

SIR RICHARD BRANSON'S **TOP TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

A look at Branson's top ten tips for being successful in business, and how you can apply them to your own daily work

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Richard Branson

Sir Richard Branson is one of England's most famous entrepreneurs; a successful businessman and renowned inventor, he is the founder of the innovative Virgin Group, which comprises more than 400 companies.

Branson is an inspiration for entrepreneurs and businesspeople all over the world, epitomizing the modern work ethic and the entrepreneurial spirit. At the age of just 16, Richard undertook his first business venture (a magazine called *Student*), and since then he has grown into one of the world's most respected businessmen.

In 2014, he was listed as the seventh richest citizen of the United Kingdom on the Forbes List of Billionaires, with an estimated net worth of \$4.9 billion.



In addition to his business prowess, Branson has always demonstrated an incredible desire to innovate and push boundaries. He has made numerous world record attempts, including the fastest crossing of the English Channel in an amphibious vehicle, the fastest around-the-world balloon flight, the fastest Atlantic Ocean crossing and the fastest Pacific crossing.

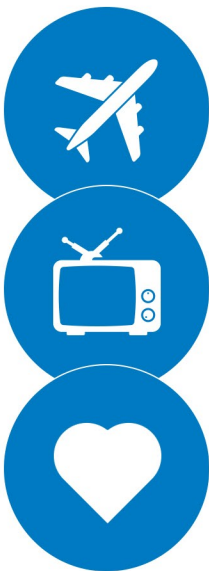
Branson also regularly undertakes humanitarian initiatives, using his considerable wealth and influence to help people and organisations all over the world. He is a founding sponsor of the ICMEC (International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children), he founded the Branson School of Entrepreneurship, has hosted an environmental gathering at his private island, is a signatory of the Global Zero campaign, is a Commissioner on the UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development initiative and has partnered with the African Wildlife Foundation for its 'Say No' campaign.

Virgin

Incorporated in 1989, the Virgin Group was founded by Richard Branson and Nik Powell and consists of more than 400 companies worldwide. According to Branson, the brand name 'Virgin' arose when the business partners were setting up their first business, a record shop. Branson and Powell considered themselves 'virgins' in business, and thus the name was born.



Currently, the Virgin Group operates from its headquarters at The Battleship building in the City of Westminster. It was previously located in The School House in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.



The core areas of the Virgin Group can be considered to be travel, entertainment and lifestyle, although it also manages ventures in financial services, transport, banking, health care, food and drink, media and telecommunications. Although Branson retains complete ownership and control of the Virgin brand, each of the companies operating under its banner is a separate entity, with Branson owning some and holding either majority or minority stakes in others. In some cases, he simply licenses the brand to an external company, such as Virgin Records (owned by Universal Music Group) and Virgin Media (owned by Liberty Global).

Snapshot

Got to run? Here's a snapshot of Branson's top ten tips for success:



- #1** | Follow your dreams
- #2** | Make a positive difference in the world
- #3** | Believe in your ideas
- #4** | Have fun and take care of your team
- #5** | Don't give up
- #6** | Make lots of lists
- #7** | Get out there and do things
- #8** | Learn to delegate
- #9** | Prove your naysayers wrong
- #10** | Do what you love, and have a sofa in the kitchen

#1:

Follow your dreams and just do it

You should always pursue your passions in life, and it's no different in business. You will find your work life far more rewarding – and successful – if you're doing something you love, rather than just doing something for the sake of making money.

“ Very few people take the risk to go and follow their dream, and those who do are usually those who end up with a much happier, more rewarding and exciting life. ”

This is undoubtedly good advice for those starting their own business, but there's also a valuable lesson here for managers too. Engaging employees can be a tough prospect for any manager, but by getting to know your employees and gauging what elements of their job they truly enjoy doing, we can better delegate responsibilities and get the best from team members. Of course it's not always possible to give someone a job they truly love, but by understanding what drives our workers, we can give them responsibilities, rewards or perks that we know they will enjoy, creating a better work environment and engaging team members to do the best job they can do.



This also highlights the importance of allowing employees to voice their opinions and make suggestions for improving elements of the business or implementing new and innovative work practices. If team members have a good idea that they're truly passionate about, listening to them and allowing them to pursue their passion can have a strong beneficial impact on their motivation, engagement and results, as well as having potentially significant implications for the business as a whole.

#2:

Make a positive difference and do some good

Companies of all kinds have a social responsibility to make a difference to the world in some way, and being out there and doing good can have a dramatic impact on how your staff feel about the company they work for. Whether it's the whole world, the country in which you're based, the local community or even just your staff and customers, you should be aiming to make a positive difference in people's lives.

“ Not only will it alter the way people feel about your business, it will give everyone involved the motivation to work harder, as they understand that their work benefits everybody. ”

There's an important lesson here for managers too, and that's the importance of understanding how little things can make a big difference when it comes to engagement and motivation. These little things, whether it's recognition, rewards, bonuses, understanding of personal situations or even just listening to team members, can make workers feel appreciated, acknowledged and part of an organisation that values more than just profits.



Making a positive difference – both in and outside of the company – can ensure your team members feel like valued and important elements of a greater whole and can create a positive and effective work environment.

#3:

Believe in your ideas and be the best

You should believe in your idea and feel proud about what you're doing. You have to have a passion for it and have the ability to inspire other people to feel passionate about it too.

“ There's little point doing something in life unless you feel really good about it and proud of what you've achieved and what you're trying to do. ”

It's also important to try and be the best – to produce the best possible version of your vision. Every aspect of what you do should aim to be better than the competition, and this should be a driving force behind your efforts.

Managers can learn from this element of Branson's work ethic, but it's important to be able to effectively evaluate the quality of your ideas and critique the work you're doing to make it a reality.



If an idea is a good one, then you should be able to pitch it to other people in two or three sentences. Bear this in mind when you're evaluating the quality of your – or a team member's – ideas. When it comes to being the best, this is easier said than done, and it's easy to become complacent in your efforts – particularly if your goal takes a long time to achieve.

As a result it's important to be able to regularly critique the efforts of you and your team, to ensure you're keeping the principles of your original idea in mind and that you're always striving to be the best.

#4:

Have fun and look after your team

Fun is one of the most important – and underrated – ingredients in any successful venture.

“ It’s really important to have fun at work. If you’re not having fun anymore, it may be time to move on. ”

Make sure you’ve got the kind of people in your company who genuinely care about others and look for the best in people. If your team are having fun and genuinely care about their colleagues and their customers, they will do a better job and staff morale will be consistently high.

There’s an important tip here for managers, and that’s that in order to get the best out of your team, you should encourage a fun, interactive and collaborative environment, both in and out of the office. Keeping your team happy and engaged will result in a more motivated and effective workforce and will also have a beneficial impact on staff retention and satisfaction.

When it comes to creating this kind of environment, you should never overlook the power of effective team-building exercises. We’ve all experienced the awkwardness and relative ineffectiveness of stuffy ‘trust-fall’ type activities, but that doesn’t mean that team building doesn’t work — you just need to think a little outside of the box.

When you’re considering which team-building activities to undertake, you need to ensure you keep some key elements in mind. Any exercise aimed at improving overall morale and teamwork should always have a shared objective and defined goals. The activities should match these goals, and employees should be provided with meaningful takeaways and key lessons. There’s nothing wrong with fostering competition within the team as long as it’s healthy, fun and always good-natured.

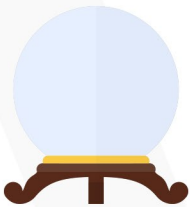
#5: Don't give up

It's incredibly important not to give up when you're working towards trying to achieve your dreams. There will always be situations where the easiest thing to do is to simply quit, but you've just got to work day and night to overcome those difficulties.

If you do fail, just brush yourself off and move on to something else. Dealing with failure is much easier if you have put everything you can into avoiding it.

“ Always do your utmost to rise to the challenge, and if you do fail there's nothing wrong with simply trying again – you'll be amazed at what you can achieve. ”

It's easy to see the value of being determined and not giving up on your dreams, but this is easier said than done, particularly in the face of a tough setback or disappointment. So how can we become more determined?



One very effective way is to steer clear of the concept of 'destiny'. Thinking that things just 'aren't meant to be' or that your future is pre-determined can be comforting in some circumstances, but at the same time, it's often the easy way out when the alternative requires grit and courage. Instead, understand that you create your destiny, and nothing is pre-determined. If you want to be the leader of a successful team, business or any other venture, don't be lulled into thinking whatever happens is destined to be. You can make it happen yourself, with hard work and a never-say-die attitude.

One of the most powerful ways of increasing your motivation and determination is to validate yourself and acknowledge your own past achievements. The dopamine reward system in the brain goes into overdrive when we achieve positive feedback, even if this feedback comes from ourselves.

Self-belief is also hugely important when it comes to being more determined, and a positive self-image can be a really powerful motivator. Think of yourself as someone who relishes new challenges and is more than capable of succeeding at whatever you put your mind to.

This kind of positive reinforcement will also activate the dopamine reward system of the brain, which is strongly associated with motivation and determination.



If all else fails, drink coffee! Studies have shown that coffee can release dopamine into the brain and has the ability to sharpen and increase mental focus.

Scientists have also found that caffeine can enhance certain cognitive tasks and spark the motivation and reward circuit in the brain. Just make sure you don't overdose on caffeine, as it can lead to an energy slump later in the day.

#6:

Make lots of lists and keep setting new challenges

If you don't write down your ideas, they could be forgotten by the next day. Write lots of lists to keep track of your goals and mark them off as you achieve them. You'll be amazed by what challenges you can overcome.

“ You should keep setting yourself new targets and challenges – unless you actually organize yourself and write the kinds of things you want to achieve, there's a danger that as time slips by, you won't achieve a lot. ”

Staying organized is an important part of any business, and you can use lists to keep you – and your team – on track. You don't need to use paper lists either, if that's not your thing. There are many excellent online tools for organisation and lists, with Evernote and Podio being excellent examples.

You can make more than simple 'to do' lists too. Split your lists up into month, week and days, with overall goals and challenges in the longer time-span lists and detailed tasks in the day-to-day lists. Start your list with the thing you want to do the least, and keep it in that order. That way you can check off the most annoying tasks early in the day when you feel most motivated, keeping that motivation (and accompanying feeling of achievement) going throughout the day.

If you're finding a certain task particularly difficult, split it up into smaller tasks and list them in order – tick off each task as you complete it and soon you'll be halfway through the job. Encourage your team members to do the same thing, you'll be amazed at the impact it can have on motivation and productivity.

#7:

Spend time with your family and learn to delegate

The art of delegation is one of the most important skills for an entrepreneur to master.

“ If you can find people who can take on tasks you aren't particularly good at, it can free you up to plan for the future and, more importantly, give you time to spend with your family. ”

If you're an entrepreneur or a team manager, then mastering the art of delegation should be considered a hugely important task. We're not all good delegators, particularly those of us who are perfectionists or precious about our ideas, but we need to be able to assign team members to suitable tasks, particularly if they're better at those tasks than we are.



Delegation is especially key if you're trying to grow a business, as you simply can't take on every job yourself.

So how can we learn to get better at delegating? The first thing to do is to pick tasks to delegate 'up' and 'down'. The former corresponds to tasks that require specific knowledge and/or skills, particularly those that don't relate to the core services of your business. For example, things like accounts, billing, legal issues and the like should all be delegated to skilled employees, companies or freelancers. Delegating 'down' refers to those tasks which don't require any particular skills or knowledge, such as postage, sending out virtual mailers, booking appointments, etc. Delegate these tasks to a subordinate, freeing up your valuable time to concentrate on more important tasks.

You need to learn to let go of the 'if I want something done right, I have to do it myself' mentality and understand that your team is there to support you and the business.



If you're struggling with delegating, start with smaller tasks and ensure you give your team members clear instructions and be absolutely clear about what you expect the outcome to be. Giving clear instructions and expectations allows you to judge the end results more effectively and gives your team members a much better chance of doing the job the way you want it done.

It's key to understand that delegation, apart from freeing up your own time, will empower your staff and contractors, making them feel trusted, valued and appreciated, and will give them the opportunity to develop their own skills, knowledge and abilities.

#8:

Try turning off the TV and get out there and do things

Instead of sitting in front of a screen all your life, try turning off the TV or the computer and go out into the world.

“ With so many fascinating people to meet, adventures to embark on and challenges to overcome, sitting in front of the TV is simply a waste of time. ”

It's important to be able to switch off now and again, but there's so much waiting for you out in the real world, and those experiences can be incredibly valuable for an entrepreneur.



So what is out there for an entrepreneur? Instead of spending your free time in front of a screen, an entrepreneur can find greater value attending conventions and lectures or meeting new people at networking events and social gatherings. The old adage goes 'it's not what you know, it's who you know', and the only way to make these important contacts is out in the real world. So follow Branson's advice: get out there and *do things*.

#9:

When people say bad things about you, prove them wrong

There will always be people who try to hang on the coattails of successful people.

“ The best thing you can do is not only ignore them, but prove them wrong in every single way. ”

Ignoring criticism is a great skill if you can do it, but it's not always that straightforward, particularly if you're a sensitive person or eager to be accepted within a certain community. So how can you deal with criticism more effectively?

Firstly, you should try and learn something from any criticism you receive. It's important to understand that most criticism is probably based – at least in part – on some truths. It may appear negative, but criticism presents us with an opportunity to learn and improve. In order to try and learn from criticism, train yourself to ignore the tone in which it's delivered and focus solely on the suggestions.

Once you focus on learning from criticism, you can begin to value it. This is particularly important if you're a manager, director or team leader, as you may only hear praise on a day-to-day basis (even if it's insincere). When you do receive criticism, learn to value it as something constructive and as an opportunity to learn what you could be doing better.

If you are struggling to deal with criticism, you should try and wait before responding. Responding immediately – with anger or injured pride – will likely result in confrontation and will do nothing to help your ability to deal with criticism. Wait and reflect on the criticism you've received, and work out the best way to respond. This also gives you the opportunity to recognise false criticism and value real criticism that offers an opportunity to learn.

#10:

Do what you love and have a sofa in the kitchen

You only live one life, so it's important to do things that you enjoy. The truth is, so long as you've got a kitchen that has space for a sofa, a bedroom and a partner that you love, you don't need much else.

“ If you're doing something that you really love, it will result in a much more enjoyable life rather than doing something purely for the sake of making money. ”

Of course we all have to pay the bills and we can't all spend our days doing something we truly love. It is, however, possible to learn to love your career, even if you're not working in your dream job.

First and foremost, you need to realise that your job doesn't define you, but how you do that job does. Your attitude at work and the way you treat people doesn't go unnoticed, and it can have a profound influence on the people around you. There are many times in life when you can't control your situation, but you can always choose how you react to it.

Although it's easier said than done, you should try and learn to stop focusing on the money. You will never have enough money – no matter how much you make, there are always going to be things you could do if you had more – so stop using it as an excuse. You should understand that work should be about more than just the paycheck for it to be truly fulfilling.

You should also try and find the significance in your work – it may require some creative thinking, but it's absolutely possible. No matter what you do, you can find significance in it if you think long and hard about your role. Perspective plays a crucial role in your level of satisfaction in your career and your overall sense of well-being, and being able to shift your perspective can go a long way in learning to love your career.

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