

ELUMNI INSIGHTS

Eloise Skinner, Oxford Entrepreneurship: Venture Creation Programme



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Oxford Entrepreneurship: Venture Creation Programme is “insightful”

Eloise Skinner, an author, teacher and entrepreneur, working across the fields of education and existential analysis, discusses her career and the impact of the Oxford Entrepreneurship: Venture Creation Programme.

Eloise started her career in law, after studying at Cambridge University, and later completed the Oxford Entrepreneurship: Venture Creation Programme and the Women Transforming Leadership Programme at Oxford University Saïd Business School. Eloise sits on the youth board of the UK’s national social mobility charity and is an Enterprise Adviser for the Mayor of London’s careers network.

Career journey

I started my career in quite a traditional way: I studied Law at university and began training as a corporate lawyer in London after graduation. During my time as a lawyer, I focused mostly on tax – both in London and in New York – and really enjoyed the fast-paced, challenging nature of the job. I’d always been fascinated by the application of academic law to dynamic, commercial scenarios. Corporate law offered exactly that: a blend of theoretical analysis and commercial awareness.

Soon after starting my career as a lawyer, I developed a strong interest in mentoring, teaching, speaking and writing. My first legal article was published in *The Lawyer* magazine, and I went on to write for many of the leading legal publications – generally focusing on professional development for junior lawyers. My first book, the *Junior Lawyers’ Handbook*, was published by The Law Society in 2019.

At the same time, I was also starting to develop an interest in other topics. I’d become fascinated by the field of existential analysis – questions about meaning and purpose – and was exploring this in my free time, across the fields of spirituality, philosophy and psychotherapy. In 2021, I was offered a book deal to publish my second book, *The Purpose Handbook*, in which I explored some of these ideas.

Venture Creation

When I left my career in law, it was so that I could work on *The Purpose Handbook*, and on my first business, *The Purpose Workshop*. But the more I became immersed in entrepreneurship, the more my interest in start-ups grew! I took my first programme at the Oxford Saïd Business School, a course in venture creation, in 2021.

One of the main attractions of the Oxford Entrepreneurship: Venture Creation Programme was the high quality of the teaching on offer. It was a real privilege to learn with Professor Hellmann, who led the programme, as well as other experienced faculty members at Saïd Business School. The teaching style blended academic theory with practical application, an approach which proved so useful as I started to develop my own start-up.



The Entrepreneurial Environment

After the programme, I had a much clearer sense of the entrepreneurial environment (in particular, looking at alternative business models and corporate structures), and I worked to create a comprehensive pitch deck to use with investors. I also developed a strong professional network amongst fellow entrepreneurs who were also studying the programme.

After completing the programme, I successfully pitched my business to early-stage investors and started to put my business plan into action. My second business, One Typical Day (a content-focused start-up, designed to help students navigate their first

careers), was designed and formed with the support of the Oxford University Innovation incubator. We have also recently partnered with the London College of Communications to explore the use of virtual technology within our business model.

A purposeful and fulfilling career path

My career now is varied: I have a new book out this year, covering topics of wellness, existentialism and fulfilment, and I'm continuing to develop my two businesses. At times, it can feel a bit overwhelming – sometimes I wonder why I've ended up pursuing so many things at once! – but ultimately, it feels like the right path to be on. I'm passionate about depth, diversity and range,

and I think my own career path reflects this.

I have a strong belief in the power of existential education, and I think the trend towards pursuing a sense of personal meaning and purpose is growing – especially amongst the most junior members of the workplace! In order to appeal to the next generation of leaders, I think businesses will have to allow employees the freedom and autonomy to explore their own career purpose: to navigate and define their own values, and to find a role that feels truly meaningful to them.

In just one word, I'd summarise the programme as *insightful*: it gave me a comprehensive insight into the world of venture creation and formed a great foundation for taking the first practical steps towards entrepreneurship.