

Startups Give Headstart to Hopefuls at Top B-Schools

Institutes like Harvard and Wharton seeking startup experience — even if a failed one

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Mumbai | New Delhi: Your experience in a startup — even a failed one — could be just the ticket for entry into some of the top business schools in the world. Leading global institutes including Harvard, Wharton, Stanford and Duke Fuqua that are pushing for more diversity are increasingly putting a premium on startup experience, finding qualities such as leadership, creativity, risk-taking ability and innovation in abundance in such candidates. Lea-

ding admission consultancies including PythaGurus, Admissions Gateway, WhiteGlow Consulting and ReachIvy say the number of such candidates has doubled and even trebled in the past few years.

There are several reasons driving this trend, experts said. The boom and bust of several 'high-potential' startups has led to a dramatic increase in applicants who had previously envisioned handsome equity payouts and now find themselves at a loose end.

Such people, who have seen the rise and fall of their companies, make for great candidates since they have interesting perspectives to share. Then there are candidates from startups that have survived and thrived and managed to secure funding. These applicants are eager to leverage their experiences and use B-school as a pivot to start their own ventures or work at star-

tups abroad.

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee, graduate Indradeep Banerjee, who got into four top B-schools (Wharton, Kellogg, UCLA Anderson and UVA Darden) this year, said his startup experiences — first at the product team at Flipkart and subsequently as cofounder of food tech startup Hungerbox — helped him gain admission.

At Kellogg, the interviewer asked Banerjee about his business fundamentals and how his personal startup experience compared with working at Flipkart. At Darden, where he got a full scholarship, he was asked about his startup experience from the operations side of things. Wharton, which Banerjee finally chose, had a 30-minute group discussion where his startup experience helped tremendously since he had donned many hats as an entrepreneur. He starts class this fall.