Science and Work and Websites - Interview with Davide Cannata, Chief Editor at "Science For Work"

Davide Cannata presents the website to university students. (Image: Davide Cannata)

Spotlight Europe had the chance to interview Davide Cannata (24) about his website project Scienceforwork. Launched in December 2014, it brings together students with business leaders and decision-makers.

Hello Davide, please tell us first: Who are you?

Hi, we are a group of organizational psychology students. I and the other founders are enrolled in the same Erasmus Mundus Master that involves a group of 5 universities across Europe: Valencia, Barcelona, Bologna, Coimbra and Paris. We are different people with a variety of passions and different personal stories, but we share the same values and we all believe that young people can start something innovative and successful.

So what is your website about? Who do you want to address?

Scienceforwork is a popular science website written by psychology students for managers. Visitors can read about many different topics related to different aspects of the organizational world, from recruiting to employees well-being, from leadership to organizational change.

Why and when did you start the site? What is the aim?

The idea came up first into the mind of my colleague Lorenzo. I remember when he told me for the first time about the project. It was September and he was really excited: "I am starting to follow discussions on Linkedin", he told me, "and it is true what they always tell us in university: there is a huge gap between what scientific research discovers and what managers think and do". That's why he thought about to create a website that could spread scientific evidence. The aim is to help decision-makers in pursuing the most effective actions for the performance of their organizations and the well-being of their people.

On your website you say that you want to promote Evidence-Based Management – what is it?

Evidence-based management is the practice of making managerial decisions with the use of critical appraisal and the best available evidence, with the aim of making these decisions more accountable and efficient. With best available evidence we are talking, of course, of scientific evidence. But not only: organizational data, the experience of professionals and the values of the stakeholders are all important sources for a manager. It's important to critically apprise all of them recognizing the specificity and the limits.

The evidence-based practice comes from the medical disciplines: thanks to this approach the number of lives saved every year increased hugely. Also managerial choices have big impacts so they should be based on facts, not only on the personal intuitions of leaders.

Could you please give an example?

Well, let's think, for example, of a crucial moment in the organizational life: E.g. hiring a new employee. Choosing the right person has positive effects on the revenues of the company. Now, a manager could think that having a short exchange with the candidates will be enough to understand what kind of people they are. Unluckily, research shows that using only intuition in evaluating candidates leads to many mistakes based on people´s tendency to be influenced by stereotypes (e.g.: Asians are good in maths) or by unrelated factors (physical appearance, similarity with the evaluator). A good selection procedure should take into account which methods are demonstrated to be the best performance predictors (scientific evidence), what kind of profiles the organization is looking for (organizational evidence) and the legality of the procedures (stakeholder values).

Ok, on your site you write about Work, Organizational and Personnel Psychology (WOP) – what is it?

WOP psychology is the study of human behavior, emotions and cognition applied to the workplace. It is an applied science that studies people at work as individuals, as team members or considering the organization as a whole.

So psychology does affect the work routine?

Yes, working is a set of behaviors. It involves people´s emotions, attitudes, cognitive resources, interpersonal skills. People at work learn, communicate, make decisions, face conflicts. The consequence of a satisfying or a dissatisfying job can deeply affect the well-being of a person. Psychology studies all these aspects of work that are extremely important in our opinion.

Coming to the technical side: Is it difficult to start an own website?

Technology makes things easy. If you just want to express your idea, you use a simple wordpress format and the start of the website only will only take a few hours. But building a professional looking website, to guarantee quality and quantity of content and running efficient marketing campaigns is another story. It was extremely challenging for us to get the website started and it was a great occasion for acquiring new competencies.

What advice can you give to other young people who want to start one?

You need to be driven by a strong idea. You need a vision in which you believe and for which you are able to pass over the difficulties you will meet.

How do you get new authors and readers?

We recruit new writers both online and through organizing workshops in universities. Readers are reached through marketing campaigns that take place mostly in social networks. Linkedin is our favorite channel, followed by Twitter.

How can I participate?

It depends. If you are a WOP-P psychology student or a young professional and you are interested in writing (In English or in Italian), you can contact me as chief editor (davide.cannata@scienceforwork.com). If you are interested to be involved in the team, not or not only as writer you should address the general manager, Lorenzo Gallì (lorenzo.galli@scienceforwork.com). We are also looking for people with a more different background than psychology, like IT or economics to collaborate with our team. In particular, right now, we are searching for someone who is a marketing expert and wants to get practical experience collaborating with a young and motivated team. Finally, if you are a

manager or a senior professional and you are interested to release an interview you can write to both Davide and Lorenzo.

What are the advantages of a website as information channel in your view?

I think that the internet is a powerful instrument to spread your word and connect with people with a small budget. You can spread your knowledge and your ideas. The contra is that the quality of the information is not guaranteed. There is a lot of nonsense, or worse, commonsense, on the web about management of people. *Scienceforwork* tries to guarantee the best quality through peer reviewing and quality assurance.

What can young Europeans do to stay informed about news?

I think that newspapers and magazines, both as paper or digital version, are still the best way to get a general overview. Then, reading blogs, or directly talking with people is a great way to have different points of view. Reading a foreign or international newspaper is always a great way to broaden your horizon.

What would you say: Which information channel is becoming more and more important today?

I would say internet, but I think that this answer already belongs to the past. Internet means many different things and we need to understand this difference. I am really interested in the new forms of media communication that are being developed. One of the latest? Infographics! They summarize lots of complicated content in few images and are incredibly effective.

Do you believe there is a change how young people perceive news and build opinions?

Yes, there is. And I think that it is especially connected to the fact that it is much easier to reach people from other countries and cultures. With the diffusion of internet and English as *lingua franca,* the influence of national politics on the way how information is presented has become less strong.

Thank you for the interview, Davide!

You are welcome!

More about Davide