

Trusted Partners: The Impact of Deep Faculty Engagement

THE ESTÉE LAUDER COMPANIES INC.



Successful companies are not static entities, they are dynamic—and so their executive education programs should be, too.

Perhaps no one knows this better than Patti Williams, who has spent several years in an ever-evolving, continually deepening relationship with The Estée Lauder Companies, a more than 70-year-old leader in global prestige beauty. Over the years, Williams has gone from occasional guest faculty at Estée Lauder executive leadership meetings to a co-architect of week-long, multi-modular programs and has become a trusted strategic advisor in the process.

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with leaders within The Estée Lauder Companies over time, connecting with them as their challenges have changed, understanding their needs...and watching as the organization itself achieves its goals,” said Williams. “Unlike when I teach our MBAs tools that they’ll use later, this is a more living kind of learning. It is translated into action quickly. Estée Lauder Companies is a remarkably learning-oriented organization. Everyone I’ve worked and engaged with soaks up the classroom content, quickly making it relevant to their challenges and objectives.”

“Over the years, Wharton has developed a deep understanding of our company culture and has become a trusted thought leader and learning partner. They know just what we need to accomplish and can help design an educational experience to help us get there.”

— William P. Lauder, Executive Chairman, The Estée Lauder Companies

Patti Williams’ deep involvement with high-level Estée Lauder executives has enabled her not just to deliver her current content, but to help the company better define its priorities, and create highly customized content and learning experiences to meet those priorities.

**ESTÉE
LAUDER**
COMPANIES

(Pictured from left to right in the header above:)

From The Estée Lauder Companies, Inc.:

Georgia Garinois-Melenikiotou, Executive Vice President, Corporate Marketing; Phebe Farrow Port, Senior Vice President, Global Management Strategies; Dara Chamides, VP, Global Executive Education; William P. Lauder, Executive Chairman.

From The Wharton School: *Patti Williams, Ira A. Lipman Associate Professor of Marketing.*

Partnering with Senior Management

Williams first had the opportunity to create such customized programming for ELC in 2011, when she was asked almost a year in advance to help design a marketing symposium for the company's 100 global and regional marketing leaders across their 30+ brands. For GLC's Global Marketing Symposium, with the same audience, Williams's involvement started even earlier and grew deeper.

To transcend prior meetings, Williams partnered with Georgia Garinois-Melenikiotou, Estée Lauder Companies Executive Vice President of Corporate Marketing, and her leadership team to design the program, identify relevant Wharton faculty members, and create new teaching materials that incorporated the company's strategic priorities. She also wrote a consumer-insights case study to illustrate and frame relevant issues and important decisions.

Building on this same case study, David Wessels, Wharton adjunct professor of Finance, wrote a second component to address the choices and financial implications of specific marketing actions, and to build tighter bonds between the marketing and finance departments. Williams began working on a third symposium the day after the last one ended.

"I've never had an engagement like this," said Williams, describing her unique role with Estée Lauder Companies as "personally inspirational," and an opportunity for her to "engage executives intellectually, to see them think in a different way." For example, she says some participants of the symposium walked away from the sessions deeply inspired and engaged by their time at Wharton. Some said it was the best learning experience in their careers, and some were so motivated that they immediately scheduled meetings with their teams to quickly disseminate their learning.

Wessels's integrated component for the symposium also inspired immediate, impactful results. "We could see partnerships between marketing and finance forming before our eyes," he said.

Building a Common Language

Williams and Wessels have also worked together to deliver joint programs for the marketing and finance functions, building a common language for the disciplines and enhancing their ability to work together to create more integrated strategic decisions and improved financial outcomes.

"We are not delivering a single custom program or even a discrete series of custom programs, but rather multiple programs all in alignment around a strategic set of goals," added Williams.



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This relationship with The Estée Lauder Companies is built upon long-established bonds that the company has with Wharton and the University of Pennsylvania. Leonard A. Lauder, Ronald S. Lauder, and William P. Lauder all are Wharton alumni, and Leonard and William have served as university trustees. In addition, Leonard and Ronald founded the Joseph H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies at Wharton in honor of their father.

With such strong ties, it's not surprising that The Estée Lauder Companies would choose to partner with Wharton in executive education. But the choice to let Williams and her co-faculty inside the company, with a seat at the leadership table, transcends any familial allegiances.

William P. Lauder, the company's executive chairman, says: "The relationship between Wharton and our company is unique in its collaboration among our senior leaders. Over the years, Wharton has developed a deep understanding of our company culture and has become a trusted thought leader and learning partner. They know just what we need to accomplish and can help design an educational experience to help us get there."



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