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BUSINESS INSIGHTS

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Education Special

Find out why profs such as **Natalia Kochetova-Kozloski** are vital to the profession. Also: teaching business ethics, the new CFE and much more

FASHION

In the Bag

Ania Kuskowski bridges the gap between high and low and fashion and function

FOUR YEARS AGO, ANIA KUSKOWSKI had to jump through hoops to get her hands on a Gianni Chiarini handbag she felt would perfectly complement her first foray into the professional world. “I went on Nordstrom’s online shop — that was before Nordstrom shipped to Canada. I shipped it to my sister, who lived in New York at the time, and then she shipped it to me here,” says the marketing coordinator turned entrepreneur. “I thought it was a really complicated way of getting a bag.”

Drawing on this experience, in 2014 Kuskowski launched [Pursebox.ca](#), an e-commerce boutique specializing in midrange leather handbags for fashion-conscious professional women. The fledgling Montreal-based online retailer carries premium-quality bags imported from around the world. All are modern, chic, functional and affordable, and, Kuskowski believes, add much-needed variety to the Canadian retail landscape. “If you want to spend \$2,000 on a purse, you can go to Holt Renfrew and find what you like,” she says. “[Or] you can get a [low-quality] bag for \$100 that is not made of leather” and that may break or crack after a short period of time. “It’s the mid-range brand — the stylish, good-quality stuff — that’s hard to find. When you’re starting out, when you’re becoming the professional you’re going to be for the rest of your life, you want something [that’s] good quality, that looks good [and] that’s practical.”

While working in marketing for the fashion industry, Kuskowski discovered renowned brands whose bags cater to the needs and tastes of professional women, some complete with special compartments for laptops and

tablets. When launching [Pursebox.ca](#), she wanted to introduce labels such as Lancaster Paris, Lodis and Knomo London to the Canadian market, eliminating crossborder hassles, high shipping costs and surprise duty fees. “I decided to import brands that are doing super well in their local markets and give women options that they didn’t have,” says Kuskowski.

A year and a half, countless sales, glowing customer reviews and a successful pop-up shop later, Kuskowski is just getting started. She plans to add more brands to the roster, partner with philanthropic organizations and possibly open a brick-and-mortar location down the line. “I want to create a space where women can find what they’re looking for, feel comfortable buying and know they’re going to get something great.”

— *Katia Jean Paul*

