Hello! My name is Edward Torres, winner of the 2025/26 MikesBikes World Championship. This international competition featured students from top universities around the world, and the competition was incredibly fierce this year, with the leaderboard shifting constantly. While I wasn't always certain my business strategy would prevail, it ultimately secured me the top shareholder value through a strong comeback in the final rounds. In this summary, I'll explain how I transformed a startup bike manufacturer, Pedal Pusher, into a profit-making machine. My approach isn't the only way to win in MikesBikes Advanced business simulation, but I hope my story provides future competitors with valuable insights for their own strategies.

Competition Journey

Take us back to the start—how did your journey unfold from the early rounds all the way to your final result?

My journey through the qualifier rounds was pretty hectic. In my qualifiers, my competitors and I actually ended up over-drafting millions early on due to sheer bad luck. Business involves a lot of risk, and MikesBikes perfectly captures this. I managed to recover and secure 6th place in the shareholder value leaderboard, which allowed me to advance to the championship rounds against nine very strong competitors. Seeing the high shareholder value my rivals had achieved in their qualifiers really impressed me. I didn't know whether I could win or not, but my ultimate goal was to end the competition with a healthy and growing business.

I went into the championship rounds with a focus on operational excellence. My background as an IT field service technician taught me that an efficient, well-maintained machine is essential to a successful operation. I applied this same mindset to my factory and my workers. My first step was to implement the Lean Manufacturing fundamentals I had learned in my operations management courses. Right from the start, I invested heavily in worker training, preventative maintenance, supplier relations, and quality systems to reduce wastage and make my factory as efficient as possible.

As a result, the quality of my mountain bikes improved significantly. Because I knew mountain bike customers highly valued quality, I chose to raise my prices by 15%. I wanted to offer customers the best quality and value for the money while still covering my costs and generating a healthy net profit. I believe this is the path toward sustainable growth. Each round my market share grew steadily in the mountain bike segment, proving this was the right call.

What was the toughest hurdle you faced during the competition, and how did you navigate it?

The toughest hurdle I faced was transitioning from a single-product firm to a diversified, multi-segment business. Over the course of the competition, I expanded my firm's portfolio to include electric, road, cruiser, and kids bikes. This wasn't just about adding products. It was a challenge that required balancing marketing spend, product launch expenses, and factory expansion costs with the precise pricing and production levels needed to remain profitable while scaling. Navigating this growth phase is incredibly difficult. It is very easy to end up with millions in lost sales due to underproduction, or to ruin your cash balance by overproducing bikes that the market simply did not want. Not only that, you also have to take into account the risk of rivals entering these new market segments and diluting your market share. Lastly, to make it even more complex, every market has different preferences; price matters most for electric and kids bike customers, whereas road bike customers care more about your bike's upgraded specs and your corporate social responsibility efforts, and finally cruiser bike customers really value your brand's image.

To navigate these complexities, I relied heavily on data analytics tools taught in my Business Intelligence courses. For example, I utilized the .csv files provided by the simulation and used Google Colab and Python code to generate bar and line graphs from the data. This allowed me to better visualize trends and market shifts to determine where I needed to invest my capital. I also built a Python script to determine my advertising mix and which media channels to invest in for each specific bike, since each segment had different media viewing preferences. This helped me get the most awareness possible for my advertising budgets. Furthermore, I used Google Sheets to conduct risk assessments when launching new products. This helped me to calculate the probability of rivals entering my market segments, the effect market share dilution would have on my demand, and the best production numbers to go with based on the most likely outcomes.

To tie it all together, I also built dashboards in Google Looker Studio to visualize my key metrics and track how the market evolved across every round. All these tools mentioned helped me to run a lean operation by minimizing lost sales, minimizing inventory carrying costs, avoiding over-drafting on my cash balance, and ensuring every dollar invested in R&D, marketing, or factory capacity returned a growing net profit; even in the worst case scenario where competitors saturated my new markets. My data-driven approach allowed me to emerge from this growth phase with accurate demand forecasts and a healthy, profitable business.

Was there a moment when things "clicked" and you knew your approach was paying off?

While I was middle of the pack in terms of shareholder value early on in the competition, due to my high costs, my investments started to pay off in the later rounds. I had achieved the biggest factory in the industry. I had trained a highly efficient workforce that could produce

quality bikes to meet demand across all market segments. Also, I had reduced my product defect rate to a negligible amount. This allowed me to save money on inspection costs due to preventing problems before they occur. Finally, I had invested heavily into R&D as well, both to upgrade my bikes and to cut costs to improve my margins. I felt I had the best products and had achieved true economies of scale. That's when it clicked that I could afford to attack all market segments with strategic price cuts, increased product advertising, higher retail margins, and that I had the production to meet all the demand these aggressive moves would gain me. I double checked the product contribution summaries to make sure this high volume production would actually keep my gross and product contribution margins growing and then I rolled the dice. Feeling confident, I made the move to give out the highest dividends in the industry for the final rollover rounds.

I was pleasantly surprised when I learned I had won the competition and how well my final pivot to competing on volume had worked. I had achieved the highest retail sales in the industry of $190 million and the highest shareholder value of $269.54 per share. My contribution margins in the final year were excellent with the mountain segment contributing $20 million, while the road, electric, and cruiser segments each added $8 million, and kids bikes contributed $4 million. My proudest achievement was ending the simulation with zero lost sales and minimal inventory, proving I had mastered lean operations and demand forecasting. Overall, these results confirmed that the operational foundation I built in the early rounds paid off in the end.

Personal Takeaways & Development

In what ways did this experience reshape how you think about business strategy or leadership?

Running a successful business is a lot harder than I imagined. There is a lot of money on the line and the environment is incredibly competitive. I learned that discipline is required to avoid wasting capital. You have to be smart and patient with your investments and remain confident that they will generate a return. At the same time, you have to take risks. Sometimes it feels like gambling. All the spending I did to improve operations or marketing felt like upping the ante at a poker table, hoping I had better cards than my opponents. However, business isn't all luck. If you make the right moves, you can tip the odds in your favor. It is very rewarding when the capital you deploy ends up generating a significantly higher return than what you started with.

When it comes to leadership, I feel it's important to have the humility and confidence to acknowledge your mistakes, learn from them, and do better next time. I wasn't perfect at

running this business. As I mentioned, I did over-draft in the qualifiers. I also had some lost sales and excess inventory early on in the championship rounds, but I accepted those mistakes and took actions to correct them. I got better as each round progressed, and overall, this was a great learning experience.

What's a key takeaway from this competition that you expect to apply beyond MikesBikes?

My biggest takeaway is that money management requires constant attention to detail. I saw how incredibly easy it is to lose millions of dollars through simple mistakes. I learned to produce insights from business data, which allowed me to justify my investments and optimize my capital allocation toward the areas with the highest impact. Specifically, I learned to use market research and market summary reports to forecast demand and minimize costly inventory errors, while relying on product contribution reports to ensure that every product in my portfolio remained profitable; even after aggressive price cuts and increased advertising spend. Also, I used manufacturing responsiveness and quality reports to verify my operational investments were gaining me the competitive advantages I desired. I learned to look for the story behind the numbers to ensure that every dollar spent is a "smart" dollar that returns value and prevents waste.

Looking Forward

How do you see this experience shaping your next steps, whether academically or professionally?

Academically, this experience helped me integrate my studies in business administration, computer information systems, and data analytics by applying them to a single, complex project. It allowed me to move concepts out of the textbook and into a simulation where my decisions had multi-million dollar consequences. Successfully managing a diverse, multi-product portfolio in such a competitive environment has given me the confidence that I can perform well when tasked with high-stakes business projects.

Professionally, this has confirmed my goal of becoming a Business Intelligence and Data Professional. This was an enjoyable experience for me and I feel I would do well in this kind of field. My next steps involve moving beyond manual analysis to learn how to build the automated and scalable systems that allow a business to maintain peak performance.

What goals are you setting for yourself moving forward, and how does this achievement fit into the bigger picture?

My next goals are to expand my visualization toolkit by learning to build dashboards in Power BI and Tableau as well. I am also focused on deepening my expertise in SQL and Database Management to ensure the underlying data architecture is as reliable as the operational foundation I built in this simulation. Furthermore, I plan to advance my skills in statistical modeling and predictive analytics to anticipate market shifts before they happen. My ultimate goal is to become a Business Intelligence Developer or Analyst, so I can leverage the knowledge I have gained through my education and this competition to drive strategic decisions that lead to sustainable growth in the real world.

Closing Reflections

What does representing your school in this competition mean to you on a personal level?

I'm proud to have represented California State Polytechnic University Pomona in this international competition. Our school is defined by the 'Learn by Doing' philosophy, and there is no better example of that than our Strategic Management Capstone (BUS 4950). The MikesBikes simulation was a core part of our final business course, where we applied the lessons we learned across our economics, management, and finance courses. Achieving the top Shareholder Value in this competition was a rewarding way to see the Cal Poly Pomona edge in action. It confirmed that the College of Business Administration (CBA) has prepared me with the practical skills needed to navigate a complex competitive market and make informed strategic decisions.

Are there any mentors, classmates or supporters you'd like to recognize for helping you along the way?

I want to recognize the faculty across the TOM, CIS, and MHR departments who provided the building blocks for this win throughout my time in the CBA. I'd like to thank Professor Ted Bistline (TOM 3010) for the foundations of Lean Manufacturing and Professor Jeffery Guyse (TOM 3020) for the essential spreadsheet skills I used for planning and managing my products. I would also like to thank Professor Fadi Batarseh, whose courses in Business Intelligence (CIS 3252) and Data Mining (CIS 4321) gave me the technical tools to forecast my firm's growth.

I also want to recognize Professors Andrew Gonzales (MHR 3010) and Sharonda Bishop (MHR 3020), whose emphasis on the value of human capital led me to prioritize worker training and productivity, which ultimately became the cornerstone of my successful business strategy. I am also grateful to my fellow competitors in the simulation. Their aggressive moves drove me to stay motivated and dive deeper into the data every single week.

Finally, I want to thank Professor Leanne Powers for her approach to this capstone. By making the MikesBikes simulation the centerpiece of BUS 4950 and requiring us to use SWOT analyses and Board of Directors meetings to evaluate our decisions, she created a high-stakes learning environment where I could truly test my limits as a business strategist. Most importantly, I want to thank my family Julia, Julie, and Carolin for their constant support and encouragement throughout this process, as their belief in my efforts allowed me to stay focused and reach my goals.