



Alumni Career Levels: Job Attributes and Satisfaction

Career Stages and Job Levels

- Class of 2011 Graduates by Job Level
- Profile of Senior-Level and Executive Alumni
- Notable Differences by Industry

Strategies for Advancement

- Career Development Strategies

Doing the Job and Gaining Satisfaction

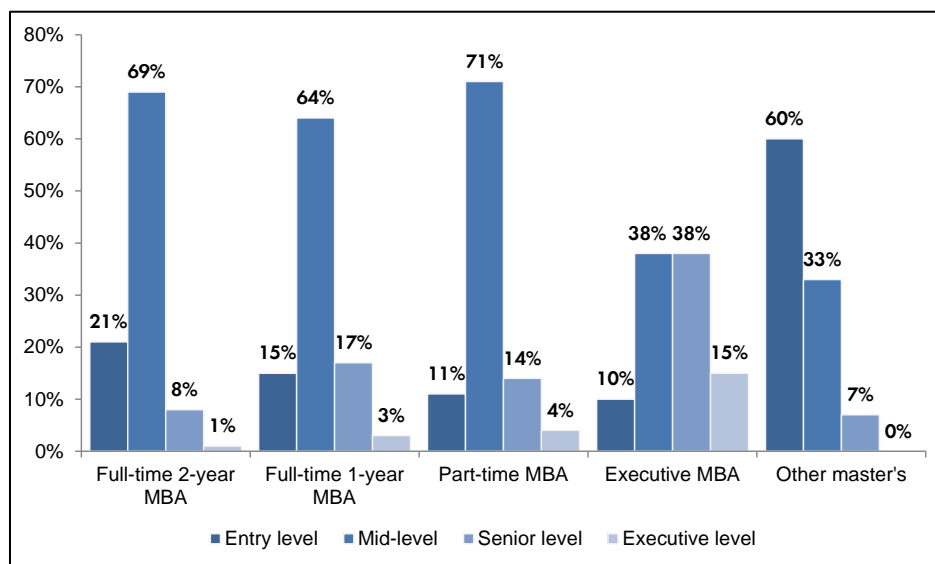
- Job Attributes by Career Level
- Career Activities and Job Satisfaction Over Time

Tracking the career progression of graduates from the classes of 2000 to 2011 offers insight into what's behind career advancement for graduate business degree-holders and what each stage may entail for professional momentum. This fact sheet highlights findings on job levels and strategies for career advancement given by the 4,135 graduates from the classes of 2000 to 2011 responding to the GMAC Alumni Perspectives Survey conducted in September 2011, as well as data from previous alumni surveys.

Career Stages and Job Levels

Work Experience Is Key. The vast majority of all Class of 2011 graduates occupied mid-level positions following graduation. However, most executive MBA grads held either mid-level or senior-level positions, with a fair percentage also at the executive level. This contrasts to a majority of graduates from other master's programs in business that holds entry-level positions (Figure 1). Career differences by program type among the alumni are likely linked to work experience, as these two groups tend to report the most and least amount of work experience, respectively, upon entering into a graduate management program.

Figure 1. Job Level of First Job After Graduation, Class of 2011 *



* Data based on responses of 963 graduates in the Class of 2011.

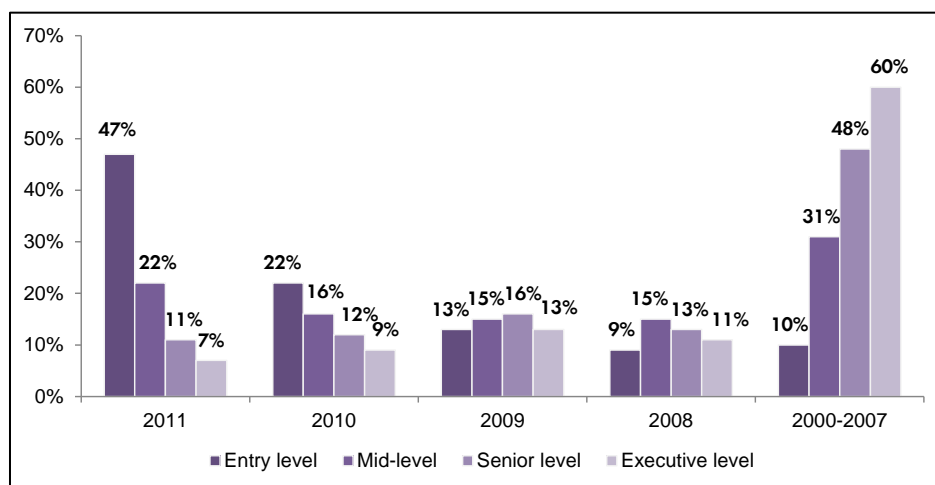
Profile of Senior-Level and Executive Alumni

A closer look at the 32 percent of all alumni from the classes of 2000 to 2011 who currently occupy senior and executive positions reveals the following:

- Senior- and executive-level alumni are more likely to report career-switching activities.
- These alumni were more likely to have graduated prior to 2005. (More than 50 percent of those in senior- and executive-level positions were from the classes of 2000 to 2005.)¹
- These alumni were more likely to be age of 35 years or older.²
- These alumni were more likely to be male than female.³

Looking across all graduating classes from 2000 to 2011, the distribution of job levels reflects some upward movement over time (Figure 2). Overall, 9 percent of the alumni were in entry-level positions, 59 percent in mid-level positions, 25 percent in senior-level positions, and 7 percent were in executive-level positions. A comparison of the last two classes shows a dramatic tapering in entry-level positions after the first year.

Figure 2. Current Job Levels of Alumni, Classes 2000 to 2011



Notable Differences by Industry

Distinctions in senior-level and executive positions occupied by industry of alumni employment are shown in Figure 3. The most notable differences included the following:

- The manufacturing industry employs the *most* senior- and executive-level positions among alumni.
- The energy/utilities industry employs the *least* senior- and executive-level positions among alumni.⁴

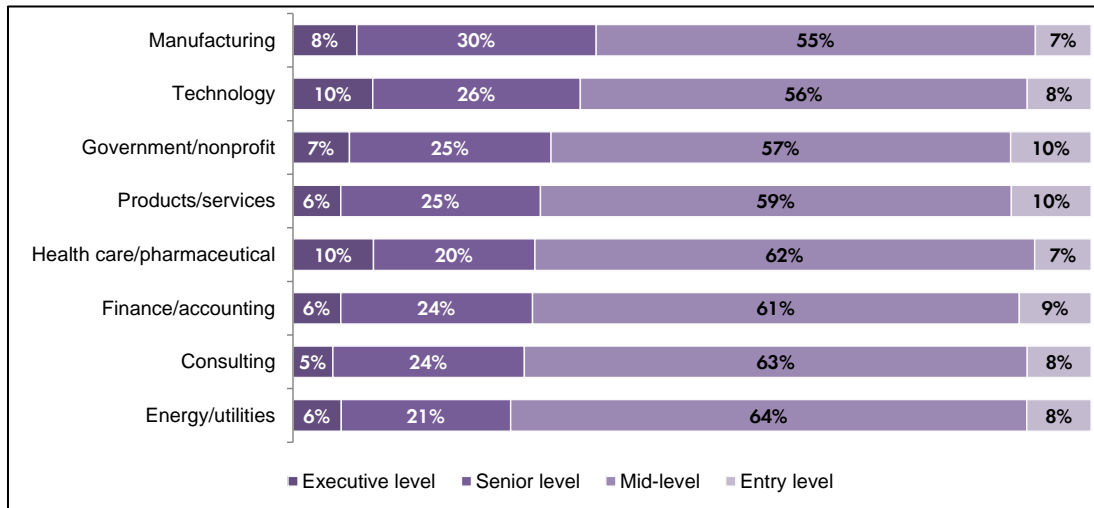
¹ $\chi^2 = 392.783$, $df = 33$, $p \leq .05$.

² $\chi^2 = 810.696$, $df = 6$, $p \leq .05$.

³ $\chi^2 = 68.157$, $df = 3$, $p \leq .05$.

⁴ $\chi^2 = 37.511$, $df = 24$, $p \leq .05$.

Figure 3. Alumni Job Level by Industry of Employment



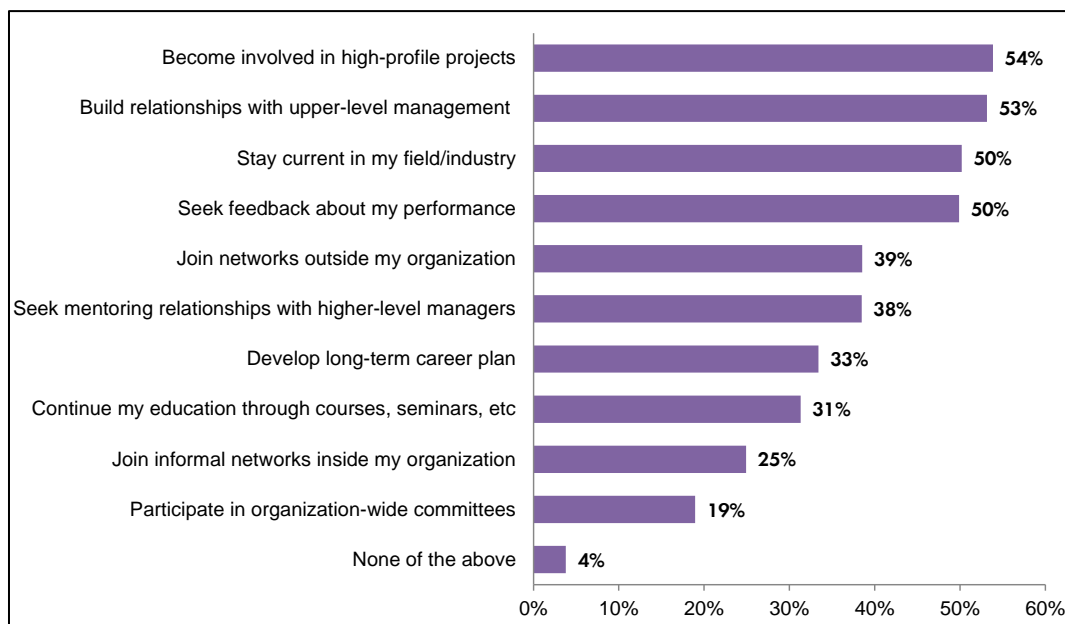
Strategies for Advancement

Career Development Strategies

Data show that alumni looking to facilitate upward momentum in their careers often engage in self-directed career development strategies. Among the many avenues taken, the most common career strategies of alumni appear to be networking-based and project-based approaches to advancement.

Career Advancement by Networking. Data from our April 2010 Alumni Perspectives Survey revealed that building relationships with upper management, which was reported by 53 percent of alumni, was the most common networking-based strategy to help develop their careers. Fifty-four percent of alumni reported involvement in high-profile projects as their most popular project-based strategy for career development (Figure 4). Other popular strategies included staying current in their field and seeking feedback for improvement.

Figure 4. Alumni Strategies for Career Development, Classes 2000 to 2009*



* Data based on the responses of 3,387 alumni from the classes of 2000 through 2009.

Doing the Job and Gaining Satisfaction

Job Attributes by Career Level

When alumni from the classes of 2000 to 2011 were asked to rate job activities by how frequently they performed them on the job, four attributes were consistently cited across all job levels by alumni:

- Modeling and promoting ethical behavior,
- Engaging in critical and creative thinking,
- Demonstrating strategic thinking, and
- Employing effective decision making.

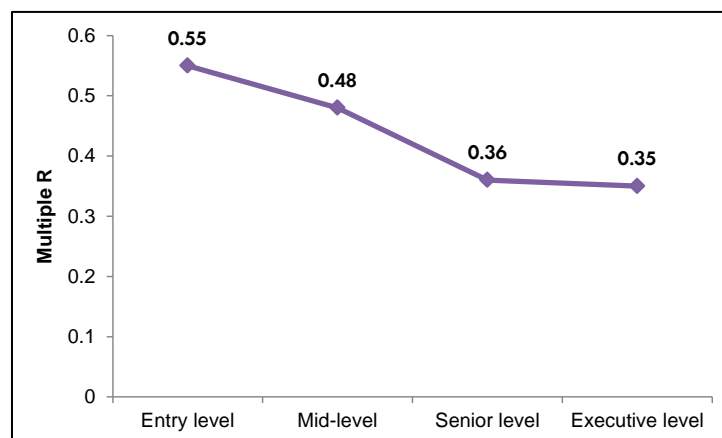
Subsequent to these top four attributes, there was a split in job activities for alumni in executive positions compared with all others. The differences suggest that to make the step to an executive-level position, alumni must build upon their current listening skills and demonstrate the ability to act with executive presence. Similarly, alumni who aspire to upper-level positions must not only succeed in building effective business relationships but show mastery of delegation and priority-setting skills.

Table 1. Attribute by Job Level	
Entry, Mid-Level, and Senior	Executive
Model and promote ethical behavior	
Engage in critical/creative thinking	
Demonstrate strategic thinking	
Demonstrate effective decision making	
Engage in active listening	Act with executive presence
Successfully build effective business relationships	Delegate and set priorities

Career Activities and Job Satisfaction Over Time

Job satisfaction and the activities one performs on the job appear to be strongly linked at the entry level and less notable as alumni advance (Figure 5). Attributes such as engaging in critical and creative thinking and demonstrating strategic thinking are among the top drivers of job satisfaction at the onset of alumni careers, but at advanced job levels, such day-to-day on-the-job activities no longer rank as key drivers of satisfaction.

Figure 5. How Well Do Career Activities Drive Job Satisfaction, by Job Level

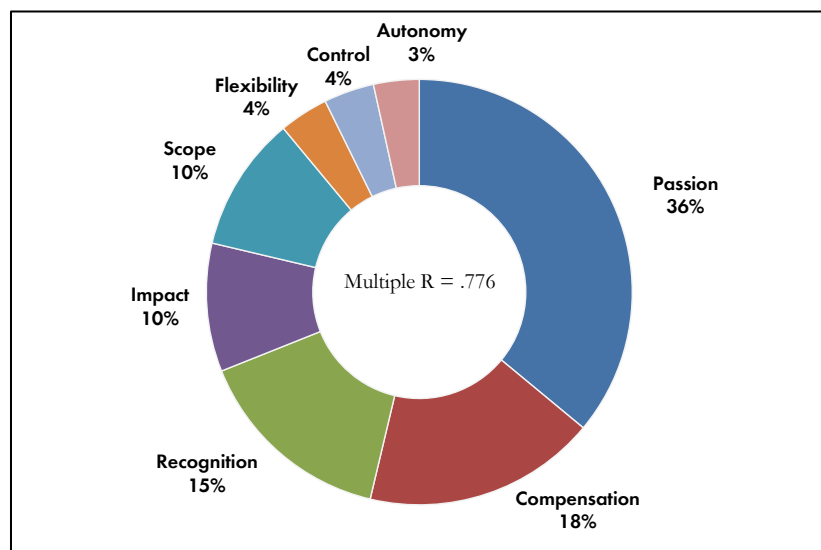


* All Multiple R values significant at $p \leq .05$.

Job satisfaction is instead linked more closely to employee engagement as alumni progress in their careers. Intrinsic measures, such as increased reports from senior-level and executive alumni about performing interesting and enjoyable work, show evidence of this shift towards reliance on internal and external *outcomes* of their efforts as well as other career aspects over day-to-day work activities.

Not surprisingly, *passion*—doing work one enjoys—was the key driver of overall job satisfaction among all alumni (36%), followed by *compensation* (18%), and *recognition* (15%; Figure 6). The availability of challenging and interesting work and ample opportunities for growth were also viewed as important to employee retention. When asked about characteristics of their ideal job, high ratings were given to making an impact in the organization where they work. This might also explain higher satisfaction levels reported by alumni in senior-level positions, where direct impact in the organization is more of an expectation.

Figure 6. Key Drivers of Overall Job Satisfaction (Pratt Index)⁵



Additional information about the data or topics listed above can be found in the 2012 GMAC® Alumni Perspectives Survey Report and Comprehensive Data Report.

For questions or comments regarding the data, findings, or methodology used in any of the surveys, please send an email to research@gmac.com.

The Alumni Perspectives Survey is a product of the Graduate Management Admission Council® (GMAC®), a global nonprofit education organization of leading graduate business schools and the owner of the Graduate Management Admission Test® (GMAT®). The GMAT exam is an important part of the admissions process for more than 5,300 graduate management programs around the world. GMAC is dedicated to creating access to and disseminating information about graduate management education; these schools and others rely on the Council as the premier provider of reliable data about the graduate management education industry.

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⁵ Pratt Index = $(\beta^*r)/R^2$, where β is the standardized regression coefficient, r is the simple Pearson correlation coefficient, and R^2 is the proportion of the variance explained by the regression model.