

## Market Wire

Students in BP and USC Business School MBA Global Competition Redefine 'Convenience' of Convenience Store

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Hong Kong MBAs Win Top Honor; USC, London Business School, and Michigan Recognized  
Imagine pulling up to the pump at a convenience store gas station and with a wave of your customer card the pump's LCD interactive display recognizes you. Not only does it call you by name, but during the three to four minutes it takes to fill the tank, the display entertains you with a selection of advertising, movie trailers, news, and weather and traffic reports tailored to your interests. Further, the display invites you inside the store to take advantage of select discounts and services.

This scenario was part of the recommendations that earned the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology MBA team top prize at the Second Annual Marshall MBA Global MBA Consulting Challenge. Hosted by the University of Southern California (USC) Marshall School of Business and sponsored by the energy company BP, the competition was held January 30 in Los Angeles.

Including HKUST, participants represented business schools at USC, University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), University of California-Berkeley, Yale University, London Business School, University of Pennsylvania and returning champions University of Michigan.

HKUST students Guillaume Boisset, Luo Chi, Xu Ke, Madhu Motwani, and Jerry Zhao impressed the panel of judges in the competition's three categories -- industry analysis, consulting process, and company recommendations -- with their group dynamic, focus and inventiveness. Judging the seven MBA teams were BP executives and consulting professionals from Ogilvy and Mathers, **Hitachi Consulting**, Accenture, The Boston Consulting Group, Deloitte Consulting, and KPMG LLP.

BP, a global energy provider with a family of well-known brands such as ARCO, ampm, and Castrol, asked students to analyze their convenience store operations and develop strategies to increase both short- and long-term profitability. Students competed for a \$3,000 award and the honor of holding the Marshall MBA Global Consulting Challenge Cup for one year.

Among the teams' recommendations:

- emphasize the convenience store experience by ensuring a consistent, clean, high-quality environment across all stores and raising the quality of service, while incentivizing store managers and employees,
- increase IT investment to align products and services with market segmentation data,
- ally with brand-name partners to provide value-added in-store services, such banking, pharmacy, express mailing, and entertainment rental drop-off, and
- tie product and service specials to customer demographics according to time of day

In addition to HKUST's overall win, students teams were recognized for outstanding performance in each of the judging categories as well.

USC Marshall MBA students Adam Laponis, Min Chan, Himanshu Kashyap, Hanli Li, and Joe Tapscott won the Consulting Process award.

The Industry Analysis award went to the London Business School and the Company Recommendations award was earned by University of Michigan Business School.

About the USC Marshall School of Business

Both U.S. News & World Report and Business Week rank Marshall's programs among the top 20. Marshall with its many research centers and Leventhal School of Accounting focuses on a core set of skills and on strengthening its position as a global center of business education and research at the graduate, undergraduate and executive levels.