

BACK TO SCHOOL

From a baking school helping to cook up a business plan to an arts retreat that will get those creative juices flowing, we pull up a chair at some of the best courses on offer.

So you want to start your own business and feel like you should go back to school for a bit first? The \$1,000 question (literally) for many is: do you shell out for an MBA? While a formal business degree sounds impressive, opinion is split on whether it's worth the money and there are a plethora of more tailored alternatives out there. If you've ever thought of starting a bakery, a furniture company or, well, any company at all, read on for a lesson from the schools that are giving you the tools to succeed at a fraction of the cost. — (M)

I.

Jolt

UK & Israel

Founded: 2006

Teaches: Finance, economics and marketing

Cost: £175 to £295 (€190 to €325) per month depending on number of classes

Best for: Anyone who wants to understand the nitty gritty business side of start-ups

It's 21.00 in the basement of a co-working space in London's Soho and author and executive coach Bill Jensen is giving out homework to his Jolt class. Sitting around a long wooden table, eight students scribble their assignment down in branded purple notebooks. "Find a disruptive hero mentor," says Jensen over a video link. Someone "who breaks the rules faster than you do".

Founded in 2006 by CEO Roei Deutsch, Jolt is an Israeli education technology start-up that earlier this year opened two locations in London. It bills itself as a business school for self-made people, offering an alternative to MBAs for the next generation of aspiring founders. "The workforce and learning need to go hand in hand," says Nitzan Cohen Arazi, Jolt's co-founder and chief revenue officer. "Learning should become a habit."

Rather than pay tuition, students pay a monthly membership of between £175 and



£295 (€190 and €325) for immersive classes at the London campuses. The company says that the whole programme should not cost more than £5,000 (€5,500) – a fraction of the price of a traditional business degree.

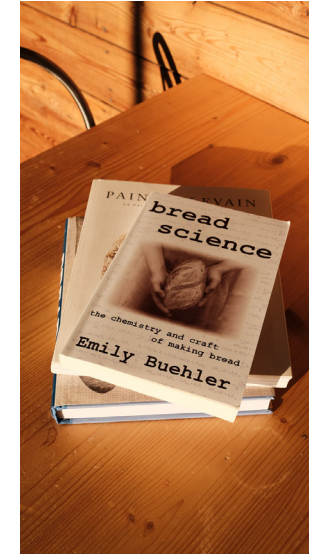
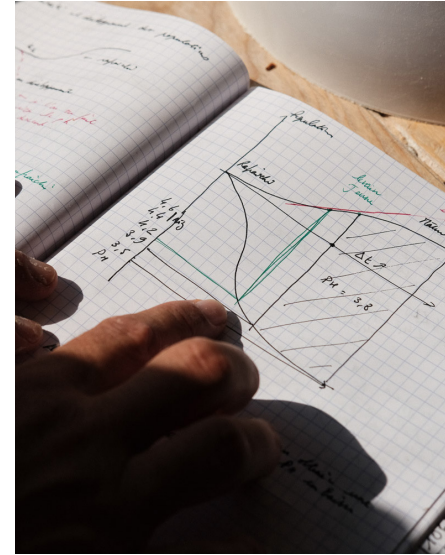
Attendees have already gone on to start businesses: current Jolt student Lotus Qi recently started Nishani, a sustainable office-clothes label for women. Qi started taking classes while she was still working at an ad agency. Jolts, which range from 90-minute sessions to longer mini-courses, are designed to fit around full-time jobs.

"When you start out as an entrepreneur you have to be jack of all trades," says Qi. "Jolt offers entrepreneurs the option to get a general understanding of many areas of business so you can avoid making costly mistakes." A class on social-media growth, for example, helped her prepare her online strategy, while a session on product market fit reinforced her business plan.

"A lot of the teachers are start-up founders so when you ask them questions, they really get it," says Qi. The role of the teacher has changed, confirms Jolt's Arazi. "It's no longer, 'I know and you don't' but rather, 'How do I make this relevant to you?'"

For Qi the fear of starting her own business was alleviated by the practical skills she learnt; she quit her job in July to go full time with Nishani. "It helped prepare me for the emotional roller coaster that is entrepreneurship." — ACR

“A lot of the teachers are start-up founders so when you ask them questions, they really get it”



2.
**École Internationale
 de Boulangerie**
France

Founded: 2005
Teaches: Organic artisan baking, business skills
Cost: €13,500
Best for: Anyone who wants to set up their own bakery or café

In their previous lives they were bankers, pharmacists, photographers and engineers. Now, in a training centre tucked away in the mountains of Haute Provence, they are watching teacher Matthias Arbion knead pumpernickel bread dough. He rolls it into a log shape, places it in a baking tin and covers it in clingfilm to let the sourdough rise. “You’ll see the result tomorrow,” he says before telling the students to go back to their work tables and repeat the process on their own.

“We give life to something; it’s a simple but satisfying pleasure,” says Kaëlig Desaize, one of the 10 students in the room. “I no longer wanted to sit in front of a computer all day.”

Desaize used to work at a bank but like his classmates, he has decided to embark on an intensive 645-hour training

“We give students all the tools necessary for finding a model that works for them”

programme at the École Internationale de Boulangerie, or EIDB, to equip himself with everything he needs to start his own organic artisan bakery. The numeracy skills from his banking days come in handy though because the EIDB is not your typical bakery school: one fifth of the programme is spent in the classroom, where students learn the IT, accounting and management skills needed to run a successful business.

As a result the school’s courses are rooted in the real economy. “When you learn to make a new type of bread, you can’t do so without calculating its production costs first,” says Thomas Tefri-Chambelland, the director of EIDB. “We constantly move between the business and product side of things.”

Students need no prior baking experience to come here; the only entry requirement is to have an entrepreneurial project waiting to be brought to fruition. “We never move far from a student’s initial business idea and budget,” says Tefri-Chambelland. “Our job is not to say that starting a bakery with €500 capital is impossible – instead we give students all the tools necessary for finding a model that works really well for them.”

After the three-and-a-half-month course, which includes a six-week internship at a working bakery, students leave the school with a fully fledged business

plan, complete with financial projections, market analysis and a comprehensive product range.

Since the training centre was launched in 2005 more than 100 artisanal bakeries run by EIDB alumni have opened around the world, from bread-by-bike delivery services in Geneva to bricks-and-mortar shops in Bogotá. The degree-level course is taught in French but the school also offers shorter, one-week introduction sessions in English and Spanish, as well as tailored options and off-site masterclasses,

“When make a new type of bread, we can’t do so without calculating its production costs first”

organised in conjunction with the San Francisco Baking Institute and the Estella patisserie school in Tel Aviv.

“I looked at several schools in the US and France but none offered quite the same package as the EIDB,” says Camilo Holguín, a graduate who launched the Bogotá-based *panadería* El Brezo in 2017. “The course gave me a 360-degree understanding of the baking business. I learnt what it means to be a baker and an entrepreneur, which is crucial in my day-to-day job.” — AW



PHOTOGRAPHER: GUILLAUME MEDEVAND



3- Haystack Mountain School of Crafts USA

Founded: 1950

Teaches: Arts and crafts

Cost: \$1,500 (€1,400) for a two-week session

Best for: Anyone whose business involves a design or artistic element

An architectural marvel sits at the end of a winding coastal road on Deer Isle in Maine. Cut into the forest are 36 cedar-shingled buildings designed by modernist architect Edward Larrabee Barnes; they seem to float above the island's lichen-and-moss covered floor, which slopes down to the Atlantic.

Haystack Mountain School of Crafts was founded in 1950 (it moved to its current location in 1961) without any set curriculum, teaching faculty or student body. Instead, every summer hundreds of students – from recent college graduates to retirees – descend on Haystack for two-week workshops in ceramics, weaving, woodworking, metalsmithing, glassblowing or printmaking. They are taught by a rotating roster of experts. “The most radical thing about this place is that its entire tenor changes every two weeks,” says Paul Sacaridiz, Haystack’s director since 2015. “It was never an attempt at a traditional school.”

When we visit, studios remain lit late at night as students finish their projects. Among them is Anna Krist, a Brooklyn-based office worker who sells her stoneware vases, jugs and planters online. “I daydream

“My whole practice changed at Haystack. It was an incubator for my ideas”

about doing pottery full time and I came to Haystack almost as a test,” she says. “If I have the ability to do nothing but this for two weeks, will I still want to do it? Will it still feel special?” The answer is a resounding yes, although striking out on her own remains an aspiration.

For more seasoned artists and craftspeople, two weeks of uninterrupted studio time is a gift. “In Chicago I’m getting pinged all day by my cell phone; I’m never fully locked into what I’m making,” says Dee Clements, a textile artist. Clements founded Studio Herron in 2010, making fashion accessories and home goods for clients such as retailer CB2 and Chicago’s Freehand hotel. But by 2017 she was feeling stuck in a rut. She came to Haystack to teach a class on rug weaving and ended up experimenting in its digital-fabrication lab and woodworking studio. “My whole practice changed at Haystack; it was an incubator for my ideas,” she says.

Many of the US’s most important craftspeople have come through Haystack; some as students, some as teachers, many as both. Among them are weaver Anni Albers, glass artist Dale Chihuly and ceramicist Toshiko Takaezu. It is a place where the rigidity of academic institutions dissolves, which is just as crucial for artists as it is for entrepreneurs.

In recent years school director Sacaridiz has seen a pattern at Haystack: more craftspeople are taking intensive workshops in place of attending graduate school, where a year’s tuition can cost about \$50,000 (€45,500). By contrast Haystack’s sessions are a more affordable \$1,500 (€1,400) and more than 150 scholarships are available. “For a lot of people, Haystack represents a possible next step,” says Sacaridiz. — WK



How do you run a business school?

Frederico Contente opened the Portugal-based Steer school earlier this year to teach people how to become self-employed traders and regain control of their working schedule. Students can attend either a five-month programme or a week-long immersion course. Contente has been refining the idea for several years; here are his tips for running a successful business school. — TL

- 1. Create a programme that reflects your values.** “I truly believe in our courses. From the content – which reflects the best of all that I’ve learnt in my career – to the teachers we work with and the way we schedule the programme.”
- 2. Invest in the best staff.** “We don’t cut costs on our teaching staff and only work with people who live what they teach. All our teachers make a living from their speciality.”
- 3. Be ready to adapt to what students need.** “We can teach in Portuguese, English or Spanish and we are flexible in how we deliver the programme to make sure it works for students.”
- 4. Think beyond the core programme.** “We teach trading techniques but also psychology. It’s not just about making money, it’s about encouraging students to understand themselves and their aims in life.”
- 5. Location, location, location.** “We vary the locations of our short courses to cater for people who also want a holiday and structure the programme to give plenty of free time. They can learn something new and discover a beautiful part of Portugal at the same time.”

PHOTOGRAPHER: GRETA RYBUS