

IBESCC Strategies

Choosing a team

Choose confident speakers. IBESCC will inevitably make you speak on the spot; you need people who can hide when they are doing that. Be observant during the Ethics Society's weekly roundtable meetings, and keep an eye on members who demonstrate these qualities. Keep in mind though, that people's speaking abilities can be deceiving when they only speak up on topics they know about. You want someone who is engaged, a good listener, and a drawing force when they speak. Personally, I have found that though some political science majors can be useful, those involved in Student Government or similar organizations seem to have already developed the requisite skills that are beneficial at IBESCC. You will also want at least one student interested in technicalities. Any such specific organizational experience isn't the focus of said observation— people who have learned to pay attention to their words while speaking effortlessly are a common factor in competitors who are most likely to succeed at IBESCC.

Choosing a topic

The topic your team picks is not as integral to success as you might think. At its core IBESCC is a presentation based competition and as such confidence, charisma, and eloquence go much farther than pure innovation. The topic you decide upon should be something that each member of your team can be genuinely enthusiastic about or at least be curious about. This will serve to help establish curiosity as a driving force towards your research topic, and will make the process feel less like a school academic report. This hopefully genuine interest will need to be directed into passion (feigned or genuine) when presentation time comes. If not the sheer amount of effortful hours you put in then your curiosity and personal interest will come across naturally during your presentation through nonverbal communication.

Some of the topics we have competed with in the past are:

1. Pacemaker Reutilization: The Heart of the Problem
2. Carbon Carma: Paying it forward
3. [Patrick's topic] something on Huawei and adopting 5G
4. Building with Zero (carbon-capture cement production)

Our thought process to come up with the first two topics was fairly similar; it was also the hardest part of the process. We have found that the best way to go about this is to either identify a specific problem in the world, or an opportunity that is not being maximized on. Our pacemaker idea managed to hit on both aspects as it identified the disparity in healthcare costs between developed and developing countries as a problem, while noticing the wasteful disposal of pacemakers as an opportunity for maximization.

Carbon Carma was a similar idea that involved having Amazon add a 3% donation option to their checkout page. These donations would qualify the customer for special reduced pricing on a host of sustainably produced Amazon store products, and would raise funds earmarked for the United Nations Environmental Program and for UC Davis' Electric Vehicle Research Center.

The idea was that this helps Amazon turn consumer climate activism into actual short term profits by increasing website engagement and traffic, while also producing long term profits by helping bring down the cost of their supply chains by supporting research that would reduce the cost of shipping. In this idea the identified problem was, more vaguely, Amazon's myriad of ethical issues and monopolistic public perception. The maximization opportunity was identified as people's apparent willingness to donate up to 5% for sustainable products, and Amazon's colossal ability to be a market leader.

25 Minute Presentation

This might seem like more than it really is but it can and should be broken down conceptually as each team member owning each section between finances, legality, ethics, and sustainability. The purpose is to present a well thought out and well studied proposal. You do not need to know everything, you just need to sound like you know what is important to know. In presentations like these I have found that confidence, feigned or natural, is your best friend. Usually, the more confident you sound the less likely you are to be questioned, and more likely you are to be believed at face value. This applies, unfortunately, in everything (think Elizabeth Holmes from Theranos), and IBESCC is no different. Keep in mind that while we are college students, the people you are presenting to are industry professionals from a wide swath of fields. They won't know what you are talking about, so they will rely on human instinct to tell them whether they can trust what you are saying is true or not. Do not stress it, speak loudly, clearly, and casually. Displaying both expertise and comfort through your words is a first place winning voucher.

Finances:

- Think about production efficiencies. If you don't know what these are, that's okay, you're in Ethics Society not a Fortune 500 company. What always worked for me is to try and turn all aspects of running a business into numeric quantities. For our Carbon Cement project we proposed an idea that was essentially about creating cement that was not 100% cement but more like 90% cement and 10% infused carbon. We converted this into numerics by calculating how much it costs to produce one unit of 100% cement and compared it to producing the same thing using 90% cement. Those 10% saved for each "unit" of the product made is essentially the company saving 10% of their cement but selling the same thing as before. So, for every 10 carbon cements they sold, they saved 1 unit of their standard 100% cement. That 10% came out to be around \$3100 in savings for each unit. Then think about scaling up: how many production plants does the company have, and how much can they stockpile? How much cement do they sell per month or per year? When we accounted for all that, we found the company would be saving \$8.2 million per plant per year! That is HUGE and was a fairly simple calculation; keep in mind that any company will have many more than just one plant too, so this

represents the savings of just ONE of their plants in just ONE year by selling a MORE ethical and sustainable product. You can imagine this leads seamlessly into the Ethics and Sustainability portion of the presentation.

Ethics:

- Hopefully you regularly attend Ethics Society meetings, so you already have a good sense of how people think about different issues. This is a key takeaway from your time in the society— it is invaluable to be exposed to what compels others to think the way they do, and this awareness will take you far in IBESCC as well. Think about the world you would like to live in, think about the businesses you would like to support, and think about how these goals can be met while still making money. If you're someone who believes capitalism is inherently evil, this section of the presentation, and honestly IBESCC as a whole might not be for you. The challenge is to propose ethically sound business ideas, which means ideas that are good for stakeholders (the community) but also good for shareholders (the investors.)
- One standard boilerplate framework we have used often is the Veil of Ignorance, which basically asks you to create a society with certain defining aspects but you would not know at all what your position in this created society would be. If you are comfortable with that veil of ignorance to your potential position in the society you are imagining, your society is seemingly morally rational and ethically sound. To read more about this look up Original position, Ideal Observer theory, etc.

Sustainability:

- I believe this is self-explanatory but keep in mind that sustainability means for the environment and community but ultimately everything you are proposing is from the perspective of a business that wants to make money. As such, sustainability also means sustainable for the business. For example, at IBESCC you would be showing Exxon that they should start investing in green technology not because of some vague notion of “the right thing to do” but because ultimately fossil fuels might run out and Exxon would financially benefit from being an early adopter and leader in green energy rather than losing its position as a leader when the market eventually shifts. Now as soon as you make this statement, really think about what you said and what assumptions you just made, because your very next sentences should be to back up those assumptions. For example, will fossil fuels really run out within a reasonable time frame (believe it or not there is actual debate on this)? Is it really better to be an early adopter? Early adopters usually suffer the most losses in the short term, will this eventually be worth it with long term profits? Is there even a market for green energy at the moment, despite all the fuss people make about it? Are people putting their money where their mouth is (what are electric vehicle adoption rates? What are solar energy adoption rates? What do national surveys tell us?)? **In our daily lives it's easy to make broad statements about what should be done but when you are thinking from the perspective of a CEO, no matter how much good you want to do, ultimately you want to know if your risks will be rewarded and worth it. That is what all businesses come down to. Your goal in IBESCC is to paint a picture of a resounding “yes!”**

Law:

- This is, in my opinion, one of the more nuanced sections. Don't worry about it more than you need to. What the judges really want to see is that your idea is not some pipe dream and is well thought out. One of the best ways to go about doing this is to sit down and make a mindmap of all the players your idea will affect. For example, for our carbon infused concrete idea our idea would affect concrete manufacturers, all organizations that might buy cement/ concrete to build new buildings, competing cement producing companies, local communities nearby that might be affected by company operations. These are all called stakeholders, and this stakeholder perspective will help in structuring the legal part of your presentation.
- Once you have identified your stakeholders, start to look into laws and regulations that affect them. Also look into government programs that exist within the same field– these are often a god rabbit hole towards more and more laws and regulations.
- Also consider legal cases that might have been settled in the past. It can be helpful to think in terms of precedents. Has something similar been done/ happened before? How did it go? Did they face any legal challenges? For example, with our carbon confused cement idea, it ended up not being relevant but my first thought was to look at laws around fracking. It's not directly related but it might be similar enough that a company would want to be reassured that you've looked into it to know you are clear.
- For our pacemakers reutilization idea we looked into laws on reusing medical equipment, and also on interstate and international commerce. We also had to look into laws of some specific developing countries so that we could at least have some concrete examples of places our idea was legal and would work. India became our model country for that program as they had relatively lax laws on medical device reutilization. We also rhetorically compared the process to refurbished consumer technology like laptops and phones. It helped to intentionally use that strawman comparison to create an opportunity for us to immediately acknowledge that we *recognize* that these medical devices are technically similar, but need higher degrees of certainty due to the consequences of failure. This let us create an opportunity to show that we looked into adjacent laws, but also to communicate that we understand the nuances we are dealing with. **The goal is always to convince the judges that you know what you are talking about, and so you can be trusted.**

10 Minute Presentation

- This focuses on just finances and ethics. Go more in depth and really treat it as a “hey! Thank you for having us back. Let's get to the meat of what we are proposing here so you understand why we are so confident in this being a good plan for your business.”

- The ethics/ sustainability part can always be talked about in terms of consumer appreciation. There are surveys out there that show consumers would be willing to pay more for products from more ethical companies. If you can convince IBESCC about this, that is huge for a company. To make more money while being seen as “good” in people’s eyes is massive.

90 Second Presentation

This presentation focuses solely on the sustainability issues and is given by one member of the team.

The key here is to pretend you are an employee at the company and have 90 seconds to express why you joined the company, what the company’s mission represents to you, and why the idea that is being proposed is exciting, aligned with the company, and good for the future. This part of the competition is emphatic acting more than it is anything else. Small details go a long way here e.g. in my 2019 90 second pitch, I last minute added details such as “when I joined Medtronic in 2008...” and the judges immediately knew that I knew what this part of the competition is supposed to be about. My speech in its rough form is excerpted below (before I added last-minute edits during the Uber drive to the conference) :

As an employee here at Medtronic, I constantly ask myself one question. Why do we do what we do? I ask myself this question not because I ever doubt our efforts but rather out of an inherent institutional commitment to remain fair and good. When I joined this company, I did so in recognition of its clear emphasis on sustainable growth, as seen in its mission statement. As such, I remain committed to those principles not in spite of my work, but because of it. Sustainable development means we strive to use the resources available to us to affect a maximal good upon the environment and the people living within it, now and into the future. For this reason, a Pacemaker reutilization program excites me. In the span of this day, 4109 people will have died directly due to a lack of access to a pacemaker. While their deaths may have been unavoidable today, with prudent best business practices Medtronic can ensure they do not occur tomorrow. In the end, sustainable growth in this field is beneficial not for any single entity, but for all parties involved. Medtronic would be even better positioned to continue its global life-saving operations thereby upholding its fiduciary responsibilities, while also acting as an arbiter of goodwill and further demonstrating its commitment to its mission statement. My time here at Medtronic tells me that I can be confident for better days ahead, and can trust us to put...

Miscellaneous Notes:

Fiduciary responsibility is such a simple cheat code to make judges think you know what you are talking about. It refers to a company’s legal obligation to intend to act in a way that makes its investors more money. Mentioning that your proposed idea will meet fiduciary responsibilities means very little but mentioning this as a casual aside will communicate that you are financially

well-read and understand your primary responsibility as a company. The purpose of casually slipping this in is to convey that this basic but extremely important principle is an obvious factor to you. That by extension implies you are well-read and aware of what matters to a company. As a general principle, when you casually mention niche terms and phrases, the message you convey is “I know what I’m talking about and am comfortable with it; this is no big deal to me.” Think of it like when someone casually mentions they went skiing or how they summer in the Hamptons– the fact that they are so casual about it, speaks loudly that they are used to it. You want IBESCC to think that thinking financially is second nature to you, because that will help them trust you and ask less questions.

“Four thousand one hundred and nine people” was a way to draw the attention of the judges halfway through the speech in case they zoned out but it was primarily a way to create a sense of urgency. Also, small details like this are to speeches what caviar is to food-- powerful and best as a sprinkled garnish. When placed, they should be emphasized and used to draw attention and urgency. Do not overdo them, but certainly do use small details to help your speech sound more real. Think like an actual employee. Maybe mention your coffee break, maybe mention the weather, mention your imaginary coworkers. Make it sound realistic with these tiny small details.

The above are quick reflections on how we began our streak of success at IBESCC. In 2019 we won first place in the 90 Second, in 2020 we had two teams and both won first place in the 10 minute, and in 2021 we had two teams and both won first place in the 25 minute. We have had an upward trajectory and the hope is for a clean sweep one of these years. What I have written in this guide is what worked for me in my three years leading our teams, but it may not work for everyone; adapt and improvise– that’s what IBESCC is about.

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