3 Steps to Creating a Company That Aligns With What You Love

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When he was just 14 years old, Richard Branson, the billionaire entrepreneur, launched his first business: *Student* magazine. At the time, Branson wanted to create an alternative to his school newspaper, which he thought was "stale." In reflecting back, Branson said, "I wanted to be an editor or a journalist, I wasn't really interested in being an entrepreneur, but I soon found I had to become an entrepreneur in order to keep my magazine going." Branson went on to start the Virgin empire and has launched hundreds of companies under the brand.

One of the most common reasons that most people contemplate launching their own company is because they are not in love with their work. While Branson has certainly amassed wealth throughout his life, he repeats often that his focus has always been creating new businesses that he is passionate about. Branson's passion is to go into industries, shake them up and do things better.

Does this resonate with you? Do you want to be fully engaged in your work?

Ten years ago, I was a fixed income portfolio manager at Citigroup. I had an amazing job, a supportive manager and I worked with a talented team of people. Unfortunately, I was

not happy in my role as I was looking to get more out of my work. I began to think about a new business to start. Do you feel the same way? If you do the first step in your business creation process is to construct an idea that answers three key questions below:

1. What are you good at?
2. What do you love?
3. What gives you a sense of fulfillment?

This is the second article in a three-part series where I explore each of these key elements in your new business ideation process. In the first article, I spoke about the importance of finding what you are good at. In this article, we will discuss the importance of creating a business that aligns with what you love.

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I started my business idea journey with practicality at first. I knew I wanted to transition out of the corporate sector, and my initial focus was on how I could make money to support myself as an entrepreneur. It was an understandably practical approach. Given where I was working and my experience, I started thinking that maybe I would open up a financial advisory business, an insurance agency or I would start a franchise. But none of these ideas resonated with me. I was focusing on the wrong things. I was already in a situation where money was the focus, and I was not enjoying my work. I wasn't looking to become a millionaire; I just wanted to be happy. I trusted that if I could do something that I loved, then the money would come. I wanted to find something that I could put my heart and soul into.

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on How to Begin

People often say to me they don’t know what they love, and others say they have too many things they love and want to explore. This resonates with me as well. I am a very inquisitive person, and there is so much I love about life. It can be tough to pick one or a few items to focus on. However, you do have to make a choice. Don’t spend 10 years thinking that one day it will all become clear. Try to narrow the things you love down to three to start. Here is how I went about the business ideation process.

Step 1: Reflection

I spent a lot of time in reflection, asking myself: What do I love? What would I want to wake up and do each day for the rest of my life? It’s a big question.

I started by listing out the key topics that resonated with me. This could start as a long list or a concise one. Either way, take the time to list out everything you have ever really enjoyed or found inspiring.

Step 2: Remembering

As children, we know instinctively what we like to do. As we get older, other conflicting demands start to creep in. We get distracted by social pressure, and our original desires, dreams and interests can start to fall by the wayside. The ideas and instincts we had as children start to get quieter and quieter. For me, it took years even to attempt things I was curious about.

In the words of acclaimed filmmaker, Steven Spielberg: “When you have a dream it doesn’t often come at you, screaming into your face ‘This is who you are, this is who you must be for the rest of your life!’ Sometimes a dream almost whispers.

[The] hardest thing to listen to is your human intuition – it always whispers, it never shouts."

Take the time to start thinking back to how you were as a child. What did you enjoy? Add these things from your youth or your memories to the list you started in step one.

Step 3: Revisiting

Leave the list for a week and then revisit it. We've reflected in the present and the past, and now we want to think more about the future. As an adult, what are the whispers you've been ignoring? If you have any final things to add, do so now. Otherwise, take a look at your list with fresh eyes. What resonates the loudest with a second pass? Remove or add things accordingly. If you've got a lot of stuff on your list, it's good to start whittling it down. Leave the list for a day more. What about now? Keep returning to this list until you come up with the things that feel vital to your deepest self. It will take time, and you have to keep in mind that the answers are unlikely to come crashing over to you. As Spielberg says, it is hard to listen to our intuition. But by starting to practice now, you will hear that voice more easily in the future.

For me, the following three items on my list stood out:

The prospect of incorporating these three things into my life already brought me so much joy. I spent months thinking about how I could take these three passions and bring them together for a company idea. It was eventually clear that adventure would be the bridge component. At the time, adventure was having such a profound effect on my life, and I wanted others to experience the same transformation I did. But I wanted to do things differently. I wanted the company to be a representation of what I loved in this world. So I started my adventure travel company, The Explorer's Passage, with the idea of really showcasing history's greatest stories through

travel experiences.

Once you identify your top three ideas, then the next step will be to see if any of them align with what you are good at and what fulfills you. You have taken an important step in creating your new business. In the next article in this series, we will look at the this and final element in the new business ideation process: finding fulfillment. I hope you found this article helpful and, I look forward to reading about your success.

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