

RETAIL

## Lane Crawford Joyce Group looks to the future with startup investment

May 7, 2018



*Andrew Massey, lead mentor and judge for The Cage, Jennifer Woo, CEO and chairman, Cristina Ventura, chief catalyst officer; Image credit: Lane Crawford.*

By STAFF REPORTS

Hong Kong-based Lane Crawford Joyce Group has invested in two new technology start-ups as part of its three-month innovation program.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

ChatQuery and Olasso, two digital platforms for retail solutions, will now be able to perfect their products by access to the suite of the group's companies and business. The startups were selected as part of the retail company's new initiative to innovate in the retail technology space named The Cage.

"The Cage is our opportunity to co-create new ways of approaching our business," said Jennifer Woo, chairman and CEO of The Lane Crawford Joyce Group, in a statement. "It's where the old world and new world meet in a mixing bowl of experience, ambition, collaboration, wisdom, learning and opportunity, to create positive change together."

### Innovation investment

ChatQuery is a retail chatbot that works on demand, answering queries on business data.

Founders Alex Man, a former Groupon data analyst, and former Google software engineer David Yang are looking to create a pilot to foresee the future of data analytics. The founders hope the tool will be able to predict whether or not the Cantonese market makes sense.

"Our passion is to make data accessible to everyone so we replaced Excel with an on-demand chatbot," said Mr. Man. "Our chatbot handles approximately 90 percent of questions asked, leaving the last 10 percent of tricky questions to the real people.

"It's like having a giant team of data scientists for everyone in your business to help them make better decisions," he said.



*Image credit: Lane Crawford*

Olasso is a system that uses AI to help with returns, reducing operational, financial and environmental impact. The beta pilot will be worked on within the Lane Crawford Joyce Group to better determine and ease customer pain points.

"Returns are still a major pain point holding back the growth of ecommerce with customers often experiencing a painful returns journey, which reduces brand trust and loyalty," said Mr. Wittgen in a statement. "We are committed to building a better returns experience for customers, while reducing the financial, operational and environmental impact for retailers."

A panel of judges selected these two startups for the program from a final group of six finalists.

Lane Crawford has created a physical space for The Cage program in Hong Kong, where Olasso and ChatQuery will work on their pilots.

Both startups will receive their own mentors to help with the three-phase process. The program starts with the Learn phasing, then moves on to Validate where testing will begin and ends with Pitch, when they finally look to sell their products for a commercial agreement.

The group's department store chain Lane Crawford also similarly looked to the Australian fashion community to find the next innovative creative individuals and brands.

The retailer hosted what it has dubbed its "Call Out," looking for emerging brands, artisans, graphic designers, illustrators, artists and more. Lane Crawford is hoping to foster growth in individuals within the industry and brands that have the potential to make a big difference ([see more](#)).

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.