

Testimony of a former laureate of the International Competition of Master's Degree Theses on Economics and Finance

Martial HELAND – GRAND PRIX DISTINCTION 2012

1) *Name, Current position, Company, Career path.*

HELAND Martial, Europe Finance Analyst, Alstom Transport

Career path:

- Alstom Transport – Financial Head Office
- Safran - Strategy & Business Development Head Office
- Airbus Defence & Space – Turnkey Projects Sales Team
- Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton –
Legal/Corporate/Litigation/Capital Markets
- Linklaters – Legal/Corporate (M&A, LBO)



2) *Which year did you take part in the Competition? Which prize did you win?*

I participated in the competition in 2012 and I won Grand Prix Distinction.

3) *Were you still a student when you joined the Competition or did you just finish your studies? Where were you studying at the time?*

I was a student at HEC Paris and École Polytechnique at that time, but I participated in the competition under the colours of Paris I University, for I had written my thesis under the framework of Sorbonne Master of Research in Financial Law.

4) *How did you hear about our Competition?*

The university office had sent an e-mail to let all students know about it.

5) *Why did you decide to compete?*

I discovered the topic of my thesis when I was an intern at Cleary Gottlieb law firm. Several lawyers from Paris and New York offices had worked in the past on litigations between States and so-called “vulture” funds and I immediately felt I had in my hand an outstanding research subject. How to defend States from these uncommon investment funds: that was the question.

I was passionate about the topic and talked about it to all my friends! I was sure the jury would be interested in it too!

6) *In concrete terms, was your award a plus when you entered the labor market?*

I have oriented my career to other areas of activity which are not related to this kind of finance afterwards so it has not helped directly.

7) *Several years after your participation, did you still mention your prize in professional contexts (on your resume, etc.)? Globally, do you find that people know the Competition or that they have never heard about it?*

I include this event on my CV and on such networks as LinkedIn since I believe it is rewarding indeed. My professional acquaintances do not know the competition because I do not directly work in corporate finance/insurance/law, but they understand the concept and appreciate the value of this award.

8) *Are you still in contact with people that you met thanks to the Competition (awarding associations, fellow candidates, etc.)?*

No, but I was in touch with another laureate whose work interested me.

9) *Which advice would you give to the students who will enter the next competition?*

I had bet on the originality. My executive summary was for instance preceded by a prologue I had written as a tale with a dose of humour! And that worked! So...dare!

10) *To conclude, how would you evaluate your participation in the Competition?*

I was really proud of winning the Grand Prix Distinction. An award is for life! And the ceremony is an experience that cannot be forgotten.

11) *What are the pluses of this Competition? What could be improved? What was your opinion on the logistics of the Competition (Ceremony, application, etc.)?*

I have won within the section "Grand Prix and Distinctions" which welcomes all kind of topics. I think that is useful to keep a section dedicated to professional prizes (specific award dedicated to insurance issues, etc.) and another dedicated to theses that do not fit into a particular category.

The variety of nationalities is a big plus besides, it enriches the competition.

Congratulations to the Center of Financial Professions!