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## UM lays out a global agenda for budding entrepreneurs

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CARL JUSTE / MIAMI HERALD

University of Miami MBA grad Rodolfo Saccoman will promote his company's online site for therapeutic journal writing during Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Rodolfo Saccoman works full time and then some as director of e-commerce for The Breakers resort in Palm Beach. But each week night around 8 p.m., he starts his second shift as an entrepreneur.

Despite the dizzying schedule, the University of Miami MBA graduate knows the value of making time for business networking. That's why he'll be immersing himself in UM's Global Entrepreneurship Week, which starts Monday.

"I wish I could clone myself into three people," says Saccoman, who uses nearly all his free time to launch MyTherapyJournal.com -- an online site for therapeutic journal writing.

There will be plenty to do at Global Entrepreneurship Week, which is part of a worldwide movement opening doors to people who want to start businesses. The UM agenda includes more than 50 speeches, panels, fairs, contests and

networking events, most free and open to the public.

Last year some 3.5 million people participated in 25,000 events in 77 countries during the week. This year at least 88 countries, from Bermuda to Uganda, are participating.

Jonathan Ortman, a founder of the global movement, says the week takes on even greater significance this year because of the anemic economy.

"It's going to be these new entrepreneurs who ultimately bring us out of this recession. They are creating the jobs and they are also finding ways to make a greener planet," says Ortman, president of the Public Forum Institute in Washington, D.C.

Research from The Kauffman Foundation, a chief force behind Global Entrepreneurship Week, shows that more than half of current Fortune 500 companies were founded during

downturns.

Saccoman's plans include attending an entrepreneurship fair, the networking event, sitting in on some panels and competing in the multi-day Elevator Pitch contest, which will award \$80,000 in prizes to entrepreneurs with the best spiels.

“I'm planning something really exciting for that -- you only live once, you know,” Saccoman says.

For him, the week will be all about promoting his venture and its proprietary software, which tracks users' progress.

The Brazilian-born Saccoman co-founded the company with his brother and a third partner. In September, Saccoman was on ABC's *Shark Tank*, luring \$80,000 in financing and tons of exposure. But the first big contract has so far proved elusive.

“We just need one person or a group . . . to say, ‘You know what, these guys are on to something amazing and let me go back into my memory and remember when I was young and someone opened their doors to me,’ ” Saccoman says.

So how does Global Entrepreneurship Week work? Locally, many events are grouped around themes, such as science and technology, arts and entertainment and sports, said Susan Amat, executive director of Launch Pad, the UM entrepreneurship career center spearheading the week's activities

## LAUNCH PAD

Launch Pad is partnering with dozens of business groups, community organizations and colleges to provide everything from a video gaming fair to a fashion showcase. Among the entrepreneurial headliners are: pop artist Romero Britto, fashion designer Donald J. Pliner and Dana White of Ultimate Fighting Championship.

Four South Florida women's groups also will host panel discussions Wednesday on attracting investors and assembling a team and a luncheon featuring Suzy Welch, author of *10-10-10* and co-author of *Winning*.

“This is the first time all the women's groups down here will be brought together with the common purpose of celebrating the role of women in this incredible South Florida economy,” says Amat.

“Suzy is a perfect first speaker for this,” she says. “Her *10-10-10* book is about looking at your decisions and how it will affect you in 10 minutes, 10 months and 10 years. As a group, if we look at it that way . . . it changes the spectrum of women's involvement in South Florida.”

Rounding out the week are:

- A screening Wednesday of *Ten9Eight*. The movie by award-winning filmmaker Mary Mazzio chronicles teens from low-income communities, including Miami, as they compete in a national business plan competition. “It does a very good job of making the toughest guy

in the room shed a tear," says Ortmans.

- A summit Thursday on social entrepreneurship. The keynote speech will be delivered by Dr. Pedro Jose Greer, the founder of Camillus House and winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Entrepreneurs such as Brian Rechtman will be presenting, too. The 2008 UM MBA grad is the founder of BlueTreeMarketing.com, an online auctioning service for nonprofits. "With the difficult economy, more charities need new fundraising tactics and that is what we offer," Rechtman says. "We help them reach more people, raise more money and spend a lot less time."

## **COMPETITION**

- More than a dozen events hosted by Miami Dade College ([www.mdc.edu/business](http://www.mdc.edu/business)). MDC's Kendall campus, for example, is holding a Global Innovation Tournament. More than 50 student teams are competing against teams from around the world on an eight-day mystery challenge. They have to solve a global challenge -- this year it's about making saving money fun -- and upload submissions in a video to YouTube. (On YouTube, search on Global Innovation Tournament 2009 to see entries.)

The entries from MDC will be judged on the Kendall campus Tuesday and the top-ranked ones will advance to the global competition judged by Stanford University, says Ivan Figueroa, chairman of the Kendall Campus School of Business.

"Global Entrepreneurship Week events illustrate possibilities," says William Green, UM's senior vice provost and dean of undergraduate studies. "People meet entrepreneurs, they discover the way entrepreneurship works in different areas like fashion, entertainment, engineering . . . and they plant the seed."

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