



The MBA Oath: Setting a Higher Standard for Business Leaders

By Max Anderson, Peter Escher

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"As a manager, my purpose is to serve the greater good by bringing people and resources together to create value that no single individual can create alone..."

So begins the MBA Oath, conceived in early 2009 by Max Anderson, Peter Escher, and a team of Harvard Business School students. They saw that in the wake of the financial crisis, the Madoff scandal, and other headlines, MBAs were being vilified. People were angry because business leaders, many of whom were MBAs, seemed not to care about anything beyond their own private interests. Many began to question the worth of business schools and the MBA degree.

The oath quickly spread beyond Harvard, becoming a worldwide movement for a new generation of leaders who care about society as well as the bottom line. Thousands of graduating MBAs have now pledged to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity, just as medical students swear by the Hippocratic oath before they can practice.

This book is the manifesto for the movement. It provides not only a strong case for why the MBA Oath is necessary but also examples of how it can be applied in the real world. It will help guide businesspeople through some of the toughest decisions they'll make in their careers.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The authors, not long out of Harvard Business School, along with many other classmates and supporters, are proponents of the hot new idea of an "MBA oath," similar in some ways to the Hippocratic Oath, as an inspiration and accountability tool for the jungle-like business climate. Shadows of Enron and assorted villain-companies, and the dire financial situation of the current recession drive the project, which they view even at this early state as a successful effort to clothe business managers with foundational ethics and morality. Now a global movement, the eight-point oath involves promises of responsibility, growth, development, honesty, and respect for the law. The authors dissect it thoroughly, with illustrations from a variety of interesting case studies and tests. As more than 10,000 schools worldwide offer MBA degrees, the writers caution that a business school ranking is influenced by the average compensation of a graduate during his first year after school and that compensation, rather than value, has become the keystone of an education. They also note that a sixty-four-page ethics manual proved powerless in the hands of Enron management. Suggesting that managers operate at a baseline level of doing no harm, *The MBA Oath* is a strong call for ethical reform.

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From [Booklist](#)

In 2009, a team of Harvard Business School students started an impressive movement: to transform the reputation of business, one person at a time, through the construction of and self-adherence to an MBA oath, similar to the physician's Hippocratic oath. Truth is, it's about time. The recent \$50 trillion global loss in financial assets coupled with a lack of integrity and personal accountability has created a huge crisis of reputation on Wall Street—and Main Street. Two of the oath's promulgators, Max Anderson and Peter Escher, have provided thoughtful arguments for realigning the profession, with equally strongly rationales for the oath's principles. To be expected from Harvard Business School-trained professionals, they cite case after case to buttress their points, both good and bad stories, the latter including the Tylenol crisis. The authors present their arguments rationally and passionately. Who could argue with young leaders who argue that managers must "strive to create sustainable economic, social, and environmental prosperity worldwide"? --Barbara Jacobs

Review

"*The MBA Oath*...turns out to be a thoughtful response to the [recent] situation in which thousands of MBA students found themselves.... A generation of students went to business school to learn about business and found themselves portrayed as villains because of the misdeeds of their predecessors.... The authors draw on cases taught to Harvard MBA students to expand their view of business ethics from the narrowly legal to a wider vision of responsibility. They write meditatively about everything from ambition to leadership."

-*The Financial Times*

"Lawyers have their oath of attorney, and doctors have that Hippocratic one, but it struck Max Anderson. . . . that MBAs have nothing. And so he and several of his classmates created the MBA oath, a promise to 'act with utmost integrity and pursue my work in an ethical manner.' . . . These Harvard students have started an important discussion about doing the right thing in business, which is never a bad conversation to have."

-*Fast Company*

"In the post-Enron and post-Madoff era, the issue of ethics and corporate social responsibility has taken on greater urgency among students about to graduate. While this might easily be dismissed as a passing fancy-or simply a defensive reaction to the current business environment-business school professors say that is not the

case. . . . Those graduating today, they say, are far more concerned about how corporations affect the community, the lives of its workers, and the environment."

-Leslie Wayne, *The New York Times*

Users Review

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