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Abstract

**Meeting the Demand for Professional Development in
Business through Online Education**

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The growth of the information economy is driving substantially increased demand for post-secondary education. This phenomenon is especially marked in Asia; it is estimated that in China alone the demand for higher education will go up from 3% of student population to 20% of the student population which will number 20 million students by 2020. The same number in India is expected to be 15 million. Because human capital represents an essential national and corporate investment to sustain economic growth in the information economy, both national governments and businesses have an interest in helping to meet this need. Online educational programs provide a cost-effective, high quality solution that is fully scalable. It is likely, therefore, that many providers will emerge in this market, a significant number of whom will offer programs of good quality. The test of their viability will involve the success with which they focus on their particular niches, the quality of the student service environment they provide, and their success in achieving a simple, sophisticated and invisible technological environment. The challenge for online programs is to develop a learning environment of equal sophistication, and equal potential for imparting knowledge, that is characteristic of the best conventional onsite offerings. Online programs must ensure that students are provided equivalent opportunity for developing professional skills and also for advancing the higher skills of cognition, critical analysis and intellectual creativity. At the same time all stakeholders including the businesses, governments and other bodies involved in providing this online education must find the right model to gain expected returns. This presentation will focus on the experience of Universitas 21 Global, a joint venture of Universitas 21 and Thomson Learning, in developing an online MBA program offered from its headquarters in Singapore.