

The road to winning the MARGA Online Competition 2020/2021

Our way to MARGA:

For years, The MARGA business simulation has been a fixed part of the last semester of the part-time MBA master's program „Corporate Management and Entrepreneurship“ at WAF (Academy of further education at Nürtingen University of Applied Sciences). A total of three teams from our university competed in this year's competition. We were the "courageous three", because all other teams of the university consisted of at least four participants. When we started the game, our goal was to reach the final. Despite the time constraints of full-time jobs, lectures, exams and parallel preparation of our master's thesis, we were able to secure the coveted MARGA awards through team spirit, discipline and a willingness to learn and perform.

The team members:

Our team with the starting number 21 consisted of Hans Peter Heilemann, working in the controlling department at CeramTec GmbH, Niels Huber, working in product management at Aptar Radolfzell GmbH and Marcel Falk, project manager at Eissmann Group Automotive GmbH.

What we think MARGA stands for:

The MARGA business simulation illustrates the complexity of a company. Every factor within a company is interrelated with one or more factors, that can be influenced in a greater or less extend. Additionally, there is the dependence of the company on its environment. The advantage of MARGA is that we were able to learn fundamental and entrepreneurial principles in a playful way, without having to take any real risks (excluding the ignominy of a bad result and the associated scorn by our lecturers). MARGA, in a wider sense, makes every participant a winner as long as he or she approaches the subject matter in the right way. That's because digital learning makes many business management topics tangible in a fun and competitive way, comprehensive learning material is provided by MARGA, and full support is always given to enable personal development. By this, every participant can gain in-depth knowledge and experience during the months of the MARGA Online Competition.

The procedure:

It started with two test rounds, which, apart from a few functions had not yet been activated, ran in exactly the same way as the subsequent main round. This allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the system and gain first experiences. The main round consisted of five periods played over a period of about five months. The best four teams then moved on to the final round, that also consisted of five periods.

Due to public action on the Corona pandemic, it was almost impossible for us to hold real meetings in person. Partly we met in pairs within the given possibilities and added the third person via teams. Most of the meetings took place entirely through teams, but we were able to manage this surprisingly well. We enjoyed the MARGA business simulation very much. Despite the time invested, we never felt participation and planning was a duty. Rather, the simulation awakened our ambition to win. So, it went for granted that on the day the planned scenarios were submitted, we could hardly wait to see the results of the round and draw the right conclusions for the next submission.



from left: Niels Huber, Hans Peter Heilemann and Marcel Falk

To make the business simulation work as teamwork, it is important to define certain rules in advance – just like in real life. This includes, for example, a division of responsibilities, the adherence to deadlines or the personal involvement in the decision-making. In the main round, we could secure the group win relatively safely. However, it was a very competitive group in which high investments were necessary to secure market shares. As a result, the margins shrank from round to round after a very strong start of the main round. Later, it turned out that a team from the company that was the winning team in the previous year was also in our main group. Compared with the other group winners, we already had our first doubts as to whether we could even make it into the MARGA grand final. When, after the fifth round, the first four places were presented by MARGA in a shareholders' meeting, our joy was even greater when, very unexpectedly, we were able to enter the final round as group leader and ranked third overall after a strong final round. The hard work had paid off after all. During the final, we were very confident until round three, but then unexpectedly strong demand for products put us in production difficulties and we didn't have enough capacity to meet demand in full. This dangerously reduced our lead in the last two rounds. However, sticking to our strategy, the one or other strategically clever maneuver and the detailed elaboration of the round evaluations paid off in the end.

In summary, MARGA provides a very good insight into strategic and operational elements of a company and simulates an almost real business practice in a playful and fun way. From our point of view, MARGA is not just a simple business simulation, but more an important learning tool, that can give the participants a knowledge advance in real life. They can decide for themselves how deeply they want to delve into the subject matter.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our professors Dr. Valentin Schackmann and Dr. Werner Ziegler, who made it possible for us to participate in MARGA and always encouraged us to be at the forefront. With our result, we hope to show future participants that not only participating companies, but also part-time students can win at MARGA. At the same time, we don't want to generate too much pressure, because as we said: everyone who starts with desire and curiosity wins at MARGA.