

# Coaching the little leagues

Jenny Dillon

YOU don't understand what you don't know until you do it.

That's the view of small business coach Greg Chapman.

"And you don't know where the gaps are until you come to one," he said.

This lack of knowledge, or encountering a gap, contribute to the fact that 42 per cent of small businesses started in 2003-04 exist no longer three years later, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

That's why Mr Chapman set up his Australian Business Coaching Club, with the aim of helping the very small, or micro, businesses that don't have access to the same sort of advice that keeps big guys going.

Mr Chapman, who teaches at Swinburne University School of Business, has been a business coach for some time, offering one-on-one mentoring for his clients.

"Traditionally, coaches focus on businesses with a turnover of more than \$200,000, which then pay their coaches at least \$25,000 over several years to ensure they stay the course," he said. "But for small business with a turnover of less than \$200,000, such an arrangement is financially impossible."

And it's even more difficult if these businesses are in regional or rural areas.

Yet small business needs are just as great as those of the larger ones, so, as long as they have access to a phone and the internet, Mr Chapman offers the same quality advice as larger, city-based businesses, at a fraction of the cost because they lose most of the one-on-one contact.

"It's the same quality, but it's do-it-yourself," he said.

Mr Chapman described micro businesses as people who are professionals, tradespeople or operating a small shop, with one, two or maybe three people involved in the business with a turnover of less than \$200,000 a year and not a lot of spare cash.

Advice is delivered online, with



**Pumped:** The Business Coaching Club has been beneficial for gym operator Lilly Kukuljan. Picture: BILL MCAULEY

## Muscling up the business

AFTER 10 years operating a gym Lilly Kukuljan decided she needed to freshen up her outlook.

"I needed help to move on to the next level," she said after she enrolled in the Business Coaching Club.

"I'm good at the gym stuff, but not good at the business stuff, such as marketing and business systems."

The benefits have been terrific, she said.

"I've gained a vast amount of knowledge that has empowered me and given me the confidence to go on," Ms Kukuljan said.

"You get into a rut when you're in business a long time so it's important that you redefine goals."

"This has kept me honest. It's so easy to get lazy."

Ms Kukuljan runs the Six Degrees South gym in Glenhuntly Rd, Elsternwick.

email and phone support at a level the business owners choose for themselves.

As well, it offers a structured curriculum, with subjects ranging from business goals to marketing strategies and sales to management systems.

There is also advice on accounting, insurance, financial planning and website design.

And there are teleclasses, where a group of businesses get together on a conference call to discuss such topics as managing cashflow and the pitfalls of commercial property leases.

"We look at problems specific to the small business and offer ideas they haven't been exposed to before," Mr Chapman said.

By taking on face-to-face mentor-

ing, some businesses commit to 12 months, often three years, for up to \$27,000 a year, so they need a huge turnover to be able to afford that money.

The Australian Business Coaching Club fees start at \$197 a month for the first of three levels of coaching, and there are no joining fees.

There is also no long term commitment so a business can drop out, say,

when things get busy over Christmas, and join up again when things are less hectic.

All businesses have cycles with needs varying according to maturity, Mr Chapman said.

"Different times present different challenges."

Net link: [www.australianbusinesscoachingclub.com.au](http://www.australianbusinesscoachingclub.com.au)