

MADONNA
Pop Culture Phenomenon
Captain of Industry
by
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Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone Ritchie was born August 16, 1958, in Bay City Michigan: one of six children in an Italian Catholic family. She was raised in the suburbs of Detroit where in the year of 1963, her family suffered the loss of her mother to breast cancer at the age of 30. Madonna was then 5 years old and at this age probably had no idea, how much this emotional trauma would play a role, in kick starting the creative fire that would in the years to come, reveal the "Lucky Star" that she was born under.

Shortly after this pivotal event, Madonna would convince her father to enroll her in ballet classes. This would be the beginning of Madonna's journey towards eventual recognition as pop culture innovator, icon and in my view, a captain of this industry.

Through her teenage years, Madonna would study dance. Her dedication and scholastic achievements would earn her a dance scholarship to the University of Michigan. At the end of her sophomore year, she would leave Detroit and move to New York City, where she would become the "sole proprietor" of a fledgling business in the music industry, that eventually would become globally known simply as - "Madonna".

With the low start up cost of \$35.00 tucked neatly in her pocket, Madonna arrived in New York City with the goal of pursuing her dance career. The year was 1978. Little did she know that by the year 2007, her initial investment of \$35.00 would grow in revenue earnings that would accumulate to, what Forbes magazine would report as being a net worth of \$325 million. These sheer numbers have proven Madonna to be a true Mistress of the entrepreneurial spirit.

Over the span of 29 years, Madonna has gone from sole proprietor to corporation by successfully marketing and selling herself as: American dance-pop singer-song writer, record company owner (Maverick Studios), record and film producer, dancer, actress, author, fashion icon and fashion designer. She is both a Grammy and a Golden Globe winner, whose record company credits her with having sold over 200 million albums worldwide and who, according to both the Guinness Book of World Records and Billboard Magazine, is the highest earning female singer of all time.

In a society wherein the greatest number of self-made millionaires and captains of industry tend to be men, Madonna is truly an enigmatic pioneer, both an artistic and an administrative force to be reckoned with and a phenomenon worth examining.

How has this little girl, who at such a young age suffered so great a loss, become the woman who has gained so much, that she is now known and recognized around the world, not only as a leader in her own industry but as an influential voice in many arena's ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous? Who is the creatrix behind the creation?

One thing that can be said about this Goddess beyond a shadow of a doubt, is that right from the beginning she has been hands on in all of her endeavors, taking the bull by the horns at every turn and defying opposition whenever confronted by it. This hands on managerial style was publicly revealed in 1991 in her first documentary, "Truth or Dare", which chronicled her successful 1990, Blond Ambition Tour. In this documentary we witness a Madonna who is definitely the president of the company and a first-line manager, on stage, back stage, in the office and in her personal life. We witness a woman who owns the final word on every aspect of her project and who's skills are manifest in all

five areas of management: conceptual, decision-making, human relations, time management and technical. Observing her, one is left with the impression that no matter how many levels there are in her chain of command, she is present in every one of them in some mysterious, pervasive, cellular way. No matter how big the machine grows, she retains the creative control of the original "sole proprietor".

When we reexamine the original goal of this "sole proprietor" (which was simply to go to New York City and pursue a career in dance) and compare it with her final success as entertainment industry mogul, we see the spirit of the entrepreneurial maverick clearly manifested. Her openness to take advantage of opportunities previously unconsidered, her willingness to do the work, her creative desire for growth and expansion, combined with her hands on approach, have catapulted her from one simple goal to the creation of a living mythology. The answer to the question, "Has Madonna achieved her original goal?", is almost mute as it is lost in the magnitude of what the pursuit of this goal has actually achieved.

In the past year I acquired a poster distributed as part of the merchandising campaign for Madonna's latest Confessions tour. It was graciously bought for me by an acquaintance, who had the great good fortune of actually attending the concert. I have often sat quietly before this image- unquestionably that of a dominatrix - which hangs in my living room and asked, "But really, what is the bottom line secret to this woman's success? She has defied the odds posed against her being a woman in a predominantly patriarchal society, she has challenged this civilization's social, religious and sexual taboos, she has smashed the golden calves of many and she has none the less come out on top. Why?"

Of late I believe that I have stumbled upon one of many possible answers to this question. It is this. Somehow, perhaps through sheer strength of will and self-mastery, Madonna seems to have overridden a social programming that teaches us to question, minimize, doubt, fear and experience toxic-shame about our personal power and the expression of it. Rather than denigrating and denying her power, she has embraced it and brazenly utilized, exploited and displayed it without justification or apology. Because of this she has both in the past and still currently continues to manifest, the 20 characteristics of successfully intelligent people, as described by Robert Sternberg. Sternberg refers to these characteristics as self-activators, Madonna has demonstrated all of them and they are as follows:

1. Motivate themselves.
2. Learn to control their impulses.
3. Know when to persevere.
4. Know how to make the most of their abilities.
5. Translate thought into action.
6. Have a product orientation.
7. Complete tasks and follow through.
8. Are initiators.
9. Are not afraid to risk failure.
10. Don't procrastinate.
11. Accept fair blame.
12. Reject self-pity.
13. Are independent.
14. Seek to surmount personal difficulties.
15. Focus and concentrate to achieve their goals.
16. Spread themselves neither too thin or too thick.
17. Have the ability to delay gratification.
18. Have the ability to see the forest for the trees.
19. Have a reasonable level of self-confidence and a belief in their ability to achieve their goals.
20. Balance analytical, creative and practical thinking.

Was the little girl from Detroit city, who lost her mother at the

age of 5 born under a "Lucky Star"? Or did she just instinctively know to "follow her bliss", as Joseph Campbell instructs us to do.

None of us can ever really know the inner workings of another fellow human being, but we can determine to surmise what those workings might be, by the things that a person manifests in his or her life.

Madonna has manifested the characteristics of being a captain of industry and a mistress of her own destiny. In so doing she has become a pop-culture phenomenon and a woman who commands, if not the love of those around her, at least and most certainly their respect.

For this reason, when faced with a dilemma, I often sit quietly before the image of the dominatrix hanging in my living room and muse,

"What would Madonna do in this situation?"