

What after CAT?

*Aditya is one of the lakhs MBA aspirants in the country who took the CAT on November 20, 2005. With the first hurdle out of the way, Aditya is now looking at other options open to him. What if he doesnot get a call from the IIMs? The next step will be to get a call from the other reputed B Schools. How? **Mayura Amarkant** guides him....*

Aditya must first:

1. Create shortlist of B Schools where he wishes to apply
 - a. B schools that will accept CAT scores
 - b. B Schools that accept other scores
2. Prepare for GD & PI

Applying to a B School involves the cost of form, the shortlist must therefore contain B Schools that are not only reputed but will also accept the CAT score.

- a. For B Schools that accept CAT scores, the student pre-emptly his CAT score and then makes a calculated decision to apply to B Schools where he feels his pre-empted score may be accepted.
- b. For B Schools that accept other scores, the student will have to start preparations to appear for the relevant examinations.

A typical CAT paper would comprise questions pertaining to Maths, English and reasoning. CAT being the toughest, a student who puts in the dedicated efforts and has prepared well for the CAT, god forbid even if he does not get calls from the IIMs, he is automatically well prepared for the other B-school's aptitude tests which follow CAT and are relatively easier. The student has to just ensure that he has to fine tune and enhance his efforts to the respective sections of these tests that are different from CAT. For example for XLRI's XAT, there is an additional section of general awareness that is not in CAT. For Maharashtra state's B-school test, CET there is a separate section called Visual

Reasoning, which would require additional efforts. Thus, a strong Preparatory programme for CAT becomes a firm grounding for all the other aptitude tests where Math, English and Logic are tested.

Creating a shortlist

How to choose a B School? The shortlist must have a fair mix of the top B Schools, second-rung B Schools and third-rung B Schools. Surely, you have a tentative list of institutes in your mind. Pen it down first. Surf the websites of the institutes. Then, instead of directly jumping to a conclusion based on ranking/perception/advice or any other parameter, it is advisable to spend a part of the money on travelling to the institutes and finding out whether the institutes are worthwhile. Interact with students, faculty, and alumni; check out the infrastructure and then make your decisions.

Instead of going by preset standards set in terms of ranking of institutes, take a close look at what the institute has to offer. Because, even after you spend another year working hard at cracking the entrance tests, there is no guarantee that you will get short-listed in the institute of your choice.

Without closing your mind on institutes other than a select few, take a close look at:

- The curriculum
- Quality of faculty -full time with industry exposure/industry faculty
- Industry-Institute Interface
- Infrastructural and other facilities
- Practical relevance of the programme
- Sincerity of the institute towards offering the programme
- Student empowerment and activities
- Are the institutes proactive at getting students good placements
 - Median Salaries
 - Names and number of companies
 - International placements

- Alumni network
- International Linkages
- Pedagogy
- Brand Name
- Location (proximity to corporate offices)

Resources you can use:

- Institute Website
- Advertisement
- Speak to current students and if possible alumni
- Visit the B School personally (if possible)

Prepare for GD & PI

Besides the all-important Communication Skills the student must be up-to-date with the current affairs and general knowledge. The best way to update one's self is to read national dailies, business newspapers and business magazines. Read on diverse topics ranging from humanities, to art, to philosophy, to legal to economics, to astronomy, to engineering. Regular reading on such diverse topics would not only help understand complex issues but would also help understand what the weak areas are and would thus help concentrate on those areas and keep working on them.

Each institute looks for different criteria for selection through Group Discussions, by and large it is your contribution to the discussion in terms of content, clarity of thought and confidence that are qualified by quantifiable examples, needless to say that your communication skills, grooming and body language also play an important role. Form a group of your peers; conduct group discussions amongst yourselves. Rope in a senior/knowledgeable well-wisher and ask him/her to conduct your interview. Be true to yourself and maintain a positive attitude. Meditate regularly so as to clear your inner thoughts and attain peace.

Upcoming examinations

Visit popular websites like:

- www.coolavenues.com
- www.careerlauncher.com
- www.imsindia.com
- <http://www.time4education.com>

These websites contain vital information like upcoming MBA entrance examinations in India, last date of form submissions, form availability centres, pattern of examinations etc.

What if you don't get into a B School of your choice?

One opts for an MBA qualification in a hope to make a grand foray into a promising career. In case you are not short listed in a reputed institute you can consider taking up a job in order to gain some real-life experience. While doing so, you can continue preparations for the next academic year.

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