Why Get an MBA?
Why get an MBA over other business management courses  
Reason 1: Professional development and finding your ideal role  
Reason 2: Acquiring management skills sought by international recruiters  
Reason 3: Fuelling dreams of entrepreneurship  
Reason 4: Career advancement through understanding global trends  
Summary: The ‘why’ varies from MBA student to MBA student  
About TopMBA.com
Why Get an MBA over other Business Management Courses?

What motivates students to pursue the MBA qualification and why get an MBA over other business management courses?

Yes, MBA students are commonly looking to increase their earning potential. Although salary expectations took a rare fall in the latest edition of QS’s applicant research – albeit from a record high – they still exceed averages offered by industry employers the world over. However, only a third of prospective MBAs cite this as their main aim in the QS TopMBA.com Applicant Survey, an annual poll looking at the thinking behind the decisions of the prospective MBA student.

Here are some key motives emerging from these annual surveys:

- Career advancement and career change
- Professional development and acquiring new skills
- Increasing salary potential
- The chance to make a difference within an organization
- Starting your own business
- Life experience from the course itself
- Growing a professional network

The following pages look at some of the principal reasons why students decide that the MBA is right for them, beyond the higher levels of compensation. So, if you’re wondering “Why get an MBA?”, then read on.
More captivating than the chance to earn higher salary levels as an MBA graduate is the opportunity to enact a career change, cited as a prime motive by over 40% of MBA applicants surveyed. But, higher still come aspirations of professional development – namely, the chance to acquire new skills that allow for speedy career advancement in any given industry.

Another factor drawing people to business management courses is the life experience offered by an MBA, often heralded as a unique atmosphere of collaborative learning between noted academics and gifted students from all corners of the world.

Students are also showing an increasing propensity to position their professional development with their own personal values, where the chance to make a contribution to something they believe in can outweigh the prospects of a hefty pay-packet.

“Salary is still a driver, because candidates want a return on investment, but personal values come into play a great deal. People want to work for companies they admire and with which they share values.”

Isabella Pinucci, career service coordinator at SDA Bocconi School of Management.

While Gretchen Shinoda, director of career counseling at the International University of Japan adds, “Our students seem to be more and more motivated by contributions they can make to companies, especially small and medium-sized companies... They are choosing places that need their skills, and want their talents.”
### MBA Student Motives

#### Reasons for pursuing an MBA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To improve career prospects</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn new skills</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take up a leadership / general management position</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build a professional network</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enable a career change</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To boost salary</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To start own business</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily for education</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Source: QS TopMBA.com Applicant Survey 2013

Read more about people’s motivations for pursuing an MBA on [TopMBA.com](http://TopMBA.com)
Acquiring Management Skills Sought by International Recruiters

As mentioned on the previous page, one of the main reasons for embarking on the MBA journey is to build and develop the kind of management skills that will be attractive to international recruiters.

These management skills are explored in the annual QS TopMBA.com Jobs & Salary Trends Report, where international recruiters are asked which skills they consider to be the most important and which particular management skills they'd like to see more of in their MBA recruits.

This year, the five most important management skills to employers were given as:

- Interpersonal skills
- Strategic thinking
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Communications skills
- Leadership skills

Combining what are termed ‘soft skills’ with ‘hard skills’ is a central theme here and with the exception, among these five, of entrepreneurial skills, the report reveals a majority of employers place a greater value on soft skills than on traditional hard MBA management skills.

For the first time in 20 years, international recruiters were satisfied with the leadership skills displayed by MBA graduates, but other soft skills – such as communication, interpersonal and strategic thinking – could still be improved upon in their eyes.

Learn more about these five most sought-after skills and the full list of management skills rated by international recruiters in QS’s annual reports.
Many people look to enroll on business management courses because they want to learn how to start their own business, and crucially, how to ensure the best possible chances for its success. In fact, over a quarter of MBA applicants polled indicated their interest in developing their entrepreneurship skills and starting a business, making it the single-most popular answer to the question ‘where do you see yourself in 10 years’ time?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where candidates see themselves in 10 years</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running own business</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director in large/public company</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO of large company</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed consultant</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner in professional services</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle manager</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director in small company</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior manager in public sector</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior academic</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior technologist</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down-shifting for work-life balance</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Source: QS TopMBA.com Applicant Survey 2013
The suggestion that business school and the MBA are not ideally suited for those looking to become entrepreneurs seems to have been turned on its head over the past few years with entrepreneurship flourishing at many leading schools. Aside from courses focused on giving entrepreneurs the necessary toolkit, the opportunities to network, build credibility with investors and take part in startup competitions are virtually unrivalled.

“I knew that entrepreneurship was something I was intrigued by and interested in, but it was really during the MBA that I realized that was what I wanted to do and not anything else.”

London Business School executive MBA alumnus, Corrado Accardi, and founder of Pizza Rossa.

“The real thing an MBA gives you is the ability to handle massive amounts of work while still being effective and building a network. Plus, you instantly make 240 new friends who are going to go off and do influential things.”

Steven Renwick, Oxford MBA alumnus and founder of Satago.

Read more about how an MBA helped these two alumni get their startups off the ground on TopMBA.com.
Career Advancement through Understanding Global Trends

Studying for an MBA not only allows you to gain access to the latest research concerning the business world, but it also gives you the chance to interact with those responsible for these findings and to discuss its practical implications in the real world.

For example, if you think the phenomenon known as reverse innovation is about making things backwards, then you should probably check out this interview with Chris Trimble, one of the two Dartmouth Tuck professors responsible for popularizing the concept and see how it could change the way corporations look at emerging markets.

“All innovation begins not with technology or creativity but with an understanding of the problem that you’re trying to resolve.”

Chris Trimble, professor at Dartmouth Tuck School of Business.

Understanding developing trends in international business can also help an MBA student to identify career advancement opportunities for employment in emerging, or expanding, areas.
For example, big data, a term used to refer to collections of data so vast and complicated that they require altogether new ways to process them effectively, is an area that is being seen and used more and more within certain industries.

Employer demand for managers with the right skillset to take advantage of the opportunities presented by big data technology therefore looks set to soar.

“There is tremendous demand-pull for managers with strong analytical skill.”

Gonçalo Pacheco de Almeida, HEC Paris associate professor

More and more top business schools are moving to provide the necessary training managers will need to meet the demand among companies working with big data.

Discover more insights from business school faculty members on TopMBA.com
By talking to those who have occupied the role of MBA student, TopMBA.com is able to get to the heart of people’s ambitions when choosing business management courses, as well as keeping track of their experiences during the program and after graduation.

Alongside and within the underlying trends for taking an MBA program, individuals will always have their own particular standout reasons for wanting to enroll.

Some emphasize their desire to explore new horizons in their professional development:

“The MBA was the perfect step in my career; it gave me the tools and general knowledge to perform at higher levels in organizations.”

Leonardo Banegas, ESSEC Business School alumnus.

Others are specifically looking at career advancement into business leadership positions within their current industry, which can range from finance and consulting to non-traditional MBA occupations such as journalism: “Most leading editors are promoted on knowledge and skill in editorial matters...”

“They know very little about leadership, budgeting and other things that are essential for managers at the operational level.”

Lucas Vogel, executive MBA student at Stockholm School of Economics.
While others still, highlight what they hope to get out of the course in terms of life experience and the great networking opportunities that come with joining a business school community.

“After a while you can’t just keep on learning on the job. You really need to take that next step, have a new experience and be taught something new....

“I’m not here for an easy route to specifically find my next job, I’m here to be able to expand my network and my way of thinking, thereby ensuring a long and successful career in my next role.”

Jacques Mouracadeh, MBA student at Columbia Business School.

Epilogue

No wonder the MBA and related specialized master’s qualifications are the business management courses of choice the world over.

It's even been suggested that Santa Claus (aka Father Christmas aka Saint Nicholas) could stand to learn a thing or two about running his global operation from an MBA. More on this festive scenario can be found [here](#).

Join the TopMBA.com community for more answers to the question ‘Why get an MBA?’
Have your say in the TopMBA.com community forum.

More information on career trends, as well as detailed reports, admissions advice and resources to help you choose the right school is available at TopMBA.com

TopMBA.com is the website for MBA and executive communities around the world.

Articles and blog posts source expert insight into a range of topics for those with an interest in the world of postgraduate business education.

These include: firsthand accounts of what motivates MBA students and where the qualification has taken MBA alumni; breaking trends and research in business education discussed by faculty members at leading international business schools; breakdowns of the different MBA and specialized MBA programs available; international and regional career trends that could have an impact on post-MBA careers; admissions tips and advice about taking the GMAT or GRE, as well as the opportunity to learn about scholarships and sources of financial aid.

TopMBA.com is also where you will gain access to the latest business education research from QS, with global business school rankings and employment reports produced each year.

QS organizes the largest business education events in the world, the QS World MBA Tour, the QS World Executive MBA Tour and the leading postgraduate studies information event, the QS World Grad School Tour, among an extensive product range including print and online publications and software solutions.

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