

Making a packet

A true entrepreneur gives not a fig for the manner of his earning, as long as he earns. That's why we have successful companies producing traffic cones



BY PAUL KEERS
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We probably all have great money-making ideas. We ask ourselves: "Why doesn't somebody...?". And eventually, somebody does, and they make a fortune out of it. But not us.

Without wishing to sound like Richard Branson, I've thought of lots of ways of making money. I've scribbled them on beer mats or the backs of cigarette packets. I have devised entire corporate strategies over a bottle of Rioja. I have not, however, pursued them – because, sadly, I am not a born entrepreneur.

Let me give you an example. When the television series 'Twin Peaks' was enjoying its cult success, I saw an advert in an American magazine for the official licensed T-shirts of the programme. I realised I could contact the American manufacturers, get a load of T-shirts sent over, and sell them at trendy street markets at a suitable mark-up. Easy money.

But then, the nightmare scenarios set in. What about the paperwork? What are the import regulations? Did someone own the British licence? And, worst of all, what if I couldn't sell them? I imagined the TV series forgotten, the overdraft mounting, and my bedroom filled with boxes of unsold T-shirts.

These problems don't deter born entrepreneurs. The prospect of unsold items wouldn't have stopped Alan Sugar. A born entrepreneur wouldn't waste time on such considerations. A born entrepreneur would dump the T-shirts in his mother's bedroom.

But frankly, I couldn't be bothered with it all. There was simply too much hassle involved. Which, I suppose, confirms that I am not a born entrepreneur.

When you read profiles of entrepreneurs, you always find they started at 14, collecting bottle deposits. At 15, they ran the bottle company. At 16, they were competing with Coke. But for every successful entrepreneur, there's another who didn't make it. The sort of chap who now says he's 'in recycling'. Basically, he's 34 – and still collecting bottle deposits.

He, like me, is clearly not a born entrepreneur. Of course, I want to make money, but I don't particularly want to be a millionaire – I just want to live like



one. But, if I'm going to put a great deal of time and energy into work, then it has to be satisfying. It's not enough to do things just to make money.

And there stands the barrier to my future as an entrepreneur. The way I earn money is as interesting to me as the amount I make. I would rather spend a year working at something I enjoy, and getting a reasonable amount for it, than doing something like importing T-shirts and earning double. However, I suspect that a true entrepreneur gives not a fig for the manner of his earning, as long as earn he does.

That's why we have successful companies producing traffic cones. That's why entrepreneurs are content to spend a lifetime in the zip business. That's why the Rausing brothers are the eighth-richest people in the world, with a fortune of around £6 billion – they're responsible for the Tetra-Pak milk cartons. All very necessary things, all making fortunes for the entrepreneurs behind them. But if I'd created the Tetra-Pak, I'd have considered the prospect of a lifetime making and marketing milk cartons. And then I'd have refolded the cardboard into a model aeroplane.

I had another money-making idea recently. It's a good one, believe me. When someone else has made pots of money out of it, I'll let you know **M**

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