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Richard Branson: Screw it, just do it

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Nigel Bowen

In a nutshell, here's how the Branson way of doing business works.

### Hire for personality, not skill

For most recruiters, skills are paramount and a positive personality is a bonus. Branson would much rather employ someone with none of the skills a position requires but who is “fun, friendly, caring and loves helping others”.

### Employees come first, not last

Corporate types often insist that companies should be run by managers for the benefit of shareholders. In contrast, Branson once informed a room full of company directors that, “We give top priority to the interests of our staff; we give second priority to the interests of our customers and third goes to interests of our shareholders.”

## **Make yourself redundant**

While most managers are secretly delighted by the idea things would quickly fall apart without their hands firmly on the wheel, Branson is able to run 400 companies precisely because he takes a hands-off approach. His guiding philosophy is that any of his companies “must be set up so it can continue without me”.

## **Your staff know best**

There are plenty of managers who pay lip service to the idea of employee engagement, but most assume they're the ones with all the answers. In contrast, Branson insists both innovative product development and exceptional customer service will only arise when managers truly listen to staff (and customers) and that businesses risk running into serious problems when employees start to feel ignored.

## **Work is a place for fun and games**

Business might be deadly serious for other people, but Branson and the 50,000-odd people employed by his Virgin Group aim to make it enjoyable. “Find the fun in your business” is a Branson mantra and one that's attracted many upbeat, enthusiastic people to work for him.

One other well-known Branson slogan that's useful for managers is, “Screw it, just do it.” As a manager, you'll inevitably be confronted with difficult challenges that are best handled by just jumping in and having a crack in true Branson style.

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