

17-10-2013

## **Advice for a Business Studies student**



I received a delightful note recently from Olivia Hill, a 12-year-old, year eight student at Aylsham Business and Enterprise School in Norfolk. She is just starting her first GCSE in Business Studies and asked yours truly about the key enterprising skills I used when first starting out.

Having replied to Olivia, I thought some other young business students might like to read my reply too, so here it is:

Dear Olivia,

Many thanks for getting in touch. I'm honoured you have chosen yours truly as the subject of your business studies project. As somebody who did not particularly enjoy school, I hope you have some fun finding out about [Virgin's adventures!](#)

As you pointed out, my life in business started with Student Magazine when I was a few years older than you are now. We set up Student to give a voice to people like me who wanted to protest against the Vietnam war and the establishment. I didn't have a career in business in mind, we just wanted to make a positive difference to people's lives. I soon learned one of the best ways to do

that is to become an entrepreneur.

The key enterprising skills I used when first starting out are the very same ones I use today: the art of delegation, risk-taking, surrounding yourself with a great team and working on projects you really believe in. As you mentioned in your letter, I suffer from dyslexia but was able to turn this to my advantage. I delegated the areas I struggled with to people who also believed in the project. This freed up my time to focus on what I was good at – the strategy of the magazine, making contacts and developing marketing.

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We had very little money so had to take risks to get our magazine on the map. I approached to be in Student people like Mick Jagger and David Hockney, whom somebody with more experience may have been too intimidated to contact. For some reason, they said yes! I secured advertising by calling up big brands from the school phone box, telling them their rivals were already advertising with us and playing them off against each other.



# AWGA - News Update

It was all great fun, and we learned so much about business by taking chances, getting things wrong and getting up to give it another go. Back then, people who were interested in starting their own businesses were not encouraged in school. Nowadays, while I still think much more could be done to encourage entrepreneurship in education, there are lots of tools and mentors to help you get started in business. If your GCSE studies spark your interest too, then that's brilliant. If you don't get top grades, remember there's a lot more to life than some letters on a piece of paper.

Have you thought about your own first business idea yet? When you do, be sure to let me know.

All the best,

Richard.