



Here's to the Crazy Ones

If “the quickest way to make a millionaire out of billionaire is to buy an airline,” as Sir Richard Branson once remarked, then what does that mean for billionaires who build commercial space airlines? Ask Branson or Jeff Bezos, because they are the crazy ones: They not only dream; they dream big.

Consider Branson’s longtime love affair with space. He watched Neil Armstrong take “one giant step for mankind” on his parents’ black-and-white TV, and at that moment knew with electrifying certainty that he, too, would go to space.

Branson’s personal quest started early and never faded. His thousands of questions about space (captured in dozens of journals), his observations and conversations with individuals at every stage of the space race value chain, and his daring exploits in the most sophisticated high-altitude hot air balloons fuelled Branson’s thirst for getting into space. Collaborating with people such as Burt Rutan, who won the X Prize, and Peter Diamandis, who created the X Prize, paved the way for Virgin Galactic to move from a boyhood dream to an adult reality.

The story is similar for Bezos, the founder of Amazon.com. As a young boy, he was also starstruck by Armstrong touching foot on lunar soil. While his underwater search for the Apollo booster rockets has been more successful than his outer space adventures (to date), don’t count him out in the long-term space race. As an innovator, his signature strength is experimenting (for concrete evidence, take a look at Amazon’s recent bold and breakneck entry into high fashion online clothing sales). Bezos may not have the marketing flair of Branson, but he does share Branson’s persistence in pursuing a dream—for decades—that goes far beyond book sales.

With dreams as big as space and as high as the moon, we’re brought back down to earth to reflect on our own lives. News of Branson’s and Bezos’s feats make us ask ourselves: Do I dream big? Do the people who work with me? Do we encourage this thinking with younger generations?

I recently visited with social entrepreneurs about teaching creativity and innovation skills to young people in emerging markets. Their answers were stereophonic in emphasizing the importance of not only teaching young people how to create, but helping them think and dream big. That’s precisely

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what Steve Jobs did when he walked into Disney’s studios as a new board member and put down the gauntlet by exhorting employees to “dream bigger!”

With vexing challenges around the world, it’s time for each of us to step back, look up, and pull a bit of that nighttime galaxy wonder back into our hearts. Whatever our vocation or avocation, the colony of space startups reminds me that it’s time to dream a little bigger. Better yet, time to help someone else dream big as well. It’s not a bad launching point for building the next generation of idea makers and impact creators. 3-2-1.

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