

ONLINE INSIGHTS

Online programmes at Oxford Saïd



Engaging, surprising, relevant – the Oxford Digital Marketing: Disruptive Strategy Programme

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I started the programme having already had some experience of online learning, both with Teradata and in my previous job. Many large corporations have an internal 'university' which provides access to online courses on a variety of subjects.

My expectations were that the Oxford programme would be similar to these – which is why I was completely surprised by just how engaging the content was. There were varied approaches across different modules, and many different ways of engaging and holding my attention. There were even live sessions by Andrew Stephen and Felipe Thomaz, during which you could ask questions – it was almost like being in a lecture theatre with them.

With the online courses I'd done before, I have to admit that there was often a tendency to do something else at the same time – open another window on screen or check my phone. With this I wasn't even tempted.

The programme was structured so that it always felt relevant to practice through-

out the eight weeks. It had a theoretical basis but, in addition, every week there would be people from industry talking about how they approached digital disruption – and these would be representatives of some of the best and most relevant companies in that space. It was also well rounded: although the programme was about digital disruption, it did not neglect other types of marketing. Not everything is digital; the human element always needs to be considered.

There were assignments as part of every module, though depth and difficulty varied. Sometimes there were multiple choice quizzes, sometimes you'd be asked to write something about how you'd apply a concept in your own company – how you'd deliver it and make sure it was successful. It all culminated in a marketing proposal, that we could

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either write for our own companies or for a generic company that we had chosen. Again, this variation, the mixing up of styles, was really helpful in keeping us interested and engaged.

I did most of the work in the evenings and at weekends, as the programme coincided with quite a heavy workload. The human side of the programme really came through when tutors were happy

to accommodate me, even when I was a bit late returning a couple of assignments. In fact, they gave me a week's extension at one point.

One aspect of the programme that I didn't expect was the effectiveness of the interactions with my fellow participants. In fact, I doubt that a face-to-face programme would have given me the same quality of interactions and

discussions. In a face-to-face group you never hear from everyone – the discussions are usually time-limited and some people are quieter and more thoughtful than others. But with the online discussions you could keep going back to them throughout the week, reply to replies about posts, think more deeply before you expressed your opinion. And the tutors would direct comments and questions to you if you looked as if you weren't participating.

What I found most fascinating was talking to people who, on the face of it, I didn't have much in common with. But then when I heard about what they were doing, I would find that they had ideas that could actually make a difference in my own industry. Hopefully they felt the same about talking to me.

While I have connected with a few on LinkedIn, the nature of an online programme means that perhaps we have not developed close relationships in the way that participants on face-to-face programmes can. But in fact this makes for better conversations online. You don't get bogged down in chit-chat – you just get straight down to discussing the task in hand.

I already had a high opinion of Saïd Business School through Teradata's involvement in the Future of Marketing Initiative. My opinion of the School and of the potential for online learning has only been enhanced by this programme. In fact, having done this online course I would be more likely to consider another online programme from the School than a face-to-face programme.

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