

EVENTS/CAUSES

Yoox Net-A-Porter, Bologna Business School open center to develop digital talent

March 2, 2016



Yoox mobile application

By SARAH JONES

Yoox Net-A-Porter Group is partnering with Bologna Business School to launch a Center for Digital Business Education, combining their collective ecommerce expertise to help train managerial candidates for an increasingly digital world.

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The first managerial education program focusing specifically on digital business will offer master's degree programs aimed at both new graduates and those with some years of on-the-job experience. Luxury brands have identified technology as a key area where finding qualified talent is especially hard, making this initiative a means to ensure that both Yoox Net-A-Porter and other business navigate the digital shift.

"There is a digital gap or, better, a generational gap," said Massimo Bergami, Dean of **Bologna Business School**. "Demand for professional digital profiles is increasing, as demonstrated by a recent European Commission study which found that 90 percent of all jobs will require digital skills in the near future, while an estimated 40 percent of Europeans currently have insufficient digital skills.

"While younger generations have an intuitive understanding of all digital things, we see many young professionals and managers, in their thirties or early forties who, while having gained extensive managerial skills during their careers, are not strong enough to compete in the digital-business world," he said.

"This human capital gap' is one that companies, and in particular the medium-sized ones that represent the large majority of the European companies, are struggling with: How to merge their managerial skills and professional resources into the digital world. This is exactly where the Center for Digital-Business Education can play a role, bridging this gap, providing the managerial and digital skills for professionals of the future.

"I am convinced that, by creating this unique center, future digital/ecommerce talents will be able to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in the field, while benefiting the Italian economy, even the European one. "

Talent search

In addition to Yoox Net-A-Porter, other key players such as Boston Consulting Group, Google, GroupM, IBM and WPP will be involved. These companies will help shape the curriculum, assist with scholarships and have some of their managers serve as professors.

The program is designed to help students prepare for roles such as Web analyst, Web marketing specialist, specialist

in big data, ecommerce manager or site manager.

At the start of the program, students will be able to choose between a number of different course offerings.

An executive master's in ebusiness, designed for those with at least five years of experience, is meant to give students an understanding that they can use to either implement an online business strategy from the ground up or innovate an existing ebusiness. The first edition will be offered in July.



Bologna Business School

A full-time master's degree program in marketing, communication and new media will train students for both traditional and digital media jobs. Designed for recent college graduates, the coursework concludes with an internship.

Another full-time program is dedicated to data science, the use of data to inform the development of products or services. Students will get computer training, be taught the concepts behind the technology and will gain an understanding of the business dynamics.

A master's in digital commerce is a 12-month full-time program that provides the basis for building an ecommerce site, develop digital marketing and establish omnichannel sales platforms. This coursework takes advantage of the best practices discovered by some of the collaborating companies, giving students a real-world understanding.

Additional open programs ranging in length from two to 12 days cover topics such as multichannel strategy and management accounting.

The program will also host lectures by industry experts such as Brunello Cucinelli and Oscar Farinetti, founder of Eataly, as well as workshops and labs.

Registration for courses will begin in April.

Local responsibility

For Yoox Net-A-Porter, this represents an act of social responsibility, building upon its previous efforts to nurture talent and actually developing the next business minds. The company has been based in Bologna since its founding in 2000, making this an opportunity to show its dedication to another institution in its hometown.

Earlier this year, Yoox.com recruited tech-savvy students for its new Yoox Graduate Program: Tech.

The program, introduced on social media, targets students interested in pursuing careers in technology fields. As a whole, the luxury industry, especially the fashion and accessories sectors, has faced hiring challenges as qualified artisans and designers are now harder to come by ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands struggle to find and recruit the top talent for positions across their companies, according to a recent study from Boston Consulting Group.

Tech roles are difficult to find good hires for, with 33 percent of respondents identifying ecommerce manager as a difficult or impossible fill ([see story](#)).

"Yoox Net-A-Porter, a company born in Bologna, warned us about the lack of professional digital profiles," Mr. Bergami said. "They have had an incredible journey of growth, and they know that the future growth will especially depend on the availability of human resources with strong digital skills.

"This center will be a place where digital professionals and managers will gain a thorough training in digital, enabling them to succeed in the field of digital commerce," he said.

"The CDE is supported by a number of prestigious companies, all leaders in their chosen field of digital innovation: Boston Consulting Group, Google, Group M, IBM and WPP. Each of these companies contribute actively to the project, through offering scholarships and by providing their managers as teachers, thus ensuring a perfect mix of academic and managerial skills."

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