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● ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK

Think tank to develop ideas

Debra Bela

University was moving too slowly for Emma Isaacs so she dropped out, accepted a 50 per cent share in the recruitment firm she worked for and became an entrepreneur at the age of 18. Ten years later, Isaacs now runs three businesses in networking, events management and fitness.

Her husband has five businesses and, when they go on holidays at the end of the year, they'll make a pact not to talk about any of them.

"You have to leave the BlackBerry at home and the laptop," Isaacs says.

"Your working pace is so hectic that holidays need to be for relaxing.

"I used to holiday with 20 business books in my suitcase, now it's fiction."

The world of the entrepreneur is changing as more young people take on the challenge.

Next month, the first Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW), will be celebrated across 75 countries.

The event will provide a platform for young professionals to try out new ideas and strategies and harness the global enthusiasm for their profession.

GEW host Matt Jones says

an entrepreneur needs an idea, a team and resources to make it happen.

"The most precious resource we have available is each other and it's one of the most under-utilised resources, particularly for young Australians in this field where most of the conversation is about larger companies or people who have started as a much larger business," Jones says.

"This week is giving a lot more oxygen to talking about what young people are doing in this area."

An academic record is not always an indicator of entrepreneurial prowess.

"(Sir) Richard Branson (Virgin founder) is a good example of that," Jones says.

Isaacs, who also is president of the Sydney chapter of the global Entrepreneurs Organization, says understanding what makes a good entrepreneur is not an exact science.

"You have to be comfortable with a high level of risk, have a high level of energy and run your own show.

"Have a strong sense of self-belief and self-worth and you need to be able to lose your ego and ask a lot of questions. You can't rely on anyone but yourself," Isaacs says.

"Then you have to be pretty

confident that your idea is going to stand up in a marketplace.

"A lot of people have an idea but, without proper research, it's going to fall over."

Isaacs ran the recruitment firm Staff It for seven years before selling and buying Business Chicks, a support organisation for business women.

The Last Thursday Club networking initiative began last year, and last month Studio Bodyfit was launched as a personal training centre.

"There are many forms of entrepreneurs," she says. "Some take an idea from scratch and make it something."

"That's not my forte. I take an idea in existence and turn it into something better."

The hardest thing she has had to do is sell a business.

"A lot of entrepreneurs get quite emotionally tied up. They feel they are that business," Isaacs says.

Global Entrepreneurship Week is on from November 17-23. For an information pack, email matt.jones@socialalchemy.com.au for an info pack, or visit the special website set up to provide a forum for entrepreneurial ideas: www.unleashingideas.org/unleash.

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Emma Isaacs, 29, is a marketing and physical fitness entrepreneur