

## MBA Waxes Poetic and Pragmatic for *BusinessWeek* Online



Anne Turchi believes that economists are the poets and philosophers of the business world, that preparation for an MBA program should include readings of “One Hundred Years of Solitude” and “The Little Prince,” and that Wal-Mart, despite conventional wisdom, does not have a “good” business model. Pretty out-there for a first-year MBA student? Maybe that’s why *BusinessWeek* selected Turchi to log an MBA journal for its online edition.

It’s not that she’s some kind of business-loathing misanthrope. On the contrary. Turchi is simply a whip-smart, free-thinking, poetry-writing, non-profit program manager who wants in on the secrets of the private sector’s success. “I’m amazed at the impact that private enterprise has had on our culture,” she wrote in her introductory journal, “and I’m angry that the non-profit and public sector hasn’t kept up.”

Actually, there appears very little that could move the affable Turchi to anger. She is loving her MBA experience, and it shows in her periodic *BusinessWeek* reports, which she writes in a tone of over-caffeinated amusement.

Turchi has mused on The Secret Language of Business School, with its transitive supply chains and dangling

opportunity costs. She has waxed on her quantitative awakening at Math Camp (a.k.a. Jumpstart, the introduction to accounting and statistics that proves critical to “arty-smarty” humanities majors like her). She has professed her love for “ugly, old Balmer Hall (which is a great filter for prospective students with entitlement issues),” but bemoaned her heartbreak over accounting (the discipline, she has come to realize, will never be hers). Somewhat more requited feelings have surfaced toward the statistics core which, she claims, has her seeing perfect normal distributions in everything from light fixtures to Volkswagen Beetles. She has outlined a friendship decision matrix, invented to help her determine the most prudent uses of her precious time. She even has admitted to finding herself enjoying—don’t say it too loudly—*The Wall Street Journal*.

Friends *can* disagree. For Turchi, business school is about experimenting with alternative lenses, and she has been thrilled to find a cohort who share in this philosophy. “The thing I love about this program is that we’re all thinkers; we have a real intellectual curiosity,” she says. “It’s not much fun to be in an organization where everyone thinks the same as you do. Everyone here—while we may differ in our viewpoints—has thought about it. Their reasons for thinking the way they do are just as valid as my reasons for thinking the way I do. I’m challenged every day.”

And not just in her world view. Turchi has written candidly on the stresses and strains of the MBA program’s academic rigors, including an admission that she had “strategically” stopped fastening her seatbelt in the anxious days before first-quarter finals.

For all the trouble, Turchi is also absorbing the mother lode of rich management know-how. And she intends to put it to good use when she returns to the non-profit sector with reform on top of the agenda.

“You read these business cases and they are all pretty similar: A company is not doing very well and then somebody comes in and makes changes or cuts and then somebody else comes in with a vision, says we need to redefine our core business, our strategy. And then they live happily ever after,” she says. “I can write that story for the YMCA or for youth shelters—up to the vision part. What is the Y in the business of? There’s a lot of stuff to figure out. And I think this is a good place to gain some unique viewpoints.”

*You can read Turchi’s MBA Journals in BusinessWeek Online: [businessweek.com/bschools/mbajournal/](http://businessweek.com/bschools/mbajournal/)*