**Law School Personal Statement Sample**

Eighteen months ago, I was sitting at my computer, wedged between a dripping coffee maker to my left and the company's CFO five feet to my right. Every keystroke shook the flimsy fold-out card table that served as my desk, on loan to the company from another employee's garage. We were packed in the largest of three rooms in a 2,500 square foot space baking in the heat generated by ten co-workers in close quarters, fifteen running computers, and an abnormally warm summer. On the glass doorway was etched the ghostly lettering of the former company occupying the space, serving as a grim reminder of the ever-present possibility of failure.

Two weeks earlier, I had been in my company's small conference room sitting at the table surrounded by familiar faces from my last employer. Silicon Valley is incestuous: teams migrate from one company to the next, so I was not surprised to find myself recruited to join my old boss's newest project. They were selling another David versus Goliath story, featuring a small rag-tag team of engineers defeating a seemingly insurmountable industry leader. Despite my skepticism, I still had a free-running imagination fed with nostalgic thoughts of Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard working on their first audio oscillator in a Palo Alto garage. But at my last start-up company, we had challenged a corporation for a piece of the industry pie, and nine years and $330 million dollars later, the company was a hollow shell doing mostly engineering contractor work. I was lucky enough to join that company late in the game and sell my stock options early, but many others spent a significant portion of their career at a company that came close to glory but ultimately fell short: Goliath 1, David 0.

This time they were telling me it was going to be different; they were always saying this time would be different. I asked them how a small, poorly funded start-up company could go against a giant corporation, which was also the undisputed king of our market, with nearly $400 million in quarterly revenue. After signing a non-disclosure agreement, I was let in on the big secret, the meaning of the "C" in the company name: we were going to use recent innovations in carbon nano-tubes to revolutionize the industry. These nano-scopic cylindrical fibers that allow unparalleled circuit density would be David's tiny, secret sling.

With the financial incentive of stock options and the confidence gained by working with a crack technical team, everyone was working at full capacity. There were scribbled drawings with names and dates taped up on a wall. These were the jotted ideas from our team of electrical engineers and physicists with M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from schools like Harvard, Stanford, and M.I.T. One posting was my recent workings of a carbon nano-tube electro-mechanical configuration bit, an idea that a co-worker and I had developed that I would write up and the company would push through the patent process. By packing a dozen well-caffeinated physics and electronics geniuses into a pathetic three-room rental that resembled a low-budget movie studio, we had created the primordial soup of intellectual invention. As a result of our collective ideas, our seasoned team, our innovative ideas, and nano-technology being the latest buzzword in investment, we were soon funded by venture capitalists for $10 million. It was immensely exciting to be the tenth employee in a growing start-up company that would have to upgrade offices and dramatically expand staff in an up-scaling war against the industry titan.

The increased design responsibility and unbounded architectural creativity that comes with working for a start-up is unparalleled. However, the necessity of side-stepping patented intellectual property
belonging to our competitor, which covered all aspects of our design, from manufacturing to testing, placed a heavy burden on the design team. This danger was extremely real, as a similar start-up had collapsed following an infringement lawsuit related to unauthorized reproduction of a bit stream. As the designer of three different components, I examined our competition’s sixteen patents related to the memory aspect of the device. It was immensely satisfying to study, absorb, and then circumvent patent claims as I designed a conceptually similar but un-patented version of three memory blocks.

I am interested in serving as general counsel for a corporation focused on advanced semiconductor technology. My diverse work experience and master’s degree provide a perfect foundation to tackle the issues faced by a general counsel. I am drawn to the challenges I will find at the intersection of intellectual property, product liability, and corporate law. At this juncture in my life, I seek more challenge and personal growth in a field that calls on my written skills, attention to detail, and love of technology. My background in nano-technology will bring a unique perspective to the NYU classroom and will make me extremely marketable upon graduation. By pursuing a law degree, I intend to enter a profession that aligns with the interests and aptitudes I have discovered and developed through real work experience. It is through deep personal reflection that I have decided that law is the natural extension of my training, personality, and talents.

**Commentary on law school personal statement sample:**

**What’s Strong?**

This is an excellent personal statement because it shows this candidate has had a tangible impact on organizations, and probably on the global economy. The statement keeps the reader engaged by giving a meaningful story with background, context, conflict, and resolution. It also provides a peek into the mysterious and increasingly legendary world of Silicon Valley start-ups. This is a good model for someone who has been out of college for a while, but who hasn’t been working in a law firm. The essay is focused on career goals, with career history to back it up. This person is a doer, not a dreamer. The writer shows a depth of technical knowledge and strong analytic reasoning skills that go way beyond linear thinking, especially when he describes finding new solutions to highly technical problems that do not violate patents. The statement creates desire in the admissions committee to admit this person because other companies seek to hire the applicant and venture capitalists are willing to support the applicant with substantial funds. This statement will inspire members of the admissions committee to act on the applicant’s behalf because he has reached way beyond the safety net of college, and succeeded.

This applicant demonstrated he has strong written communication skills by writing a compelling statement, using logos, pathos, ethos, and mythos. Logos is used as evidence of excellence when he discusses the substantial funds invested in his intellectual potential, and the use of his analytical ability to keep the company afloat in the same waters where others have foundered. He uses touches of pathos lightly when he describes the “primordial soup of intellectual invention” inside the cramped office. And the analogy, in which he compares his small start-up and the industry leader to David and Goliath, uses both pathos and mythos to excellent effect: The story is one everyone knows; just by invoking the names, the writer brings another powerful story to his narrative without using valuable space. This mythic story becomes a theme woven throughout the essay. It is a
rhetorical device that establishes a connection in the reader’s mind between this candidate and a king, or leader, known for his compassionate ethos. This reader has also composed the statement so that he comes across as an authoritative, competent, thoughtful, and honest leader.

What’s Wrong?

This essay is too focused on the details of the story rather than giving evidence for why this person is a good candidate for law school. Luckily for the applicant, the story is powerful enough on its own, due to the impact the real events had on many people. This essay is structured as a personal narrative, and the topic is the applicant’s professional experience. The first paragraph is wholly descriptive prose that has very little to do with why this person is a good candidate for law school. The first paragraph lacks a thesis or a direction for the essay. Ideally, the reader should find a microcosm of the essay in the first paragraph.

The main body of the personal statement is full of specific details and action verbs, which is great because visual learners can imagine the office in vivid detail. By far, the second-to-last paragraph packs in the most value to the admissions committee for the space used, but the background story is important for this paragraph to be so powerful. The writer could plant more indicators of his positive qualities and characteristics throughout the background story. For example, he could mention how he used his oral communication skills to communicate with his design team and supervisors, so that the admissions committee knows he feels, like they inevitably do, that mastery of oral communication skills is important.

The last paragraph is where the applicant draws together his themes with his self-assessment and goals. He should mention what his master’s degree is in. This writer commits the common error of throwing in the name of the school receiving this statement as a token. Any law school program could fill that place. The writer does not convey that he has done research about the law program at NYU. There is no mention about how NYU Law School is strong in patent and intellectual property law. Nor does the applicant discuss how being in New York City will put him in contact with East Coast technology specialists who will give him an edge up in his career. NYU Law School admissions counselors would love to hear about how the applicant and law school are an ideal match. The writer needs to persuade the NYU admissions committee that NYU is the only school for him, and he can do this by interpreting how the school’s particular strengths will advance his goals.