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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Key to Success: Start Before You Feel Ready

In 1966, a dyslexic sixteen-year-old boy dropped out of school. With the assistance of a friend, he started a student magazine and started generating an income by selling advertisements to local businesses. For lack of funds, he managed the entire operation from the crypt inside a local church.

After four years, he started looking for new ways to expand his small magazine concern and began selling mail order records to students who bought the magazine. The records sold so well that he was able to build his first record store the following year. After two years of selling records, he decided to launch his own record label and recording studio.

He rented the recording studio out to local artists, including one named Mike Oldfield. In that small recording studio, Oldfield created his hit album, *Tubular Bells*, which was the

record label's first release. The album went on to sell more than 5 million copies worldwide.

Over the next decade, the record label grew with the addition of bands like the Sex Pistols, Culture Club and the Rolling Stones. The young boy who dropped out of school and kept starting things despite his inexperience and knowledge eventually started an airline business, then trains, then mobile phones and so forth. Almost 50 years later, there were over 400 companies under his leadership.

Today, that young boy is a billionaire and his name is Sir Richard Branson.

The Start of Virgin Airlines

At a recent conference, Branson told the story of how he started Virgin Airlines, it serves as a great example of his approach to business and life.

“I was in my late twenties, so I had a business, but nobody knew who I was at the time. I was headed to the Virgin Islands and I had a very pretty girl

waiting for me, so I was, umm, determined to get there on time.

At the airport, my final flight to the Virgin Islands was cancelled because of maintenance issues or something. The problem is that it was the last flight out that night. I thought this was ridiculous, so I went and chartered a private airplane to take me to the Virgin Islands, which I did not have the money to do.

Next thing, I picked up a small blackboard, wrote “Virgin Islands - \$29” on it, and went over to the group of people who had been on the same flight that was cancelled as me. I sold tickets for the rest of the seats on the plane, used their money to pay for the chartered plane, and we all went to the Virgin Islands that night.”

- Richard Branson

What stands out for me about Branson is the fact that he is proactive. He does not wait for approval, authorisation or consent before he starts ventures. Think about it, he dropped out of school to start a business. He signed the Sex Pistols to his record label when everyone else said they were too controversial. He even chartered a plane when he did not have the money to pay for it. An important lesson one might learn from his actions is that one would have to take moderate risks. After all, if that is not the case, we will never attempt such actions.

When everyone else balks or comes up with a good reason for why the time is not right, Branson gets started. He figures out how to stop procrastinating and take the first step – even if it seems outlandish.

When in doubt...simply start

While Sir Richard Branson is an extreme example, we could all learn something from his approach to life. If you look at the habits of successful individuals in different spheres of life you will see that successful people start before they feel ready.

Who better to embody this principle than Branson himself. In fact, the name of his business empire (Virgin), was chosen because Branson and his partners were “virgins” when it came to business.

Branson has been at the helm of more than 400 different businesses ventures, charities and expeditions. It is simply not possible for him to have felt prepared, qualified and ready to start all of them. In fact, it is unlikely that he was qualified or prepared to start *any* of them. Branson admitted himself that he had never flown an aeroplane and didn't know anything about the engineering of planes, yet he goes on to establish one of the most successful airlines in the world.

Coincidence you might think? I beg to differ. I think it is a case of the “chosen ones” choosing themselves.

If you are working on something important, it is unlikely that you will ever feel ready. A side effect of doing important and creative work is the fact that you are pulled in different directions by excitement and confusion at the same time.

You are bound to feel uncertain, unprepared and unqualified. But the reality is that what you have right now is enough and indeed all you will have. You can go ahead and plan, delay and

revise all you want, but believe in yourself enough to know what you have right now is enough to start and continue. Whether you want to start a business, write a book, lose weight or achieve any other goals...who you are, what you have and what has brought you to this point in your life *right now* is good enough to get going. Praise yourself that you at least doing something and not just thinking about it.

We all start in the same place: no money, no resources, no contacts and no experience. The difference is that some people – the successful ones – choose to start anyway.

Whatever your circumstances, my wish is that you will be brave enough to start before you feel ready.