

Entrepreneurs: Solo but not alone



Mark Joffe is joint head of Investec's Growth and Acquisition Finance team, based in Sydney.



Michael Sack is joint head of Investec's Growth and Acquisition Finance team, based in Melbourne.

Investec Bank has joined BRW as the foundation sponsor of the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club, a unique forum for key decision-makers and entrepreneurs from Australia's fastest-growing and most-innovative businesses.

Launching in November 2009, invited members will have the opportunity to discuss and explore new business ideas and partnerships, and will have access to exclusive research, educational resources and expertise.

Mark Joffe, joint head of the Growth and Acquisition Finance team, says Investec is thrilled to be the foundation sponsor of the Fast Club together with BRW.


"We speak to entrepreneurs every day and we see how this initiative can significantly benefit them," says Mark.

"Importantly, our experience tells us that although they often prefer to make many of their own decisions, they don't necessarily want to be alone. The Fast Club will provide networking opportunities for like-minded people that could spur the next round of innovation and further success."

BRW editor-in-chief Sean Aylmer says that while entrepreneurs in Australia come from all sorts of backgrounds, the over-riding commonality is passion for what they are doing.

"They are extremely innovative and not afraid of change, as well as being resilient," says Sean. "Some of the best entrepreneurs are very skilled at handling risk and very disciplined about their long-term goals. They revel in the challenges and rewards of succeeding in an uncertain and dynamic business environment."

Michael Sack, who is joint head with Mark and based in Melbourne, agrees that the Fast Club is a timely initiative because, although there is still some uncertainty in the economy, entrepreneurs would see the current environment as providing the perfect landscape for the next stage in building their businesses.

[Entrepreneurs =  + (courage ≈ ambition) @ [time]]

“Australia is starting to experience a recovery and, by nature, these people are the first to see emerging opportunities,” says Michael. “But turning ideas into reality often requires some form of funding, and this is where we come into the picture. We help businesses that are well beyond the start-up stage by providing tailored funding to further their growth aspirations. As such, we are ideally suited to partner BRW in this forum.”

Drawing on Investec’s origins, Michael says entrepreneurship is in Investec’s DNA. After starting as a small leasing business in South Africa in 1974, Investec has grown to become an international specialised banking group providing a diverse range of financial products and services.

“We understand the mindset of entrepreneurs. After all, Investec began as a venture by entrepreneurs, and we are keen to partner some of Australia’s fastest-growing and most-innovative businesses at this critical time in the country’s recovery,” says Mark.

Sean says that many of Australia’s great entrepreneurs had started several businesses before hitting the jackpot.

“Wotif.com is founder Graeme Wood’s sixth business venture. Others have faced the depths of despair before succeeding, such as Aussie Home Loans founder John Symond who was facing bankruptcy. That’s when he launched his mortgage origination businesses,” says Sean.

“And others started at the very bottom and built businesses out of nothing. Harvey Norman’s Gerry Harvey started life as a door-to-door vacuum salesman.”

The largest breeding ground for entrepreneurs is property and business services, followed by IT and retailers. Construction and financial service firms also have their own fair share of entrepreneurs in the Fast Club.

Partnering with entrepreneurs

Investec aims to compliment these entrepreneurial business leaders who belong to the Fast Club with like-minded entrepreneurial thinking and financial expertise.

Investec’s Growth and Acquisition Finance team provide funding to Australian businesses. Each funding solution is specially tailored to the business, and the team engenders a partnership approach with management, business owners and private equity firms.

Funding can be provided for:

- Management buy-outs and buy-ins
- Corporate acquisitions
- Implementing growth and expansion strategies
- Shareholder restructuring and equity release
- Succession planning.

Our greater appetite for risk and experience in tailored funding sets us apart from traditional banks. We invest passively through debt, and can even play a minority role with equity funding.

We also participate in equity where a further layer of capital is required. We are not exit focused, but rather work with our clients to ensure that business interests are aligned.

Through it all, we partner with our clients to ensure that all our interests are aligned with the future success of the business.

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BRW Investec Bank Fast Club

Launched in late November 2009, the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club is an exciting new community of like-minded entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs are senior executives of members in the Fast 100, Fast Franchises and Fast Starters from the past five years; members in the bottom 100 to 200 of the Top 500 Private Companies in 2009; and winners in the 2009 BRW Private Business Awards.

The Fast Club is a forum to drive new business opportunities, forge partnerships and discuss business issues.

As well as providing a forum to lobby agencies, members of the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club receive exclusive access to valuable research and education.



For more information, see www.investec.com.au/fastclub.

Foundation members

The BRW Investec Bank Fast Club will include some of Australia's best entrepreneurs – individuals who have grown businesses from the start-up phase into companies turning over hundreds of millions of dollars.



Naomi Simson

Founder and Chief Experience Officer
RedBalloon
Fast 100: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009
Fast Starters: 2005, 2006

“To stay a fast-growth business means an absolute commitment to innovation and learning. I invest hugely in education for my own development - and also for the team. Quite frankly, I'm a sponge for information and the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club is in the perfect position to deliver this.”



Dave Stevens

Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Brennan IT (companies include Brennan Software Development, Brennan Voice and Data, Secure Telecom)
Fast 100: 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

“The BRW Fast 100 has been extremely beneficial to the media profile of the Brennan business. It has allowed us to punch above our weight in winning the business from large clients and has assisted us in establishing credibility with our clients, suppliers, staff and potential investors. This has translated into real and material financial benefits, and I am sure the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club will similarly contribute to our success.”



Leigh Jasper

Chief Executive Officer
Aconex
Fast 100: 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

“When trying to grow a business, there are few activities more worthwhile than meeting with successful leaders that are walking a similar path to your own and dealing with many of the same challenges. The inspiration, advice and networking opportunities I expect to receive from the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club will unquestionably benefit my company.”



Andrew Thomas

Chief Executive Officer
Thomas Duryea Consulting
Fast 100: 2007, 2008, 2009
BRW ANZ Private Business Award winner: 2008

“As a young company competing against local and international brands, recognition on the BRW Fast 100 list over the past two years has gone a long way to cementing our reputation as a true player in the Australian information and communication technologies market. I am certain the BRW Investec Bank Fast Club will bring together powerful groups of like-minded entrepreneurs, each with their own stories, lessons learned, and experiences to share. I'm certain the conversations and relationships that evolve will spawn some incredible Australian success stories in the years ahead.”