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The entrepreneur whisperers

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For many years business owners had a limited range of options if they wanted to improve their skill set. They could buy some how-to books, try to find a mentor, do a TAFE course or enrol in an MBA. In recent years another choice has been added to the list: a coaching and education program offered by privately run organisations such as The Entourage, The Fortune Institute or Republica Education's BSchool, in the hope of turbo-charging the growth of their actual or planned business.

Joining The Entourage

One of the new generation of 'entrepreneur whisperers' is 28-year-old Jack Delosa, Founder and Managing Director of The Entourage, which chiefly targets Generation Y. The Entourage regularly stages free events throughout Australia featuring business gurus such as Ruslan Kogan and Mark Bouris sharing the secrets to their success.

"Entrepreneurship is a rising tide globally as more people become disheartened with the lack of meaning and financial freedom that comes with traditional education and the traditional career path," says Delosa, a university dropout who became a self-made millionaire. "People want to be their own boss and to create a life that is meaningful."

Real-world techniques

Connecting with entrepreneurs is about an authentic approach to improving your business – one that's not formulaic or contrived. This emphasis on real-world and easy-to-apply technique is the foundation of The Fortune Institute. Run by advertising guru Siimon Reynolds, and fellow entrepreneur Brian Sher, The Fortune Institute draws on their vast experience as entrepreneurs to empower a new generation. Reynolds, for example, co-founded The Photon Group, which at its peak consisted of 54 advertising, public relations and marketing firms. He's currently Chairman of the telco, Inabox.

Like Delosa, Reynolds puts on free events where he, Sher and others provide advice about various aspects of running a business and encourage attendees to enrol in coaching programs. The costs range from \$497 to \$2150 a month. The results speak for themselves, says Reynolds: "It's not unusual for companies in Fortune Institute programs to double or triple the size of their businesses."

Reynolds is a big believer in how marketing can transform a business. "For most businesses, improving their marketing is one of the fastest ways to increase their speed of growth."

Heading to BSchool

The entrepreneurs behind BSchool, Ryan Trainor and David Trewern, say they have injected "the DNA of some of Australia's top entrepreneurs into a course that gives you all the skills necessary to take an idea from ideation to commercialisation". The entrepreneurs involved include Carman's Founder Carolyn Creswell, Hitwise Co-founder Adrian Giles and Grill'd Founder Simon Crowe.

The course is completed online over 12 months and costs \$17,950. Trainor says it focuses "on practical learning – we give business owners the tools they need on their tool belt plus the confidence to take their business to the next level and make it scalable and successful".

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The foundation course takes business owners through a process from ideation to creation to implementation of a new product in an existing company. The key focus of this course is education around core business principles, such as marketing and product development, branding and communication, the power of digital marketing, leadership and recruitment, 'lean thinking' and project management, finance, raising capital and innovation.

Like the coaching provided by Delosa and Reynolds, Trainor isn't just aimed at start-ups.

"Business owners tend to be perpetually on a steep and often frightening learning curve," he says. "Having insights, advice and guidance from entrepreneurs who have been there and done that is invaluable. Just having someone there to say, 'this is the mistake I made, and this is how to avoid it', can save a lot of time and money for people trying to grow their business at any point."

Four reasons to consider this kind of coaching

1. You're learning from people who've successfully built businesses rather than just studied the way other people do so.
2. You'll have the opportunity to network with other business owners and potentially form valuable relationships.
3. You're more likely to stay motivated and take action if you have to report back on your progress to a coach and the other members of your class.
4. You'll learn about marketing from people who are experts at it.

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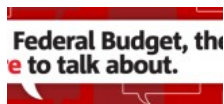


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