Innovation Olympics: where innovators learn their trade

55 students, 11 teams and two companies: a hands-on business innovation exercise to cultivate new skills. The purpose of the initiative is to create the perfect mix of empathy and creativity, on one side, and method and rigour on the other, to promote solid innovation projects that can make a difference. Rector Collini awards prizes to winning teams

Trento, 27 December 2016 – (a.s.) The organizers said it is a “fitness programme” for future top innovators. And the Innovation Olympics have all it takes to be a training field for young people who are about to start their careers and want to put their creativity and innovation capabilities at the service of companies. 55 students in 11 teams of the University of Trento participated in the programme and worked, for ten weeks, to offer ideas and solutions to a marketing problem presented by two large companies: Miele Italia (leader in the sector of domestic appliances with innovative, high-quality products) and MEC (a company in the area of stone processing and stone splitting technology).

The programme of Innovation Olympics aims at helping students develop business innovation skills giving them the opportunity to work on real cases, like the two proposed by the above companies. This means finding new and useful ideas for the company, but there more than that. Students learn important skills through this programme, skills that they will need in their future to launch and develop a start-up, for example, or to make their profile stand out in the arena of large companies, or just to successfully lead a small or family business.

The second edition of the event attracted 55 students (51% male and 49% female) from 11 countries worldwide, 1 out of 4 from abroad. The majority of them come from Economics and management, but 25% is from the University’s other departments.

The jury, made up of the representatives of the two companies and faculty members, awarded a prize to the two winning teams in a ceremony that took place in Trento a few days ago. The winners are team MEC 3, that worked on MEC’s customer care service (Chiara Bellini, Giovanni Ferrante, Paolo Mattiuz, Stefano Petrucco and Sara Zanigni) and Miele 6, that helped Miele develop actions to improve the training of their dealers (Marta Bonicelli, Lisa Caserotti, Jingchen Jiang, Daniele Spurio and Malou Westersoe).

The winners, who received the prize from the Rector of the University of Trento, Paolo Collini, will have the opportunity to obtain the “Innovation Manager” certificate from the GiMInstitute (www.gimstitute.org) for free (for a maximum value of 1,000 euro).
The initiative, promoted by the University of Trento with IXL, was put in place in collaboration with HIT.

The format of Innovation Olympics was launched by IXL 38 years ago in the United States and today is gaining ground in Italy as an instrument to connect young people with the labour market and to promote business innovation. IBM, Nike, 3M, Siemens, Unilever, Bosch, Harrods and many more: many prestigious companies over the years have asked the help of young people to solve their business problems. Keeping up with change has always been a big challenge for companies all over the world. A recent survey by the Harvard Business Review among 400 business managers found that about 80% of them are worried for the growing complexity and speed of change of the market.

For more information on the project:
http://international.unitn.it/blt/innovation-olympics

Some pictures (©Alessio Coser) taken during the presentation of the projects before Miele’s board (ceo Alessandro Covi, and sales, administration and logistics director Ornella Pippa) and during the presentation of awards with Rector Paolo Collini (©Roberto Bernardinatti)