



It's not often that you get the chance to interview an individual like Sir Richard Branson. Being an aspiring entrepreneur myself, there is nothing more powerful than hearing valuable pearls of wisdom, from significant individuals who have achieved major success in their chosen field. Read our exclusive interview with Sir Richard Branson and get the opportunity to be inspired, empowered and encouraged to go forth on your own, unique journey.

I had the pleasure of attending your event at the Royal Opera House which was organised by the phenomenal and truly inspirational young people, who were chosen to become 'Virgin Media Pioneers'. What made you decide to start this venture?

I believe it is vital that young people in the UK have the confidence and ambition to keep up. Virgin Media Pioneers champions undiscovered talent by giving people all the tools they need to succeed in their chosen career or business.

'The Project' was an initiative from Virgin Media Pioneers that brought together Virgin Media's ambition to harness 'entertainment for good', with an entrepreneurial endeavour like no other. Young people across the UK were challenged to take on the epic task of producing an ambitious live event with a largely open brief, simply aiming to celebrate and demonstrate young British talent and initiative – with just six weeks planning time!

What have you taken from this experience?

Whenever I get the chance to meet with our Virgin Media Pioneers I am always inspired by their ideas and the businesses they are creating. There are some great entrepreneurs out there, who with a little help and nurturing; really will go on to make a difference in their chosen field.

A great example of this is Jamal Edwards who has created the online music platform SBTv. Jamal runs a very successful company, employs a team of staff and most importantly seems to LOVE what he is doing. This is very important when starting a new business, you have to be passionate and really love what you do. Do not enter a new business with the sole intention of making money.

When you started out in business, times were very much different. However, today's advancements in technology mean that entrepreneurs, on all levels now possess more ways to share their skills and business ideas through diverse mediums. In your opinion Richard, how best can aspiring entrepreneurs use the advancements in technology to their advantage?

I think one of the main advantages of social media and the technology available today is the engagement with your customers. Being able to hear first-hand what you are doing right or wrong is invaluable especially when starting a new venture. Don't be afraid to ask questions, speak with your peers and embrace new technology.



In business, experience goes along way. For over 30 years Virgin has been a key influence within the business world. What has been some of the best advice you have been given on your journey that you can share with others?

Freddie Laker was a good friend and mentor of mine. He gave me fantastic advice when Virgin Atlantic started out. He warned me that I would have to defend my business against monopolist and protectionist governments, and also explained why we needed to beat competitors on quality of service as well as price.

He concluded his advice with the immortal words: “When BA come after you, which they inevitably will, shout long, shout hard and then sue the bastards!” Within six years everything he had predicted in that one sentence came true, but — partly thanks to his advice — we won. I will never forget him.

Be ambitious, honest and passionate always. Don’t give up and be bold with your ideas”

We have all seen the growth and widespread influence of Virgin for many years and one thing that is particularly evident is the way in which you always appear to be humble, open and approachable. What would you say are the contributing factors behind your down to earth nature? (The Usain Bolt-Virgin Media ad campaign comes to mind)

Thank you!

I was raised in a loving, warm and respectful family, we were taught to be kind to others and to think of ways to always help those around us. I then went onto to marry a very down- to- earth and strong Glaswegian lady named Joan, who would not stand for any fancy behaviour.

I truly believe and have always believed that you should treat others in the way you expect to be treated.

You may be an inspiration to many but whom or what would you say have been an inspiration within your own life?

I have been very lucky over the years to surround myself with some very inspirational figures.

As mentioned earlier Freddie Laker was one of those.

Nelson Mandela is just the most incredible man, and someone I am proud to call a friend. Peter Gabriel and I founded the Elders, which is a collection of global leaders who are helping to diffuse conflict around the world. Each one of our members are highly inspirational.

Out of all of the business ventures you have under the banner of Virgin, which has been the most exciting to launch and why?

I am often ask this question – All of our business launches are fun and exciting and it would be unfair to name just one.

It is not your wealth or your fame that sets you apart from other well-known successful entrepreneurs on the world stage. What I feel is your most defining characteristic is that you never allowed the negative labelling and the then stigma attached to your undiagnosed dyslexia to diminish your self- belief. What advice can you offer individuals who are facing a similar situation?

I would always advise those who are facing negativity or stigmas to find an area that you excel in and focus on this. Some people are creative, some academic, it does not matter; we all have something to give. Believe in yourself and that you will succeed. Be your own cheerleader and don't give up at the first hurdle.



What drives and motivates you the most within your life?

I am motivated and driven by the opportunity to learn new things, to try new ventures and meet new people. I have been very fortunate to have led an interesting life, part of that has been because of my willingness, and Virgin's willingness, to keep trying out new ventures.

Do you have any positive quotations that you apply to your life? If yes, what are they?

'I don't think of work as work and play as play. It's all living.'

'Having a personality of caring about people is important. You can't be a good leader unless you generally like people. That is how you bring out the best in them.'

Finally, in the face of adversity, what would Branson do?

In the face of adversity I would just stick to it, push through, overcome it, climb over it, dig under neath it, and go around it. Sometimes the problem is that while we are going through so much frustration and adversity, we tend to not focus on solutions but instead focus on the problem at hand.

Please complete these sentences.....

I am at my best when....I'm being challenged or creating new ventures, opportunities.

Self-belief can....and will get you through dark days. Believe in you and what you can achieve.

Three words that best describe me are....Fun, Honest, Passionate

I am at my happiest when....I could have fun with this answer, but let's keep it clean! Surrounded by my friends and family. We are very lucky to call Necker home, it's our little jewel in the Caribbean.

I am most passionate about...making business a force for good!

I dream of..... I don't really dream. I sleep very well at night.

I believe in....making a difference. We can all play a part in protecting the planet and the future of our children's, children.

I am a ‘superman’ because..... In the near future I plan to go explore the depths of the Oceans and travel to space.

@Richardbranson

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