

EMLYON: personalised training for high-potential managers through immersion in start-ups

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EM Lyon is launching personalised training to help large corporate groups and intermediate-sized companies increase the impact of their investment in innovation, the Lyon-based school announced on 02/11/2015. For six months, high-potential managers are immersed in innovative start-ups to find a solution to a specific challenge. Bouygues Telecom is the first company to introduce this programme for its teams.

"We held in-depth discussions on the changing needs of companies for developing talent and improving performance in terms of innovation. The result is the "Innovation for Growth" programme, a training course for large corporate groups and intermediate-sized companies, on an intra-company basis", Guillaume Soenen, strategy professor at EM Lyon and creator of the programme, told News Tank on 04/11/2015.

Personalised training, with Bouygues Telecom as the first client

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- "Bouygues Telecom is the first company to join us in developing this programme for high-potential employees. We worked in close partnership with the human resources department to adapt this programme to the specific needs of the company. 16 managers, singled out by Bouygues as having high potential, are participating in this first session", he continued.
- EM Lyon is continuing to pursue its marketing efforts to find new corporate clients.

A six-month immersion programme

- "The 16 high-potential managers are divided into teams of four and assigned to a specific challenge facing a start-up chosen by EM Lyon. Each manager commits to devoting ten days - three of which are on-site- over a six-month period to meeting this challenge", explained Guillaume Soenen.
- "The programme also includes two intermediate modules for presenting structured feedback. The goal of these modules is to see what the managers have learnt, especially from a human point of view, for developing their "reflexive" abilities, i.e. their ability to analyse their own practices and behaviour" he continued.

- At the end of the six months, each team presents a joint proposal to the Bouygues Telecom management committee.

Educational principles behind the training

The programme is based on four fundamental principles that are a new departure from the traditional immersion schemes and approaches to innovation training:

- **Decentralisation** Managers learn by facing differences and otherness. "The managers become decentralised by working in a technology start-up which has few means and resources", added Guillaume Soenen.
- **Readiness for action** Participants in the programme are not consultants, they must provide the start-up with concrete solutions. The start-ups "are asking for help on specific issues. It might be hiring staff, raising funds, expanding to a different country.... the course participants must offer a concrete and complete solution at the end of the six months."
- **Reflexivity** According to Guillaume Soenen, "during the experience, each manager must question his or her own practices, behaviours and ways of thinking, in order to develop. It's a source of continuous improvement."
- **Team work.** "To make changes in a large company, you need to create a coalition. Participants have to reach an agreement on the concrete plan of action to propose to the company. Agreement is only reached by working together", he summed up.