

## Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs

*As a worldwide recession looms, organizers of Global Entrepreneurship Week hope a younger generation of risk-takers will lead the recovery.*

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With the prospects of a traditional career path looking increasingly bleak, organizers of [Global Entrepreneurship Week](#) are hoping to inspire a generation of younger entrepreneurs around the world to create their own opportunities.

Starting this Monday, the week-long event brings together 75 participating countries with a diverse roster of competitions, workshops and mentoring programs, all designed to give younger people the entrepreneurial bug.

"We're hoping to get people to see that entrepreneurship is more of a creative, innovative thing," Global Entrepreneurship Week President Jonathan Ortman said.

Ortman said organizers the world over want to expose young people to activities and initiatives that gauge their interest, aptitude and skills in a particular field or market. But they're also being encouraged to think beyond the nuts and bolts of starting a business.

"It's not just about spreadsheets," he said.

In the U.S. alone, over a thousand partners will be sponsoring events, including support from over 270 colleges and universities, organizers say.

Among other business competitions, events this week include a [contest](#) hosted by hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons that challenges young people interested in fashion, film, or music to turn creative ideas into profitable ventures.

Another approach includes [Speednetworking](#), rapid-fire social events aimed at connecting young entrepreneurs with seasoned entrepreneurial mentors.

"We've found that people are looking for role models, those mentors that could help to inspire," said Greg Ericksen, vice chair of strategic growth at Ernst & Young, a major sponsor. He said the initiative was a natural extension of the

New York-based accounting firm's 22-year-old Entrepreneur of the Year program, which was moved to coincide with this week's events.

Last year, the Kauffman Foundation, a Kansas City, Mo.-based entrepreneurship advocacy group, organized a smaller version of the event as a pilot project based on [Enterprise Week](#) in the U.K. By the end of the week, business groups and schools from around the world were asking to participate, according to Bo Fishback, Kauffman's vice president of entrepreneurship.

"It's clear that the world just needed an organizing force to get it off the ground," Fishback said. "It didn't take a billion dollars to get this going. Just an invite," he said.

This year's event was co-founded by the Kauffman Foundation and Make Your Mark, an entrepreneurship program based in the U.K.

After the week's done, Ortman said he expects planners will be busy year-round connecting aspiring entrepreneurs with mentors and investors through [UnleashingIdeas.org](#), the program's website.

So far, the world's growing financial problems haven't dampened enthusiasm among organizers or participants, Fishback said.

"The existing economic climate lends itself to an even stronger embrace of the week, and entrepreneurship in general," he said.

Ortmans said if anything, the global financial crisis was giving the event an unexpected boost.

"Countries hoping to foster commerce are turning to Global Entrepreneurship Week as a path to growth," Ortmans said. "At the end of the day, the new growth will come from private sector individuals that have seen bright spots and capitalized on them to create new jobs and new growth," he said.

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