

5 Successful Entrepreneurs Who Didn't Start Until Their 30s

These five very successful individuals followed Sir Winston Churchill's advice to 'Never, never, never give up.'

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If you're a little further along in age, you might look at the culture of modern startups and think that it's too late for you to get started. So often, we read stories of entrepreneurs in their early-to mid-20s (and sometimes entrepreneurs who got started in high school) who eventually built billion-dollar fortunes. And it's true that there are some incredible youngsters out there who will see more success in the span of a few years than many of us will in a lifetime.

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But there's also no shortage of people who hit 30 and had virtually no money and/or no accomplishments, yet managed to start a business that turned their life around.

Here are just a few of their stories:

1. Tim Westergren

Tim Westergren is the founder of Pandora, but he didn't get started until he was 35. What was he doing up until that point? At various ages, he was a hippie, a male nanny and a

part-time music composer. In the late 1990s, he started composing music for films and created a concept that allowed him to customize music choices based on the personalities of each director he worked with.

This new career didn't pay much, but it did provide the foundation of an idea that turned into a forerunner of Pandora, the Music Genome Project. It wasn't until 2007 that he created Pandora, and in 2010, he was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people.

2. Milton Hershey

You see this name every time you have a piece of his signature chocolate, but you might not suspect that Hershey didn't see success in founding the Hershey Chocolate Company until he was 37 years old. Much earlier, at age 13, Hershey dropped out of school and started apprenticing in candy-making. He borrowed money to open a candy shop of his own, but failed after five years of work.

Then, when he was 26, he started the Lancaster Caramel Company, but it wasn't until 1893, when Hershey was 37, that his focus turned to milk chocolate, and the Hershey Chocolate Company was born.

3. Gordon Moore

For decades, we've referred to "Moore's Law" to describe the exponential growth we see in the number of transistors that can be fit into an integrated circuit. The man the "law" is named after, Gordon Moore, was the founder of Intel – and he didn't start that business until he was 38 years old.

Moore got his start when he was 27, joining up with seven other talented techies to create Fairchild Semiconductor. After a decade of corporate stagnation and frustration, Moore

left and started his own business, Intel, with his partner Bob Noyce.

4. Jan Koum

Jan Koum has one of the best rags-to-riches stories in modern entrepreneurship history. Born in Ukraine, Koum came to the United States with his mother when he was 16, relying on food stamps and his work as a janitor to get by. He learned to code when he was 18 and started college, but dropped out before getting a degree.

He then worked at Yahoo! for nearly a decade, but quit at 30 to pursue something bigger. At 32, he started WhatsApp, and after a series of false starts and challenges, thought about shutting the company down. Thankfully, he didn't, because, at 37, he sold WhatsApp to Facebook for a whopping \$19 billion.

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5. Jack Ma

Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, has an inspiring story, as well. Born to a family without much money, Ma decided that the only way to get ahead was through education – but he failed his college entrance exams twice. He finally gained admission on the third attempt, however, and started applying to any job he thought might take him.

After more than a dozen rejections, Ma started teaching English, for \$12 a month. After visiting the United States at age 31, Ma realized what a massive opportunity there was for internet companies in China. He created two ventures that eventually failed, but, when he was 35, pulled together a group of friends to gather investments for his online marketplace idea. This would later turn into Alibaba. At the

end of 2017, Jack Ma was worth \$46.6 billion, a major step up from his previous \$12-a-month salary.

It doesn't matter if you're 20, 30, 40 or older: If you have a solid idea, the passion to follow through on it and access to the resources you need to get things done, you too can become a successful entrepreneur at any age.

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Certainly there are pros and cons to getting started at any age, such as the inexperience of youth or the low risk-tolerance of age, but with the right mentality and knowledge of the stakes, it's possible to turn things in your favor.

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