

Biography of Richard Branson

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July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020

## **Biography of Richard Branson**

### **Abstract**

Richard Branson is an entrepreneur and founder of over 400 Virgin Groups. The Virgin Group grew from a small record store founded in 1972 to become a major multinational corporation with interests in transportation, media and entertainment. Richard Branson is also a glamorous character, taking part in a variety of tough adventures, including transatlantic sailing and hot air balloon trips.

“My general attitude to life is to enjoy every minute of every day. I never do anything with a feeling of, “Oh God, I have to do this today.”Richard Branson, (The Guardian newspaper, September 20, 2008)

## The Biography of Richard Branson

On July 18, 1950 in the region of Blackheath, Richard Branson was born. By profession, Richard's father was a lawyer and his mother was an entrepreneur. Branson attended Skate Cliff School and then Stowe School. He suffered from dyslexia at a very young age, so he was not good at research.

Sir Richard Charles Nicholas Branson (Richard Charles Nicholas Branson) - famous English entrepreneur, founder of one of the largest in the world of private corporations "Virgin", which unites under its brand a large number of completely different companies. Analyzing the biography of Richard Branson, sooner or later you understand: he should have been born one and a half hundred years earlier, and not in England, but in the United States. It seems that it was from Branson that Theodore Dreiser copied his heroes. Absolute recklessness, impudence, the external absence of any calculated strategy - this is how fortunes were made in America in the 19th century. To enter the prim and until today English business with such manners seems to be sheer madness, but Branson proved that only by generating seemingly insane ideas can win their place in the sun.

Branson was born to Sir Edward Branson and flight attendant Huntley Flindt. Having only a title in his soul, the dyslexic father could not follow the path of many ancestors and become a successful lawyer. The income from the family property was enough only to put little Branson in a privileged school.

Teachers "Stove School" only in the third year of study found out that Branson Jr. had a paternal illness: Richard could read, but did not understand at all what he was reading. Flogging has traditionally been used as therapy. Of course, the rods did not help his studies, but they had another positive effect: Richard became completely insensitive to pain, both his own and someone else's. And already at school, Branson realized that he was not destined to become a lawyer or a military man, like his noble ancestors.

### **Branson's Career Start**

Branson never graduated from school, but he probably retained his hatred of it: after moving to London, he began publishing the Pupil magazine. The main topic of the magazine was school reform and making life easier for schoolchildren. The stormy 60s were in the yard, and the topic of emancipation of schoolchildren was very relevant. The author of spy novels John le Carré recalled: he was flattered that his opinion was of interest to the editors of the "most popular school magazine" in England (excessive modesty was never one of Branson's merits). The novelist fell for Branson's fishing rod along with J.-P. Sartre and Mick Jagger. True, even such authors did not bring success to the "Apprentice": the project went bankrupt, not having lived even two years. But that didn't stop Branson. Likewise - in non-business circles, he is usually called "a lie" - Branson starts a business selling records.

To the manufacturer, he tells stories about the huge export network and achieves a discount, part of which he shares with customers. Everyone is happy except Branson. Why live on interest when you can churn out records yourself?

## **Richard Branson's business**

Richard founds a music label, and for the first time in his life hits exactly the top ten: the unknown Mike Oldfield becomes a star, and the circulation of his first album exceeds five million. This was the first disc released by Virgin Records. The name became symbolic and fully reflected Branson's business credo: to enter with virgin purity those markets that seem to be established due to the long-term presence of giants. Virgin pushed British Airways out of the airline market, Pepsi and Coca-cola out of the beverage market, Hayatt and Hilton out of the hotel business. Now, having made three billion dollars, Branson is mainly involved in charity work and sports. His name is often featured on news broadcasts, and he was twice featured in the animated series The Simpsons, which further underlines his importance. He went down in history as a man-brand who proved by his own example that nothing is impossible in business. A striking example is his company "Virgin" ("virgin"), the name of which does not mean at all the state of his soul or his target audience, but experience and knowledge (zero, being absolute laymen) with which Branson and his partners take on any business and win.

Richard Branson is a unique businessman. Its success is phenomenal. Starting with Student magazine, Branson has created one of the most famous brands of our time, which now includes about 400 different companies. What is the secret of Richard Branson's success? It is impossible to answer this question unequivocally. But we can say for sure that Sir Richard is the image of a typical businessman who is always ready to take risks. He was never afraid to risk everything, both in business and in everyday life (traveling around the world in a balloon is a prime example of this). Today there are a lot of small businessmen who want to build a serious

"business", but at the same time, not getting involved in adventures, but working in the style of "the quieter you drive, the further you will be." It is unlikely that they will succeed. To achieve something worthwhile, you need to take risks, put everything on the line ...

Branson's life can be summed up in a commercial for one of his Virgin Airlines companies:

### **Thirst for primacy**

Richard Branson was born on July 18, 1950 in the UK. Since childhood, Richard wanted to be the first in all the things he did. His first successes were in the field of sports (since he studied very badly). Branson was involved in many sports, but was especially good at football. (and, if you also take into account that there is a cult of football in England, then it is clear why he was tolerated at school, despite his poor performance)

However, Branson did not make a football career, as at one of the school tournaments he received a serious injury, which in the future did not allow him to engage in this sport. After the injury, Richard did not have the best times in life, since sports were the factor that saved him from failures in school and, accordingly, gave a guarantee that he would not be kicked out of school.

Branson's first business ventures were unsuccessful. First, Richard and a friend named Nick tried to grow trees and sell them on the eve of Christmas. But nothing worked, since all the shoots were eaten by the rabbits. It should be noted that Branson managed to get revenge on the rabbits. Nick and Richard set up a real hare hunt, and even shot several, eventually selling their carcasses to a butcher shop for 800 pounds.

Branson's second entrepreneurial experience was in the parrot trade. It also failed quite quickly. (well, there was no crazy demand for budgies in England at the time)

Richard Branson founded his first serious business at the age of 15. It was Student magazine. Richard came to the idea of organizing his own magazine after a series of letters to the headmaster of Stowe School (in which he studied at that time) about how to reform the structure of the school itself. Ideas, I must say, were not bad, for example, Branson did not want to attend the matches of the school football team, as he himself could not play, and "watching others succeed" was extremely painful for him. In addition, he believed that the school canteen should be converted into a buffet, as this would help the school save money on staff. At the same time, he advocated the abolition of the ban on having any conversation during lunch. Well, Branson also described the idea of a bar for sixth graders.

Student

The magazine was originally conceived as an alternative to the Stow School newspaper. But in the end, Johnny and Richard decided to do more. They wanted to make Student a magazine for all students in England. Why students? After all, the original idea was to make the magazine an alternative to Stow's school newspaper. Well, firstly, Branson thought that if you make a magazine for students, then high school students will also be interested in it, and if you do it only for students, albeit high school, then students will not read it anyway. It's simple.

Richard then compiled a list of about 25 advertisers, MPs, and sent a letter to WH Smith asking if it would like to sell a student magazine on its networks. The time was just right for such a publication. Students stood up for rights, freedom and, in general, quite actively participated in the public life of the country.

Branson's main activity, at that time, was calling potential advertisers, publishers and distribution networks. Richard turned his school room into an office. However, the headmaster of the school refused Branson's request to put a telephone in his room. So Richard had to make all the calls from the phone booth. Expensive ... However, Branson quickly found a solution that allowed him to make free calls. He just called the phone company and said that his call fell through. He was connected free of charge, and the telephone operator said, as if she was his secretary: "Mr. Branson will talk to you." Richard loved it. He was 15 years old.

Things were getting worse and worse for Branson at school, but the situation with the magazine was diametrically opposite. In the beginning, most of the potential advertisers turned down Branson. But he found a fairly effective solution. For example, Richard called the Coca-Cola Company and said that Pepsi had already advertised on Student. It worked. He also used a win-win tactic, asking this question: "Are you interested in hiring the best graduates of universities and schools?" Branson's answer was always yes. "In that case, we publish the magazine just for you," he continued.

Now, remember the reasoning about risk at the beginning of this article. By making all these calls and negotiating with advertisers, Student magazine has never been published, only Richard and his friend Johnny worked on it. If Branson had a clear business plan, he would never have taken up this adventure, but he was only 15, and so he did not even think about failure. During school holidays, Richard met his childhood friend Nick (with whom he traded parrots and Christmas trees) and told everything about the magazine. Nick said he would help and decided to distribute it in Amplefort.

Johnny and Richard have been working on the magazine for over a year. During this time they sent out a lot of letters, but there was still no result. Probably, most people would simply give up this venture and focus on their studies, in which Branson was doing worse at that time.

Ultimately, the first advertiser was found, and Branson and a partner received a check for £250. Moreover, the famous artist Gerald Scarfe has made several illustrations for the magazine. (he is the author of the cover art for Pink Floyed's "The Wall," and also an animator for Walt Disney Studios Hercules)

In 1967, Richard Branson graduated from Stowe School. The director's parting words were: "Congratulations Richard, I think that you will either go to jail or become a millionaire." In January 1968, the first issue of Student magazine was published.

The magazine quickly gained popularity, especially since it regularly featured interviews with the idols of young people of those years, among which the young Mick Jagger and John Lennon should be singled out. The magazine was distributed through word of mouth, as well as with the help of a large number of distributors who gave half of their proceeds to the magazine itself. It was a scheme that could really interest the sellers, one might even say that it was to some extent "cost accounting", a business process in which everyone participated. Distributors, loners, also had their own business, they distributed Student, and how well they did it and how much money they made depended on how much money they made.

Ad slots for the magazine were hard to come by, and it became clear to Branson every day that Student was not paying off. Even despite the flattering reviews in the press, the magazine did not become a serious source of income. By the way, about the press. Richard and Johnny organized quite interesting communication with the journalists who came to Student in order to understand

what was causing such a fuss. (Yes, the magazine was popular) When the journalists sat down for a dialogue with Richard, the bell rang. Johnny picked up the phone, and then said: "Richard, you Mick Jagger (or someone else) on the phone." After that, Branson answered the phone and started a dialogue with his opponent. Usually it sounded like: "Yes, that's a great idea, let's meet." After that, Branson ended the conversation, sat in front of the journalist, and then several more calls from "celebrities" were heard, but Branson yelled at Johnny to tell him that Richard would call them back later. Ultimately, the journalists came out dumbfounded from the reception. If such stars call Student ... Of course, no one called. These were fake calls to impress journalists.

In 1968, Richard and about 20 other magazine employees moved from Johnny's parents' basement to an apartment on Albion Street. At the same time, under the auspices of the magazine Branson opens a counseling center for young people. This was extremely important at that time, since it was then that people were seriously concerned about the prevalence of drugs and sexually transmitted diseases among young people. Richard's working day was quite interesting at the time, as he himself says. Branson was lying on his bed talking with young people or advertisers, and during breaks he had sex with girlfriends (and early co-workers). This was normal, since at that time the ideology of "free love" and the hippie movement dominated. In addition, there was only one youth working in the company.

There were also problems, since the company's office was located in a residential building, the constant checks by inspectors burdened the work. In addition, the consulting firm's advertisements were at risk because they contained the word "venereal disease," which at the time could not be used in advertisements. Finally, Richard had a conflict with longtime friend and partner Nick. He wanted to "hook" Branson, as he believed that he was leading the company

to the bottom. As a result, Nick left the magazine, but Branson remained his friend. Nick would later become an important Virgin employee.

At this time, young people were more and more interested in music. It was in music that students' protest was best seen. Therefore, Richard Branson decided to do it.

### Music business

To begin with, Branson and a small group of associates decided to mail out the records. The original name for the company was Slipped Disc. Everything would be fine, but only this name was clearly associated with the music industry, and even then Richard Branson wanted to have one name under which all his future projects would go (did he think that there would be so many of them !?) Discussing the title once again company among Student employees, Branson received an offer from one of the girls to name the company "Virgin" (Virgin). Virgin was born .

Virgin Mail Order Records quickly became popular. Firstly, advertisements in Student magazine helped, and secondly, the prices of records sent by mail were lower than in stores. Nevertheless, the growth of the business made it clear to Richard that he could not cope with all this alone. (most of the employees worked for the company temporarily, usually a month or two) The main problem was that Branson did not really like and knew how to keep track of finances, and therefore he turned to an old friend Nick. He agreed, eventually receiving a 40% stake in Virgin Mail Order Records.

If 1970 was a successful year for the Virgin Mail Order, then the next one is almost disastrous, since in 1971 there was a strike of British postal workers. It was then that Nick and Richard decided to open their first store selling music records. There was not much time to open the

store, as the money was running out, and the postal workers were not going to go to work. After a long search for a place for a store, they took the second floor of a shoe store on Oxford Street. There was no money to pay for his rent, so he had to go to some tricks. Nick convinced the landlord, who had his own shoe store on the ground floor, that the crowd that went to their music store would buy shoes on the way to his. I must say that there really was a crowd, but no one bought shoes.

The first Virgin store itself became the perfect haven for rock music lovers. Branson specially placed pillows in it on which visitors could lie, listening to new hits. (they were expected to buy the record afterwards) Despite strong initial sales, they soon plummeted. I had to change the style of the store. In the first version, too many visitors came to just listen to music and chat, which disturbed real customers. However, after the changes, sales began to rise again. The consulting service was soon renamed HELP (now a charitable foundation), and Branson began looking for a buyer for Student magazine.

The music business is tricky. A fusion of art and business, to be more precise. And the main money in it revolves not at all around shops and concerts, but around record companies. Richard Branson understood this, and therefore decided to open his own. The idea was this: to buy a country house where musicians can come to record their creations as much as they need. There, no one will be able to interfere with them, and far from the bustle of the city, they will be able to truly focus on music. Together with Virgin employee Tom Newman, Richard chose a £ 35,000 estate in Shipton-on-Chervil. True, in the end, Branson managed to negotiate with the seller for 30 thousand, provided that all the money would be paid immediately. Of course, Branson didn't have that kind of money. I had to go to the Coutts bank. Before that, the Coutts used to see Richard dressed loosely, but this time he was in a suit, which means that things

are going really badly. The bank decided. However, the sales reports for Virgin Mail Order and the company's store have been good. The bank pledged Branson 20,000 as collateral. It remained to find 10 more 2500 thousand Branson received from his parents. They set aside this amount for each of their children, and planned to hand it over at the age of 30. But in this situation, Richard received this money earlier.

The remaining 7,500 were lent to him by his Aunt Joyce. (later he learned that for this she had mortgaged her house!) The estate was bought. A gradual transformation into a recording studio began. Despite the rapid development, Branson was completely in debt. In addition to 30 thousand for the estate, the company had a long time of 5000 at the store. At this point, Richard will try to (unintentionally) smuggle records. He will only need three raids to pay his debts. But alas, he will be caught and even spend the night in prison. As Branson himself would later note, this was a lesson for him, after which he never broke the law. There was no criminal case against Branson, he was released on bail at his parents' house.

In 1971, Branson's cousin Simon Draper came to London. This man was well versed in music, as no one knew all modern trends and albums of almost every artist. He was a godsend for Virgin.

Virgin's first real breakout was Mike Oldfield with his album Tubular Bells. Subsequently, the next few years, sales from this album will sponsor the recording of other artists, so it is simply impossible to overestimate the importance of this artist for Virgin.

Ultimately Virgin Music had both successful and not so successful artists. For example, the famous Sex Pistols was recorded by Virgin. And many other bands such as the Rolling Stones,

Phil Collins, Boy George, Janet Jackson and so on. Virgin Music was a real cash cow for the entire company.

As for the record stores, the situation was complicated and as a result, most of them were sold. Branson left behind only the so-called Virgin Mega Store. Huge stores selling music and films. (still work today)

1983 saw the emergence of new companies such as Virgin Vision for motion pictures, Virgin Developments for retail and real estate, and Virgin Games for computer games. In addition, Virgin becomes the owner of the Venue nightclub. All of these companies were quite small and were only a small part of the Virgin consortium, whose heart was music.

But Richard Branson is not one of those people who stop there. Therefore, he decided to found his own airline.

### **Virgin airlines**

Before founding its airline, Virgin released 1984, based on the novel of the same name by George Orwell. The film was warmly received by critics, but this did not help him financially. He brought only losses.

Establish your own airline. This is a rather costly and difficult undertaking. Virgin, at that time, had a fairly good financial performance. But, in fact, it was a merit of the company's music business. Neither clubs, nor hotels, did not bring serious income. Richard Branson himself has long been occupied with all thoughts by the airline. Branson ran into serious debt to found Virgin Airlines. In addition, Richard's relationship with his cousin Simon seriously deteriorated, as he was against this venture. This is understandable, since Simon was the driving force behind

Virgin's music business and didn't want to work to pay off another company's debts. Moreover, such as Virgin Airlines, which intends to run a very expensive business.

Despite the fact that none of Branson's closest associates supported him, the decision was made. Virgin leased a Boeing jet for a year, on the condition that if the business does not go well, then it can safely return it.

When everything was ready, Virgin Airlines needed to arrange a demonstration flight for the Flight Operations officials. The flight was not very successful, as the engine caught fire, due to the fact that the Virgin plane flew into a flock of birds. Had to buy a new engine for £ 600,000. As a result, after this payment, Virgin had an excess of the bank limit by 300 thousand pounds. True, the company was waiting for a check from MGM for 6 million pounds, which more than covered all the costs.

In Great Britain, the main rival of all airlines is the legendary British Airways, a monster that prefers to crush competitors in the bud. That's what BA tried to do with Virgin. The methods used by Lord King (BA President) were, to put it mildly, not sporting. Among them, it is worth noting defamation, blatant lies, insults, unfair competition, when BA representatives called Virgin customers and informed them that their flight was canceled, but they could fly on a BA plane at a discount (while BA representatives presented themselves as Virgin Atlantic managers). All these and many other nasty things from a reputable company led to the fact that Richard Branson filed a lawsuit. Virgin won the case.

But to survive, Virgin Airlines needed to differentiate itself favorably from the leader. For this, a number of measures were taken: business class passengers were brought in a limousine directly to the airport, while on a Virgin Airlines flight, passengers were massaged. Gradually, the

company began to receive more and more new routes for flights. Virgin Atlantic became self-sufficient in its first year. However, the airline will cause many more problems for the Virgin Group. Ultimately, in order to jump-start (and just not lose her), Virgin will sell its cash cow Virgin Music to Thorn Emi in 1992 for \$ 1 billion. At the same time, Richard Branson remained president of Virgin Music, but rather for show.

In addition to struggling in the air travel market, in the 1980s Virgin bought a stake in a five-star hotel in Deye, Mallorca. This will be the beginning of the company's hospitality business. At the same time, Virgin Vision will distribute films throughout Europe, Asia, the United States and Australia. Virgin will also be looking at the travel business. Virgin Holidays , a travel company specializing in the United States, will be established in the 1980s. In 1987 Virgin Records opened in the USA and Japan (the latter was especially successful). In the early 90s, Virgin Books , books about rock stars, and Virgin Publishing , will appear . In addition, Virgin begins broadcasting a number of satellite TV channels. Virgin Atlantic Airways' profits will double in 1989. It will be £ 10 million.

### **What's next?**

When the situation with Virgin Atlantic Airways returns to normal in the mid-90s, the company will start thinking about new heights. Richard Branson gets the idea for the Virgin High Speed Rail. (by the way, now Richard Branson is thinking about opening a representative office of Virgin Rail Group in Russia)

In 1993 Virgin Radio began broadcasting on the AM band. In a year, broadcasting will switch to the FM band. At that time, the company will have over 4 million listeners. Virgin Television is established in addition to radio. In 1994, Richard Branson challenges Coca-Cola

and Pepsi with the launch of Virgin Cola. I must say that the virgin cola did not become very popular.

In 1995 Virgin enters a not-so-its own market - financial consulting. However, Virgin Direct Personal will become quite popular. Branson's dream of high-speed rail links across the UK will come true in the mid-1990s. Virgin Group will open many more companies, including Virgin Cars, Virgin Money, Virgin Wines, Virgin Mobile (by the way, the fastest growing mobile operator in the UK), Virgin Energy and Virgin TravelStore.

What is the reason for Virgin's success? At the beginning of this article, I talked about the risk that the founder of the company, Richard Branson, constantly takes. But, there is one more important factor - the company's strategy. If you look at all the successful Virgin Group companies, you can see one important detail. All of these companies are not leaders in their industry. On the contrary, they are opposed to them. For example, in the UK air transport market there is a large BA, a monster company, where all as one employees go in strict suits. She is contrasted with the extravagant Virgin Atlantic, which brings with it fun and clownery. In the mobile market, Vodafone is pitted against Virgin Mobile. Something special is already expected from Virgin. She is exactly the company that, in the public eye, is David challenging Goliath. People love stories like this. And who cares that the whole Virgin is much larger than this very Goliath. The second factor is Richard Branson himself. England appreciates its heroes like no other country. And Richard Branson is the most successful British businessman. So the credibility of Branson in England is unlimited.

Richard Branson turns 68 this year. In addition to business, he is quite seriously involved in charity. Moreover, he believes that in the final stage of life this is his main

priority. Fortunately, financial opportunities allow. Sir Richard Branson is now worth an estimated \$ 7.8 billion. Of the major projects for the future, it is worth noting the Virgin Galactic space station under construction in the United States, which in the near future will send everyone into space for "ridiculous money." Branson is leading this project with Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. It remains only to wish Richard Branson good luck in all his future endeavors, because once his compatriot Freddie Mercury sang: "Show must go on!"

### **Richard Branson - Record Man, Show Man**

Richard Branson is known in the world not only as a talented entrepreneur, but also as a showman, a person-brand, a bright, extraordinary personality.

He holds the world record for crossing the Atlantic Ocean for the fastest time in the history of sailing, in 1986 on the high-speed vessel "Virgin Atlantic Challenger II". His repeated flights in a hot air balloon posed no less risk to his life. So, in 1987 he flew across the Atlantic in a Virgin Atlantic Flyer.

And, remarkably, his balloon was not only the first hot gas balloon to cross the Atlantic, but it was also the largest ever soared. With its volume of 65,000 cubic meters, the balloon's flight speed reached 210 km / h.

In 1991, Richard Branson completed the longest flight in history. He crossed the Pacific Ocean, covering 11 thousand km. from Japan to northern Canada in a 74,000 cubic meter hot air balloon. Breaking the world record, he set a new one at 392 km / h. In the period from 1995 to 1998. Richard Branson, in the circle of loyal friends, several times made new attempts to non-stop flight around the globe, but to no avail.

At the end of 1998, he again managed to set a world record for the distance from Morocco to Hawaii, but the dream of a round-the-world flight was again not destined to come true due to bad weather. But already in March 1999, he finally managed to successfully fly around the world in a balloon with a team from Switzerland. In June 2004, Richard Branson set the speed record for crossing the English Channel in an amphibious vehicle in 1 hour and 40 minutes.

Sometimes only a miracle saved him from certain death. However, thanks to this, he felt the fullness of life. His extreme sporting achievements to this day attract attention not only in his native England, but throughout the world. Plus, it makes the Virgin brand even more popular.

At one time, Richard Branson was the star of the reality show "Rebel - Millionaire" (2004), in which 16 participants competed under his leadership in entrepreneurship, was a guest actor, as a rule, played himself, in many television series, in particular Rescuers Malibu ", " Friends ", " The Simpsons ", " New World ", " Handsome ". and also performed bit parts in films, for example, Around the World in 80 Days, Casino Royale, Superman Returns, etc.

When asked why he needs all this, Richard confesses: "I love to learn new things, I'm very curious. I like to take something well-established and turn it upside down. I perceive life as a single endless process of learning new things. "

Once a Virgin stewardess shared with Branson her idea of opening a bridal salon and after a short time became its co-owner. At the opening ceremony of this very salon, Richard Branson appeared to the public in a wedding dress and full make-up.

And oddly enough, but his petty tricks are perceived by the public as normal. He can afford to come to a party in a woman's dress, jokingly throw pastries, push a guest star into the

pool, or unexpectedly turn another diva of the world show business upside down, he can appear in jeans and a baseball cap at the Queen's official reception.

Of course, it becomes funny when the owner of the Virgin Group is mistaken for an ordinary hard worker and is not allowed to face control even on the doorstep of the club. And having realized who is really in front of them, they vaguely apologize and offer to pass. Richard is not surprised by this, for him this is a familiar situation. I just want to compare him with a prince disguised as a beggar in order to be closer to the people.

Perhaps Richard Branson owes such eccentric behavior to his equally extravagant grandmother Dorothy, who at 89 became the oldest person in Great Britain to pass the Latin American dance exam, and at 90 was recognized as the oldest golfer to score with one hit into the hole. And that is not all! At 99 years old, Dorothy's grandmother traveled around the world on an ocean liner. What do you say, a great example to follow.

Sir Richard Branson has managed to become famous as a virtuoso of advertising shocking. For example, while launching his Virgin Cola fizzy drink, he rode a tank to Times Square (New York, USA) and fired his main competitor Cola-Cola from a cannon a couple of times at a billboard.

In his subsequent interviews, answering the question why he needed to carry out this kind of action, he innocently remarked that advertising in the media, as well as outdoor advertising, cost excessive money. "And so I drove down the street in a tank, and all the front pages of the newspapers are mine," Branson boasted.

And advertising his Virgin Mobile phones in London, he, having previously undressed, climbed up on a construction crane and from there, to the delight of all onlookers, brandished his

new phones for half an hour. Further more, he changed into a stewardess, a clown, a pirate, jumped from a great height on the wings of Icarus, descended from the ski slope of Switzerland completely naked, participated in goat races, came to the Queen's reception in different boots, danced a striptease on a table in women's garters, danced Princess Diana with champagne. And on the birthday of his Virgin airline, he persuaded guest Pamela Anderson to show all the employees her famous breasts.

One of Branson's latest pranks was a daring photo shoot with young and completely nude model Danny Parkinson for Vanity Fair.

### **Personal life of Richard Branson**

Virgin was taking over the world, Richard Branson was pushing higher and higher. He had neither the strength nor the time for his personal life.

Branson met his first American wife, Kristen Tomassi, under the following circumstances - shouting at the top of his lungs: "Contraband!", Branson was running around the house rented by the company for visiting musicians. Looking into one of the rooms, Richard saw a beautiful tall blonde of the Scandinavian type: cheerful eyes, high cheekbones, tight-fitting black jeans and a black bra - the girl was holding a sweater in her hands.

He said that she looked much better this way and that she could not wear anything at all. She asked what kind of smuggling he asked. When the black and shaggy Contraband entered the room wagging their tails, both burst out laughing.

Branson and Kristen spent the day together, at night they were also together, and in the morning she left - her fiance was waiting for her. Richard Branson was not going to put up with

it: in the afternoon Kristen received a strange telegram: "The boat is sinking. Call a pay phone "- and there was his own number. Puzzled Kristen ran out into the street and called back.

And while they were talking, John (he was already guarding at the entrance) entered the apartment, told her boyfriend that the girl had left him, and took her suitcase to his floating house. On the phone, Branson told Christine that he had prepared a surprise for her and that she needed to come to him as soon as possible - the surprise was her own things, which he solemnly dumped on the floor.

The marriage with Kristen Tomassi did not last long for the billionaire. Richard Branson lived not so much with his wife as with the phone: he rang at any time of the day or night, and Richard, looking up from the newspaper, lunch or sex, started doing business. At first Kristen was indignant, then - exclusively in protest - she began to cheat on him, and then went to another. Branson chased her all over the world and yet Kristen did not return - Richard had to come to terms with this, but they remained friends.

In the past, Joan, Branson's second wife, was a saleswoman in an antique store, Branson took her away from her husband, with whom she lived for eight years. He fell in love with her at first sight, brought flowers for a year, went on dates for another year - and one fine evening she stayed in his floating house. Their first child lived only four days, and their second daughter, Holly, was born in 1981, inquisitive and healthy, and three years later she had a brother, Samuel.

Joan was never used to her husband's adventures - a few years ago Richard swam across the Atlantic in a motor boat (the boat went down, but he miraculously managed to escape) - and every time she could not find a place for herself from anxiety. The fact that he constantly

checked himself and tempered fate did not allow her to sleep peacefully - why risk it, because everything is so good with them ?!

Cheerful Richard Branson will turn 62 this year. He is still full of strength and vitality. Nearby is his loving wife Joan and two children.

### **Richard Branson's Success Secrets**

It is impossible to answer this question unequivocally. But we can say for sure that Sir Richard is the image of a typical businessman who is always ready to take risks. He was never afraid to risk everything, both in business and in everyday life (traveling around the world in a balloon is a prime example of this).

Today there are a lot of small businessmen who want to build a serious "business", but at the same time, not getting involved in adventures, but working in the style of "the quieter you drive, the further you will be." It is unlikely that they will succeed. To achieve something worthwhile, you need to take risks, put everything on the line ... Branson's life can be characterized by a commercial for one of his companies Virgin Airlines

What else is the reason for Virgin's success besides being a risky guy? An important factor is the company's strategy. If you look at all the successful Virgin Group companies, you can see one important detail. All of these companies are not leaders in their industry. On the contrary, they are opposed to them. For example, in the UK air transportation market there is a large BA, a monster company, where all employees as one go in strict suits.

She is contrasted with the extravagant Virgin Atlantic, which brings with it fun and clownery. In the mobile market, Vodafone is pitted against Virgin Mobile. Something special is

already expected from Virgin. She is exactly the company that, in the public eye, is David challenging Galiat. People love stories like this. And who cares that the whole Virgin is much larger than this very Galiath.

The second factor is Richard Branson himself. England appreciates its heroes like no other country. And Richard Branson is the most successful British businessman. So the credibility of Branson in England is unlimited.

Behind the outward appearance of a lover of adventurous adventures, accustomed to wearing completely simple, inconspicuous, sometimes even very shabby clothes, capable of shocking high society with his extraordinary antics, but, at the same time, admitted into its circles, hides a person with a tenacious analytical mindset. He is able to quickly analyze and clearly assess the situation, to calculate and competently plan the activities of the companies he heads with lightning speed.

He has a lot of non-standard business ideas in his head, most of which led to the achievement of significant commercial success. He can easily find a new opportunity where no one else sees it.

Paradoxically, he achieves success even in areas of activity that were previously unfamiliar to him. In his opinion, in order to reach the top of the business, it is not necessary to thoroughly understand it, first of all, it is necessary to be able to effectively manage it. Thanks to this inimitable management style, innovative approach to business, developed intuition of a businessman, Richard Branson managed to achieve phenomenal success.

Richard Branson is not afraid to do what he wants. In his opinion, life is not so long as to spend it on boring, not giving joy and pleasure to business. For him, work is not a duty, but an exciting activity, a kind of entertainment that brings first of all fun, and then a colossal

income. "Live joyfully, work from the heart, and the money will come by itself," says Richard Branson.

### ***Richard Branson : crazy dad and his normal kids***

A couple of minutes after the crash of the Virgin Galactic SpaceShipTwo suborbital spacecraft, Sir Richard Branson was already rushing in a private jet to the scene of the tragedy. There was no need to rush the catastrophe of October 31 last year reliably buried in the Mojave Desert not only the pilot, but also the eleven-year dream of tourist flights into space.

At such a moment, the last thing a team of four hundred engineers needs is the presence of a boss. But the man who has built a £ 4 billion Virgin empire from scratch is organically incapable of sitting idle. "We have to move forward," he told Sky News three days later, defending his Virgin Galactic (the oligarch was immediately accused of the quality of testing being bad). "When humanity explores space, unthinkable things can happen."

It's true. But not everyone can recover from such a blow. It takes Branson's optimism to do that. He vowed that he would not launch commercial Virgin Galactic flights until his family got on the ship. Quite in his spirit. The Bransons are an incredibly close-knit family, and no matter how you feel about Sir Richard, no matter how much you exercise with the nickname Lionheart, you have to admit that this orange-tanned man raised two beautiful children. Holly and Sam - to the core of the Bransons: blondes, confident, not without charm. Dad taught them that the impossible does not exist, and they also want adventure. But 2015 promises big changes: at Christmas Holly gave birth to twins, and two months later, their cousin appeared - the son of Sam and actress Isabella Calthorpe.

THE SECOND GENERATION OF THE BRANSON FAMILY: SAM WITH HIS WIFE,  
ACTRESS ISABELLA, AND HOLLY WITH HER HUSBAND FREDDIE

For grandfather, life is the eternal "fight and seek, find and not give up." Holly and Sam are a little quieter. Richard wants to take real risks, boyishly, his children are more about physical education and sports. Sam participated in a rugby match just a month after he crashed in a car - he broke his spine and punctured his skull (his head was reinforced with a brace, but she did not add common sense to her father's son). The paradox is that in sports, the younger Bransons seek camaraderie that is deeply foreign to their father. Sir Richard himself sees himself as a lone wolf against boring institutions like British Airways or British Railways. But he will have to hand over the matter to a more sophisticated generation of Bransons inscribed in society. They sit comfortably in the inner circle of the royal family, where discretion is prized,

Sir Richard has been looking for a successor for the past ten years. "We need a face," he explains. A powerful personality attracts people. If the children took over this business, they would take a big load off my shoulders. " Two years ago, in an interview with the Financial Times, he reiterated his obsession: "Virgin would certainly win if Holly or Sam wanted to be her face." They said they were ready to drink less champagne in palaces and study the family business more deeply, but they have not yet sat down for lessons. Branson's first choice fell on Holly. She is four years older than her brother, more thorough and smarter, she herself entered University College London and became a pediatrician. Holly and Sam attended St. Edward's School in Oxford is a huge mixed (you can choose day or boarding) school, which is not very respectfully called Teddies for teaching friendship, not science. Teddy Bears are not aerobatics, not Marlborough or Stowe, which Richard dropped at sixteen to start his first business. The offspring of influential, but not pretentious Oxford families study here, it is more important for

them "that the person is good." Holly married her classmate Freddie Andrews. Why not? Tall, with a thoroughbred face, straight, open and loyal, not a snob. His sister is studying medicine at Bristol Medical School - will be a doctor, like her daughter-in-law. not a snob. His sister is studying medicine at Bristol Medical School - will be a doctor, like her daughter-in-law. not a snob. His sister is studying medicine at Bristol Medical School - will be a doctor, like her daughter-in-law.

#### RICHARD BRANSON WITH WIFE JOAN, 1987

During her studies in London, Holly behaved modestly. In the first year, she lived not in her parents' twelve-room house in Holland Park, but, like everyone else, in a hostel on Tottenham Court Road. Classmates remember how dad helped her with the move. Joan's mother tried to raise normal children - as much as possible with such a father. Holly has adopted many of her habits as a working-class girl in Glasgow, including shabby tracksuits instead of evening gowns. At the university, before lectures, she ran into the dining room to eat a traditional English breakfast (scrambled eggs, beans, sausages, fried tomatoes, mushrooms and - just to be sure - also croutons with butter). In her second year, her parents bought her an apartment building and assigned her the responsibilities of a manager - she paid bills and collected rent from tenants. Presumably, The girl spent her holidays on a cosmic scale, but during the semester her life would hardly have adorned the gossip - jeans, jumpers, lacrosse and netball games. Mobile phones had just started to appear, and a friend, bragging about her successful contract with Vodafone, asked Holly what provider. "Hmm, Virgin." Indeed, it was strange to ask.

Holly is indifferent to art, she is closer to sports. On their honeymoon, she and her husband walked for two weeks with backpacks in the mountains and raft along the rapids of

Costa Rica, and then met with Albert Gore, and he invited them on an Antarctic expedition. "Poor Freddie," the newlywed lamented afterwards. - When asked what he remembered most, he always talks about Antarctica, although he did not plan to go there at all.

#### GRANDPA BRANSON WITH HER GRANDCHILDREN, HOLLY'S CHILDREN

Holly liked medicine - there is order, structure. She graduated in 2007, but after working for a year at London's Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, she succumbed to her father's persuasion and abandoned patients. Richard put her in Virgin Care - he was just doing healthcare. According to Branson biographer Tom Bauer, Holly did not become a key figure in her father's company: she lacks business sense and leadership skills. But she does not plan to leave and even took on new responsibilities - now she is engaged in special projects in Virgin Management and is on the board of Virgin Unite, a charitable foundation, which has two main areas: protecting human rights and training ship captains to efficiently use fuel during sea transport ... She also has her own children's fund - Big Change, she founded it with friends (Princess Eugenia among them). Sam, too, was looking for his own way, asserting himself as best he could, although he knew that all Virgin would end. Because "this is not a company, but a family - and I enter it, whether I like it or not." He owned the independent film studio Sundog Pictures, which has produced several excellent documentaries on global population growth and drugs. "As I grew up, I was increasingly interested in social issues," he explains. "The better my education got, the more I wanted to solve problems - or at least seek an explanation for them, based not on propaganda, but on facts." has released several excellent documentaries about the growth of the world's population and about drugs. "As I grew up, I was increasingly interested in social issues," he explains. "The better my education

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#### BRANSON'S DACHA, BRITISH VIRGINIA - 300,000 SQUARE METERS OF NECKER ISLAND

Whoever you ask about Sam, everyone says he's a playboy. One socialite who spent New Year's Eve on Richard Branson's Necker Island remembers her son as the sexiest guy in the world. But reputation is not the whole person. Friends claim that he has another side: he is serious, deep and sincere. Some use the words "passionate" and "sensitive" - they say he often cries in the movies. He has enviable prospects, but they, it turns out, do not provide guarantees against depression. "There was a period when I just didn't know what I wanted to do. Somehow I have abruptly lost all illusions, - he told the American radio last summer. - But I am growing up and gradually begin to understand exactly how I would like to change the world. Three months at the North Pole had a strong effect on me: I figured out myself, decided on my goals. Even some self-confidence appeared. The North may seem so monotonous ... But he taught me to be grateful that this planet basically exists, and never to take for granted the wonders of nature. "

#### PRINCESS DIANA VISITED NECKER WITH PRINCES WILLIAM AND HARRY, 1990

To get himself the right to speak beautiful words, Sam honestly tried. In the Arctic, he did not ride a snowmobile, wrapped in reindeer skins, but went skiing. Once I decided to climb

the Matterhorn Mountain, although I could, like all normal people, ride from it in Zermatt - he had to be evacuated by helicopter because he started to have high-altitude hypoxia. Looking for trouble is a family thing for them.

On the night Sam was born, his father did not sit under the door of the ward, much less cut the umbilical cord - at that moment he was picked up near the Isles of Scilly by a British naval ship. Lionheart tried to cross the Atlantic in a racing boat, but it capsized. Having remembered the offense, Sam, it seems, immediately decided that he would look like his mother - and will try not to break his neck. "She is very different from her father," explains the heir. - Afraid to even go fast by car, there is nothing to say about traveling around the world. And my father is crazy, very greedy for life. " In his youth, Sam had a phobia: he decided that they wanted to kidnap him, and was so convincing that Joan began to hide the children from strangers.

Branson's wife is afraid of any publicity - it is more convenient for her to quietly remain faithful to him while he promotes the business, taking pictures in an embrace with half-naked blondes. Friends love her, they say that you can call her at any time and she will give advice - ask her at least about sex and relationships, at least about how to fry Wellington steak. She is always here, while Richard is somewhere out there - in distress with another bursting balloons. A close friend of hers says that "Joan had only one pedagogical rule - before eighteen in every possible way to protect children from the attention of the press, and then let them decide." Princes William and Harry, whom the younger Bransons have known all their lives, were raised in much the same way. The seeds of this friendship were sown by Richard, who made friends with Princess Diana and invited her to his island of Necker. In 1989, she brought the princes on vacation, and the children played together. Diana liked both Richard's self-confidence and his wild political incorrectness - he has the habits of an entrepreneur from the

time of the rise of capitalism. There is a photo of Diana walking out of the gym wearing a Virgin T-shirt - an ad worth millions, and he got it for love.

#### BRANSON ON THE VIRGIN ATLANTIC POSTER

But crazy enthusiasts are not in vogue now, and Branson's plans for private space exploration are embarrassing for many - like himself. The Virgin Galactic project raised over fifty million pounds - about seven hundred passengers made deposits. Even before the October 31 crash, there were doubts that the launch could be carried out in the spring of 2015, as originally planned. One of the English clients, who urged him not to reveal his name, shared his doubts that Sir Richard's spacecraft, in principle, can reach an altitude of sixty-two miles - the so-called Karman Line, the border between the earth's atmosphere and space. He made a deposit of ninety thousand pounds, but continues to complain: "I think the ship will fly, but I'm not sure if it will go into space, as I was promised. If I do not overcome the Karman line, then this is thrown away money.

Rumor has it that Branson is gradually winding up his business projects, although he himself flatly denies everything. And yet, serious changes are taking place in his life. Recently he sold his own house in Oxfordshire to his children and with all his belongings moved to his beloved Necker. He says the air is cleaner there, although the fact that there is no tax on the British Virgin Islands is suggestive. In general, whatever the reasons, he can now spend a maximum of one hundred and eighty-three days a year in the UK (this is the tax limit), which means that part of the time he will have to manage the Virgin corporation remotely or transfer power to someone else.

#### VIRGIN GALACTIC SPACECRAFT MOCKUP

Heir to Sir Richard Branson is hell. In principle, it is impossible to comply with its standards! Holly is practical, hardworking, smart, but not a genius, and she is not very good at presenting herself. Sam looks great, he is a public person, charming, but compared to the adrenaline addict who is his father, he is not passionate enough. "Sam has always been an extrovert, and he loves to play," says a good friend of all the Bransons. - Holly is more sane and pedantic. Well, yes, she is not extravagant, but competent, diligent and benevolent. No bitchiness. A sensible girl, married to a reliable man from Oxford, not to some rogue. Sam is a sweetheart, but not too solid. Although over the past few years he has changed a lot, matured. In his twenties, he was completely a fool, interested only in nightclubs. Now it has become much more serious. No one helped him with documentaries, he earned a reputation in the cinema in spite of, not because of his surname. Both of them are well aware that in business, Richard does not fit a candle. And they don't really want to earn money - modern society has blown them into their ears that they need to use what your parents earned in order to change the world at least a little. This is what Holly and Sam are eager to do. There are people for whom charity is just money spent on PR. They are literally obsessed with it. " And they don't really want to earn money - modern society has blown them into their ears that they need to use what your parents earned in order to change the world at least a little. This is what Holly and Sam are eager to do. There are people for whom charity is just money spent on PR. They are literally obsessed with it. " And they don't really want to earn money - modern society has blown them into their ears that they need to use what your parents earned in order to change the world at least a little. This is what Holly and Sam are eager to do. There are people for whom charity is just money spent on PR. They are literally obsessed with it. "

The great thing about Holly and Sam is that they grew up to be harmonious, normal people. Moreover, their papa is anything but harmonious and not normal. And not cute. "They have no enemies at all," says a family friend. - People treat their father very differently, but I have not seen a person who would not like Sam and Holly. They have absolutely everything, but they are not proud of it - from early childhood they understood how lucky they were, and tried not to destroy their personality. " Another friend adds: "Our children often mutilate their biographies - they are destroyed by money, drugs and idleness. But this is not about Sam and Holly. It just so happens that their father is a crazy billionaire. "

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International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research Volume 8, Issue 6, June-2017 ISSN 2229-5518 546 IJSER © 2017 <http://www.ijser.org> IJSER References

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*International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research* Volume 8, Issue 6, June-2017 ISSN 2229-5518 547 IJSER © 2017  
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