
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Young and in business



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NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Alice

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Alice...

Rob

... And I'm Rob.

Alice

So Rob, did you have a part time job while you were at university?

Rob

Yes, I worked in the student bar.

Alice

Did you learn anything from the experience?

Rob

I learned how to pull a decent pint.

Alice

Did you learn anything else?

Rob

Yes, I learned how to add up.

Alice

Didn't they teach you that at school?

Rob

I wasn't good at doing sums in my head – you know – mental arithmetic. But I got pretty good at it as a barman. They didn't have computerized cash registers in my day, you see.

Alice

I didn't realize you were *that* old, Rob! Anyway, the subject of today's show is young

business entrepreneurs. So, can you answer this question: How young were the founders of Facebook and Microsoft when they first set up their companies? Were they...

- a) junior high-school students
- b) high-school students
- Or c) university students?

Rob

And Alice in case you think I don't know, Facebook is an online social networking service and Microsoft is a computer software company. OK?

Alice

Well done!

Rob

Well I'm going to say they were b) high-school students.

Alice

We'll find out if you chose the right answer later on in the programme. But let's talk now about what **drawbacks** – or disadvantages – there are for young entrepreneurs. What do you think, Rob?

Rob

Hmm. Well, I suppose one of the drawbacks of being young and your own boss is that everyone who works for you is older than you!

Alice

Is that a drawback?

Rob

Well, let's consider a real case. Young British entrepreneur Suleman Sacranie started his first company when he was 17, followed by another business shortly afterwards. Then whilst studying chemistry at university he started his third company, an online version of the pound shop – or dollar store in the US – where everything in the shop is priced at one pound. Let's listen to Suleman Sacranie talking about his company.

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Suleman Sacranie, founder of online wholesaler 99pwholesaler.com

I'm actually quite fortunate now, compared to what I was six months ago because now I've got two additional directors who have grey hair. It actually... commercial meetings are excellent now, you know. But before that I think I came across quite professional but you could still tell they were thinking in the back of their heads, 'I've got a kid sitting in front of me.'

Rob

So young entrepreneur Suleman Sacranie has got two grey-haired directors working with him now.

Alice

That's right – but how does having grey-haired executives on board help, Rob?

Rob

Well, '**executives**' are people who run a business and **on board** means being part of a team. Well, to answer your question, Alice, they bring experience to the table. I have a few grey hairs you know – you could learn a lot from me.

Alice

I do, Rob. Everyday. And if you **bring something to the table** it means you provide something useful. Well, what do you bring to the table, Rob?

Rob

Well, bad jokes, peanuts, crisps, cups of coffee, that sort of thing...

Alice

I was going to say a **keen** mind, in other words, a well-developed mind, and... great business acumen!

Rob

Come on, you weren't going to say that!

Alice

You're right, I wasn't. **Acumen** means good judgement. But don't worry, you have an abundant enthusiasm that makes up for it. But moving on now, do you think that school prepared you well for working life?

Rob

No, not really. I studied Latin at school, and I don't use that much. And maths – well, I never use trigonometry or calculus. So I'm not sure how useful maths lessons were...

Alice

Yes, and you only learned to add up in the university bar after all...

Rob

Yes, but I am very good at it! And the point is that I've got a fantastic job now. And if you're really interested in something you can always **acquire** – or get – the skills you don't have. Let's listen to successful young entrepreneur Jessica Rose talking about her experience. She works with jewellery.

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Jessica Rose, owner of a jewellery making business

I didn't need all these previous skills and experience to go out there and start on my own. When I first started I had no business training whatsoever, no jewellery training whatsoever, but I kind of woke up one day and thought I'd really love to be a jewellery designer. Which is kind of a tricky position to be in, because it's you know, a lot of people would say and did say, well, you know, you're mad.

Alice

So Jessica Rose used her savings to learn jewellery making and then set up her own jewellery-making business.

Rob

And despite setting out with no business experience and no jewellery training – her enthusiasm for the article **paid off**.

Alice

And that means it was successful.

Rob

A bit like me...

Alice

Yes. OK, I think it's time for the answer to today's quiz question. I asked: How young were the founders of Facebook and Microsoft when first set up their companies? Were they... a) junior high-school students, b) high-school students or c) university students?

Rob

I said b) high-school students.

Alice

And you were wrong, I'm afraid, Rob. Sorry.

Rob

Again.

Alice

Yes. Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates were both university students when they started their companies. Zuckerberg was studying at Harvard in the US when he launched Facebook in 2004. And Bill Gates took a break from Harvard to launch Microsoft in 1976, but never returned to his studies.

Rob

Both at Harvard – that's a coincidence. I wonder if the bar there was any good... Now can we hear the words we learned today?

Alice

Yes. OK. They are:

drawbacks

executives

on board

bring something to the table

keen

(business) acumen

acquire

paid off

Rob

Thanks, Alice. Well, that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you've enjoyed the new vocabulary we brought to the table.

Alice

Very good.

Rob

Please join us again soon!

Both

Bye.