

## JOHN BELMONT | EDITOR & ESL TUTOR

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### Copyediting Sample: Personal Statement

Client:	Non-native speaker of English who has an above-average command of spoken English
Type of writing:	Response to a writing prompt for MBA graduate school admission
Level of editing:	Light to medium copy edit with light line editing where appropriate
Style guide:	<i>The Chicago Manual of Style</i> , 17th Edition

Below I have provided both the editing pass and the final cleaned version of the client's personal statement. The university she was applying to asked her to **describe a time when she effectively demonstrated her leadership ability.**

#### Editing Pass

In-During my undergraduate senior year, I decided to take on a leadership position at AIESEC, a global hon-profit organization that strives to empower youth through leadership development and cross-cultural exchange. I began my role as the vice president of the Seattle branch with the specific goal of increasing the our member retention rate from 40%-percent to over 90%-percent. Despite this ambitious goal, I soon found myself neither motivated nor inspired due to the performance-driven culture, resulting which had resulted in the purge of members, under the former president's leadership. Three of my most competent members quit together because the work environment no longer aligned with their morale. Fortunately, I was not the only one feeling the urge of a change in management. The the majority of the executive team members too had also lost confidence in the president's leadership. After the president was removed through popular vote, I decided to step up and lead the organization. As a leader, as counterintuitive as it may sound, I have learned that prioritizing doing my best does not always yield optimal results. I learned from my predecessor's mistakes that solely doing my best alone would not help AIESEC succeed; thus, I started practicing a collaborative leadership style to solve the our one fundamental problem—organizational culture. I knew that if I were to build trust, synergy, and a strong support system within, AIESEC would thrive as an organization. I had invited all 15 fifteen members participated to participate in the recruitment process to show them that their opinions mattered in-to AIESEC; I scheduled coffee dates with each newly recruited member; I awarded rewarded the best performing member every month—ultimately, I was creating had created a platform for youth voices to be heard and established to have a college family the members can could count on.

**Commented [JB1]: Write out abbreviations/acronyms on first mention:** Write out this abbreviation followed by "(AIESEC)". Use the abbreviation for all future mentions. See CMOS 17, 10.3.

**Commented [JB2]: Hyphenation and part of speech:** "Nonprofit" doesn't require a hyphen, according to Merriam Webster's. Also, in this case, "nonprofit" is an adjectival noun, so it should modify a noun; hence, I added "organization". OK?

**Commented [JB3]: Determiner usage:** The definite article "the" is fine, but the possessive adjective "our" expresses ownership, possibly more intimate knowledge of the context. OK?

**Commented [JB4]: Numerals/percentages:** Spell "percent" instead of using the percent sign. Also, you are correct to use numerals (not spelled-out numbers) with percentages. See CMOS 17, 9.18.

**Commented [JB5]: Changed present participle to adjective clause:** Using an adjective clause with the past perfect "had resulted" instead of the present participle "resulting". The past perfect is needed here because this "purge of members" occurred before [11]

**Commented [JB6]: Clarification:** How many? Several? Hundreds?

**Commented [JB7]: Clarification:** Using "former" since this person is currently no longer the president.

**Commented [JB8]: Superlative:** Using "most" to suggest that the other members are *not* incompetent.

**Commented [JB9]: Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of "together", how about "at the same time"? It seems [2]

**Commented [JB10]: Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of "because", how about "claiming" or "alleging"? [3]

**Commented [JB11]: Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of 'aligned with', how about "sustained"? Would this [4]

**Commented [JB12]: Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of "feeling the urge of", how about "who felt the need" [5]

**Commented [JB13]: Verb tense:** Using past perfect instead of simple past because the executive team [6]

**Commented [JB14]: Word/phrasing choice:** How about "voted out"? Less wordy, but OK as is.

**Commented [JB15]: Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of "within" at the end of the sentence, how about us [7]

**Commented [JB16]: Word/phrasing choice:** "invited" is a more specific verb than "had" in this context.

**Commented [JB17]: Numerals:** Spell out numerals 100 and below, except with percentages. See CMOS [8]

**Commented [JB18]: Verb tense:** Past perfect makes sense here as the platform was created after both [9]

**Commented [JB19]: Redundant:** "to be heard" probably unnecessary since voices implies this idea already [10]

**Commented [JB20]: Parallel structure and word/phrasing choice:** Changed infinitive verb [11]

Today, in my short tenure as the president, I have achieved accomplishments include achieved a member retention rate at 97% of 97 percent—leading a recruitment campaign that was ranked first nationally—and realized 30-thirty exchanges that placed the Seattle branch at-within the top seven chapters among 35thirty-five chapters nationally nationwide.

#### Final Version

During my undergraduate senior year, I decided to take on a leadership position at the International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences (AIESEC), a global nonprofit organization that strives to empower youth through leadership development and cross-cultural exchange. I began my role as the vice president of the Seattle branch with the specific goal of increasing our member retention rate from 40 percent to over 90 percent. Despite this ambitious goal, I soon found myself neither motivated nor inspired due to the performance-driven culture, which had resulted in the purge of several key members under the former president's leadership. Three of my most competent members quit at the same time, alleging the work environment no longer sustained their morale. Fortunately, I was not the only one who felt the need for a change in management; the majority of executive team members had also lost confidence in the president's leadership. After the president was voted out, I decided to step up and lead the organization. As a leader—as counterintuitive as it may sound—I have learned that prioritizing doing my best does not always yield optimal results. From my predecessor's mistakes, I learned that merely doing my best would not help the AIESEC succeed; thus, I started practicing a collaborative leadership style to solve our one fundamental problem: organizational culture. I knew that if I were to build trust, synergy, and a strong internal support system, the AIESEC would thrive as an organization. I invited all fifteen members to participate in the recruitment process to show them that their opinions mattered; I scheduled coffee dates with each newly recruited member; I rewarded the best performing member every month; and ultimately, I had created a platform for youth voices while establishing a college family the members could count on.

During my short tenure as president, I achieved a member retention rate of 97 percent—leading a recruitment campaign that was ranked first nationally—and secured thirty student exchanges, effectively positioning the Seattle branch within the top seven chapters among thirty-five nationwide.

**Commented [JB21]: Decrease wordiness:** This is OK, but you could remove "Today" and start this way: "During my short..." to be a little less wordy.

**Commented [JB22]: Decrease wordiness:** Just using the verb "achieved" to reduce wordiness. OK?

**Commented [JB23]: Word suggestion:** "leading" helps to clarify the fact that *you led* the campaign, plus, it refers back to the essay prompt about *leadership*. OK?

**Commented [JB24]: Word/phrasing choice:** What do you think of "secured" instead of "realized"?

**Commented [JB25]: Clarification:** What kind of exchanges? "Student exchanges"?

**Commented [JB26]: Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of "that placed", how about "effectively positioning"?

**Commented [JB27]: Repetition:** "Nationally" used earlier in sentence. Edited to reduce repetition. OK?

Page 1: [1] Commented [JB5] John Belmont 2/17/19 11:30:00 AM

**Changed present participle to adjective clause:** Using an adjective clause with the past perfect “had resulted” instead of the present particle “resulting”. The past perfect is needed here because this “purge of members” occurred *before* the fact that you had “found [yourself] neither motivated nor inspired...” Verbs in the past perfect express the idea that one thing occurred in the past before another.

Page 1: [2] Commented [JB9] John Belmont 2/11/19 2:51:00 PM

**Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of “together”, how about “at the same time”? It seems this might be what you are trying to say; however, OK as is.

Page 1: [3] Commented [JB10] John Belmont 2/11/19 2:58:00 PM

**Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of “because”, how about “claiming”? or “alleging”? Using a present participle will make the *members* the agents of their reasoning for quitting instead of you, making your overall argument stronger.

Page 1: [4] Commented [JB11] John Belmont 2/11/19 3:01:00 PM

**Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of ‘aligned with’, how about “sustained”? Would this be more accurate?

Page 1: [5] Commented [JB12] John Belmont 2/11/19 3:04:00 PM

**Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of “feeling the urge of”, how about “who felt the need for”? Does this seem more accurate to you?

Page 1: [6] Commented [JB13] John Belmont 2/11/19 3:15:00 PM

**Verb tense:** Using past perfect instead of simple past because the executive team *had lost* confidence *prior to* the three members quitting—one thing happened before another.

Page 1: [7] Commented [JB15] John Belmont 2/17/19 11:49:00 AM

**Word/phrasing choice:** Instead of “within” at the end of the sentence, how about using the adjective “internal” to describe the kind of *strong support system*, as in: “a strong *internal* support system”?

Page 1: [8] Commented [JB17] John Belmont 2/12/19 10:09:00 AM

**Numerals:** Spell out numerals 100 and below, except with percentages. See CMOS 17, 9.2.

Page 1: [9] Commented [JB18] John Belmont 2/11/19 3:51:00 PM

**Verb tense:** Past perfect makes sense here as the platform was created after both *scheduling coffee dates* and *rewarding top performers*.

Page 1: [10] Commented [JB19] John Belmont 2/17/19 12:03:00 PM

**Redundant:** “to be heard” probably unnecessary since *voices* implies this idea already. OK?

Page 1: [11] Commented [JB20] John Belmont 2/17/19 12:09:00 PM

**Parallel structure and word/phrasing choice:** Changed infinitive verb “to have” to the past perfect “[had] established” to make verb parallel in form with previous past perfect verb “had created”. OK?

Note: “had” not necessary in this case with “established” because it is being *elided* (i.e., implied) since it is has already been made explicit with the earlier stated “had created”.