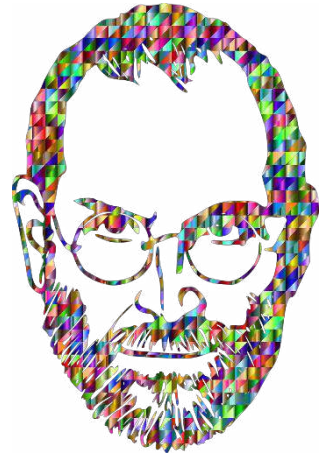


## Celebrity CEOs

### Warm up

- Can you name any celebrity CEOs? What do you think of them?
- What kind of character traits do you think a CEO should have?
- What do you think are the pros and cons to a company of having a celebrity CEO?
- Why do you think there has been such an increase in celebrity CEOs in the past 15 years?
- Would you like to be a celebrity CEO? Why or why not?
- Does your country have any well-known CEOs? What's your opinion on them?



### 1. Read the quotes from CEOs and discuss. Which do you agree /disagree with the most?

- “We are really competing against ourselves. We have no control over how others perform” – *Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook*
- “You don't need to be a rocket scientist. Investing is not a game where the guy with the 160 IQ beats the guy with 130 IQ.” – *Warren Buffett, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway*
- “I always did something I was a little not ready to do. I think that's how you grow.” – *Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo*
- “To be a CEO is a calling, not a job. Your heart has to be in it, you have to love it”  
*Indra Nooyi, CEO of Pepsico*
- “The path to the CEO's office should not be through the CFO's office or the marketing department. It should be through engineering and design.” – *Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla*
- “In business sometimes you can change the CEO in order to change the direction of the whole company.” – *Thomas Massie, CEO of SensAble Technologies*
- “What consumerism really is, at it's very worst, is getting people to buy things that don't actually improve their lives.” – *Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon*



**2. Pairwork: Read the descriptions of CEOs below and try to describe the CEO in your own words to your partner.**

***Student A***

Warren Buffett is the owner of *Berkshire Hathaway*, an insurance and investment company. When Buffett took over the company in 1965 it was in enormous debt, and bankruptcy seemed likely. However, today Berkshire's stock has risen by almost four million percent. In short, the company has been wildly successful, and Buffett is widely regarded as one of the smartest investors of all time. He has shown an incredible ability for picking which start-ups will flourish and which will go bust, and has also been noted for donating half of his wealth (\$45 billion) to charity, and has pledged to donate 99% of his wealth by the time he dies.



Elizabeth Holmes is the former CEO of health technology company *Theranos*, a company which promised to deliver blood testing machines at a price and size which the average consumer could buy for use in their own homes. Like many tech CEOs, Holmes was charismatic, intense, and decidedly informal, and her ideas appeared to be revolutionary. Only one problem: the tech did not work. Holmes received billions of dollars in investments by faking blood tests, tricking investors into believing Theranos tests were accurate. She is now serving eleven years for fraud.

***Student B***

Elon Musk is the CEO of *Tesla*, *PayPal*, and recently acquired the social media company *Twitter*. Musk got his start in business by buying part of PayPal, and since then has bought into several large companies, often announcing incredibly big goals for the future. Musk has always been a controversial figure often making himself a large part of his company's branding, and may have been in the public eye more than any other CEO in history. Musk has always been seen as a big-thinking futuristic billionaire, but public opinion may have started to turn against him, as many previous colleagues have stated that he routinely takes credit for the work and ideas of others.



Richard Branson is the owner of *Virgin Airways* and about 400 other companies. He got his start by signing bands like the Sex Pistols, Culture Club, and The Rolling Stones to his label, Virgin Records. Branson's approach to business seems to be; take risks and be impulsive, even when you don't have to be. In the 70s Branson was in an airport when his plane was cancelled. Branson made a few calls, hired a private plane, and walked around the airport with a sign offering to fly the other passengers to their destination for \$29. That, according to Branson, was how Virgin Airways was born.



### 3. Read through the rest of the CEOs in exercise 2 and answer the questions.

- Which CEO is now in prison? *Elizabeth Holmes*
- Which CEO has been accused of stealing ideas? *Elon Musk*
- Which CEO is known for being particularly generous? *Warren Buffett*
- Which CEO started in the music industry? *Richard Branson*
- Which CEO is good at predicting the success of businesses? *Warren Buffett*



### 4. Ask and answer the questions with a partner.

- Do you think you would make a good CEO? Why or why not?
- Is there any CEO that you particularly respect or dislike? Why?
- Of the 4 CEOs in exercise 2, who had you heard of before? Did you find out anything new about them?
- Do you think some CEOs have too much money and power?



### 5. You are going to watch a video about celebrity CEOs which contains the vocabulary in the box. Use the vocabulary to complete the sentences.

|          |                     |           |
|----------|---------------------|-----------|
| diverse  | conspiracy theories | deceptive |
| backfire | don't get me wrong  | role      |

- The *role* of CEO is different in every company.
- He seems honest and straightforward, but he's actually quite *deceptive*.
- Trying to keep something secret often seems to *backfire*, and makes people talk about it even more.
- My brother thinks the earth is flat, and will believe pretty much any *conspiracy theory* you tell him.
- Don't get me wrong*, I like Jack, I just think he can be a little selfish sometimes.
- We offer a *diverse* range of investment opportunities, everything from real estate to oil.



6. Watch “[Celebrity CEOs are amazing. Until they backfire](#)”<sup>1</sup> and answer the questions

- a) What do you think a “larger than life” CEO is? *A CEO with a big, charismatic personality*
- b) What did Steve Jobs say his goal was? *To constantly work on making things better*
- c) Why did the stock of Overstock crash? *The CEO had a personal blog where he expressed conspiracy theories, which made investors nervous about the company.*
- d) What type of person was missing on Theranos’ board of directors, and why? *Scientists, because they would know the technology did not work.*
- e) According to Anna Butrico (the presenter) what does a board of directors need to be? *They need to be diverse, and have very different ideas about everything.*



7. Choose a CEO from the list below, research them, and make a presentation to your class about their background, achievements, career path, and anything else you find notable.

- Steve Jobs (Tech, *Apple*)
- Indra Nooyi (Food, *Pepsico*)
- Charles Koch ( Chemicals, *Koch Industries*)
- Sundar Pichai (Tech, *Google*)
- Jeff Bezos (Retail, *Amazon*)
- Abigail Johnson (Investments, *Fidelity Investments*)

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNeYSjMKyY&ab\\_channel=BigThink](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNeYSjMKyY&ab_channel=BigThink)