How Business School Can Help You Find Purpose

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By AACSB Staff

No longer just a path to a financially successful career, business schools today help students discover their purpose and leverage it for meaningful work.

- A business education provides students with critical leadership skills, which are essential for driving meaningful change in organizations.
- By attending business school, students are exposed to diverse perspectives and a wide range of career possibilities, discovering purpose-driven paths and connecting with like-minded individuals.
- Business schools help students build a robust professional network, facilitating connections with peers, educators, and alumni who share similar motivations and attitudes toward purposeful work.

Historically, students have attended business school for a few main reasons: to begin or advance their career, to obtain deeper knowledge of a particular field of business, or to build connections and a professional network. But businesses today play a significant role in improving the world, creating a new set of motivations and values for prospective business students—and new opportunities for business schools to meet those needs.

Attending business school is no longer viewed solely as a vehicle to earn more money or augment business skills. Many students now seek a business education to learn more about how their career goals, skills, and business acumen can be used to give them and their work a sense of purpose. The pace of technological innovation is leading many workers to think about how technology, such as generative AI, could help or harm our society, environment, and relationships. Going to business school increasingly means grappling with complex questions like these. Here are some of the other ways business school can help you find purpose.

Learn Leadership Skills That Are Essential for Creating Change

Whether you are hoping to work at a small startup, join a large established company, or start a business of your own, learning and developing leadership skills is critical. As a business leader, finding purpose isn't just a matter of creating positive business outcomes; it means using problem-solving and communication skills to push those outcomes further, to get your team to buy into organizational goals fully, and to delegate resources as efficiently as possible.

AACSB-accredited business schools have courses and faculty experts devoted to every aspect of leadership, including collaboration, analytical thinking, ethical considerations, strategic planning, empathy, self-awareness, and developing your team's skills and communication, among many others. You'll also learn how to effectively speak about the impacts and merits of your work to your peers, allowing others to learn from and be inspired by your purpose-driven work. Finally, business school will equip you with the ability to confidently assess whether some aspect of your work is not in line with your values and purpose and allow you to make a change.

Gain a Wide Range of Perspectives and Possibilities

Although an increasing number of people think it's important to have a purpose at work, most don't feel that their work gives them a significant sense of meaning. The growth of public awareness and wealth of information about environmental impacts, sustainability, and work-life balance means that many people are measuring their work in ways that go beyond financial compensation, seeking to also have a positive societal impact.

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Although it's not the only way to start a purpose-driven career, business school offers you some major advantages. In addition to teaching you new skills and helping you build connections, a business education also introduces you to a student body and faculty from diverse backgrounds with equally diverse perspectives and goals.

During your studies, you'll be exposed to a multitude of job and career possibilities, giving you invaluable context and knowledge for choosing a line of work, industry, or career that is meaningful to you. Learning the range of options available to you will furnish you with a number of career choices that most aren't aware of, allowing you to find purposeful work more easily.

Discover Opportunities to Pursue a Meaningful Career

Having a robust professional network is essential for any kind of work, and this extends to purpose-driven work. Personal and professional connections you build with your business school peers and educators will be instrumental throughout your career, opening doors to other opportunities and allowing you to seek advice and assistance from others.

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During your studies, you will meet others with similar motivations and attitudes toward work. Some of these connections could end up working with you or for you, or help you find new work. Your instructors can also make introductions for you and provide resources for you to learn more about your chosen field or passions. This network only grows more robust after graduation, as you can establish contact with other alumni you didn't study with, via alumni associations and events.

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Understand How to Assess Change and Impact

Understanding the intricacies of "purpose" and how to achieve it is crucial. It's no longer enough to simply state your mission or values; purpose now requires detailed measurement and continuous improvement.

Business school equips you with the ability to make data-driven decisions and develop a comprehensive understanding of the short- and long-term impacts of your work and team. This empowers you to set realistic goals, allocate resources effectively, challenge the status quo, and substantiate your decisions with measurable results.

Learn the Value of Looking Beyond the Business

Even if your chosen field isn't a direct fit with what you're looking for, there are other ways to infuse purpose into your work. Business school provides insights into forming strategic partnerships with other businesses, NGOs, nonprofits, and government initiatives. These collaborations enable your business to impact not just profit, but also people, purpose, and planet.

Forging these connections is particularly valuable for smaller companies and startups, which often aspire to tackle significant challenges but lack the necessary resources. By forging partnerships, you not only expand your capabilities but also engage your team in meaningful work. Internal programs focused on sustainability, environmental impact, or other relevant issues can also actively involve your team.

Find the Ideal Business School

In today's evolving workplace, people are looking for more than just financial reward: They want an understanding of the broader impact of their work. The increased emphasis on having a positive societal impact has reshaped business schools' educational approach and research focus.

A business education offers a unique perspective that can help you search for an industry, company, and job that aligns with your purpose. AACSB accredits the highest-quality business schools in the world, which can guide your search for the ideal fit.

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