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## **Interview Debrief 1**

Commerce, GMAT 680

Location: Bangalore

My interview was very brief, lasted 15 - 20 minutes. The first few questions revolved around my internship experience with PepsiCo. 2-3 questions were asked back to back and one can call it was a stress interview ( for this particular section ). Questions were technical and one should be thorough with every aspect of their project. for example I had conducted an analysis, so they ask me about my findings, the process I followed etc .

A few HR questions were asked post this discussion. Two of the 5-6 questions had been asked to me in the mock interviews so I was prepared to answer those. For the rest, one needs to be very sure of what one wants to do and why, one's long term and short term goals etc. Your purpose and passion should really reflect in your answers and I think that that's exactly what worked for me. I was asked questions like 'why brand management? what are the good traits of a brand manager?' then they even try to stress me with questions like 'what would you do if you don't make it to the YLP?' then questions like 'what do you do for personal growth?'

The key to crack the YLP interview is to be very open minded, calm and confident ,and be sure of your story. Bootcamp definitely will prepare you with all kinds of situation that can be thrown in your direction but what happens at the interview is something no one can predict and therefore it's really important to be very open minded. They can ask you anything. it's more like a conversation than a typical interview one expects it to be. I was not ask questions like 'why ISB? why MBA? tell me about yourself.'

Key is to be confident and know what you are doing and why you are doing that.

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## **Interview Debrief 2**

Commerce, GMAT 760

Location: Mohali

Before the interview, we were asked to write a 50-100 words essay on a random word. The word I got was 'Organic'.

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Interview panel: 2 members- P1 and P2

P1: So I see, you moved from Chandigarh to Delhi for your undergraduate, what was the difference you have felt in the 2 cities?

Me: The main difference between the 2 was the diversity in my surroundings; I felt it was much more prominent in Delhi. As I was the member of my college's film society, I realized that 20 different people in a room could have 20 different opinions about a particular idea. This diversity in thought processes and ideas was what made my Delhi experience very enlightening.

P1: You were the captain of a team which came 4<sup>th</sup> in a national level business competition. What was your role as a captain?

Me: The competition involved making business decisions and we were a team of four. When there were multiple opinions floating around in the team to take a particular decision, I was the one to finalize the decision. Our chemistry was great and my teammates always trusted me with the final decision.

P2: You have mentioned that you learned Python. (He asked 3-4 questions related to Python)

Me: I did Python almost 1.5 years back and right now I don't remember any codes, but I did make notes so that I can revise the whole 6 month course in 2 days.

P2: Haha notes! (sarcastically) What is big data? What is parsing of data? Do you remember the ELIF function in python?

Me: (I knew these answers and gave one line definitions).

P1: I think you are the only person from Kirori Mal College this time.

Me: Yes even my CAT coaching tutors told me the same.

P2: So what other B-Schools are you aiming at through CAT?

Me: Through CAT, I am looking forward to the IIMs, but my preferences are very clear to me, first is ISB, if not ISB then IIM-A, and then the other IIMs.

P2: Why ISB is your first preference?

Me: (Talked about the 2 years of work experience, how some work experience will help me gain more sense from what I do at ISB, then mentioned the international faculty).

P2: Say you get admission to ISB, and now you are sitting for the IIM-A interview, what will you say to the IIM interviewer, why IIM is better than ISB?

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Me: I will tell him that I am getting an MBA immediately at IIM while at ISB, I will have to wait for 2 years.

P1: There's even a program at IIM which accepts GMAT after 4 years of work experience. Why not that?

Me: Well, you see there's a difference between 4 and 2.

P1: Hahah! You said international faculty at ISB attracts you. Why do you think IIM does not have international faculty?

Me: I don't know about that.

P1: You have mentioned that you want to be involved in analytics in the future. Tell us something about it.

Me: (Told them about the opportunities that analytics presented, how doing python made me realize about the potential of analytics, and how it suits my interest in technology. Mentioned that I would like to work at OYO rooms)

P1: What should OYO rooms do to go global?

Me: The most important thing is that it needs to get profitable. It has the market share and brand name now, it must expand its operations and start making profits now.

P2: Even flipkart is still in losses. How does it profitable so soon?

Me: You see flipkart has so many competitors funded by foreign companies. OYO doesn't have a clear competitor. Its competitors like Treebo are small and not much of a challenge right now.

P2: Okay, so any questions from us?

Me: Yes sir. What would an ideal candidate for ISB look like to you?

P2: You can find that out on the website.

Me: No sir, to you personally.

P2: Hah personally? Umm... You tell me about your strengths.

Me: (Started off with 1 strength, and as soon as I gave a pause, I was followed up with a different question)

P2: You are interested in technology, so what is the size of the IT industry in the market.

Me: I don't know the size of the IT industry, but I do know about the analytics industry.

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P2: Okay so what's the size of the analytics industr?

Me: 2 billion dollars in India and 120 billion dollars in the world.

P2: What is your source?

Me: Actually I just googled it, I didn't focus on the particular source website.

P1: Okay, thank you Siddharth.

Me: Thank you sir and happy diwali!!

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## Interview Debrief 3

Engineer, dancer, singer, 710 GMAT

The interview started with questions around my first essay. One achievement I had mentioned was how I balance my personal and professional life, owing to the blend of work and extracurricular stuff.

I was grilled on every single aspect mentioned in the essay, in detail. One interviewer was interactive and the other was busy making notes and underlining the application to ask questions.

They next started talking to me about my goals - how I would connect what I did now with what i wanted to do post ISB. i told them that i was ambitious and wanted to be a CEO someday. They said they were quite impressed with that and further asked questions on how i would want to do that, how would isb help me in that a lot of questions on the internship i had done in marketing. they also asked me why another MBA. i

justified it, talking about why isb was better. i told them how peer learning was what i was looking for. i was asked what my peers would learn from me? what would i add to the class? this question was the game changer a detailed discussion on the third essay - additional info - i had written about family business- my contribution to it. a little deeper discussion on all the extra curriculars i did. asked me why i was not focused on just one thing? they asked me if i was inconsistent - i justified saying i wanted to explore options before zeroing on a thing and gaining expertise on that appreciated my one-word essay

i asked them their profiles and which batch.

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## **Interview Debrief 4**

Commerce, GMAT 720

Most part of my interview was focused on my plan to join the development sector and how MBA and ISB make sense from that perspective. They touched upon my past experiences with the sector and clarified time and again why I would want to do an MBA and not something on the lines of MSW or Public Policy. The interviewers emphasized on how ISB does not offer a lot of placement opportunities within the development sector. I made it clear to them that from what I understand the development sector is moving from a philanthropy model to an entrepreneurial model and hence skill sets that an education in MBA can offer are important. I did not hesitate to mention that as much as I want a job in this field I am not in a position to take a pay cut or work for below reasonable compensation. I was given small cases on social sector problems and related matters. In an interview that lasted 40 minutes around 30 was spent on the above. It was a very comfortable experience as the interviewers were very patient in listening and moreover I was at ease talking about development sector work.

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## **Interview Debrief 5**

Energy Sector, Re-applicant, GMAT 720

What went wrong last year?(I am a re applicant).

Told them I got the feedback that I was not clear with my goals. They asked are u now? And the answer was a resounding yes with me adding that I have focused in my goals and carefully analyzed them.

Describe your usual day at work? I answered the full schedule explaining how I plan and control the operations of the refinery to meet targets. Counter 1- But do refineries change the plan so often? i said its a new refinery with lots of challenges so changes have to be made even at midnight and then I have to communicate it to all concerned and ensure that the plan is adhered to.

How do you see the oil industry moving?

I feel people have a misconception about the oil industry drowning. According to me this slump has just thrown more options into the pool and has given other players to snatch the initiative from OPEC by bringing in options such as Iran mix and Shale into the pool. Moreover the oil refineries are going to expand in the next two years to cater to the demand of the country. So yes exciting times lie ahead.

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Why according to you the market is expanding?

With more industrialization, smart cities coming up and individuals being more capable of purchasing automobiles the market is definitely going to ask for more.

Do the renewable sources not come in?

Yes as i said more options come into the pool with everyone trying to improvise. So all this makes the market really exciting in the next couple of years.

What are the diverse skills that you have inculcated in the past year?

I tried to explain a problem at work where I lead a team but the interviewer gestured towards my essays and asked about the skill set I had mentioned about in the essays. So went about the three examples that i mentioned there.

What are the diverse skills that you have inculcated in the past year?

I tried to explain a problem at work where I lead a team but the interviewer gestured towards my essays and asked about the skill set I had mentioned about in the essays. So went about the three examples that i mentioned there.

You were in the placement team of college. It is a very responsible job. What were your initiatives and one thing you feel the department people accused you for at the end of the year. After explaining the job I took some time to recall the accusations. the interviewer joked saying people never forget accusations. i said I was very aggressive and dominating.

Follow up- Have you improved now? I said yes after interacting with people with such rich experiences at the company I understood that it is important to understand others' perspectives about a certain work also.

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## Interview Debrief 6

Dentist background , 730 GMAT

It had already been a month of submitting the application when I finally got a call for interview on 14th March 2016 and my interview was scheduled after 6 days, ie on 20th March 2016.

After some initial debacle (when the rustic auto driver didn't understand what is "ITC Windsor", still pretended to know where it is and authoritatively decided to take me somewhere else,

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before I actually realized he is taking me on the wrong roads), I finally reached the venue 1 hour in advance, visibly grimacing in the business suit (I hate wearing so many clothes).

The security guard outside the hotel promptly guided me towards the interview area and I was made to sit in a small room with 7-8 other applicants. I had read other interview debriefs where everyone had advised to talk to other candidates present to calm yourself down but somehow all I did was to sit down silently and stare around the beautifully furnished room.

After a while, a somewhat senior guy entered the room with a small travel bag. Someone asked him, "Are you coming from some other city?"

"No", he replied, "I own a company at Bangalore, I want to show the interview panel some products of my company"

Needless to say, whatever hopes I had to make the cut sank. I had an idea of how impressive are the profiles of ISB applicants but here there was someone in front of me, enough for me to lose hope (I am a bit on the pessimistic side)

In hindsight, that feeling actually calmed me down and I started talking to other EEO (Early Entry Option) applicants. EEO applicants (I myself was one) have less than the mandatory 2 years of Work Experience required by ISB. If selected, they are given a deferred admission but they can join only when they complete 2 years at work.

After around 1.5 hours of waiting, my turn came. One of the interviewer himself came to call me and asked me to follow him. Before we reached the interview room, he shook hands with me and introduced himself, "Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_, from Co2012.

There were two interviewers in the panel (both alumni, no one from the AdCom). One (Let's call him P1) had my application print out in his hands while the other (P2) just sat there most of the time and nodded.

P1- So, you are a Dentist. Why are you making this career shift?

This question was more than expected so I started with the answer that I had mugged up.

Me- Sir, if you would closely look to my CV and profile, you will realize that it has been always skewed towards entrepreneurship and management. (Don't know why, I got tongue-tied at this point)

P2- (Nodding and after waiting for a few seconds). Please elaborate.

I gathered myself again started the answer that I had mugged up, this time with decent confidence. Both P1 and P2 seemed convinced.

P1 (Flipping through my application)- So you have shown your internship at hospital as work experience? Was it full time?

Me- Yes sir, it was full time and paid.

P1- Can you tell us one incident during that one year at internship where you had to show leadership or management skills?

Me- Sir I cannot think of any moment like that. All I can say is that I completed all my patient quotas in time, was the only person in my batch to finish internship without any extensions (infact 3 leaves were left when I finished) and in mid of all this, I got my startup registered.

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P1- (Didn't look convinced at all)- We will come to your startup story later (I realized that he has read my application essays, atleast superficially). Tell me how come you landed up at Oliveboard? How come you, being a dentist, having no relevant education or degree got a marketing profile?

Me (again I had expected this question)- I will quote my offer letter here, "You are being offered this job because of your attitude and previous startup experience"

P1- So what exactly you do there?

Me- If you don't mind, can I answer this question by explain the difference that I have made to the organization after I joined and also by citing a difficult situation that I managed?

P1- Please go ahead.

I explained it decently and both look convinced.

P1- Now let's come to your journal. What made you start it?

Me (another expected question)- Explained

P1- Who all are the members in your journal and how exactly do you work?

Me- Can I get a pen and paper to explain?

P1 handed me a pen and paper. I explained with the help of flowcharts that how "Double blind peer review" review process of a scientific journal works.

P1- How did you get so many reviewers from abroad?

Me- Through Facebook

P1- And how much do you pay them?

Me- Absolutely nothing, sir

P1- Then how come they work for you free?

Me- Most of the reviewers I approached are very senior and extremely successful in their career. They definitely do not need any extra revenue by reviewing scientific articles. When I approached them, they were extremely impressed that a 2nd year UG student is trying to start a scientific journal and they supported me. I received a fair share of mockery and criticism too but mostly the dental fraternity was supportive. Also, Indian Dental Academicians need to maintain a certain number of points according to the guidelines set by the DCI (Dental Council of India) and they get some points for reviewing journals. And hence, they are in my team.

P1 (Smiling)- Makes sense. How many articles have you received after you started charging publication fee from the authors?

Me- Sir, It has been exactly 1 year and we have a revenue of \_\_\_\_\_

P2 (all of a sudden as if he got back from dead)- Have you brought the hard copies of the journal?

Me- Yes sir. It is in my bag in the other room

P2- Why didn't you bring those with you here?

Me- Sir, I didn't want to look like as if I am trying too hard.

P2- So you are not trying eh?

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Me- Sir, don't get me wrong, ISB is the only college I have applied to and even if I don't get through, I will only apply to ISB and nowhere else the next year too. There is a thin line between trying and looking like an absolute desperate and hence I decided not to cross that line.

P2 (laughed loudly)- Fair enough. Once the interview is over, show us the hard copies.

Me- Sure sir.

P1- So Dr. Anshul, what do you want to do post MBA?

Me- Sir, being an EEO applicant I think it is too early to decide that (both nodded on this). I have just started my career and I think I have a knack for marketing and entrepreneurship. I am versatile and can manage completely unrelated stuff equally well. I might take up a healthcare management job but I am keeping all my options open.

P1- Hmm..but you do know right that those jobs are generally for doctors with 5-6 years of work experience?

Me- No sir. I have no idea about that.

P1- Please go home and do your research. Also, you can get those jobs without an MBA. Why you want to invest so much of money?

Me (completely clueless where the interview was going)- Sure sir. I will do that tonight itself.

P1- You can leave

P2- Please bring the hard copies of your journal.

I ran towards the other room (it was 45 minutes already), sipped some cold water and returned and handed one copy each to both.

P2 (Flipping the pages)- Oh, so you have advertisement space too? How many advertisements have you got so far?

Me- None. And they are there only because the publisher wanted to, I really don't want advertisements to be present on a scientific journal. Publication fee is the only major source of revenue and some royalty which we get through subscriptions.

P1- Where is the list of your team?

I showed him that page.

P1- How come you gathered so many people from so many countries?

Me- I have a facebook page on Dentistry with 30k+ Likes that I used to use for social medial marketing during my college days. I used the same page to build my team. Also, I did a webinar in a world virtual conference of dental students which helped me to get some team members initially. Rest all was word of mouth and facebook spamming.

P1- What else you want to do under your startup apart from the journal?

I mumbled something random (Don't even remember what I said)

P1- Hmm..but how will you manage that? You will be having a full time demanding job post MBA which will take your 15 hours/day.

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Me- Sir if I can manage it with medical school, I can manage it with job also. And I have worked for more than 15 hours/day effectively at various points during my UG, Internship and current job.

P1- I am not denying that, but I don't think it will be possible.

Me (decided not to argue)- Then I will delegate the work sir. I am well networked in Indian Dental fraternity to do that.

P1- That I am sure you are. But you will leave all these so easily that you have build up with so much of hard work over these years?

Me- Sir, I said I will delegate the work. I will still be the owner.

Both P1 and P2 smiled.

P2- Ok last question, can you check my teeth and give some diagnosis?

Me- No sir, I cannot. I cannot break the infection control protocols. Patients must not be examined without gloves.

Both laughed loudly and asked me to leave.

Moral of the story- ISB interview, as per the common belief, is extremely chilled out. They don't want to check your knowledge of economics, history, geography and finance. All they want to know is YOU. Be thorough with your application and you will sail through.

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## Interview Debrief 7

GMAT 710 Network Engineer

It started with a one word essay, word being nightmare. Then they asked me what kind of nightmares do you have. I said mostly the ones where I have failed to achieve my goals. They asked me what was the last nightmare you had. I said a couple weeks ago, I had a nightmare in which I didn't get an interview call. It was pretty scary, they laughed it off. Then the real interview began, they asked me, you had interviewed previously for YLP , what has changed since the last time. I said I have got more clarity on why i need this mba from isb, I have matured as a professional and acquired new skills in the last three years. I have also got a better gmat score this time and most importantly I am a lot more confident . Then they asked me why ISB, i told them , ISB has the right mix of repute, faculty, infrastructure and alum network to help a budding entrepreneur. Also talked about how ISB can get me the kind of exposure and job i want. They asked me what's the kind of job you want after mba, i told them business technology industry me product development /manager ka role. They then asked me what kind of companies would you be targeting, name some... i said hackerearth, instamojo, inmobi etc. They then asked in detail about inmobi, i told them the basic bio of the company, the acquisitions and funding etc.

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Next they asked me why would a company hire you as a product manager.. i talked about the core abilities of any successful project manager... leadership, creativity, market analytics, technical knowledge, then i said i have all of these skills.

Then they asked me about music, and about my performances at various places. They asked if you're so good, why not try a career in music instead, i said am passionate about music, but recently I have been more passionate about technology, also I consider it as a hobby.

Then I think they tried to stress me out, by saying that my essays are so much brighter than me, i told them, yeah, i am proud of my content writing abilities and if I could match my spoken skills to my writing ability I would be the happiest person ever. They tried another stress question, asking me the 3rd line of the second para of my second essay, to their surprise I recalled the exact line. They moved to the application again, asking about my long term goal of entrepreneurship and if I had a business model, i detailed my plans did a little market and revenue computation, and they were satisfied. They asked me for questions for them, i asked about clubs in isb and how the election process happens. They replied in detail. End of interview.

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## Interview Debrief 8

GMAT 770 , IT Analyst

About the ISB debrief - with the interview lasting for 75 mins, it was by far the longest interview that I ever gave. The panel consisted of 2 alums and an adcom member. One of the Alums was from the 2005 batch-lets call him 'A'. The other alum was of 2009 batch and will call him B. The adcom member was a girl with a humanities background. It was a stress interview out and out. The questions started even before I sat down. Especially guy A decided that he wanted to stress me out as much as he could and so he proceeded with that! First question was on why I had not had my breakfast( the interview was in bangalore and that was my first time in that city . . had to hurry to the location and had not had any) and how that proved that I liked to starve myself from there he talked about my road trip and basically wanted to know about every single turn that my bike took. We then went into why ISB and why MBA and why now . . On all three questions, was interrupted by the alumni who just wouldn't accept any of my answers . . From there the topic was shifted to the JNU episode and it is there when things became worse from bad . . for some reason, it became a debate between me and the ad com girl on one side and the two alumni on the other side 😬 We talked about times now, Arnab, Kanhaiyya and Umar and what now . . Alum A had no problem in blatantly lying to just prove his point . . I am simply glad that the adcom girl was there to back me up when I politely called his

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statements to be untrue . . somewhere in this whole process, alum A deduced that I was just too impulsive and that I would leave ISB in the middle of the course only . . The other Alum managed to accuse me of plagiarism(based on my 1 word essay) which again I had to prove to him that it wasn't the case . . At the end it started becoming just too much! When asked about any questions I had for them, I said a no and just left the hall! Guess my only saving grace here was that I kept calm, peaceful and responded with a Ile on my face throughout the interview . . Probably the toughest interview I have faced so far.

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## **Isb Interview Debrief 9**

GMAT 760, Engineer

My interview for ISB's Early Entry programme was held on the 21st of February this year at ITC Windsor in Bangalore. We were directed to a common room where each of us were asked to write an essay on a one-word topic before we went for the interview. The topic for my essay was "Go-getter" and I wrote some philosophical stuff about how it's only go-getters who eventually succeed in this extremely competitive age (yeah right :P). Finally, my turn came and I was directed to a room where three panelists sat waiting for me (one was a young alum who appeared to be in her late 20s, the other two were middle-aged professors at ISB).

My interview began with this rather unexpected question – "So what would you like us to ask you?". I rather cheekily replied "hobbies" to which all three of them laughed. I then went into detail about my love for reading and told them about two books that I was currently reading – one was Wolf Hall (a Booker Prize winning novel) and the other was a study on the 2014 General Elections that took place in India. On mentioning PM Narendra Modi, I was asked for my views on his tenure so far. Luckily, this was something that I had prepared for and I told them what I felt were the pros and cons of the NDA leadership's performance over the last two years. My interviewers then started asking me questions based on the essays that I had written. There was one particular essay where I had mentioned an Art of Living programme that had brought me in touch with people from varied backgrounds. They really grilled me on this and this went on for another 10 minutes. They then followed up by asking me about a project that I had worked on in my organisation for Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicles Limited and I was able to explain that reasonably well. Finally, my interviewers asked me if I had written CAT and what my score was. When I told them it was 99.2, they told me that I would definitely be able to get into one of the IIMs so there wasn't really a need for me to have applied to ISB in the first place. I defended myself by saying that ISB was only below IIM Ahmedabad in the Financial Times' latest rankings and that I had virtually no chance of getting into Ahmedabad with that score, being a general category male engineer (GEM, as they say :P). They then went on to ask me

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what my motivation was for doing an MBA in the first place. I said that my dream was to land a product manager role in one of the e-commerce companies as I already had two years of experience in IT which I could leverage while learning the basics of business and business administration. At last, they touched upon my love for writing which was something I had mentioned in my essays. I went on to explain about the many awards for essay- writing that I had won at my school and my personal movie review website. They then asked me both my best and worst films of 2016 thus far and my reasoning

behind the same (they laughed when I mentioned Mastizaade as the worst :P). And that was it! My interview was done. All in all, my ISB interview experience was a highly memorable one. I was admittedly very anxious on the day of the interview but the panelists were so cool and so friendly that I went out with a big grin on my face. I can hardly wait to meet them on campus now!

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