Screw Business as Usual.

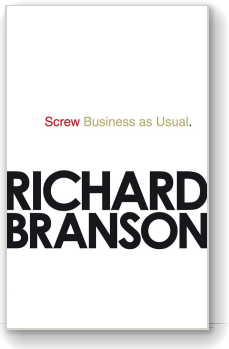
RICHARD BRANSON

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Royalties go to his foundation, Virgin Unite

"I believe that business can be a force for good. By that I mean doing good is good for business"

"Writing a cheque might impact hundreds of people's lives; mobilising your whole business to drive change can impact millions of lives, and give a whole new life purpose to all the people who work in your company."

His seven-year journey with Virgin Unite, told in company stories from a Sussex grocer to GE: stop treating profit as the only goal, and use everything a business has for people and the planet.



1 CAPITALISM 24902

THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS YOUR JOB

The earth is 24,902 miles round, so the name means *"every single business person has the responsibility for taking care of the people and planet that make up our global village"*. Not a CSR team in a basement office: every person, in everything they do.

BUSINESS AS USUAL	CAPITALISM 24902
profit is the only goal	do good; money follows
a CSR team on the side	every person, every day
write a cheque	use the whole business
shareholders first	staff and customers first
nature and waste are free	put a price on both

> *"a good socially aware business doesn't have to be big to make an impact - it just has to have the right people in place."*

SMALL PROOF · JEMPSON'S, SUSSEX
Four family grocery stores, 100,000 customers a week. Thirteen local suppliers (its *Local Heroes*) get £3.5m a year, staff choose the charities, a daily bus brings customers without cars. The owners say doing good raised profits and brought new customers.

PEOPLE FIRST · THE BABYLON STORY
Peter Avis, dyslexic, quit every job before he could be found out. Asked for spreadsheets at Virgin's Babylon restaurant, he resigned; the People director refused, and he was given the £6,000 uniform budget to learn on. He became Restaurant Manager of the Year. *"It's not about you, it's not about the business even - it's about staff and the customer."*

2 STOP SAVING, START REINVENTING

Hand-ups beat cheques. A mentor at his Johannesburg centre moved an arcade's cash desk from the doorway to the back: sales up almost 30%. Mentors give a framework, not strategy.

4 THE NEXT FRONTIER

Listen to the people affected. Virgin hires ex-offenders and buys promo T-shirts from a prison social enterprise.

3 IF YOU'VE GOT IT – USE IT!

DO GOOD WITH WHAT YOU ALREADY OWN

> *"Business makes a profit to exist. Surely it must exist for some higher, nobler purpose than that"*
> — Ray Anderson, Interface

A ONE-LINE PURPOSE · Virgin Money
Its people agreed one aim: make everyone better off. Every new product must show how. So no charging one group more than another, and *"We can't find a way to tack on a hidden charge. We can't give duff or ill-considered advice."* Bonuses weigh hard and soft skills together.

SPARE PEOPLE · Virgin Money Giving
Overstaffed, and offered the London Marathon sponsorship, Jayne-Anne Gadhia found the usual donation site kept 6% of gifts. *"So, rather than put a lot of friends out of a job, we set them this great task"*: a not-for-profit engine taking under 2%. £25m in year one, 4,000+ charities, a natural fit for the brand.

CUSTOMERS AND STAFF · Virgin Mobile USA
Leaders spent 24 hours homeless; every team mapped the tools it had; texting linked customers to street kids. *"it was not just a simple marketing campaign bolted on to their business"*. A struggling start-up in 2001 had 5m customers and $1.3bn sales when sold in 2009. You can't fake it, he warns.

SEATBACKS · Change for Good
Joan's drawer of foreign coins became UNICEF envelopes in every seatback within weeks; when crews wanted a say, it became Change for Children.

OVERHEADS COVERED · Comic Relief
He paid its founder's salary and overheads so 100% raised went to good causes, as at Virgin Unite.

A HANDSHAKE · Grameen Danone
Fortified yoghurt from small local plants, sold door to door by village women at 10% commission, €0.06 a cup. His point: *"even a small or a medium-size company could look at different ways to use its resources"*.

FLYING, HONESTLY · VIRGIN ATLANTIC
"people are always going to fly, whether with Virgin or not". Over 99% of its measurable carbon is the aircraft, so: newer aircraft, less weight on board, smarter routes; target 30% less per passenger and cargo kilometre by 2020.

5 GAIA ROCKS

PRICE WHAT YOU TREAT AS FREE

A hive's honey is worth about £130; the crops it pollinates about £600. PUMA built an *honest balance sheet*, an Environmental P&L that prices the impact of its whole supply chain.

INTERFACE · WHEN CUSTOMERS ASK
Architects kept asking what the carpet-tile maker did for the environment; sales had no answer. Waste then fell 40% in 3½ years, saving $67m. Its rule: *"we define waste as any cost that goes into a product that does not produce value for our customers."* That includes a misdirected shipment, a mispriced invoice, a bad debt. It then leased carpet instead of selling it, and made more. Branson: *"Do you want a Boeing Dreamliner, or just an air ticket?"*

6 THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

UNLIKELY MARRIAGES

The Elders and the Carbon War Room began as business cases, with budgets and teams. What made Ray Chambers' malaria coalition work:

1. a simple solution everyone understands
2. an honest broker trusted by all
3. a half-dozen key groups who lock hands
4. an enabler who measures the goals

7 THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES

STAFF, CUSTOMERS, SUPPLIERS

"The businesses that are most successful connect with everyone as an individual, not just as an order number or a transaction."

- **Let staff shape it.** Staff named Virgin Unite; its first volunteering drive flopped, as people wanted to use real skills.
- **Hit Squads.** A few days of professional skills for a cause, run like a paid consultancy with deliverables. **Connection Trips** take staff to see projects first hand.
- **Keep in touch.** At West Cornwall Pasty Co a director phoned every shop manager daily.

USE IT MONDAY

- Write a one-line aim and test the next price or product with it: does this make everyone better off?
- List what you already own (people, skills, kit, customers, suppliers) and one good each could do.
- Ask staff which cause they want and let them name it.
- Put a number on one cost you treat as free or normal.
- Notice one person this week as a person, not a role.

READ WITH CARE

- A 2011 snapshot: many figures, pledges and targets (2020 carbon, the $25m Earth Challenge with no winner yet) were unfinished.
- Evidence is chosen stories, many from friends, Virgin firms and his own foundation; one FTSE index line aside, little data.
- Billionaire tools (Necker retreats, The Elders, a $3bn pledge a recession undercut) do not scale down.
- His speed and dislike of analysis suit causes, not safety-critical work.

HOW THIS PAGE WAS MADE. Read in full, preface to case-study appendix, in the Portfolio/Penguin 2011 US ebook (ISBN 978-1-101-57217-7). Every quote checked word for word against that text by script. Cover: UK Virgin Books 2011 edition, from the PDF copy (the ebook has only a title page).