

15 Billionaires Who Came From Nothing

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In this article we are going to present our list of the 15 billionaires who came from nothing.

Look, we all like money. Whoever said money doesn't buy happiness would be wrong 95% of the time. Sure, money isn't all there is in life but it does play a very significant part. Ask a man who is unable to provide for his family, or a person who is unable to have a roof over his head, or someone who has to skip out on meals so her kids can eat. People who don't have money spend all their time on making basic ends meet and so, don't have time for other problems in life. I can tell you that I've experienced both scenarios where I was broke and where I was moderately well-off, and the latter situation was much more peaceful and happy every single time.

We all know people who hoard stuff. Some may hoard newspapers, others may store albums, while others yet can even hoard books. But then, we have some people who actually hoard wealth. These people tend to have more money than many small countries, and more money than they can spend in a hundred lifetimes. While I do believe that everyone should have money and a high standard of living, there is always a limit and a balance to be achieved, and it is quite apparent that we are not even close to achieving that sort of an equilibrium.

I am of course, talking about billionaires. There are currently slightly over 2,000 billionaires in the world, or around 0.000025% of the world's population consists of billionaires. And yet this number, this absolutely miniscule number, has more wealth than half of the world's population, which is a completely mind boggling fact and goes to show how extremely uneven and unequal the share of wealth is. The 22 richest men in the world are richer than all the women in Africa, and taxing these super rich people just 0.5% extra would create enough investment in 10 years to produce 117 million jobs and boost the standard of living for everyone. And yet, despite the fact that these people have more money than their next 10 generations can think of spending, they will fight tooth and nail to not just stop the increase of tax, but to decrease the already existing tax rate. And with their wealth, influence and connections, they end up winning way more often than not.

The funniest / saddest part in all of this is the fact that not only do people not speak up against such activities, we tend to make them our role models and inspirations. Sure, there are always some exceptions to the rule, such as Microsoft Corporation's (MSFT) founder Bill Gates, who has spent tens of billions of dollars on philanthropy throughout, and despite being among the richest men, if not the richest, for decades, has seldom been involved in major controversy. Or Chuck Feeney, the founder of Duty Free Shoppers, who lived a life of frugality despite extreme riches, and during his lifetime, has donated so much money that he has only \$2 million left, out of billions, while he's still living, which is a much more noble gesture than simply establishing a foundation on your death. Forbes even called him the James Bond of philanthropy. But for every billionaire like Chuck Feeney or Bill Gates, there are many more billionaires like Amazon.com Inc (AMZN) founder Jeff Bezos, who is the richest man in the world and is currently worth \$187 billion, while his workers aren't even allowed to take bathroom breaks as they struggle to make ends meet at minimum wage, which in the United States is not a livable wage or even close.

But one of the reasons that we consider them as inspirations or role models is the belief that if they did it, so can I. If there's one thing billionaires like to perpetuate, it is that they're self made and came from nothing. You hear about Jeff Bezos starting off in garage to create Amazon ([NASDAQ:AMZN](#)), or Bill Gates created Microsoft ([NASDAQ:MSFT](#)) or Elon Musk created Tesla ([NASDAQ:TSLA](#)). Bezos's grandfather was a regional director of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and owned a 25,000 acre ranch. His parents invested \$250,000 into Amazon when it was failing initially. And while Donald Trump may try to hide it, not only did he get a 'small loan' of \$1 million from his father, according to the New York Times, he actually got around \$413 million through various ways. Bill Gates had rich and influential parents which is why he was able to work with a computer system at a time when it was quite expensive and not readily available, as well as the influence that got him the initial contract with IBM ([NYSE:IBM](#)).

However, this doesn't mean that everyone started out like that. While the overwhelming number of billionaires had significant advantages to enable them to reach that level, many also did not. No, I am not talking about Kylie Jenner being the youngest self made billionaire in the world, not to mention that she's not even considered to be a billionaire anymore. These people actually came from nothing, had to work hard and persevere, and despite the numerous disadvantages that would inhibit most people from succeeding, these people refused to give up. Maybe some of them are still not the best role models to follow, but as far as it comes to pursuing your goals, no matter what your situation, you can definitely look up to them. We have used [Bloomberg](#) and [CNBC](#) to determine our list. So without further ado, let's take a look at the billionaires who came from nothing, starting with number 15:

15. David Murdock

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 2

David Murdock's father was a traveling salesman while his mother worked as a housekeeper to make ends meet. He is now the chairman and CEO of Dole Foods, which is an agricultural multinational organization.

14. Alec Gores

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 2.5

Alec Gores ranks 14th on our list of the billionaires who came from nothing. Alec Gores moved to the United States from Israel at the age of 15. He would initially bag groceries at the store of his uncle for 25 cents an hour, and now, thanks to leveraged buyouts of technology firm, is a billionaire.

13. Oprah Winfrey

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 2.6

One of the [richest Black Americans in the world](#), Oprah Winfrey is also perhaps one of the most celebrities for the past few decades. She suffered an incredibly tough childhood, where she was molested by her cousin, uncle and a family friend. She was able to overcome all the difficulties

she faced in life, and become one of the most successful TV shows in history, which propelled her to becoming a billionaire.

12. John Paul DeJoria

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 2.7

There are plenty of Italian immigrants in our list and John Paul DeJoria is no exception. When his parents divorced, he was sent to a foster home as his mom was unable to take care of two kids, and so he had to make in on his own, starting off with selling Christmas cards when he was 9 years old.

11. Mohed Altrad

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 3.5

Mohed Altrad ranks 11th on our list of the billionaires who came from nothing. Mohed Altrad is a French Syrian businessman, who spent his youth in Syria. He was able to earn a scholarship worth 200 francs from the Syrian government, because of which he was able to move to France. He is currently 72 years old.

10. Stephen Bisciotti

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 4.6

Born to a middle class Italian American family, Bisciotti was just 8 years old when his father passed away. He later started a company, now known as Aerotek, which is a staffing company and is counted among the biggest staffing companies in the entire world. Founded in 1983, the company had revenues of \$13.4 billion in 2019.

9. Howard Schultz

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 4.7

Howard Schultz ranks 9th on our list of the billionaires who came from nothing. You all know him as the CEO of Starbucks ([NASDAQ:SBUX](https://www.nasdaq.com/symbol/sbux)) and for announcing a doomed presidency run in 2020 against Donald Trump, he was the Jewish son of a truck driver and grew up in public housing projects. According to the man himself, his family was not well off at all, and when he later got a chance at Starbucks, he took the chain to new heights.

8. Ken Langone

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 4.8

Ken Langone ranks 8th on our list of the billionaires who came from nothing. Ken Langone was born to working class parents, where his father was a plumber while his mother was a cafeteria worker. Today, he is best known for having organized financing for founding Home Depot ([NYSE:HD](https://www.nyse.com/quote/NYSE:HD)) which is one of the biggest retail companies in the entire world.

7. Ralph Lauren

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 6.8

Ralph Lauren is the owner of one of the most famous fashion companies in the world in Ralph Lauren Corporation ([NYSE:RL](#)). However, he was earlier part of an extremely poor family, and worked as a clerk at Boor Brothers.

6. Harold Hamm

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 7.2

Harold Hamm's parents were sharecroppers, and started pumping gas as well as repairing cars to make ends meet, before becoming a tycoon in the oil and gas business.

5. Shahid Khan

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 7.9

Shahid Khan emigrated to the US from Pakistan and in his childhood, actually washed dishes at a restaurant for \$1.2 an hour while studying at university.

4. George Soros

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 8.6

George Soros has been derided by conspiracy theorists as a puppet master behind conspiracy theories, but has actually donated \$32 billion, even though his current worth is just around a fourth of that. He is popularly known as the Man Who Broke The Bank of England, when his shorting of sterling pound earned him a billion dollars in profit while collapsing the price of the GBP. He survived the Nazi occupation of Hungary as a Jew child.

3. Roman Abramovich

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 14.4

The owner of Chelsea Football Club, Abramovich had lost both of his parents before turning four years old, and was raised by relatives. He even worked as a street-trader as well as a mechanic at a factory, and selling re-treaded tires, before finding significant success.

2. Thomas Peterffy

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 23.9

You know your life isn't going to be easy when you're born in a hospital basement in Hungary during a Russian air raid. When he moved to the US, after his father did initially, he was given \$100 by his father as he couldn't allow him to live together. He started as an architectural

draftsman working on projects, before becoming a billionaire through major shareholding in Interactive Brokers ([NASDAQ:IBKR](#)).

1. Larry Ellison

Current net worth according to Forbes (in billions of dollars): 88.4

Larry Ellison, the founder of Oracle ([NYSE:ORCL](#)), easily tops the list of the **5 billionaires who came from nothing**. Ellison had a really tough childhood, starting from being born to an unwed woman, who gave him up for adoption when he contracted pneumonia at the age of 9 months. His adoptive father had lost a fortune in the Great Depression, and even had to drop out from college as his adoptive mother passed away. He then worked multiple odd jobs, before finally creating Oracle, and is now easily among the richest people in the entire world.