

A Christmas carol for 2011



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Fun, games and business

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Two online marketing games are bringing some of the country’s ablest business students together with the world’s largest beauty-products company. L’Oréal Canada uses the games to raise its profile in leading business schools and identify the best and brightest, while students about to enter the workforce receive business training by playing the games and open doors to unexpected careers.

“The first objective is to identify talent,” says Javier San Juan, president and chief executive officer of Montreal-based L’Oréal Canada. “We try to see and recruit the best people at each university.”

The second objective, he says, is to let talented business students know that the business world contains more than just traditional sectors such as mining and banking. “It’s to make sure our line of business – consumer goods – is very present in the universities. We want beauty in particular to be attractive to the students.”

Mr. San Juan mentions a third objective: “To make sure they have fun, so they realize that trying and making mistakes and taking risks is part of professional life.”



One game is called [Brandstorm](#). “We give students a topic, a case to break,” explains Marie-Josée Lamothe, L’Oréal Canada’s vice-president, chief marketing and corporate communications officer. “Last year we gave them information on the men’s market and we challenged them to create a marketing plan to launch, worldwide, a men’s-care product of their choice. It could be hair care, skin care or something else.”

The students are chosen with the help of professors from three business schools – the Schulich School of Business at Toronto’s York University, HEC Montréal and McGill University’s Desautels Faculty of Management. They receive guidance from a marketing specialist from L’Oréal Canada, and “then we put them in contact with one of our advertising agencies, which will do for them the same thing that they do for us,” says Mr. San Juan. “Then we put at their service our studio that produces packaging and everything related to the external form of the product. The students decide what product to launch, define the product with the studio, do the advertising and communications strategy with the agency.”

Two teams from each school answer questions in front of a jury featuring L’Oréal Canada’s head of human resources, the president of the ad agency, a business journalist and Ms. Lamothe. The winner heads to an international competition in Paris, featuring the best of the participants from 43 countries. First prize is \$14,000.



[Reveal](#) is an online game that sets up a parallel business world, meant to mimic L’Oréal Canada’s work culture; participants experience that world through an avatar. The game was designed by experts from university, business and psychology, and includes a behind-the-scenes look at a brand new product launch.

While Reveal is promoted to business students on university campuses across Canada, anyone can set up a profile and play. It could lead to future work, if company and player see each other as a good fit, Ms. Lamothe says.

“As they go from room to room, challenged on different topics, they are asked what their fields of interest are. It’s a means for L’Oréal Canada to recruit people from marketing but also from finance, from logistics, from any other field.”