Every Friday for three months the halls of the Business and Economics building are packed with nervous BCom students. In the crowded hallway you can hear the students mumbling their presentations under their breath and nervously glancing at their watches, wishing time would just hurry up so they could face the judging panel and get it over with already. What brings them here week after week? The RBC Internal Case Competition.

The competition is stronger, the judges more intimidating, and there is prize money on the line. The RBC Case Competition finals are upon us. We are put in a room for three hours, assigned to analyze a business case and forward a set of recommendations. After reading the case our group creates a list of relevant facts. Then we bring forward our ideas and formulate a strategy addressing the key issues. Two of us focus on the qualitative analysis, looking at the implications of each possible decision on the marketing and human resources aspects of the business, while two others work on the financials and operations management, tackling the quantitative analysis.

The progress of each team member is checked regularly and adjustments to strategy are made when new information arises. By combining the qualitative and quantitative analysis we come up with our best solution. I can feel the nervous energy in the room, but it is eased by the trust between group members. Unity in this competition is critical.

We know each other’s strengths and weaknesses and use them to accomplish the team’s goals. Unfortunately, no one in the group remembers to bring a watch, and as we grind out overhead slides, the effects of the coffee start to wear thin. I look out the window and see a clock—we are closing in on three hours. I find myself reinventing my nervous energy. I cannot bear slight panic in each member’s voice. There is more to cover and not enough time. The time flashes by and I pass it to my teammate for the financials. My section complete, my body relaxes and I begin to focus on the next task at hand.

Question period begins—seven minutes of questions from judges who are hungry to test our knowledge. We answer the questions smoothly and do not waiver in our strategy. Then suddenly the timekeeper announces that the question period has come to a close. The team breathes a collective sigh of relief and we look at each other feeling relieved and we look at each other feeling good about our performance.

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I loosen my tie and smile. The only thing left to get the results is difficult not to think about the teams we’re competing against, but I know we had a solid presentation, and a real chance of winning.