

Section 2.4, Task 2: Modern Day Entrepreneurs

Sir Richard Branson (born in 1950-...)

Richard Branson was born in London and went to school in Buckinghamshire. He left school at the age of 15 with just three O-levels (now called GCSEs). Branson has dyslexia and had poor academic performance; on his last day at school, his headmaster told him he would either end up in prison or become a millionaire. At the age of sixteen his first business venture was a magazine called *Student*. In 1972, he opened a chain of stores selling records (and later CDs) called Virgin Records, later known as Virgin Megastores. He sold records for considerably less than other high street businesses. With the revenue made from his music stores, he set up the Virgin Atlantic airline in the 1980s and expanded the Virgin Records music label. His businesses are now worth more than \$4.8 billion. His advice: "You don't learn to walk by following rules. You learn by doing, and by falling over."

Harry Benson (born in 1929-...)

Harry Benson is a Glasgow-born photographer. "I had to leave school at the age of thirteen as I couldn't pass French, Latin, or Greek and my most pressing ambition was to be a goalkeeper for Scotland in football. Having been kicked out of school, I got a job being a messenger boy. On my way home from work I would see all other children having fun rehearsing for their school play which made me very angry. Photography was a way out," Harry Benson has said.

His father gave him his first camera, to keep him away from trouble. Benson started to take wedding photographs in Glasgow. In order to find a job in journalism, he decided to move to London. In 1964, he was given a task to travel to America with a then unknown band, The Beatles. Benson's creative and beautifully composed photographs of The Beatles not only helped to make the band famous, they also helped to further his own career. Benson has taken official photographs of every American president since Eisenhower, and he has worked with celebrities such as Amy Winehouse, Kate Moss, Jack Nicholson and so on. His original photographs now sell for \$30,000 a piece. His advice to young photographers is: "Start small. Don't get carried away. Look for a job in a local newspaper, not a big city paper. Once you can take a great picture of a small town mayor, you can take a great picture of a president."

Karren Brady (born in 1969-...)

Karren Brady was brought up in London. She attended school until she was and 18 gained four A-levels. "I just got to the point where I had had enough of being in an academic environment. I didn't want to be in the system anymore, I wanted independence. I chose to work. Being told 'you can be anything you want to be' by my parents was a great motivator for me," Karren Brady has said.

Brady's career began as a trainee at the advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi and she developed a career in marketing. At the age of 23, she spotted an advert in the newspaper for the sale of Birmingham City Football Club and persuaded her boss to buy it and let her be the managing director of it. Although she encountered many challenges, she became very successful in her role. Her personal wealth is now estimated to be over £100 million.

Her advice is: "It sounds obvious, but bringing positive energy and passion to the workplace can make all the difference. You can demonstrate enthusiasm to your employer in many different ways, such as showing an interest in what's going on around you, arriving on time and proving that you are reliable."

Jessica Alba (born in 1981-...)

Jessica Alba is an American actor and businesswoman. She started her career in television at the age of 13. After graduating from school, she joined a theatre company in New York. At the age of 19 she auditioned for a role in a famous TV-series Dark Angel which made her a famous actor.

In 2012, using her savings, she decided to set up her own company which sells organic beauty and homecare products. She says that setting up her business was not easy: "People just saw me as a pretty girl." However, after working hard for three and a half years, it finally paid off - her company is currently valued at \$1 billion. "It's something I had to learn as a woman in business...to ask for help and to not be afraid of criticism," Alba has said.

