

# Richard Branson's leadership secrets

British entrepreneur Richard Branson has turned his Virgin brand into a conglomerate of more than 350 companies. His unique leadership style requires some studying:

- **He never pigeonholes himself.** He signed the Sex Pistols to a recording contract when he was in his 20s and then went on to become both a retailer and an airline executive.
- **He says that he never listens to critics.** The first severe criticism against him came when he launched his Virgin Atlantic airline in 1984, when one critic wrote, "A brand can't stand for music stores, airlines, mobile phones, colas, financial services, and on and on. No brand on earth can do that. That's ego." Branson didn't listen, and he proved that critic wrong.
- **He is a sponge for new ideas.** He keeps a notebook in his pocket and jots down every promising idea he hears. "Good ideas come from people everywhere," he says, "not in the boardroom."

—Adapted from "26 Most Fascinating Entrepreneurs," *Inc.*