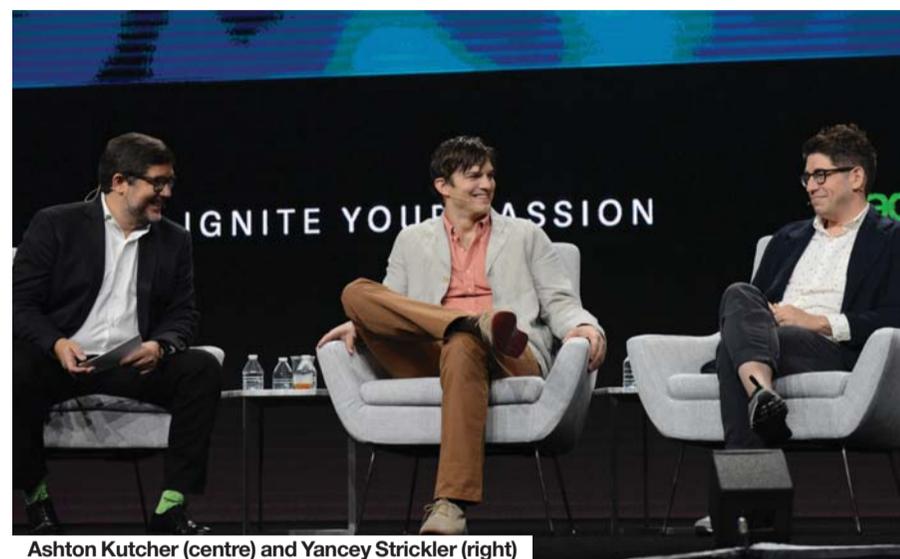


'Celebpreneurs' light up the Sage Summit

A select few celebrities-turned-entrepreneurs offer their perspectives of running businesses to attendees at the Sage Summit



Stephen Kelly and Sir Richard Branson



Ashton Kutcher (centre) and Yancey Strickler (right)



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Reception hit fever pitch when a host of A-list celebrities took to the stage at the recently concluded Sage Summit 2016. From celebrated entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson to celebrity-turned-entrepreneur Ashton Kutcher, each of these conversations offered unique insights on doing business.

The Sage Summit 2016 was swamped with talks and networking sessions that cover a wide variety of topics and issues. However, the highlight of the conference were the featured conversations with A-list celebrity speakers. From entrepreneur extraordinaire Sir Richard Branson, to obsessed investor Ashton Kutcher, each conversation offered a unique perspective on the business world.

Sir Richard Branson – Details and People

Founder of the Virgin Group, Sir Richard Branson is certainly one of the biggest names of the business world, if not the biggest. Starting his first business at the age of 15 with a magazine called *Student*, Branson has maintained a consistent philosophy of business throughout his 50 years of entrepreneurial experience, putting details and people first.

If you can create a product that has got every single detail right, your staff are so proud of working for the company that they cannot do anything but smile.

— Branson

Branson said, "If you can create a product that has got every single detail right, your staff are so proud of working for the company that they cannot do anything but smile. If you give your staff a big airline where everything is going wrong, you're just not going to be able to smile and interact with your passengers as they should. When you create anything, make sure you get all the details right."

"Make sure you get out and talk to your customers, talk to your people and scribble down notes like I do. Note down ideas and feedback and make sure they are your actions

the next day. You can see why restaurants that have their owners there all the time are better than franchises that are 200-300 strong. If you have a big-ish company, you have to try to run the company with that kind of mentality."

Gwyneth Paltrow and Zoey Deschanel – The giving economy

Gwyneth Paltrow, founder and CCO of goop and Zoey Deschanel, co-founder of HelloGiggles both started companies based on a mission of giving back and making the world a better place. Both online publications, goop gives a large portion of their profits to charity, while HelloGiggles is a positive online community for women.

Goop and HelloGiggles have business models based on their mission of making a positive impact for the community. As such, both women have emphasised the need to not sacrifice the core mission of the company for growth.

Deschanel said, "We were always trying to grow the business while not sacrificing our mission, and that was sometimes challenging. Sometimes we want it to grow bigger than it can grow while still keeping our integrity. When TIME came in and bought our brand, we felt we were able to do that because TIME understood our brand and what it represents, which is why TIME was interested to buy us in the first place."

Iron Man leading lady Paltrow agreed and said: "We do a lot of supporting causes through our content



Gwyneth Paltrow



Zoey Deschanel

which aims to offer women good choices. We like to think that we are a place that do a lot to support women. The charitable components we have done so far have been done quietly because we have so many causes we are passionate about, but moving forward we will set a clear vision of what we want to support through our organisation."

Ashton Kutcher and Yancey Strickler – Ideas and crowdfunding

Ashton Kutcher, entrepreneur and tech investor and Yancey Strickler, co-founder and CEO of Kickstarter both stress the importance of ideas in a competitive world, with crowdfunding an avenue for starting companies based on these ideas. Kickstarter is one such avenue, with projects and ideas getting funding on Kickstarter which otherwise would have not.

Strickler said, "I spend at least half an hour a day looking at ideas and projects on Kickstarter, and take a lot of pride in being a patron of the idea. A lot of ideas and companies that were funded and founded on Kickstarter have gone on to have incredible success, such as the Oculus Rift. People are just excited to become part of ideas. The idea that capital is raised to gain more capital locks out creative ideas and

projects from getting funded, and crowdfunding avoids that."

Kutcher has invested in over 150 companies, and is co-creator of a venture fund called A-Grade Investments. A-Grade Investments has made investments in Airbnb, Spotify, Uber, Flipboard, SoundCloud, Foursquare, Shazam, and Houzz. How then does Kutcher choose which companies to invest in?

Kutcher said, "My process of choosing a company to invest in changes every day, but some processes remain consistent. First is the founder. Are they a problem solver, able to handle lawsuits that may come their way or able to sell their product? Then I think it's the product. Is it a disruptive product or business model, something that is different?"

"I think a business that challenges the norm are very successful companies. Building businesses in a void can be very exciting. Kickstarter is a perfect example. Why would people give other people money to start businesses? Why would anyone open up their homes to strangers to stay with them? Companies that build into those challenged notions and intuitions are companies playing in that grey space with no competitors, and become very big." **MSME**