

# WOULD YOU KNOW HOW TO REPORT TO A BOARD?

There's no question that defending a project to a board member isn't easy. EMBA students offer some pointers after participating in a simulation where they posed as members of an executive committee and interacted with real executives.

“**T**oday the technical capacities of professionals are taken for granted, and what really makes a difference is their ability to engage in the practical aspects of a firm's day-to-day life – and reporting to a board is one of these,”

says **Gilles Drege**, managing director of Reig Capital Group.

That is what second-year Executive MBA students looked at in the executive management simulation program (EX-SIM). Without leaving the classroom, they put themselves in the shoes of company leadership. In addition to competing with other companies, students negotiated with real members of boards, banks and trade unions.

**Jordi Mallo** (EMBA '16), consultant at Laboratorios Esteve, explains, “You have to make decisions without having all of the information and do it fast. You have to live with the consequences, correct your mistakes and adapt for the future.”

**Carlos Tarragona** (EMBA '16), head of international sales for Kompuestos, adds, “You have to fight on despite



1



2



your shortcomings, so knowledge becomes very valuable.” In this context, it’s essential “to know how to manage stress and nerves,” notes **Nicolas Gruloos** (EMBA ’16), senior manager at Lexmark Enterprise Software.

“Making decisions quickly with limited information requires flawless coordination,” explains IESE Lecturer **Albert Girbal**. Negotiating with different professionals, the students have to “manage and interact with the firm’s principal stakeholders: the board, the employees – through the trade unions, and the banks.”

When it’s time to negotiate with a financial institution, **Jordi Llobet** (PDG ’14) says, “It’s very important to understand that the person that meets with you knows little about your company.” Banco Sabadell’s director of risk management for the area of Catalonia says: “You have to tell me who you are, where you are, what your job is, what product you offer. Then come the numbers. People come first. People are what builds trust and convinces you that a relationship can be long-lasting and sustainable.”

From the unions, **José A. Pasadas**, secretary for sectorial policies at UGT Catalonia, advises managers to “look down” because “you have to take into account the human impact that your decisions can have on the workforce.”

#### CROSS-CUTTING VISION

● Thanks to the simulation, the students “learn that there is a very important interaction between the various areas of the firm,” explains investor **Luis Ivandic. Maria Colomar** (EMBA ’16), back-end products director at wuaki.tv concurs: “We’ve seen that each role is indispensable for everything to work well; a good group dynamic is essential.” For that reason, **Francisco Centeno** (MBA ’87), CEO of BacktoRoots, recommends that managers be “transparent in everything they do. They should have that spirit that’s about the team, about work and about analysis.”

## REALITY CHECK

“It’s a chance to take a look at the reality of business, which many people haven’t experienced,” says **Hermann Camps**, former managing director of Benetton Spain. The program is a “reality check for what they might encounter, both as managers and as workers,” says **José A. Pasadas**, from the UGT trade union. Both **Camps and Pasadas** participated in the EMBA executive management simulation program (EXSIM).

The EXSIM strengthens the skills, knowledge and values necessary to carry out responsible and successful business management. The students, who have been training for months using the case method, complement their perspective on management with this program. It is a week long, and students work in teams of five or six in sessions that last all day.

According to Professor **Natalia Yankovic**, “In the cases, we never see what would have happened if we’d implemented our ideas. In contrast, in the simulation, we have to make decisions in a competitive context and live with the consequences. This creates tension and a real understanding of the firm’s different moving parts.” She added, “It’s a unique opportunity that enables students to experience and contextualize everything they’ve learned during the first year of the program.”

It’s an “exceptional experience,” according to **Tania Planes** (EMBA ’16), Applus Norcontrol’s head of industrial security for Catalonia and Aragon. “Very intense in every way: in terms of time, in terms of emotions, in terms of the team,” explains **Alejandro Jaumandreu** (EMBA ’16), CEO and Co-founder of Placetobe.



3



4

#### STEP BY STEP

During the EXSIM, EMBA students put what they learned during the first year of the program to the test. During this intensive week they simulate joining an executive committee. The experience includes:

1. **Group decision-making** on company strategy and operations.
2. **Outlining a financial policy.**
3. **Negotiating** with real risk management directors from financial institutions and with active union leaders.
4. **Giving an account** of the firm’s **bottom line to a board** made up of executives and professors.