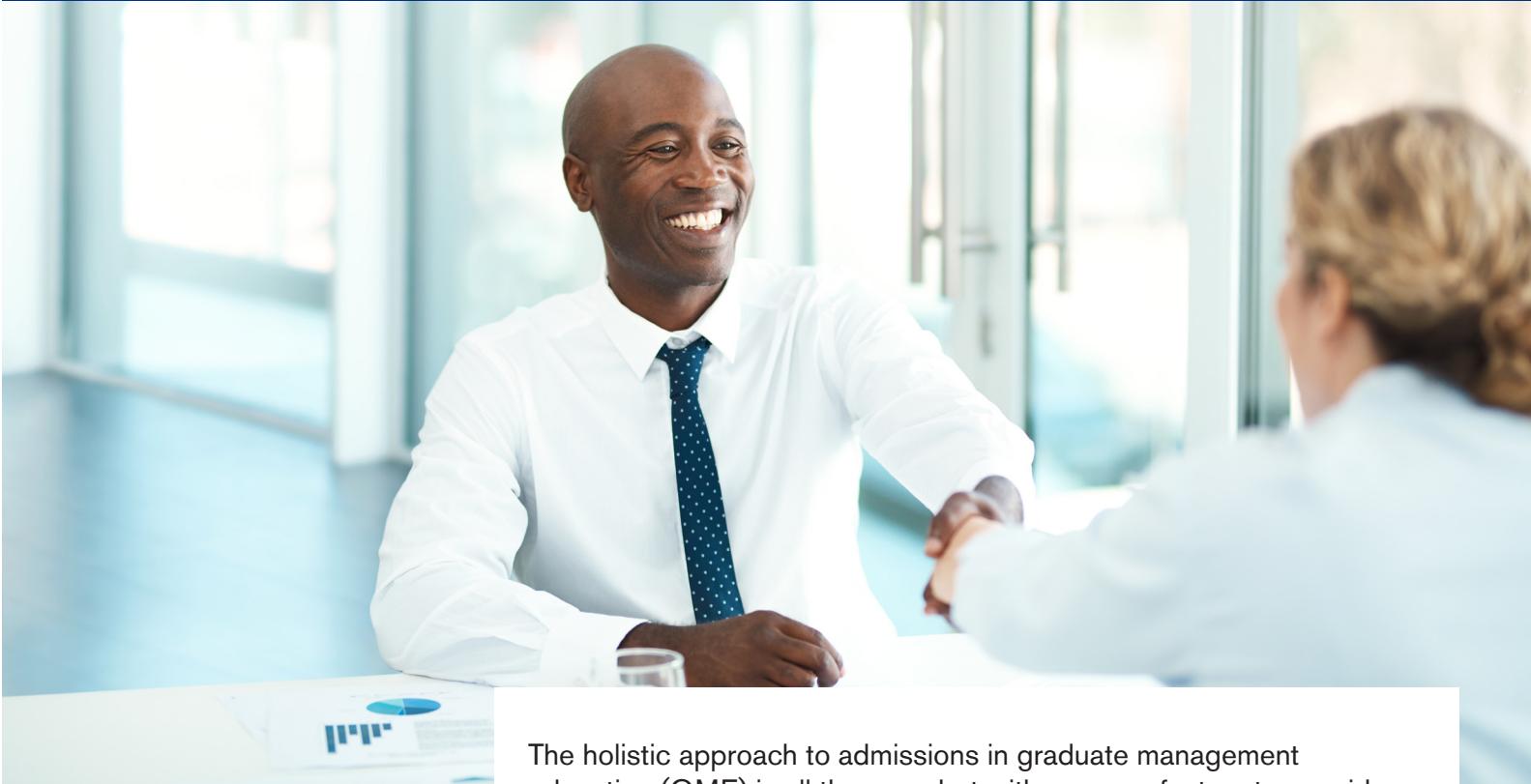


Simplifying Business School Admissions



The holistic approach to admissions in graduate management education (GME) is all the rage, but with so many factors to consider, from GPAs and test scores to work experience and personal attributes, the volume of information to process and review can lead administrators to go into a rage. Beyond individual assessments, admissions officers need to evaluate the spectrum of candidates in order to craft a well-balanced class in line with their school's goals, mission and yield target. It's no wonder this holistic approach has led some administrators to compare the process to solving a Rubik's Cube.

The good news is that a centralized, cloud-based solution has been launched to facilitate the holistic admissions process for business school administrators and applicants alike. Leveraging over two decades of experience with admissions technology, Liaison introduced BusinessCAS™, the Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for GME programs, to meet the needs of business school admissions officers grappling with the holistic admissions process. The platform has already attracted many schools that expect to benefit from shortened decision-making cycles, streamlined data management and improved communications and outreach with applicants and prospects.

Focus on People, Not Paper

The information-intensive nature involved in employing a holistic admissions process is time-consuming and cumbersome, as is tracking the process. Rather than chasing paperwork and collating folders, using a CAS allows admissions personnel to electronically store applicant information, sort the data by requirements or rubrics and automate the workflow process. In this way, admissions teams can easily screen applicants by various criteria, review supporting documents such as personal essays, schedule interviews, receive input from faculty and make final admissions decisions. Graduate schools that have joined CASs have reported a reduction in the application review process from 8 days to

1.5 days and a 69% decrease in time to make admissions decisions.

Another benefit of a CAS is the ease of access among constituents holistically reviewing applicants. In particular, time-strapped faculty can assess candidates at the touch of a button, review information such as rigor of the undergraduate program and work experience and make recommendations or input ratings that are automatically captured in the system. One CAS client commented that their faculty has been able to significantly reduce the time it takes to review applicants from several days to several hours.

Lending a Helping Hand — Liaison's Customer Service and Support

Members of BusinessCAS enjoy a user-friendly, collaborative platform for seamless application processing as well as gain access to a dedicated customer service and support team. Over half of Liaison's employees are in customer service, and each year they process over two million documents and handle over 700,000 emails and calls. "Our customer support team is Liaison's real secret sauce," says Robert Ruiz, Liaison's vice president of strategic enrollment. "Our team can field routine inquiries and scan and verify documents so your team can focus on evaluating candidates and making admissions decisions."





Customized, Consistent Evaluation Criteria

It used to be that admissions officers pre-screened applicants based on GPAs and test scores, and while some still do, those using a more holistic approach take into account students' backgrounds and other biographical information as well. Shaun Carver, assistant dean of graduate programs at the University of California at San Diego's Rady School of Management, comments, "Because the academic and professional community benefits from a diverse membership, and a diverse student body enhances the educational experience, the University views as a high priority the enrollment of men and women from different social and economic backgrounds

and different cultural and demographic groups. Successful efforts at overcoming socio-economic, educational or physical disadvantages are viewed, in combination with other factors, as indicators of future performance." But taking these factors into account adds complexity to the evaluation process. How do you measure these factors as well as ensure consistency among your evaluation team? Indeed, the benefits of holistic admissions can end up opening Pandora's Box.

It is incumbent on admissions officers and graduate management administrators to develop and adhere to uniform

criteria to ensure an equitable, standardized admissions process. Here again, a CAS can be an asset. A set of agreed-upon rubrics can be added to the platform to rank applicants on different criteria. From there, faculty and staff can drill down to review essays, letters of recommendation, work experience, community service and more. Such methods of ranking and screening can streamline the evaluation process. Moreover, a CAS helps to increase transparency and accountability in the admissions process by creating an audit trail. This can prove particularly helpful if there are admissions disputes, internal inquiries or requests from accreditation agencies.

More Gain, Less Pain

The efficiencies afforded by moving to a CAS cannot be understated. Among Liaison's clients who have implemented a CAS, a number have reported a significant reduction in the decision cycle and a 90% drop in time spent on administrative tasks. Clients cite features such as authentication of transcripts, automatic links to standardized test scores and workflow dashboards among the time-saving aspects. The time saved has been redirected to deeper reviews of candidates' qualitative information in order to better assess their potential and fit with the school.

The implementation of a CAS is also relatively easy as it is SaaS-based and compatible with most existing SIS and/or ERP systems. "From the very beginning, we've had all the support we could possibly need from Liaison," states Loubna Bouamane, director of admissions at University of Miami Business School. "Now we're in the stage where we're working internally with our IT team to create an integration between PeopleSoft and BusinessCAS."

Surprising Twists and Turns

Along with aiding the holistic admissions process, an unexpected benefit of the CAS platform has been higher application flows. "When deciding whether or not to join BusinessCAS, we knew our peer institutions had not joined the community yet," shared Dee Steinle, executive director of MBA and MSB programs at the University of Kansas School of Business. "With this in mind, we recognized that we would see one of two initial outcomes: (1) we might quickly see significant results just from being listed in the centralized directory of graduate management programs — or (2) we might be delayed in seeing any uplift until the participating programs list filled out. Flash forward just one month after our BusinessCAS launch date, and we already see a substantial increase in applications — specifically, a 50% increase over last year! I'm personally excited about what this progress in our first BusinessCAS cycle means for the University of Kansas School of Business, and I'm excited about what it says about the

momentum of the BusinessCAS initiative."

University of Miami's Bouamane concurs with Steinle: "Even before we redirected our official application to BusinessCAS, we had new applications coming through organically because the Miami Business School was listed in the central directory for GME programs. I knew we'd get exposure to a whole new pool of applicants who hadn't considered our program when we joined BusinessCAS, but I didn't realize it would happen that quickly!"

Schools that participate in BusinessCAS are not only listed in a central directory but can also customize their online materials and messaging to prospects and current applicants through the web interface. Some schools target prospects by geography, school or profession. The more touch points with an applicant, the deeper the relationship and the greater the chance to enroll best-fit students.

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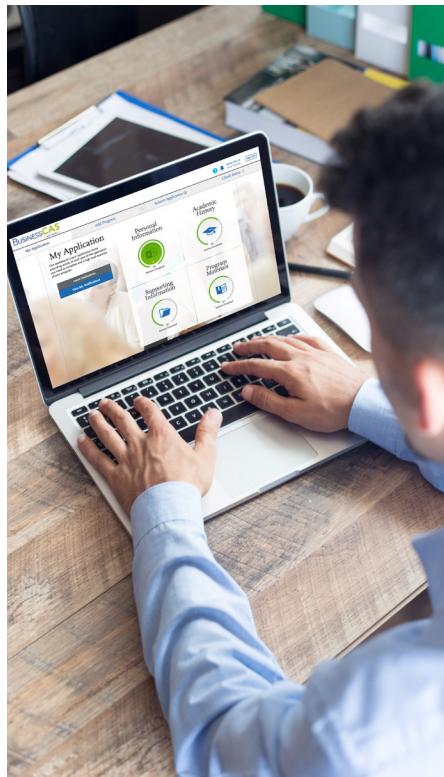
Manage for the Future

Data captured from the admissions process is another positive by-product of BusinessCAS. The data can be analyzed to reveal information pertinent to recruiting efforts, yield analysis, program reviews and applicant trends. In some cases, schools have seen a lack of geographic diversity among applicants, so they have chosen to send representatives into new territories to boost awareness. Valuable information captured, like the growing trend of students looking to pursue dual-degrees, has led admissions teams to tweak requirements such as accepting GREs in lieu of GMATs and reconfigure the rubrics used to evaluate candidates.

In looking forward, business schools will be able to use the data captured in the admissions process and compare a student's success during their business program as well as post-matriculation to assess the effectiveness of the admissions process and see what correlations exist. Based on these data findings, admissions processes will no doubt be further tweaked and refined. While admissions decisions will continue to resemble a Rubik's Cube, solutions like BusinessCAS can help navigate all sides of the equation with the goal of boosting applicant fit and yield.

BusinessCAS Advisory Board — A Consortium of Colleagues

BusinessCAS formed an advisory board comprised of subject matter experts from business school campuses across the country. These GME professionals provide strategic guidance and drive the vision for BusinessCAS. In addition, they serve as Liaison's conduit to the greater GME community, providing thought leadership on a range of topics from marketing and recruitment to program development.



About BusinessCAS

The first and only Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for business programs, BusinessCAS™ brings graduate management admissions offices an improved way to recruit, admit and enroll best-fit students while saving money and headcount each admissions cycle. BusinessCAS optimizes the admissions process for all stakeholders. Learn more at businesscas.org.

About Liaison

Over the last two decades, Liaison has helped over 31,000 programs on more than 1,000 campuses more effectively manage admissions through its Centralized Application Service (CAS™) technology and complementary processing and support services. Partnering with over 30 professional associations, the company has developed discipline-wide services for a range of fields, including most of the health professions, as well as engineering (EngineeringCAS), graduate management education (BusinessCAS), graduate education (GradCAS), social work (SocialWorkCAS), psychology (PSYCAS) and architecture (ArchCAS). Learn more at liaisonedu.com.