

A CRASH COURSE IN BUSINESS STRATEGY

THE GLOBAL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE FAST-TRACKS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND CORPORATE MANAGERS EAGER TO LEARN HOW TO DEAL WITH RISK AND BECOME EFFECTIVE COMPETITORS.

FOUR YEARS AGO, Cedric Kouam, 31, joined EDP Renewables, a Houston-based company that builds and operates wind farms. He brought a background that included a Ph.D. in mathematics and an international perspective acquired from growing up in Africa, but until this year he had little occasion to work closely with colleagues outside his own department, which structures financial transactions with utilities that buy electricity from EDP.

All that changed this spring when Kouam participated in the Global Management Challenge USA's inaugural competition, a strategy and management simulation competition that involved 24 other teams and convened in partnership with NYSE Euronext. In the opening round of the competition, Kouam and four EDP colleagues—from marketing, finance, procurement, and asset management—were given a hypothetical manufacturing company to run. They performed well, winning the U.S. national finals and an invitation to compete internationally.

Initially launched in Portugal in 1980, the Global Management Challenge today

ranks as the world's largest business simulation event. More than 480,000 university students and corporate executives have participated in the various competitions in 40 countries, acquiring new skills and experiences along the way. According to Sylvester John, chairman of the Global Management Challenge USA, participants soak up knowledge through valuable experiential learning, which helps their companies gain an edge in marketplaces that don't always operate according to textbook scenarios.

During the 30-plus years that the Global Management Challenge has been in operation, hundreds of companies have participated. One of them—The Hershey Company, the largest producer of quality chocolate in North America and a global leader in the chocolate and sugar confectionery industry—is an enthusiastic supporter, seeing it as “a powerful tool to help us identify future leaders.” Hershey, which sponsored the U.S. competition this spring, will be one of the sponsors and participants in the next U.S. challenge in the first quarter of 2013.

“Finding and developing the talent who will create insights-based value for our customers, consumers, and stakeholders is critical to Hershey's long-term global business strategy,” says John P. Bilbrey, president and CEO. Hershey believes that the sophisticated simulations in the Challenge offer a measurable and meaningful view of how different candidates are likely to perform in real-world situations—creating a much higher likelihood that it will place the right people in the right roles for the best overall business results.

Approximately 100 Hershey employees will participate in the 2013 competition. To encourage knowledge sharing and enhanced learning, the Hershey teams will be cross-functional and drawn from different geographical regions—the best way, the company says, to upgrade the skills of current managers, creating “insights-driven performance and managerial excellence for today and tomorrow.”

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

In today's competitive marketplace, as employers look for ways to maximize the talents and enhance the skills of their employees, the Global Management Challenge gets high grades at both. “The issue comes down to hands-on experience,” says Sylvester John,

senior vice president and former president of the international affiliate division of SIFE Worldwide, a nonprofit organization that fosters the development of socially responsible business leaders.

The Challenge provides a cost-effective alternative to more formal executive





Participants in the Global Management Challenge USA inaugural competition during an educational session on the trading floor of NYSE Euronext (top); the five members of EDP Renewable's cross-functional team and their championship plaque

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Registration for the 2013 competition will take place through Jan. 16, with the first round starting Jan. 18. To learn more about the Global Management Challenge USA and the upcoming competition, visit: www.usamanagementchallenge.com



education programs, says John. "You don't have to pay the cost of training employees on-site or related travel expenses." It also offers the type of competitive engagement format that appeals to younger professionals—"ones who don't respond well to the traditional way of training, where someone comes and talks at them," he says. "These folks want to have fun, be involved, be hands on."

In squaring off against the other competitors, Kouam and his teammates from EDP got a crash course in the big-picture thinking that CEOs and other top managers must master. "I learned how comprehensive running a company can be," says Kouam. Increasing production might be good for a virtual company's bottom line, he discovered, but it might not work from an HR perspective. "If you work too many hours, people will quit," he says.

In addition to employees, college students also

are finding the Challenge to be a cost-effective way to acquire new skills—and jobs. Many students are entering the contest to enhance their prospects in a tight job market, says John. Over the years, many global companies have recruited students who perform well in the competitions.

Tanmay Mehra, 26, competed last spring on a team from Purdue University's Krannert School of Management. Although his team did not win, the newly minted MBA, whose previous employment in India tapped his engineering background, says that the experience gave him an opportunity to practice the negotiating skills he learned in school.

"Implementing these skills in the competition is very different from learning it in class," says Mehra, who is about to begin work at Inovalon, a company in the Washington, D.C., metro area that specializes in analytics for health care companies. ●

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The Hershey Company is a proud sponsor of the 2012-2013 Global Management Challenge USA competition and its dedication to shaping the next generation of innovative business leaders.