

Distance learning reinforces ties among the various players within the Executive MBA programme at ESCP-EAP

IN BRIEF



The challenge

Offering qualified candidates for the ESCP-EAP Executive MBA an online preliminary learning programme that builds loyalty among the students enrolled, and immerses them in a dynamic learning mechanism. A highly motivating approach!

About the European Executive MBA offered by ESCP-EAP

ESCP-EAP is now ranked among the world's top business schools. It has a transnational positioning that enables it to offer an innovative approach to management development. ESCP-EAP offers a European Executive MBA designed for working executives with at least five years of professional experience.



► Since the introduction of distance learning, executives taking part in the ESCP-EAP European Executive MBA programme have enjoyed an enhanced level of engagement with the ESCP-EAP teaching staff and a higher quality of interaction with professors. Indeed those professors are now participating in the development of e-learning programmes in conjunction with teams from CrossKnowledge.

As soon as an executive has been deemed eligible for the ESCP-EAP Executive MBA, on the basis of her/his profile (five years of professional experience, two letters of recommendation and a functional level of fluency in English) and an interview, she/he is given access to an online pre-course learning programme.

Members of the class of 2007 (about 130 students) were the first to benefit from such access on being accepted by the School. Prior to commencement of the programme, they were given a pre-course curriculum of some 40 CrossKnowledge distance learning sessions.

Once the course started, students' access was extended to the entire collection of 300 online sessions within the CrossKnowledge catalogue.

A guaranteed way of building loyalty

In 2007, 80% of the candidates initially admitted to the course ultimately accepted their place and pursued the 18 month Executive MBA programme. In 2006 only 69% had eventually joined the course, and having been accepted had had to wait for the start of the course before being able to access the distance learning sessions. *"There is no question that this pre-course programme has reduced the rate of withdrawal by winning the loyalty of all those admitted, with an immediate immersion into an engaging learning mechanism"*, says Marianne Conde-Salazar, director of the European Executive MBA programme at ESCP-EAP, and which has been offered since 1993.

While the European Executive MBA class of 2006 saw the benefits of

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Marianne Conde-Salazar
Director of the European Executive MBA programme at ESCP-EAP

a “self-serve” form of access to the CrossKnowledge catalogue, the strength of some very positive initial results drove the business school to decide to embed the online learning even more thoroughly within the body of the curriculum. *“We quickly realised that those who were starting to use the online resources used them a lot. And this justified our decision to place even greater emphasis on the online content for the class of 2007.”*

Placing the online offer within a context

Once the curriculum had been launched, the student enrolled in the programme had access to a completely new portal that offered a list of e-learning sessions in preparation for each of the in-class courses.

The teaching staff would firstly select the pertinent e-learning sessions and then the professors would ensure that they matched the content of their own lectures. Each professor modified and expanded the list of sessions recommended to the students.

This ‘contextualisation’ effort called for an initial involvement by the professors, who had the opportunity to further include any new material offered by the online content. For their part, the five persons in charge of the European Executive MBA programme keep regular track of the progress made by each student.

“The participants are always pleasantly surprised when a programme manager gives them advice on their progress with the e-learning sessions. We explain from the outset that we are following their progress by means of a report function.” Thus while each professor has about 12 to 24 hours of contact with the participants, the programme managers can provide a more regular follow-up.

Richer interactions

The introduction of distance learning therefore provides an opportunity for additional interaction between the participants and the teaching staff of the European Executive MBA programme. The catalogue also reinforces interaction between participants and professors. According to Marianne Conde-Salazar, *“The professors noted an immediate improvement in the quality of interaction from the beginning of the partnership with CrossKnowledge, a discipline where the participants’ levels are the most mixed.”*

In an MBA curriculum, the participants assume responsibilities that are as varied as their individual and professional experiences. By giving them the opportunity to become familiar with key management concepts without any limits on their application, the MBA finds a way to reconcile these different levels. *“The content is learned before the courses. This is exactly what we were aiming for.”*

The professors are beginning to make use of this leverage with online content, to the point where some of them are seeking to transfer a part of their methodology to the CrossKnowledge programmes. One of these is Isaac Getz, author of the recent programme, *“Managing your team’s progress and innovation”*. This experience is all the more rewarding since the latest generation of online sessions offers expanded interactive functions and the know-how of the CrossKnowledge production team optimises the (billed) time put in by the authors. Two years after its introduction, online has acquired fully legitimate status in the European Executive MBA.

In 2007, the students in the Master in European Business programme have also benefited from their access to the CrossKnowledge offer. There are talks under way for a timetable to open up the catalogue to all the students in the school, whether they are in an initial learning or continuing education programme. The operative word of the day is ‘mutualisation’, or sharing.

This will concern a potential 5,000 students and managers, spread out over the school’s five European campuses (Paris, London, Madrid, Berlin and Turin). ●●●