Getting Started

1. Read each of these things people said their business leaders or managers (1-8) and match them with one of the qualities or skills listed in the box. (a-h)

(1) "Amongst other things, she has this tremendous ability to see how things could be in the future, and how the organization should develop."

(2) "He's just great at producing new, unusual ideas, things other people would never have thought of."

(3) "I really like the fact that he gives us all plenty of responsibility. We all feel so empowered."

(4) "I'd say one of his strong points is his ability to get down to the nitty-gritty; nothing is so minor that it escapes his attention."

(5) "One thing I have to say about him is that he has excellent people skills; he can handle even the most awkward member of staff."

(6) "One thing she's particularly good at is problem-solving. You know, in our line of work we seem to go from crisis to crisis, but she seems to be able to get everything running smoothly again."

(7) "She has a totally practical approach. I mean, she doesn't just sit in her office theorising. She rolls up her sleeves and gets down to work with the rest of us."

(8) "She's just excellent at getting her ideas across. To give you just one example..."

a. A hands-on approach
b. Ability to delegate
c. Attention to detail
d. Good communication skills
e. Good interpersonal skills
f. Originality
g. Trouble-shooting skills
h. Vision

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Reading

RICHARD BRANSON leader of Virgin

Richard Branson – the founder and owner of the Virgin Group, an empire of 350 companies that includes Virgin Atlantic airlines as well as ventures in other industries like telecommunications, trains, cosmetics and credit cards – says his goal is to turn Virgin into 'the most respected brand in the world'. Branson's skill as a brand builder is one of the reasons underlying his longevity as a business leader.

It is difficult to separate the success of the Virgin brand from the flamboyant man behind that brand. He travels the world weekly, reinforcing his good-natured, visible, jet-setting, billionaire reputation – a reputation like the reputation of the companies he owns. 'Generally speaking, I think being a high-profile person has its advantages,' he says. 'Advertising costs enormous amounts of money these days. I just announced in India that I was setting up a domestic airline, and we ended up getting on the front pages of the newspaper. The costs of that in advertising terms would have been considerable.'

What is the most important quality of a good leader? 'Being someone who cares about people is important,' he says. 'You can't be a good leader unless you generally like people. That is how you bring out the best in them.'

How does a man who owns 350 companies get it all done? Branson places enormous value on time-management skills. As chairman of a large group of firms, Branson says he spends about a third of his time on trouble-shooting, another third on new projects, both charitable and business, and the last third on promoting and talking about the businesses he has set up. 'As much as you need a strong personality to build a business from scratch, you must also understand the art of delegation,' says Branson. 'I have to be good at helping people run the individual businesses, and I have to be willing to step back. The company must be set up so it can continue without me.'

In order for this process to work, employees must be happy. Branson says his philosophy of 'look for the best and you'll get the best' helped him build an empire recognised for its young, fun culture. 'For the people who work for you or with you, you must lavish praise on them at all times,' Branson says. 'It's much more fun looking for the best in people. People don't need to be told where they've slipped up or made a mess of something. They'll sort it out themselves.' Branson feels strongly that if an employee is not excelling in one area of the company, he or she should be given the opportunity to do well in a different Virgin Group job. Firing is seldom an option.



Motivational strategies extend to innovative ideas. The key to encouraging innovation within the Virgin ranks, suggests Branson, is to listen to any and all ideas and to offer feedback. Employees often leave companies, he reasons, because they are frustrated by the fact that their ideas fall on deaf ears. Interaction between employees and managers is fundamental.

Branson has developed a level of trust with his top managers by setting the direction and then stepping back to let them navigate. 'I come up with the original idea, spend the first three months immersed in the business so I know the ins and outs, and then give chief executives a stake in the company and ask them to run it as if it's their own,' explains Branson. 'I intervene as little as possible. Give them that, and they will give everything back.'

Read the text again and check that you have understood the main points by choosing the best answer, A, B, C, or D, to these questions.

1.What, is Branson's business aim?	
A	To diversify Virgin's activities
B	To make Virgin a global company.
C	To survive longer than other business leaders
D	To enhance Virgin's brand image

2.What, according to Branson, is the business advantage of being well known?	
A	It is easier to establish new ventures.
B	It saves money on publicity.
C	He is offered special advertising rates.
D	It makes his brands easily recognisable.

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3.What, for Branson, is the key to managing his workload?	
A	Being continuously involved at all levels of the enterprise.
B	Concentring on problem-solving.
C	Making his companies independent of him.
D	Continually expanding his empire

4. How, according to Branson, can you ensure optimum performance from staff?	
A	By having an enjoyable corporate culture
B	By pointing out your employee's mistakes
C	By dismissing incompetent workers
D	By telling people that they are performing well.

5. Why, says Branson, do many businesses lose good employees?	
A	Managers do not listen to employees' suggestions.
B	Managers do not know how to communicate with staff.
C	Managers do not encourage innovation.
D	Managers do not delegate.

6.How does Branson optimise performance from his CEOs?	
A	By giving them specialist training
B	By giving them a financial interest in the company
C	By giving them a three-month trial period
D	By offering them innovative ideas

Vocabulary 1

Find out meaning of the following words and provide examples:

Example: 1). flamboyant

Example: 2). Troubleshooting

Example: 3). To empower/empowering

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Vocabulary 2

Vocabulary, matching activity: Business English idioms, expressions and phrases

1. time management		**a)** direct management of staff
2. quality management		**b)** how a company tries to control its brands and brand image.
3. line management		**c)** level between senior management and junior management.
4. middle management		**d)** management systems in a company so that each department works effectively and produces products of the required standard.
5. brand management		**e)** process of dealing with difficult situation.
6. crisis management		**f)** process of assessing and measuring possible dangers and evolving strategies to deal with them.
7. risk management		**g)** The skill of administering your time so as to work effectively.

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