

What they say about Dave Stewart



'If you are an entrepreneur and you spend time with Dave, you will know exactly what your next business idea should be. If you are a philosopher and you get talking to Dave, your mind will suddenly have clarity like never before. If you are a student and you listen to Dave, immediately you will believe in yourself and know exactly what you need to do next. Dave is a creative genius' **Simon Fuller, Founder and CEO of 19 Entertainment and creator of American Idol**

'Captain Dave is a dreamer and a fearless innovator, a visionary of high order, very delicately tractable on the surface but beneath that, he's a slamming, thumping, battering ram, very mystical but rational' **Bob Dylan**

'Dave is who we all want to be – living his dream and actually changing the world every day with his gentle inspirational genius' **Janice Vandenbrink, Senior Vice President of Global Systems at Visa International**

'Dave is a truly extraordinary blend of creative genius and businessperson with flair' **Rita Clifton, Chairman of Interbrand**

'Real creativity has me in awe, and Dave Stewart is one of the most thrilling creative minds I have ever met' **Anita Roddick, Founder of The Body Shop**

'When I met Dave he talked for 12 hours about the impact of digitalisation on the production and distribution of media. As a banker, I didn't know what the hell he was talking about – nor did anyone else. Over the next five years, we all found out' **Michael Philipp, Chairman and Executive Board Member of Credit Suisse Europe, Middle East And Africa**

'For over 30 years I have been working with creative people the world over; but none compare with Dave. His creative cup overflows with originality, profusion and, most importantly, generosity. He is undoubtedly a genius' **Andy Law, Worldwide Chairman, The Law Firm**

'Jack of All Trades, Master of All of Them' **Sunday Times**

'He's a One Man Advertising Think Tank' **The Daily Telegraph**

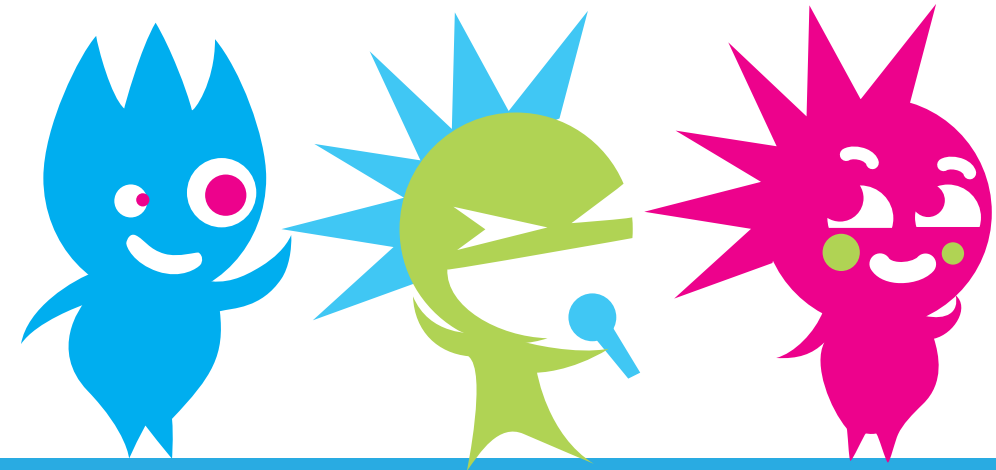
What they say about Mark Simmons and Punk Marketing



'Blunt, fair, fearless and outrageous – just like the marketing style they espouse'
Publishers Weekly

'*Punk* reads like the insider wisdom your tattooed brother gave during your first nose-piercing session: "Don't show Mom, but the girls at school will dig it"' **Advertising Age**

'Taken together, their anecdotes show that truly original, engaging and – most important – surprising ads will always prevail, whether they're labelled punk or not.' **Business Week**



THE BUSINESS PLAYGROUND



In an increasingly competitive world, we believe it's quality of thinking that gives you the edge – an idea that opens new doors, a technique that solves a problem, or an insight that simply makes sense of it all. The more you know, the smarter and faster you can go.

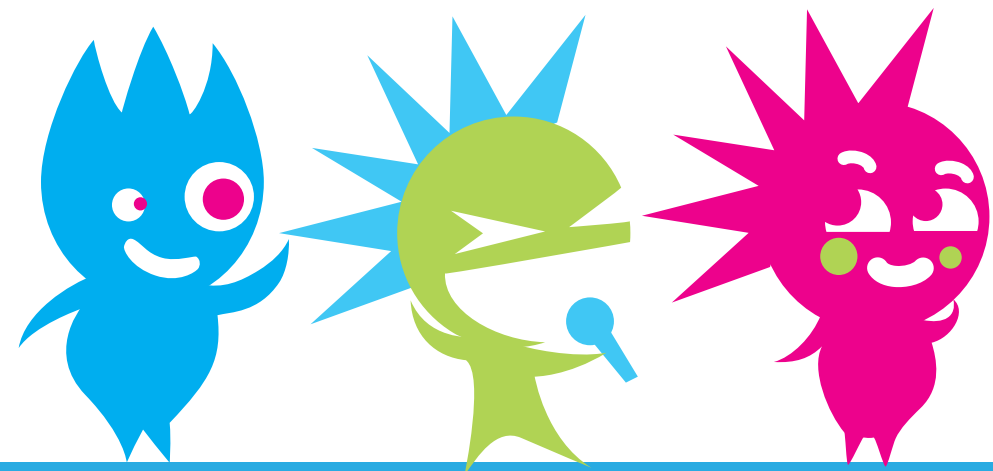
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THE BUSINESS PLAYGROUND

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FOREWORD

Catching the cow



I am by nature an adventurer and am continually energised by whatever challenges I can find to throw myself into (sometimes almost literally), whether that's shaking up an industry or trying to circumnavigate the world in a hot air balloon. **It's the same enthusiasm and openness to new things that young children have.** When I was growing up, my family and I would often talk about business ideas at the dinner table and, because my parents made it so much fun for me and my sisters, that wonderful memory has stayed with me.

I set up my first business when I was 16, publishing a magazine. I really had no idea what I was doing when I started that venture, or my next one selling discounted records ... hence the name 'Virgin'. I had what I thought was a good idea, but with little in the way of a business plan, and just went for it. Since then I've launched countless other businesses, some very successful (and a few that are best forgotten) and the Virgin name is now on everything from spas to spacecrafts.

I'm no longer a business virgin but the spirit with which I entered into my first few ventures remains. 'Catch the cow, Ricky', my mum used to say. 'If you want some milk you can't just sit in the middle of a field waiting for a cow to come to you, you've got to go and catch it and milk it yourself.' And that's what I've been doing ever since.

I'm lucky enough to have made a fair bit of money from my various ventures and could retire tomorrow, but because I'm doing what I love the thought of it never crosses my mind. I couldn't imagine not being part of that incredible buzz you get when talking about ideas and turning them into reality. That's what *The Business Playground* is all about – unleashing that creative power that's inside all of us and putting it to work to reach whatever business goals we have set for ourselves.

I've known Dave Stewart for 30 years, ever since he formed the Eurythmics with Annie Lennox, and have long admired him, not just for his musical talent, but also for his intuitive understanding of business. Like me, he gets really excited by big ideas and is always trying to find ways to make the best ones happen. At Virgin, if someone has a good idea, my first response is always 'Screw it. Let's do it.' and Dave is the exact same way.

Dave and Mark's enthusiasm for creativity and how it can be applied in business leaps off every page. *The Business Playground* will bring out the creative child inside of all of us and I can't imagine many readers being left uninspired to try it out for themselves. Their mix of insights about creativity, revealing examples, anecdotes, interviews with creative thinkers and games make for an entertaining and informative read. If you get half as much out of this book as I did, you're in for quite a treat.

I've been playing in the Business Playground ever since those times spent at the family dinner table discussing business ideas, and I hope to be playing for many years to come. Let Dave and Mark be your guides to your own exciting adventures into the Business Playground.

RICHARD BRANSON

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INTRODUCTION

Why business needs creativity.



What's the secret weapon that will give a business an unfair advantage over its competitors? No, we're not talking industrial espionage or insider trading, we're referring to creativity. More specifically, the ability to come up with ideas and to successfully bring them to life in the marketplace.

Actually, that's not really a secret at all. **Time after time, in survey after survey, executives say that it is creativity that will drive their businesses in the future.** A recent IBM study¹ of CEOs and senior managers highlighted the importance of innovative thinking as the world of business continues to change. Eight out of ten CEOs predicted significant change ahead; change that comes from just about anywhere. One of those interviewed described the business environment as 'a white-water world'. We don't think this was referring to an amusement park ride.

'Innovation in business offers an alternative to the endless downward spiral of commoditisation that comes if you don't,' says Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, a top design and innovation consultancy. 'Once you're over a certain bar in terms of quality or efficiency, there's very little competitive advantage to be had from doing more of that. Everybody else learns just as fast as you do. The only alternative to commoditisation is new choices and alternatives that haven't existed before.'

In a 2008 Boston Consulting Group survey of senior executives from around the world,² two-thirds of them put innovation as one of their top three strategic imperatives. That's good, right? But, and here's the rub, less than half of the big cheeses questioned were happy with the results that their investment in innovation brought. According

¹'The Enterprise of the Future: Global CEO Study', conducted by IBM and The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008.

²'Innovation 2008: Is the Tide Turning?', The Boston Consulting Group, 2008.

to the report, these cheese blues came from a combination of the time it takes to develop innovations, risk-averse corporate cultures, not knowing which ideas to select to put money behind, and from internal shenanigans. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, the man on the hundred-dollar bill, 'Vision without action is hallucination.' More on hallucination in a later chapter...

Creativity is vital for successful business, yet all too often it's not part of the culture. **Most businesses just aren't designed for creativity. Instead, they tend to be efficient machines with established processes, systems and rules that allow little flexibility for the more unstructured thought that is necessary for ideas to form and flourish.** 3M, a corporation once famed for its creativity, began to focus on efficiency at the expense of creativity and is now trying to find its way again. 'Invention is by its very nature a disorderly process,' says CEO George Buckley.³ The Post-it note was one of 3M's biggest breakthroughs, created in the company's heyday, and its inventor, Art Fry, now questions whether his innovation would have ever seen the light of day in an environment that embraces efficiency over experimentation. His view is, 'Innovation is a numbers game. You have to go through 5,000 to 6,000 raw ideas to find one successful business.'



³'At 3M, A Struggle Between Efficiency And Creativity: How CEO George Buckley is managing the yin and yang of discipline and imagination', Brian Hindo, *Business Week*, 11 June 2007.

Tero Ojanperä, Executive Vice-President, Services and member of the Nokia Group Executive Board,⁴ told Business Playground: 'Companies typically always drive for the linear innovation, where they continue to do what they are doing, but just a little bit better. And that helps you to a certain degree, but ultimately there is a point where it produces so little that somebody comes with the non-linear thinking and they bypass you and you are left behind. That's why companies typically fail. They continue with the old trajectory of things.'

So how do we break out of that linear way of thinking and make creative leaps? **Creativity is about exploring the unknown and so it feels very risky.** It's tempting to cordon it off into certain departments, assign it to off-site meetings or outsource it to agencies and consultants. That's a shame, because we all have the ability to be creative. As Tim Brown of design consultancy IDEO told Business Playground: 'The myth is that you have to wear black turtlenecks and designer spectacles in order for you to be creative. Sure, some people are born with talent they exploit, but everybody to some extent can use creativity techniques to be more productive and have better ideas than they would otherwise.'

By not making creativity a part of everyday business we're missing a trick. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, urged corporations to 'Use the brains of every worker. Make sure that it is the person with the best idea who wins. Reward and celebrate new ideas to encourage others to want to contribute as well. Reward

⁴Nokia is the biggest mobile-phone company in the world and, if Tero has his way, will soon be one of the biggest media companies in the world. Nokia is becoming a massive distribution network for all sorts of content (such as music, games and film), services and applications. Its *Comes With Music* service, for instance, allows people who buy certain Nokia handsets to have unlimited access to millions of music downloads for a fee that is already built into the price of their new phone.

those who live the company's values, show "guts", and, in doing so, make the numbers.'⁵ We were all born with great creative skills, it's just that sometimes these skills get sidelined or smothered through the rigidity imposed by schools and in businesses. There's plenty of evidence that the parts of our brains responsible for the logical thought processes inhibit the ones where creativity occurs, and that without the freedom to play it is not allowed to flourish. Stuart Brown, an author who has studied the 'play histories' of 6,000 adults, says⁶ that 'Play-deprived adults are often rigid, humorless, inflexible and closed to trying out new options. Playfulness enhances the capacity to innovate, adapt and master change in circumstances. It is not just an escape. It can help us integrate and reconcile difficult or contradictory circumstances. And, often, it can show us a way out of our problems.' Play doesn't just give the brain a rest; 'Play is an active process that reshapes our rigid views of the world,' he says.

Playfulness is a vital ingredient of creativity and one that is often at odds with the serious environment of the business world.

*The Business Playground*⁷ aims to change all that. In the next twelve chapters we are going to look at what it means to be creative, from our own perspective (with additional personal anecdotes on the side from Dave) and those of some highly successful artists and entrepreneurs. Mixed in with these are research studies and a bunch of games and techniques we hope will give you a fun way of unleashing your amazing creative potential and applying it to business. Are you ready to play?

⁵Jack Welch & *The G.E. Way: Management Insights and Leadership Secrets of the Legendary CEO*, Robert Slater, McGraw-Hill, 1998.

⁶'Let the Children Play (Some More)', Stuart Brown, *The New York Times*, 2 September 2009.

⁷Sadly 'business' and 'playground' are two words you don't often find together in the same sentence – they somehow seem contradictory – but we think they need to become firm bosom buddies.

