

Five top tips to starting a successful business

By Richard Branson



As LinkedIn is a business that started in a living room, much like Virgin began in a basement, I thought my first blog on the site should be about how to simply start a successful business. Here are five top tips I've picked up over the years.

1. **Listen more than you talk**

We have two ears and one mouth, using them in proportion is not a bad idea! To be a good leader you have to be a great listener. Brilliant ideas can spring from the most unlikely places, so you should always keep your ears open for some shrewd advice. This can mean following online comments as closely as board meeting notes, or asking the frontline staff for their opinions as often as the CEOs. Get out there, listen to people, draw people out and learn from them.

2. **Keep it simple**

You have to do something radically different to stand out in business. But nobody ever said different has to be complex. There are thousands of simple business solutions to problems out there, just waiting to be solved by the next big thing in business. Maintain a focus upon innovation, but don't try to reinvent the wheel. A simple change for the better is far more effective than five complicated changes for the worse.

3. **Take pride in your work**

Last week I enjoyed my favourite night of the year, the Virgin Stars of the Year Awards, where we celebrated some of those people who have gone the extra mile for us around the Virgin world. With so many different companies, nationalities and personalities represented under one roof, it was interesting to see what qualities they all have in common. One was pride in their work, and in the company they represent. Remember your staff are your biggest brand advocates, and focusing on helping them take pride will shine through in how they treat your customers.

4. **Have fun, success will follow**

If you aren't having fun, you are doing it wrong. If you feel like getting up in the morning to work on your business is a chore, then it's time to try something else. If you are having a good time, there is a far greater chance a positive, innovative atmosphere will be nurtured and your business will flourish. A smile and a joke can go a long way, so be quick to see the lighter side of life

5. **Rip it up and start again**

If you are an entrepreneur and your first venture isn't a success, welcome to the club! Every successful businessperson has experienced a few failures along the way – the important thing is how you learn from them. Don't allow yourself to get disheartened by a setback or two, instead dust yourself off and work out what went wrong. Then you can find the positives, analyse where you can improve, rip it up and start again.