

# Spreadsheets won't change the world but leaders will

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**Issue date:** 12/3/01 **Section:** [Perspectives](#)

It was still a few years before World War II. General Douglas MacArthur was a pretty popular man. Given his status, the executives at JP Morgan offered him a very high level position at the bank. One that would have made him very rich and amongst the most high-class people in New York City. His wife at the time (he later divorced her!) was constantly egging him on to take the job. She was, after all, very keen on being associated with the elite and having the best that life had to offer – in short, she was tired of living on a military salary. Yet, in a stunning move, General MacArthur turned down this golden position. When asked why, he simply said, "Bankers don't make history." So what happened to General MacArthur after that bad career move? He went on to lead the Pacific Fleet to victory in WWII, and, in short, made history. In October 1944 the world watched as he dramatically liberated the Philippines from Japanese control. On September 2, 1945, he presided over the Japanese surrender on board the U.S.S. Missouri, bringing an end to World War II. In the next five and a half years, as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan, MacArthur and his staff helped a devastated Japan rebuild itself, institute a democratic government, and chart a course that has made it one of the world's leading industrial powers. While his decision to ding JPMorgan may have been surprising at the time, one thing is clear: Douglas MacArthur fulfilled his self-imposed destiny of becoming one of history's greatest men.

Now the point of the story is not to encourage Wharton MBAs to join the Navy, but rather to debate about what our underlying mission is as an institution. Is it to create spreadsheet monkeys and consulting goons? Or is it to help develop the future leaders of society?

I cannot count how many times I have heard the following quote "I don't want to major in Finance, but I am at Wharton, and it would look bad if I did not have some solid NPV skills!"

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