

Beauty **Business NEWS**

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TOP OF THE WEEK

Lancôme's latest spin on training

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In an effort to perfect the communication of its retail sales staff around the world, Lancôme has launched what it calls the first online training tool specifically for fragrance and cosmetics sales consultants in selective distribution. The website, Lancôme-Pro, features a two-hour interactive training course providing step-by-step coaching on various aspects of retail sales in the beauty sector; monthly forums with beauty experts; information on the latest trends in the sector; and a personal tutor for FAQs. The company is quick to point out that the website is not only for Lancôme consultants, but for all beauty sales staff in Lancôme POS worldwide.

Lancôme-Pro was conceived as a complement to the company's traditional training methods. The company stresses that this new tool is in no way intended to replace formal training by a qualified staff member. Rather, it is a way for the company to be more reactive to and in touch with its sales consultants, provide a faster and more efficient flow of information, and deliver an à-la-carte service personalized to the needs of the individual employee.

A Lancôme-Pro pilot program was introduced in France, the US, Sweden and Italy last September covering 1,800 users. Access to the site is currently being rolled out to Lancôme POS in these markets. By the end of the year, the company hopes to have ten sites in operation in six languages (French, English, Swedish, Italian, Spanish and Japanese) and to reach 40% of its consultants with the tool. Lancôme is already

examining possibilities in Japan, Korea, Latin America and the UK as part of its planned global rollout. It also hopes that Lancôme-Pro will become a major trade marketing tool in its relationship with distributors as more consultants go online. In the long term, the company plans to use Lancôme-Pro as a customer relationship management (CRM) tool, something that is already being implemented in the US with e-cards sent to consumers by sales consultants. But Lancôme will have to face the large variations in Internet penetration and differing habits both in the countries it is targeting and at its POS.

In terms of resources, the US site is supervised by three dedicated tutors and a training team of 30, compared to six tutors in France. Lancôme declined to comment on the level of investment in the site, but revealed that it had purchased a platform called e-teach and the site was designed by French web agency Crayon Noir e-Medias. ■

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