

THE DO SCHOOL

ottointernational

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, smiling and looking towards the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. In the background, there are blurred vertical elements, possibly window blinds or a modern interior design.

# Co-creating an Intrapreneurs Academy

A case study



Otto International is tackling a challenge faced by forward-thinking companies everywhere:

- 1) how can we integrate sustainability into our business model, not as a nice-to-have, but as an essential driver?
- 2) How will new approaches cut across departments, functions, regions, and output?

The global sourcing company has worked with The DO School on co-creating its OI Academy: a program where high-potential employees have been developing inspiring solutions to this and other challenges, the DO way — honing their leadership skills at the same time.

## THE SITUATION

Headquartered in Hong Kong, Otto International (OI) is a one-stop-shop sourcing company that creates bespoke solutions across fashion, home and living, as well as general merchandise— building trusted customer relations worldwide. Otto International belongs to the Otto Group, one of the world's leading privately owned multi-channel retail groups. OI has expanded its presence across Asia, Europe and Africa and employs more than 1200 people. **Multi-national, culturally diverse, people-driven and committed to quality, it operates as an intermediary within the global supply chain — a position that comes with both responsibility and opportunity.**

Together we have run

3

OI Academies since

2019





## THE CHALLENGE

Otto International's dedication to responsible commerce drives the company to integrate sustainability across its operations. Sustainability is high up on the company's agenda: operating at a crucial point of the supply chain, it must set the right standard. The challenge is to keep building on its impressive record in a way that touches diverse functions and cultures — from logistics to merchandising, from finance to HR — and have all employees feel involved. **It's a question many companies are asking when it comes to sustainability: How can we give our people the space, and the guidance, they need to connect, to innovate and to collaborate?**

## THE SOLUTION

Otto International started working with The DO in 2019. **Together, we created the OI Academy as a bespoke intrapreneur program: a place where diverse talent from across the organization can come together and prepare for their next steps as leaders.**

Now in its third year, the 2022 Academy was the perfect port of call for a challenge on sustainability.

As in previous years — the Academy tackled organizational transformation in 2020 and developed knowledge sharing tools in 2021 — The DO worked closely with the senior leadership team to turn a complex business challenge into an interesting, workable project. Happening some 3-6 months before the program starts, this is a core part of The DO's offer: a clear process helps organizations take some of their most acute issues into the learning and experimentation space.



**5** individual formats were developed including **Business Challenge, Innovation Open House, Alumni Events, Peer Coaching Groups** and **Growth Assessment Open House.**



*“What we really wanted to do, and what the OI Academy has achieved, with the help of The DO, was for our people to stop, and think. To zoom out and step back — and to trust the process”*

Verena Patricia Favre, Chief People Officer at Otto International.

## MAY 2022 - PROGRAM KICKOFF

The OI Academy kicks into action. 12 employees, from across departments and regions, meet online for the first time. Skills, experiences, backgrounds, and day-to-day work routines vary greatly. What binds the group together is an ambition to develop as leaders — and a willingness to try something new.

A 7-month journey begins. The program combines intensive 3-day workshops, monthly “open houses”, peer coaching groups. The DO provides tools, resources, advice. This edition is fully virtual: The DO has adapted face-to-face formats to successfully run in the online space, and can offer face-to-face, virtual and hybrid programs – depending on need.

For some in the group, sustainability is a familiar theme; others have barely been in touch with it in their professional contexts. Exchanges start to happen. People begin collaborating on a topic they’re not familiar with — with colleagues they don’t know.

“Trust the process” becomes one of the most frequently used phrases as participants start applying newly learned competencies: prototyping,





empathy building, effective co-creation, collaboration. As the Academy finds new ways of catalyzing innovation, the sphere for learning and the sphere for implementation become one. “The DO does not only offer access to a diverse network of experts, but also empowers people to be an actual part of the solution,” says Verena Favre.

## NOVEMBER 2022 - PROGRAM END

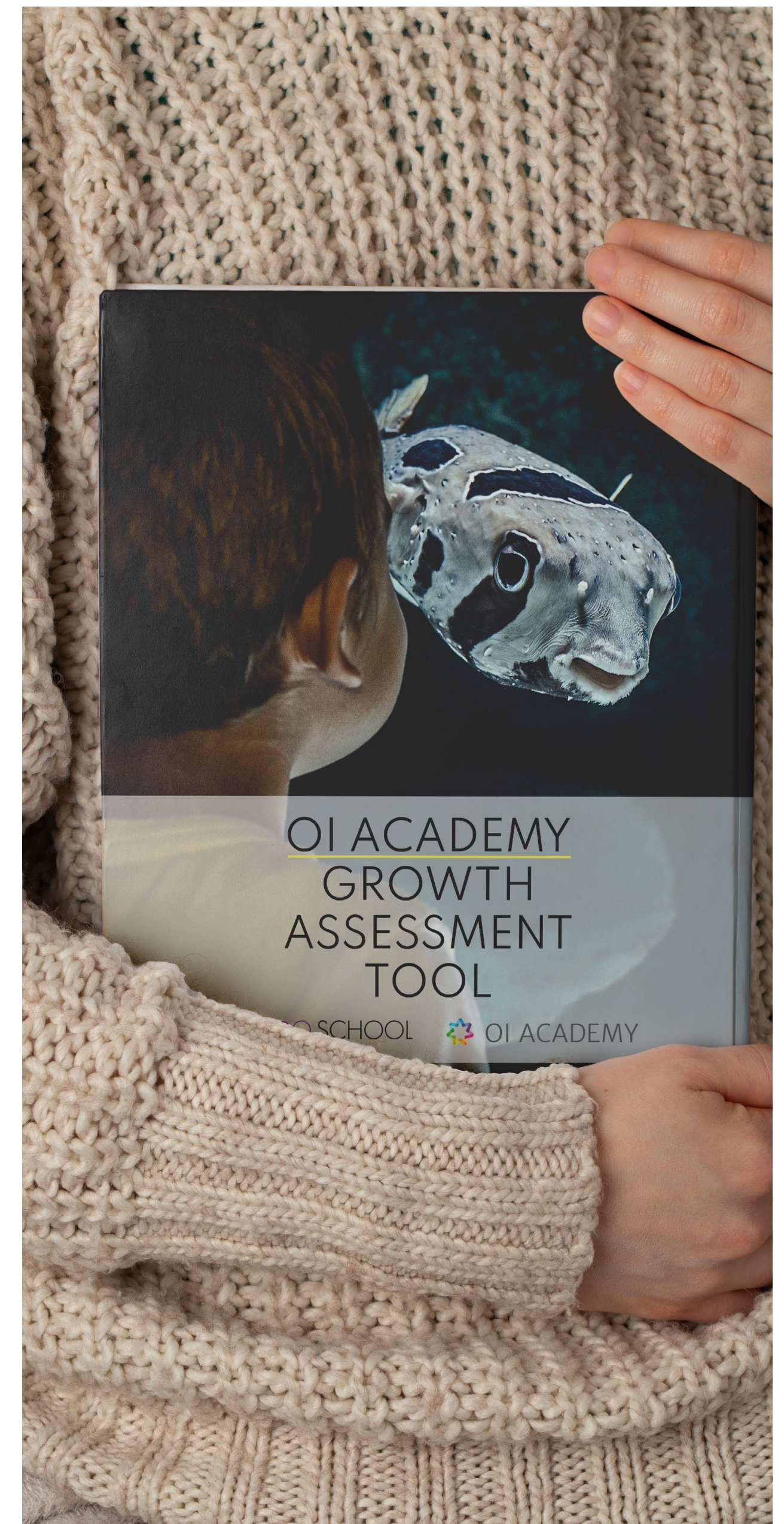
After several months of “being in love with the problem,” new approaches to integrating sustainability are being put on the table. “We are very clear about the fact that we commit to the challenge — and we commit to the ideas and the solution the Academy is coming up with,” says Favre.

As a phase of adaptation and implementation gets underway, participants take their Academy experience with them — into their teams, their day-to-day, their leadership styles. “I met an amazing new group of people that I can now rely on for support,” says one 2022 participant. “I have greater awareness of my impact, presence, and development areas as a leader,” says another.

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*“We make participants fall in love with the problem, not the solution. Instead of rushing straight to the end point — as we often do in our professional lives — we keep them at the preceding stage for much longer.”*

Giorgia Trascinelli, OI Project Lead at The DO School





This kind of awareness shines through the participant feedback from Otto International's latest Academy: a shifted perspective; what Verena Favre calls "new thinking patterns". Together, they have developed a strong cohort sensibility, a network that reaches beyond the Academy.

"Participants become ambassadors," Verena Favre says — ready to pioneer the organization's business strategy, and inspire others. With each new cohort of the OI Academy, this group of newly upskilled, continuously advancing, highly networked new leaders strengthens Otto International's culture of innovative collaboration.

# 39

emerging leaders from OI have participated in the program from

# 10

countries so far.

## PROGRAM INFO

**DURATION** 7 Months

**LOCATION** Hybrid: in person & virtual workshops

**COMMITMENT** 10 days in total (including workshops, solo and group work)

## FORMATS

Workshops, Open Houses, Alumni events.

THE DO SCHOOL

# Let's DO this!

Get in touch with Hauke or Giorgia to transform your leadership while moving your strategy forward.



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