

MOBILE

Sephora sparks mobile beauty growth by supporting startups

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Glossgenius acts as a digital assistant

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Sephora is the latest retailer attempting to push mobile innovation by supporting several entrepreneurs with forward-looking takes on the role of smartphones in booking beauty appointments and inspiring shoppers.

Candace Mitchell, Carolina Grove and Danielle Cohen-Shohet are young women who have made strides in the beauty tech world with platforms and applications that allow users to book appointments and find inspiration. These startup ideas have prompted Sephora to choose them, among several others, for a program that gives these women the tools to fulfill the potential of these concepts, starting with a one-week bootcamp.

"The future is happening now on mobile and through social channels," said Corrie Conrad, head of Social Impact at Sephora. "I saw the beginnings of the move toward mobile several years ago when I worked at Google, and now at Sephora have seen the relevance and importance of these channels in retail.

"Sephora Accelerate aims to equip our cohort with the confidence and tools to succeed, and a mobile and social strategy need to be part of that," she said. "Through the program, the inaugural Sephora Accelerate cohort will have access to experts from Sephora and our network who will be able to share from their experiences and best practices learned along the way."

Sephora's startups

The beauty retailer recently announced its lineup for the Sephora Accelerate Cohort, which is geared toward supporting women entrepreneurs as they are underrepresented in business startups. Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Grove and Ms. Cohen-Shohet are among the chosen women developing tech innovations in beauty.

Ms. Mitchell is responsible for a data-driven social platform, named Myavana, which provides personal recommendations for consumers looking for insight on hair products and services. Ms. Grove is the founder of Stylerz, a mobile platform that connects users with beauty salons, spas, barbers and independent professionals in Mexico to book appointments.

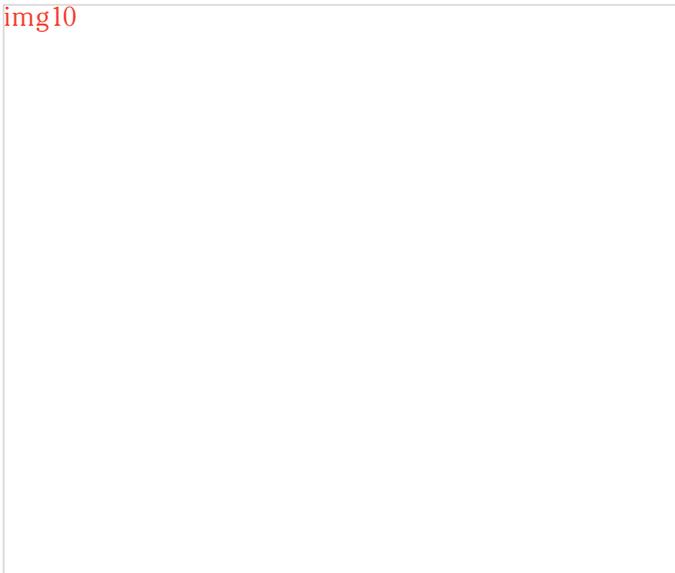
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Users can connect with one of Myavana's licensed hair care professional for a free consultation

Glossgenius, created by Ms. Cohen-Shohet, is a digital platform designed for mobile, which pairs SMS with an optimized Web site creating a digital assistant for independent beauticians. The digital portal gives them the ability to manage schedules and their business with tools for marketing and customer interaction.

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Glossgenius' booking platform

The program is in a competition format, starting out with a bootcamp to structure business models, market analysis, growth plans, and funding strategy ending with a Demo Day in San Francisco.

Trained designers and beauty experts will be working with the women to help guide them through business. There is also a mentorship program in which each woman will be assigned a mentor to help.

Each event will be expense-free for those recently chosen and will also receive grants of \$2,500 as well as other funding.

Sephora innovation

A Sephora executive at eTail West 2016 discussed the beauty brand's focus on collecting individual customer data in addition to data gleaned from its loyalty program as it ramps up to drive sales among frequent and first-time customers ([see more](#)).

In a reflection of augmented reality's growing role in beauty, Sephora also brought the technology to a wide audience via a new application feature that enables users to virtually try on different lip shades ([see more](#)).

"We are seeing some great innovation with social and mobile from our cohort," Ms. Conrad said. "For example, one of the founders actively uses her social media following for A/B test naming, pricing and tag-lines and even to beta test physical product, while another is using social media to educate and build an ongoing relationship with her customers that makes her among the top influencers online.

"Several others are building mobile apps and have backgrounds in computer science," she said. "Each Fellow in the cohort has different strengths they bring and we're excited to build a supportive community with such an amazing group of women."

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