

THE VIRGIN WAY

Everything I Know About Leadership

RICHARD BRANSON

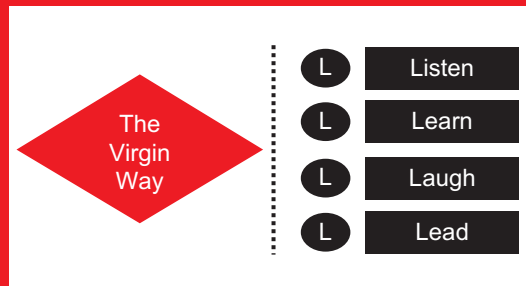
RICHARD BRANSON is the iconic founder of Virgin Group, a conglomerate which now numbers more than 400 companies. He left school at age sixteen to start his first business venture which was a magazine called *Student*. He later established his own record label (Virgin Records), built a chain of record stores (Virgin Megastores), set up an airline (Virgin Atlantic) and established many other businesses. Richard Branson has also made several successful (and unsuccessful) world record attempts and undertaken many large-scale humanitarian initiatives. As of October 2014, the Virgin Group now has 50,000 employees who generate in excess of \$30 billion in annual revenues. Richard Branson has an estimated personal net worth of approx. \$5 billion.

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MAIN IDEA

The "Virgin Way" of doing business really isn't all that hard to describe although it can be challenging to implement. It generally comes down to just the one maxim: If you don't enjoy it, don't do it. Life's much too short to spend any of it working on what you don't like.

Specifically, the four keys to doing business and leading the Virgin Way are:



Don't spend your life looking in the rear-view mirror or talking aimlessly about how things are going to somehow be magically better in the future. Get busy doing what makes your heart soar. Just get out there and do it.

"Having what we like to call 'serious fun' is at the core of 'the Virgin Way' and that's something for which I will never apologize. Being passionately engaged and enjoying every minute of what you do is an attitudinal thing – a spark – that cannot be mandated, trained, put in a job description or an employee manual. It's something that's either in a person's DNA or not, and as such has to come from within."

– Richard Branson

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

– Mahatma Gandhi

"If you live every day like it's your last, someday you'll almost certainly be right."

– Steve Jobs

L Listen Pages 2- 3

Listen intently to anyone who has an opinion to share. It's amazing how much you can learn that way. If you get into the habit of listening deliberately to your customers, to the marketplace and even to those who have made mistakes in the past, you'll be amazed at how much you can learn. Great leaders are active listeners first and foremost.

"I'd just urge you to do more listening than talking, don't be afraid to wear your passion on your sleeve for all to see, and when in doubt, trust your instincts."

L Learn Pages 4 - 5

Avail yourself of the best education you can get. Then never stop learning for the rest of your life by getting out and experiencing things first-hand. Reading about things in books is useful and interacting with academics is fine but to really get to know something, get your hands dirty with new experiences, businesses, people and cultures.

"Life isn't a dress rehearsal. By simply sticking with it, brushing yourself down and trying again, you'll be amazed what you can achieve."

L Laugh Page 6

The people you lead are always going to be more committed and more passionate if they're having fun while they work. Make this your central aim. The fruits of passion applied to your business can be incredible and far reaching.

"I love nothing better than what appears to be an outlandish challenge. As any of my colleagues from Virgin will attest, in my vocabulary the phrase 'seemingly impossible' is defined as 'something that should be a lot of fun disproving.'"

L Lead Pages 7 - 8

As a leader, your job is to keep it simple for everyone else. Build a work environment which is open and inclusive and then let people contribute what they bring to the party. Find ways to make a positive difference to other people's lives and you'll do just fine as a leader. That's really all there is to it.

"Keep it simple, stupid, and above all else keep it coming."

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