

## Taking the Oath

Every spring, a number of students at Harvard Business School take what has come to be known as the Harvard MBA Oath, but as Business Week reported in its June 11, 2009 issue, the oath has been forwarded to folks around the world, and as of that time, more than 800 people had signed it. Here is what the oath says, as reported in the New York Times on May 30, 2009:

### ***THE MBA OATH***

*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. Therefore I will seek a course that enhances the value my enterprise can create for society over the long term. I recognize my decisions can have far-reaching consequences that affect the well-being of individuals inside and outside my enterprise, today and in the future. As I reconcile the interests of different constituencies, I will face choices that are not easy for me and others.*

*Therefore, I promise:*

*I will act with utmost integrity and pursue my work in an ethical manner.*

*I will safeguard the interests of my shareholders, co-workers, customers and the society in which we operate.*

*I will manage my enterprise in good faith, guarding against decisions and behavior that advance my own narrow ambitions but harm the enterprise and the societies it serves.*

*I will understand and uphold, both in letter and in spirit, the laws and contracts governing my own conduct and that of my enterprise.*

*I will take responsibility for my actions, and I will represent the performance and risks of my enterprise accurately and honestly.*

*I will develop both myself and other managers under my supervision so that the profession continues to grow and contribute to the well-being of society.*

*I will strive to create sustainable economic, social and environmental prosperity worldwide.*

*I will be accountable to my peers and they will be accountable to me for living by this oath.*

*This oath I make freely, and upon my honor.*

Some have derided this effort, pointing out with some justification that a lot of the MBA graduates of earlier years have played a large part in the sharp decline of our economy.

But wouldn't it wonderful if every manager of every business freely and voluntarily took an oath like this? Further, they should dust it off regularly to remind themselves of their ethical responsibilities to themselves as well as to their "enterprise and the societies it serves."