

Odd and Unusual: Things You Never Knew About Bezos and 4 Other Big Names

History is full of tales of remarkable people with unusual personal habits: The French author Honoré de Balzac allegedly drank up to 50 cups of coffee a day (not recommended, since he also suffered from stomach cramps, headaches, and high blood pressure).

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Thomas Edison reportedly slept only two hours a day – he was too busy inventing things.

Just as interesting are the relatively unknown entrepreneurial pursuits of historic figures known for other reasons. Winston Churchill, for example, started routinely painting at age 40 and created over 500 works of art before his death, many of them while he served as prime minister.

And former President Barack Obama somehow managed to carve out one hour a day of book-reading – late at night – during the eight years of his presidency, finding solace, when he felt lonely or isolated, in the works of Nelson Mandela, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

Such “unknown” anecdotes about legendary luminaries abound. But what of today’s entrepreneurs? Are they all too focused on the bottom line to nurture and exhibit peculiarities and idiosyncrasies?

Thankfully, no: Many of the world’s most successful entrepreneurs are in fact proof that eccentricity isn’t dead. Here’s how some of them let their personalities shine through:

Jeff Bezos

Jeff Bezos is now officially the world's richest person. The founder of Amazon also has some intriguing daily habits. For example, he never sets an alarm clock to wake up. And he does the dishes at home every night saying he's "convinced it's the sexiest thing I do."

Bezos has some quirky habits in the workplace, as well. He's said he never organizes meetings where two pizzas aren't enough to feed everyone in the room. And he spends only six hours a year meeting with Amazon's investors – an extraordinarily short amount of time for the CEO of one of the world's most successful companies.

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Sandy Lerner

As co-founder of Cisco Systems in 1984, Sandy Lerner was a true internet pioneer. With her partner (now ex-husband) Leonard Bosack, she helped develop the very first commercially successful internet routers. By March 2000 – the height of the dot-com bubble – Cisco had become the most valuable company in the world. A polymath, Lerner also cofounded Urban Decay in 1996, an incredibly successful cosmetics company, which was acquired in 2000 by LVMH.

A serial entrepreneur, Lerner has also run a family farm and a butcher shop in Middleburg, Va., But perhaps her greatest passion is jousting. Yes, you read that right: Lerner has a thing for the medieval pastime of charging at your opponent on horseback with a blunted lance under one arm and with period dress instead of street clothes.

Lately Lerner has said, she doesn't joust as much as she used to, choosing instead to concentrate more on her 800-acre farm,

the restaurant that sells and prepares her produce and her retail grocery store Gentle Harvest.

Ray Dalio

Ray Dalio founded Bridgewater Associates, a hedge fund that manages \$160 billion in capital, making it one of the world's most successful. He also spends a considerable amount of time being mindful of his breathing. Why? He's a dedicated believer in the power of transcendental meditation. By 2016, his charitable organization, the Dalio Foundation, had donated approximately \$20 million to the David Lynch Foundation (DLF).

Founded by the famed Hollywood film director, the DLF is dedicated to making the practice of TM accessible to victims of violence and poverty worldwide. Dalio's foundation is responsible for 20 percent of the DLF's funding.

Dalio is also a best-selling author: his book *Principles* hit number one on the *New York Times* business bestseller list. With all his accomplishments – which have earned him an estimated net worth of \$17 billion – Dalio calls his personal discovery of transcendental meditation “the single biggest influence” in his life.

Erik Bullen

They say the early bird gets the worm. If that's so, Erik Bullen's initials could just as easily stand for that. Bullen, CEO of GrooveJar, starts his day early. Very early. He's hard at work at 3:30 a.m. each day while most of the East Coast slumbers. He puts the early hours to good use, finding the time to focus without distraction “an amazing productivity boost.”

Another thing that sets Bullen apart from many of his contemporaries? He often pays employees higher salaries than

his own. His goal is the overall success of his company, and he believes that to attract and keep the right talent, they need to be compensated accordingly.

Now *that's* a “ritual” non-CEOs can appreciate, and one that certainly decreases turnover!

Mark Zuckerberg

When he's not busy reshaping the face of digital advertising, Mark Zuckerberg is honing his bilingual skills. The 33-year-old billionaire Facebook founder is said to speak fluent Mandarin. This may not be so unusual; after all, China is a huge market for his company.

But the fact that Zuckerberg spent a year eating only meat that he killed himself might be considered a little more unique. He explained to *Fortune*, “I'm eating a lot healthier foods. And I've learned a lot about sustainable farming and raising of animals.

“It's easy to take the food we eat for granted when we can eat good things every day,” Zuckerberg said.

Now, I can't see Zuckerberg's practice becoming as habit-forming as, well, Facebook, but it certainly sheds light on the ways this man's particular entrepreneurial personality and values show themselves.

In fact, his unusual dietary ritual seems part of an overarching one. Turns out Zuckerberg sets himself a personal challenge every New Year's and spends the rest of the year achieving it. With this kind of discipline, perhaps it's no surprise that he built the social network into a \$407 billion company.

Zuckerberg's yearly resolution for 2017 was to visit and meet people from every state in the United States. Wonder what he's got up his sleeve for 2018?

Final words

“Highly successful” doesn’t have to mean boring. As Bezos, Dalio, Bullen, Lerner and Zuckerberg demonstrate, you can be driven yet still find time to express yourself and do the things that fulfill you as a person, not just a successful business-person.

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As an entrepreneur, you may not want to follow any of these examples, but you can rest assured that it’s safe to have unusual habits or rituals of your own. Don’t shy away from showing your true self in your work and your business. Those qualities are often the ones that can get you to where you want to be.

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