

Report of First Year at Harvard Business School

My time at the Harvard Business School has been the most eye-opening and transformational strip of my academic life. I originally believed that my classroom experience would center around analyzing economic models and applying business frameworks, a misconception shared by many German academics. Instead, I find myself surrounded by fascinating professors and passionate classmates who push me to question legendary frameworks and the sustainability of successful business models. Each class is dynamic, the topics uncovered are never what I expect, and I walk away each day always reflecting on interesting insights from thoughtful discussions.

In reality, HBS's approach is a discussion method rather than a case method. In many ways it seems like an orchestra of ideas where students constantly exchange points of views and the professor conducts an orderly performance. Through the case method, I learned the value of listening. As an active participant and listener, I have broadened my one-dimensional view of managerial decision-making to a multi-faceted perspective that takes into account complex issues and the motivations of people involved. This was largely fostered by classmates who were former army officials, teachers, pastors, politicians and secret service agents from 30 different nations. Each of them challenged my largely "cookie-cutter" approach and forced me to question whether there is the one "right" answer. Today, I realize that there's no single solution or leadership style that fits everything. The intriguing element of classroom discussions is that each individual brings different qualities to the forefront. I feel more comfortable now with my strengths and weaknesses – and making the most of them for the good of society.

What's unique about HBS is the opportunity to take the time to seek learning experiences outside the classroom. As a member of the investment committee of the Alpha Fund, a group that picks stocks and invests about \$100,000 of endowed funds, I discovered my passion for investing. I found a discipline that profoundly excites me and provides an unparalleled level of mental stimulation, requiring a broad comprehension of businesses and their value in the constantly changing world of capital markets. This experience encouraged me to intern with an alternative asset manager, where I feel to have matched my personal skills and passion with a job in a highly impactful industry that is still in its infancy. Based on this experience, I have decided to rejoin the firm – a path I would probably have never dared to take without coming to HBS.

From the outside, HBS may look like a factory that produces managers, but in actuality there is something greater and more noble here. Although I am only in my second year, HBS has transformed my outlook: my life will not be meaningful simply because of a successful career in business but it will be colored by how much I give back to my community. HBS has instilled in me the belief that we can and should all be better citizens, friends, spouses and parents. Much of my view has been shaped by the school's deep mission and by the friends I have made. I have formed meaningful, lifelong bonds with people I appreciate, care about and who care about me – this is personally enriching and constitutes largely what I feel life is worth living for.

I would like to cordially thank the HBS Foundation of Germany. Without their encouragement and financial support, the opportunity to embark on such a life-changing journey would not have been possible.

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