applications had not converted into interviews.

Our work focused on understanding the gaps in the previous application, identifying stronger stories from her career, and building a more structured application across essays, resume, recommendations, and interviews.



CANDIDATE PROFILE

Gender: Female

Nationality: Indian

Profession: Chartered Accountant

Industry: Manufacturing

Function: Audit, Accounting, Cost Analytics & Business Partnering

Work Experience: 8+ Years

Team Management: 7 Direct Reports

Global Exposure: Multi-country portfolio across Asia, Europe, North America and South America

GMAT: 635

Reapplicant: Yes

Previous Applications: HEC Paris, INSEAD

Current Applications: HEC Paris, IESE, INSEAD, NUS

Final Outcome: Admits from HEC Paris and IESE



UNDERSTANDING THE STARTING POINT

Before making any changes, we reviewed her previous applications.

The profile had many strengths:

- Chartered Accountant qualification
- Strong career progression
- Multiple promotions
- Team management experience
- Global exposure
- Awards and recognitions at work

However, the application felt fragmented.

The resume focused mainly on responsibilities and projects.

The major issue in her previous application was that the essays did not clearly answer the prompts. While this may seem like a simple mistake, it is surprisingly common, and many applicants struggle to directly address what the admissions committee is actually asking.

The different parts of the application were not reinforcing one another.

As a result, admissions committees saw a strong accounting professional, but they did not get a complete picture of her leadership journey.

TAKEAWAY

“A strong profile alone does not guarantee results. The different parts of the application need to work together to tell a consistent story..”

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Reapplying After an Unsuccessful Cycle

The first challenge was deciding how to approach a reapplication.

Simply updating essays and submitting the same stories again was unlikely to create a different outcome.

We started by identifying what had changed since her previous application cycle.

Over the past year, she had:

- Taken on additional managerial responsibilities
- Expanded her people leadership experience
- Improved her GMAT score
- Gained greater exposure to business stakeholders
- Developed more clarity around her post-MBA goals

These changes became important building blocks for the new application.

Rather than treating the previous cycle as a setback, we focused on showing growth since the last application.

TAKEAWAY

"For reapplicants, schools want to see progress. Demonstrating growth is often more important than rewriting the same stories."



Story Discovery and Profile Building

The next step was understanding which stories should form the foundation of the application.

We conducted multiple discussions covering her professional journey, major projects, leadership experiences, failures, achievements, and career decisions. Initially, many of her stories were explained through tasks and responsibilities.

Through several conversations, we worked together to identify the experiences that revealed her leadership style and decision-making process.

Some of the strongest stories included:

- Turning around a difficult stakeholder relationship at a manufacturing facility
- Building learning and development initiatives for a growing team
- Supporting large-scale transitions across global teams
- Leading onboarding and capability-building efforts for new employees
- Managing difficult team situations and rebuilding customer confidence

As we reviewed these experiences, clear patterns began to emerge.

Across different roles and projects, she repeatedly stepped into situations where teams needed support, structure, or guidance.

These themes eventually became the foundation of her overall application.

TAKEAWAY

“Strong MBA stories are often already present in a candidate's career. The challenge is identifying which experiences best demonstrate growth, leadership, and impact.”

RESUME REFINEMENT

When we reviewed her initial resume, we noticed that many accomplishments were buried inside operational descriptions. The work was strong, but the impact was not immediately visible.

One example was a project where she translated cost insights into business recommendations that helped unlock approximately \$1.1 million in savings. In the original version, the achievement was described largely through responsibilities and analysis performed. However, the larger story was that she had influenced decision-makers and contributed to a measurable business outcome.

Across the resume, we worked on:

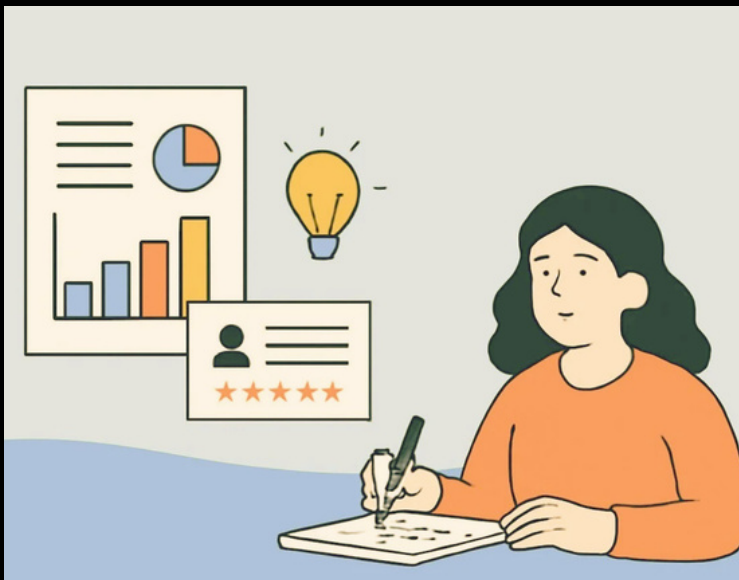
- Quantifying impact wherever possible
- Replacing task-oriented descriptions with outcome-driven achievements
- Highlighting promotions and leadership progression
- Demonstrating scale through global responsibilities and cross-functional exposure
- Showing influence rather than only execution

The final resume presented a professional who was not only managing processes but also contributing to business decisions and value creation.

TAKEAWAY

"A strong MBA resume should answer one question quickly: "What changed because this person was involved?" Quantifying outcomes and highlighting influence helped make her impact more visible."

STORY DISCOVERY & NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT



Before starting essays, we spent significant time identifying which stories deserved space in the application.

Initially, she viewed many experiences as routine parts of her job. Through multiple discussions, we identified a recurring pattern across her career: stepping into situations where teams, stakeholders, or processes needed stability and direction.

Among several stories, one stood out.

She had inherited a situation involving a manufacturing facility in Asia where stakeholder feedback had been consistently negative. Team capability gaps, communication issues, and growing dissatisfaction had damaged trust between teams.

Rather than treating it as a short-term operational issue, she focused on understanding the root causes, coaching team members, improving communication, and rebuilding stakeholder confidence.

Over time, feedback improved significantly and the relationship was restored.

What made this story powerful was not the operational outcome. It demonstrated leadership, people development, stakeholder management, and long-term thinking.

This became one of the key stories that shaped her overall narrative.

TAKEAWAY

“The strongest MBA stories are often hiding inside everyday work experiences. The goal is to uncover what those experiences reveal about leadership and decision-making.”

ESSAY DEVELOPMENT

Once we finalized the story themes, we moved into essay development.

We began by discussing the purpose of each essay, the message it needed to communicate, and how different stories could support different questions.

After these discussions, she prepared initial drafts. While the content was genuine, many essays focused heavily on describing events rather than reflecting on them.

Over multiple calls and review rounds, we worked together to strengthen:

- Personal reflection
- Leadership lessons
- Decision-making thought process
- Growth and self-awareness
- Connection between past experiences and future goals

The stakeholder turnaround story from the manufacturing facility became particularly important because it showcased leadership beyond technical expertise.

Instead of focusing only on what she did, the final version explored what she learned about coaching people, building trust, and creating sustainable solutions.

The essays gradually evolved from professional summaries into stories that reflected her growth as a leader.

TAKEAWAY

“MBA essays are not designed to test accomplishments. They help schools understand how candidates think, learn, and grow through their experiences.”

RECOMMENDATION STRATEGY

For recommendations, our objective was to ensure consistency between her application narrative and the feedback provided by recommenders.

We first discussed which managers were best positioned to evaluate her leadership and growth. Once finalized, we encouraged her to have conversations with them about her MBA plans and career goals.

We specifically advised against focusing heavily on technical accounting, audit, or compliance skills, as these were already visible in her resume and overall profile.

Instead, we encouraged recommenders to highlight qualities such as:

- Team development and coaching
- Stakeholder management
- Empathy and emotional intelligence
- Ability to navigate challenging situations
- Leadership potential

This ensured the recommendations added a new dimension to her profile rather than repeating her technical strengths.

TAKEAWAY



Strong recommendations do not simply confirm technical competence. They provide insight into how a candidate works with people, handles challenges, and earns trust."

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Interview preparation became one of the most intensive parts of the process. We began with mock interviews to understand her natural communication style. During the initial sessions, we observed that many responses became highly technical and contained more detail than necessary.

As a result, we focused on helping her structure answers more effectively.

Areas covered included:

- Keeping answers concise
- Leading with actions and outcomes
- Highlighting lessons learned
- Avoiding excessive technical explanations
- Demonstrating leadership and self-awareness

CAREER GOALS

We spent considerable time refining her career goals narrative.

Her long-term goal was to move beyond finance support functions and eventually take on broader business leadership responsibilities with strategy and P&L ownership. Her short-term goal focused on entering a strategic leadership pathway within the manufacturing sector where she could work closer to business decision-making.

Ensuring this progression felt logical and realistic became an important part of interview preparation.





SCHOOL-SPECIFIC PREPARATION

For school-specific preparation, one school required a presentation component.

Since she did not have a highly specialized passion area outside work, we explored multiple possible topics including:

- Women in leadership
- Future of manufacturing
- Finance transformation
- Technology and industrial operations
- Sustainability in manufacturing

After several discussions, we selected a topic focused on the intersection of manufacturing, finance, and business decision-making because it aligned naturally with her professional experience and long-term aspirations.

We then worked on making the presentation more distinctive by incorporating practical business examples, industry trends, and personal insights rather than presenting it as a purely academic discussion.

By the end of the process, her responses became more structured, confident, and reflective.

TAKEAWAY

“Interview preparation is not only about preparing answers. It is about helping candidates communicate their experiences in a way that is clear, relevant, and memorable.”

APPLICATION TRANSFORMATION

At the start of the engagement, different parts of the application highlighted different versions of the candidate.

The resume focused on responsibilities.

The essays focused on accomplishments.

The recommendations focused on performance.

The interviews focused on technical expertise.

By the end of the process, every component reinforced the same narrative.

A Chartered Accountant who had built her career across accounting, reporting, analytics, and business partnering roles.

A leader who developed people, rebuilt stakeholder trust, drove business impact, and consistently stepped into challenging situations.

A professional who wanted to move from supporting business decisions to helping shape them.

TAKEAWAY

“The strongest applications are not built through individual documents. They are built when every component tells the same story from a different angle.”

RESULTS

She applied to:

- HEC Paris
- IESE
- INSEAD
- NUS

The outcome:

- Admit from HEC Paris
- Admit from IESE
- Chose to attend HEC Paris



For a candidate who had not received a single interview invitation in the previous cycle, these results represented a significant turnaround.

TAKEAWAY

“Moving from no interview invitations to admits from HEC Paris and IESE required much more than updating documents. It required revisiting experiences, strengthening stories, improving communication, and presenting a clearer picture of professional growth.”

FINAL REFLECTION

One of the most interesting aspects of this engagement was that the profile itself did not need major changes.

The achievements, promotions, leadership experiences, and professional growth were already present.

The work involved identifying the right stories, presenting them more effectively, and ensuring consistency across every part of the application.

That process ultimately helped transform a previous unsuccessful application cycle into admits from two leading European MBA programs.

TAKEAWAY

“A strong MBA application is not always about adding new accomplishments, it is often about presenting existing experiences with greater clarity, focus, and strategic alignment. When every component of the application reinforces the same narrative, even a previously unsuccessful profile can achieve significantly better outcomes.”