

# CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

## MEET THE WINNER OF THE AARHUS SYMPOSIUM CHALLENGE AWARD 2013, BASTIAN STEMANN LAU

---

**November 1, 2013**

Surprised, happy, and overwhelmed are among some of the many feelings that rushed through Bastian Stemann Lau - a cand.oecon student at his 9th semester at AU BSS - after being granted the Aarhus Symposium Award 2013.

AFTER AN INSPIRING DEBATE WITH **GROUP CEO OF MAERSK GROUP, NILS S. ANDERSEN**, BASTIAN STEMANN LAU HAS WON THIS YEAR'S AARHUS SYMPOSIUM CHALLENGE WITH HIS ESSAY '**LEADING THROUGH TROUBLED WATERS**', ADDRESSING NILS S. ANDERSEN'S CHALLENGE TOPIC WITHIN LEADERSHIP.

Bastian's essay was selected as the best Challenge essay. First, by the Knowledge Board, which gave him access to Leaders' Forum and the meeting with Nils S. Andersen, then, after the Leaders' Forum session Bastian's essay was selected as the Award winning essay by the executive board of Aarhus Symposium composed of Nina Smith, Professor and Chairman of the Aarhus Symposium Executive Board; Flemming Lindeløv, the Chairman of DELTAQ; Jan Beyer Schmidt-Sørensen, Director of Business Development at the Mayor's Department, City of Aarhus; Carsten Tanggaard, a Professor in Finance at the Department of Economics and Business of Aarhus University; and Jens Riis Andersen, co-founder of Aarhus Symposium and a Management Consultant at McKinsey & Co. After being presented with the Aarhus Symposium Award on stage, Bastian was asked about his experience with Aarhus Symposium Challenge 2013 in a short interview:

**Why did you accept the Aarhus Symposium Challenge and hand in an essay?**

"Basically, I enjoy writing, which is something I do not get to do much through my studies in Economics and Management, since the study is more focussed on math. I therefore regarded the Aarhus Symposium Challenge as an interesting way to submit an assignment not just containing formulas. However, my greatest motivation for submitting a Challenge essay was to meet and talk to Nils S. Andersen about some of the challenges Maersk Group is facing.

After being selected to participate in the Leaders' Fo-



**"The winning essay stood out in the anonymous ranking of the best essays for the Aarhus Symposium Challenge 2013. This was confirmed both by professors in the Aarhus Symposium Knowledge Board and by the members of the Executive Board of Aarhus Symposium. The essay had an interesting angle, an edge, and was well written. In the discussion with Nils S. Andersen, the author underlined the decision." - Nina Smith.**

rum by the Knowledge Board, I wanted to make sure that I was prepared for the Leaders' Forum session in the best possible way. So, in order to prepare for the meeting with him, I contacted an analyst I know from Sydbank, who has a great insight into the market situation of the Maersk Group. He has been working with this job for twelve years, but has never come close to meeting the Group CEO at Maersk. No one is just handed this opportunity and this motivated me a lot.

Also, another factor that motivated me was that a



qualified essay would ensure me my track priority at Aarhus Symposium 2013. I enjoy being at the annual event and have participated each time the Symposium has been held the last three years."

#### **What did you write about?**

"I wrote within the subject of 'Leading through troubled waters' with an emphasis on 'Duck Management'. Usually, a great leader is compared to animals like a lion or bear that fight hard to stay ahead of the game. However in my essay, I state that a leader should appear as a duck instead... No matter how tough the environments may seem, a leader is supposed to keep a calm and encouraging appearance to his surroundings. A leader should inspire trust and guide the employees in the right direction. With that being said a leader still has to put a lot of work and effort in his company. Especially in difficult and challenging times - yet it is important for him to signal trust to his employees and to the surroundings. This is where the duck comes into play. When a duck is swimming across a lake, it appears calm and relaxed to the people watching it from the shore. However underneath the water the duck's legs are paddling extremely hard in order to move forward. With this illustrative picture in mind my essay emphasizes that a focus on Duck Management can help leaders make tough decisions through difficult periods of time without hurting the spirit in their companies."

**"IT LITERALLY CONNECTS LEADERS OF TODAY WITH LEADERS OF TOMORROW"**

#### **How was it, meeting Nils S. Andersen in person?**

"It was great to experience how the CEO of Denmark's biggest company was very down to earth and social despite the fact that he is in charge of a 342 billion DKK revenue company. We were four students sitting at one table with Nils S. Andersen. Each of us was given one minute to present the main points of each of our essays. Earlier during the day, Aarhus Symposium arranged a workshop session with McKinsey & Co. that provided us with tools that could help us approach a CEO on a high level. We learned that we needed to be right on and get to the point right away. I was thrilled to see that Nils S. Andersen had read our essays beforehand and written down comments about the different points that he agreed and disagreed with. The fact that both the Leaders' Forum participants and the leader himself had prepared prior to the Leaders' Forum session ensured a rich debate. Yet what thrilled me the most was hearing Nils S. Andersen applying some of our essay points in his speech during Aarhus Symposium 2013.

It was definitely a reassuring experience that emphasises how amazing this new Aarhus Symposium Challenge concept is. It literally connects leaders of today with leaders of tomorrow".