

## Business School Admission Essay

My father and mother - for which I hold immeasurable consideration - are the closest examples of people who are leaving a great legacy in the world. Despite harsh childhoods and economical difficulties while raising my sister and I, they always focused their priorities in our education while always caring and helping our family and closer community, with the extra care of conveying the message of “what seeds you’re leaving to the world”. Thanks to their efforts, I was able accomplish things at the professional level that, honestly, were unimaginable just a few years ago. Since then, I started to think more seriously about the type of legacy I am leaving to the world.

Our legacy begins with family, friends, and the local community we’re in, and I like to think that you begin to leave your impact in a very subtle but powerful way -- by simply raising the bar and setting the precedent that it’s possible to achieve your dreams, despite the numerous failures and obstacles you face in life. By being a good example to be followed, I was able to demonstrate to my family and social circle, as well my college professors and colleagues, that it’s possible to achieve previously unimagined things through extreme hard work and persistence, regardless of our circumstances or the place we are in the world.

For example, It’s considered unachievable for the best engineers from my Brazilian undergraduate college to get a job at a top firm in Silicon Valley, despite the fact that their skills are (from my personal experience) easily comparable to those of computer scientists graduating from the top schools in the U.S. Setting the precedent and empowering exceptional people to at least try to achieve bigger dreams was very satisfying for me. A couple of cases: Ivan was the best student in my class — much smarter than I am— and despite exceptional potential he was contentious with “only” pursuing a masters degree at another college in Brazil after his bachelors degree. Upon seeing my achievements abroad, he reached me for advice and we worked together on the steps for a placement in a top CS PhD program in California. Hugo, a better coder than I am, was working in a job that surely was subutilizing his potential. We spoke about how he was wasting his potential in that firm and we worked together in his resume and helped him recommended him to a few other companies - he’s now working in as a software engineer at an international company and traveling abroad often. Examples of people whose skills are better than mine but potential was only unleashed with a small “push”.

One of the most joyful and proud moments of my life was when I found out that one of my “failures” in life -- the start-up that I had to dissolve after joining my current full-time position at Palantir -- actually yielded pretty amazing outcomes and positively affected the lives of the people working on it. The startup was composed of people from several countries who didn’t know one another, except the Duke students, and a few of those remote employees were highly exceptional Brazilians, great developers who unfortunately didn’t have the best opportunities in life. I do not consider my failure to lie in having to dissolve the start-up and possibly lose a considerable opportunity, but instead in letting down my international team, whom I had promised I was going to give a better life and that we were going to grow together -- that killed me. Not being able to keep that promise was very frustrating until I received really good news, recently.

First, the CTO who worked closely with me went ahead to launch a successful startup within the same segment and brought one of the Brazilian developers with him; one of the other Brazilian developers got a job in Switzerland and is working side-by-side with our ex-lead developer who was previously located in Siberia -- they had never met each other before. Both partners in the US and employees from around the world, reminded me a few times how my example was inspiring for them, and, even though they went ahead to pursue their dreams in a meritocratic way through their hard work and skills, I felt full responsibility for introducing them to each other, making them work collaboratively even in a remote environment, and allowing them to grow. All that was needed was the “spark” and one single opportunity for them to grow and pursue their dreams and ambitions. Since then, I realized that empowering people through their skills and hard work regardless of background or origin has become my ultimate life goal.

From the examples before, examples I saw in life and personal experience, it became really clear for me that giving people that one opportunity, even if it’s a recommendation, makes all the difference in someone’s life. Personally, I have several examples of mentors in my life, that by seeing my work ethics and perseverance, changed my life in unique ways. The most extreme example is that my current job at Palantir was only possible because my professor at Duke for which I worked really closely as a TA recommended me for the position. Surprisingly, that happened in one of my most fragile periods in my life — the CEO of the investment bank I was going to be working at after my graduation, in less than 2 months at the time, was arrested in Brazil due to corruption allegations.

That said, I learned that giving people new opportunities and allowing them to see better and bigger things by setting the precedent, resulted in people dreaming bigger and as a consequence, the human potential on an individual basis is maximized. This overall concept, together with the desire to leave a more direct legacy in society, led me to my most recent endeavor, Instituto Elevar (“Elevate Institute”), whose main goal is to empower people through education not only by helping them finance their studies but also by changing their networks by connecting them with successful sponsors from around the world who will guide them through their initial years of their professional lives. Instituto Elevar will change the outlook of exceptional people in my hometown who might not have had the same opportunities on a global context as other people, allowing them to accomplish even greater, previously unimagined, things. In the longer term, I expect that there will be an exponential effect on the network, causing a significant impact to more people.

Moving forward in my life, I want to constantly revisit the main points cited above -- setting the example, providing the right connections and empowering people through their skills and right opportunities — by creating the right situations to reinforce those. There’s no doubt that my big and crazy dream of creating an equivalent Brazilian Silicon Valley to empower the local talent will intersect directly with those points and my ultimate life goal, and even less doubt that my two years at Harvard will be an important step towards creating my legacy, simply because my time at HBS will be used to empower me to better empower others.

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