CHAPTER 1

The Critical Secret I Learned from the World's Billionaires

Lost time is never found again.

—Benjamin Franklin

It's one of my favorite personal stories. And folks just can't seem to get enough of this tale. But the personal experience I'm about to relate also taught me some very valuable lessons, which I'm now going to share with you.

This story goes back to my days as an entrepreneur, when I was running a venture that designed, built, and installed water-desalination systems.

One of my first customers was Richard Branson.

Yes . . . that Richard Branson . . . the man so often referred to as "Billionaire Richard Branson" in media reports that I'm betting many folks think "Billionaire" is his first name.

Actually, it's Sir Richard Branson. And with my little quip, absolutely no disrespect was intended.

In fact, Richard Branson is a gentleman for whom I have great respect. Because he's one of the first people to really help me understand the value of time.

Time as a key ingredient—or raw material—of wealth.

Let me show you what I mean . . .

From Castaways to Kings

The British investor, philanthropist, and entrepreneur is probably best-known as the founder and builder of Virgin Group, a holding company for more than 400 ventures. And one reason Branson has been so successful is that he started early.

At 16, in fact, with a magazine called *Student.*

By the time he was 20, Branson had set up a mail-order business and—two years later—he opened a chain of record stores called Virgin Records. Throughout the 1980s, he expanded the Virgin Records music label, the Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd. carrier, and a host of other ventures.

In July 2015, *Forbes* estimated Branson's net worth at $5.2 billion.

My interaction with Branson's entrepreneurial efforts had to do with the billionaire's private getaway, called Necker Island.

The 74-acre tract in the British Virgin Islands is wholly owned by Branson, and is part of the Virgin Ltd. Edition portfolio of high-end properties. The entire island is set up as a resort, has two private beaches, can accommodate up to 28 guests and rents out for $65,000 a day (or about $2,200 a person).

It wasn't always a resort.

Back in 1965, in fact, *Daily Telegraph* reporter Andrew Alexander and photographer Don McCullin were sent to what was then a desert island" for a castaway adventure the British newspaper hoped would last for three weeks.

The duo managed to stick it out for 14 days.

As McCullin would later say, Necker was "inhabited by snakes, scorpions, and tarantulas . . . the mosquitos and other insects were more venomous and persistent than any I had encountered in Vietnam or the Congo."

In the early-morning hours of that fifteenth day—suffering from "gathering weakness . . . out of temper and out of water," McCullin said he and his photographer colleague "hoisted the red flag and were taken off the island."

A bit more than a dozen years later, the then-28-year-old Branson learned that some of the islands in the BVI chain were for sale. He visited, and immediately realized how great they could be for putting up his record label's top stars—so he investigated a purchase. Branson and his team were given a luxury villa on one of the islands, toured several others by helicopter, and saw Necker last of all.

From the island's highest point, Branson took in the stunning view and wondrous array of wildlife—and immediately offered $100,000 for an island whose asking price was $6 million (his cash was low at that point in his entrepreneurial career).

Branson wasn't just turned down . . . he was evicted.

"The Realtor closed in on me to make the sale and said Necker Island could be all mine for the small price of around $6 million," Branson said in a recent humor-laced recollection of that time. "I considered for a moment and then made the highest offer I could, based on my available funds: $100,000. The music stopped instantly. We were taken back and unceremoniously dumped on the main island. The helicopter disappeared, the champagne evaporated, and we were left to find our own way back to New York."

Not long after, however, the island's owner—needing cash—accepted a revised offer of $180,000.

But there was a state-imposed proviso: Branson had to develop a resort within five years—or the island's ownership reverted to the state. The businessman didn't worry about that: he committed to the purchase—and then committed to creating his dream resort.

Three years and about $10 million afterward, Branson had his private resort. And as anyone can easily see, it's breathtaking. The architect combined local stone with Brazilian hardwoods for construction of a

10-bedroom villa on a hill overlooking the beach. Antiques from Asia, furniture from Bali, and rugs from India highlight the getaway. Open walls give 360-degree views and the most wondrous of soothing breezes.

That brings us back to my story.

Learning in Luxury

In the late 1990s, my company constructed the desalination facility that I talked about a moment ago. In my own telling of this tale, I like to tell listeners that when they read about Beyoncé, Oprah, or Robert De Niro staying on that island, they're reading about celebrities . . . drinking my water.

That quip always sparks a round of laughter.

But I also share this little factoid.

At $65,000 a day, the whole cost of constructing this resort could be recouped in just five months.

All thanks to the shrewdness, patience, vision, and personal financial control that Branson displayed—even as a 28-year-old entrepreneur.

Indeed, there are the "Five Lessons of Necker Island" that, put to use, will help make you a successful investor:

- Necker Island Lesson Number 1: Have a Plan—and Act on That Plan. Branson had a plan . . . He wanted to create a private luxury getaway. He did the legwork, he identified his investment target, and he made his move.
- Necker Island Lesson Number 2: Look for Bargains. Granted, paying $180,000 for an island worth $6 million is an extreme example of a bargain. But in real estate, in stocks, and in other parts of the financial and capital asset markets, bargains come along more often than you'd think. You have to be patient. You have to understand what you're buying. And you have to be ready to act when you spot one.
- Necker Island Lesson Number 3: Invest Within Your Means. At that point in his entrepreneurial career, Branson knew what he could afford to invest. As much as he loved Necker Island, and understood its potential, he also knew his outlay limit. So he refused to overpay . . . even after his champagne had been taken away and he'd been evicted during his investigative trip.

- Necker Island Lesson Number 4: When You Finally Do Make Your Move, Be Decisive. Once the seller took his offers seriously, Branson made his move. And he embarked on the project and got it done well within the five-year deadline he faced.

If you're one of those folks with a wonderful eye for detail, you notice there were only four lessons listed—even though I promised five.

And, indeed, there is a fifth.

And it's the most important lesson of all.

Like capital, *time* is a valuable resource.

That, in fact, is Necker Island Lesson Number 5: Time Is the Single-Most-Valuable Resource Investors Have.

Used correctly, time is our most powerful ally.

Used incorrectly—or ignored outright—time is our biggest enemy.

It's not enough to merely acknowledge this lesson.

You actually have to embrace it . . . as a mindset . . .

The fact is that this lesson is the central element of the wealth system I'm going to teach you during the rest of this book.

It's time for you to embrace—as your own—what I refer to as the 10-Minute Millionaire mindset.

Let me start by showing it to you . . .

That Ticking Sound You Hear...

Ten minutes . . . it's a time interval we've already talked quite a bit about—despite having just met.

And yet . . . it's an interval of time that most of us fritter away without a second thought.

We'll waste it watching a TV show we have absolutely no interest in.

We'll waste it surfing the Net . . . jumping from one link to the next on the mindless trivia shrewd e-commerce marketers refer to as *clickbait*.

We'll waste it daydreaming . . . about nothing in particular.

We listen as those ticks of the clock run off—indeed, disappear—without a single pang of regret.

But what if I told you that with each 10-minute interval you waste, you're potentially flushing away $1,000, $10,000, or even $100,000?

Properly directed—properly focused—those minutes . . . those ticks of the clock . . . could each add hundreds, thousands, or hundreds of thousands of dollars to your net worth.

Indeed, over time, those ticks of the clock could add . . . millions.

To make my point—in fact, to illustrate this 10-Minute Millionaire mindset—let me share another story . . . two stories, in fact.

The first of these two tales is a favorite of investing icon Warren Buffett—the "Oracle of Omaha" and the chairman of vaunted investment vehicle Berkshire Hathaway, Inc. (NYSE: BRKA).

Years ago, in an essay titled "The Joys of Compounding," a then-32-year-old Buffett shared this story.

> I have it from unreliable sources that the cost of the voyage [Spanish Queen] Isabella originally underwrote for Columbus was approximately $30,000. This has been considered at least a moderately successful utilization of venture capital. Without attempting to evaluate the psychic income derived from finding a new hemisphere, it must be pointed out that . . . the whole deal was not exactly another IBM. Figured very roughly, the $30,000 invested at 4 percent compounded annually would have amounted to something like $2 trillion.[1]

Buffett makes two very important points here.

The first is about focus . . . about not wasting the capital that we have.

And the second is about time—and the powerful ally it can be.

Translation: even trifling sums must be invested with the utmost care. To the Oracle of Omaha, wasting 30 grand represents not the loss of $30,000 . . . but the missed opportunity to make *$2 trillion.*[2]

Wow . . .

And just as *money wasted now* represents a potential fortune not reaped in the future, *time* wasted now is *also* a fortune not earned.

In some ways, it's a bigger deal to waste time than it is to waste money. That's because *time* is the one commodity that you can't create more of.

After all, if you spend a dollar, you can always find another.

But once you waste a minute . . . or five minutes . . . or 10 minutes . . . those ticks of the clock are gone . . .

Forever . . .

There's one particular group that understands this as well as anyone. I'm talking about the builders and shapers of the world economy . . . the holders of the bulk of the wealth both here in the United States and in the top markets abroad.

I'm talking about the world's billionaires.

Richard Branson's peers.

Here's what I mean.

The Private Lives of the World's Elite

As a recent report in *Inc.* magazine underscores, this group of super-achievers fully understand that time is unrivaled as a "scarce resource." In that report, writer/entrepreneur John Rampton said he found 12 habits that the world's billionaires all seem to share.[3]

Those include such daily rituals as:

- Taking time for family: Carlos Slim Helu, number six on Forbes's list of the world's billionaires, with a current net worth of $49.5 billion, is a telecom mogul who is currently the honorary chairman of America Movil SAB de CV (NYSE ADR: AMX). He devotes his evenings to his six children and numerous grandchildren, Rampton writes. These execs may be tough as nails in the boardroom, but they see it as a gift when they're able to read to their kids or tuck them in at night.
- Taking time to exercise: Dole Food Co., Inc. Chairman David Murdock, number 231 on the Forbes 400 list, with a net worth $3.0 billion, is 93—and plans to see 125. He credits his staying power to yoga, which he does each evening. Wealthy folks spend so much time being so focused—and tightly scheduled—that they need workout time to stay sharp and fit.
- Taking time for gratitude: Finally—and perhaps most important of all—is a habit that we should all remember: be thankful for what you achieve. As Rampton writes, "Before closing their eyes for the night, an astonishing number of billionaires focus on what they feel grateful for in their lives, no matter how small it may seem." This has led many to feelings of contentment while adding a jolt of joy to

their lives. And it's not just the vast majority of billionaires that find gratitude useful—science agrees. Research from best-selling author Dr. Sonya Lyubomirsky showed that gratitude exercises, practiced regularly, improved emotional and even physical health. The bottom line? Show gratitude and improve your quality of life.

I could continue here, but I really don't need to: the pattern is clear . . . as is the message.

The world's richest folks—the people who know the most about wealth and what it takes to achieve it—understand that time is a scarce resource . . . meaning it's a resource that's not to be squandered.

Time can help you *make* a fortune. Time can help you *keep* that fortune.

And time can help you enjoy that fortune . . . which, after all, is the whole reason for amassing a fortune in the first place.

To me—for purposes of our 10-Minute Millionaire mindset—here's what's really fascinating.

Each of the dozen rituals Rampton wrote about is an activity that can be fulfilled in increments of 10 minutes. Some—a diary entry, for example—might be taken care of in a single 10-minute tranche.

Others—running a board meeting for a local charity—might consume multiple 10-minute increments.

Ten minutes . . . it's intriguing how that seemingly insignificant amount of time keeps cropping up . . .

In a turning-point battle in the American Revolutionary War.

In the daily lives of the world's billionaires . . .

And in the rest of this book . . .

With regards to these billionaires, the point to keep in mind is that these folks use their time wisely—even though they've already reached the billionaire's club.

You see, they long ago grasped the secret to investing success I want to share with you right now.

Most folks believe that *money* is the key to wealth.

And, to be sure, it's important.

Here's the thing, however . . .

Money may be *a key* to meaningful wealth.

But *time* . . . those precious ticks of the clock that once gone can never be recouped . . . is *the key.*

The wealthy investors and business leaders who I know and deal with view those minutes as a precious scarce resource, as a key to a fuller life, and as the raw materials for additional wealth.

They deploy and apportion those minutes judiciously—even shrewdly. They put those minutes to use in their business and investing pursuits. But they also use those minutes wisely at home, in their private lives . . . even just before they retire for the day and head for bed.

These habits combine to create a true formula for success.

And they also demonstrate a shared appreciation for the value of time . . . for the ticks of the clock.

If you now see and understand that simple fact—that time is a scarce commodity . . . and that time deployed in 10-minute increments can be transformed into meaningful wealth—you've embraced one of the two key building blocks of what I refer to as the 10-Minute Millionaire mindset.

And if that appreciation of time is one of those building blocks, then a deep-seated belief—that it's *absolutely possible* for you to become a millionaire—is the other.

The Basic Tenets of Prodigious Wealth

One discovery I've made through the years is that most investors view millionaire status as only a dream: they enjoy thinking about what it would be like to be wealthy—but view it as something that could never be attained.

That's the wrong way to think about it.

You see, millionaire status is actually more of a *goal*—a goal that can be worked toward and achieved, just like earning a graduate degree, buying a first house, or retiring early.

In other words, if becoming a millionaire is something you know you want to do, you establish it as a goal, put a time frame on it, and work backward to craft a plan that will get you there.

Indeed, as was illustrated by the 1996 best-seller *The Millionaire Next Door*—a seminal study of America's stealthy wealthy class—the populations of literal millionaires (households with a net worth of $1 million or more) is much bigger than most folks might think.

As authors Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko superbly chronicled, the nation's millionaires tend to fit a very precise profile. They spend less than they earn, and avoid status objects like super-big houses or obscenely expensive cars. And they manifest real discipline when it comes to saving and investing—and they do so over very long periods of time.

This lack of ostentation and a tendency to act and live just like "regular folks" is the reason you often don't recognize a millionaire as such when you meet them—hence the "millionaire next door" tagline.

To me, that last point—that it's not all that easy to say who's a millionaire and who isn't—is the most intriguing point of all.

Here's why.

If it's possible to meet a group of people—and not be able to tell who is a millionaire and who isn't—*then why couldn't one of the millionaires in that group be you*?

The short answer: There's no reason it can't be—as long as you believe it's possible.

And thanks to the 10-Minute Millionaire system, it is possible.

You see, in addition to the ones I've already described, there's one other trait that many "next-door millionaires" share. They are what that book's authors refer to as "Prodigious Accumulators of Wealth," or PAWs.

To be a PAW, you have to have a net worth that's higher than might seem possible, given your age and income level.

Most of that wealth is accumulated the old-fashioned way—through time, planning and discipline.

However, just because these PAWs are good savers and disciplined investors doesn't mean they aren't opportunistic.

Obviously, PAWs avoid roll-the-dice type of investments. But they will take risks if those risks are calculated, and if the underlying investment offers a high potential returns. As the authors noted, for the right opportunity PAWs will go into such financial opportunities as stocks, private equity and venture capital investments, and even financial stakes in operating businesses.

The bottom line: These PAWs *will* take financial risks—if the odds and rewards make those risks worthwhile.

If you bring together all of what we've been talking about here, it really describes the 10-Minute Millionaire system—which was designed to turn you into a "wealth accumulator."

If your goal is to become a millionaire, and you believe that goal is attainable, discipline must become a core piece of your plan. You want to be a good saver. You want to have a net worth that's high relative to your income. You want to eschew ostentation.

But you also want to become a "wealth accumulator." You want to supercharge your rate of return.

And you'll start by taking a small slice of the underperforming part of your portfolio—and using that as the seed capital for the trading strategy that I'm going to teach you in this book.

And as I detail this system, I want you to remember three key concepts—concepts that I'll flesh out with real numbers and will tie together as I teach you the 10-Minute Millionaire strategy.

First, becoming a millionaire isn't just a dream—it's a goal. And goals can be achieved if you have a plan to get you there. A plan demands discipline—which I'd define as a series of steps or a checklist you can follow. That's what a system does—it gives you those steps to follow. And the 10-Minute Millionaire system was designed with this specific goal in mind.

Second, if you string together a series of quick-but-modest (even small) gains, but you do so over a sustained stretch, the power of compounding will leave you with a *hefty* sum in a stunningly short period of time. For instance, if you can pull down a 4% gain every other week for 26 weeks, you'll *more than double* your starting capital in a single year. The reason for this is very simple: Seemingly small gains earned quickly actually work out to big, big gains when they are "compounded." So if you start out by putting $2,500 "at risk"—and you achieve the 4% win every other week that I just talked about—you'd hit the million-dollar mark in five years, 11 months. If your "at risk" capital at the outset is $10,000, then you'd hit the million-dollar threshold in four years, six months. And remember, we're just talking here about the trading portion (the "prodigious" wealth generator) slice of your overall strategy. In addition to this trading system, you're also traveling the more-conventional "save-what you earn" path to wealth.

Third, balance risk and return. I know that sounds boring—like something your insurance agent might say to you—but it's so incredibly important. It's by keeping your risk in check that you're able to string all those wins together . . . and reap those big annualized results. What's great about the 10-Minute Millionaire system is that all this is so simplified and systematized that you can identify the stocks you want to trade, establish your risk/return parameters, and input the actual trades in 10-minute sittings—just as the system name says.

Here's one promise I can make you. As you get into this more and more, and get more adept at screening for stocks and setting up new trades as you close out their predecessors for nice gains, you'll not only get revved up about the money you're making—you'll have fun doing it.

Indeed, from the strategy and mindset I've described to you here flows a wealth-building strategy that, once learned, will be employed over and over again. Day after day, week after week, and year after year.

Always in 10-minute increments.

Now you're ready to hear it all . . .

And I'm ready to share it . . .

Notes

1. Warren Buffett, "The Joys of Compounding" (excerpt from Buffet Partnership, Ltd.), January 18, 1963.
2. Anonymous, *The Master Money Plan* (Baltimore, MD: Money Map Press, LLC, Fall 2016).
3. John Rampton, "12 Evening Routines of Billionaires That You Need to Try," *Inc.* magazine, November 2015.
4. *The Master Money Plan*.