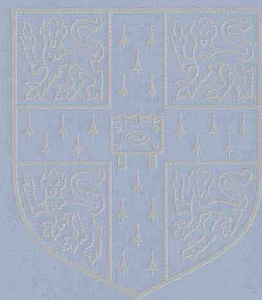


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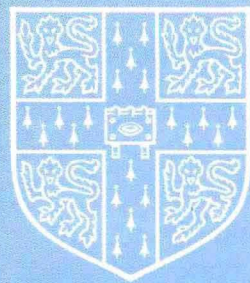
▣ Guy Brook-Hart



# Business BENCHMARK



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Guy Brook-Hart



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# Introduction

## Who this book is for

This book is intended to be an interesting and stimulating course for Advanced students of Business English (Common European Framework Level C1). It provides a general Business English course for students who have not yet worked in business and for people who are working and have experience of business environments.

It provides the practical reading, speaking, listening and writing skills necessary for people who need English for working in business. It also contains a wide range of essential business vocabulary and grammar.

For students who want to study for a Business English qualification, this book gives you a complete preparation for the Cambridge Business English Certificate (BEC) Higher exam, together with a complete BEC Higher practice exam.

## What the book contains

The book contains the following elements:

- **24 units for classroom study.** These units are organised in groups of four around a theme: management, competitive advantage, etc. While each unit gives training and practice in a variety of skills, the first unit in each group mainly concentrates on reading skills, the second on listening, the third on writing and the fourth on speaking. Each unit contains essential vocabulary input for business students. Many of the activities in the units are similar to those found in the BEC Higher exam.
- **Grammar workshops.** For each group of four units, there is a two-page Grammar Workshop section. These explain and extend grammar work introduced in the units. In the units, you will from time to time see a cross-reference, e.g. ➤ **page 20** (Future simple or future continuous?), which indicates where further explanation and exercises on a specific point can be found.

- **Exam skills and Exam practice section.** This section, which starts on page 121, gives you detailed guidance on how to approach each BEC Higher exam task, the skills required and what the exam task is testing. The Exam skills pages also contain exercises to build up your exam skills. The Exam practice pages contain all the questions/tasks from a BEC Higher exam.
- **Answer key** to all the exercises and activities in the Student's Book. Sample answers to writing activities have not been included at this level because the range of possible answers is too great for this to be useful. However 'models' are provided for all writing tasks.
- **Transcripts** for all the listening activities in the book.

The book is accompanied by:

- **MP3**, containing a variety of recorded material, including interviews with business people and BEC exam listening tasks.
- **Teacher's Resource Book**, containing guidance and suggestions on how to approach activities in the book and a large number of extra photocopiable activities and case studies to supplement the units in the Student's Book.
- **Personal Study Book**, containing activities and exercises based on the vocabulary, grammar and skills covered in each unit, and intended as reinforcement of material which you have studied in class. The Personal Study Book contains keys to all its exercises, so you will be able to check your answers yourself. It also contains a Word list of vocabulary from the Student's Book.
- **Website**, containing additional resources and information. Go to <http://www.cambridge.org/businessbenchmark>.

# Map of the book

	Unit	Reading	Listening	Writing
Management	<b>1 Corporate culture</b> 10–13	Who is responsible for corporate culture?	My company's culture	
	<b>2 Leaders and managers</b> 14–17	Richard Branson, leader of Virgin	Rachel Babington, Disney Channel, on leaders and managers Rachel Babington on empowerment	
	<b>3 Internal communications</b> 18–21	Internal messages (memo, email, note, notice)	Advice for communicating effectively with colleagues	Replying to messages Writing and replying to a memo, email or notice
	<b>4 Chairing meetings</b> 22–25	Advice for chairs Summary of action points	Key phrases for chairs	A memo summarising action points
<b>Grammar workshop 1 (Units 1–4)</b> 26–27 Defining and non-defining relative clauses, Some meanings of <i>as</i> and <i>like</i> , Future simple				
Competitive advantage	<b>5 Customer relationships</b> 28–31	Giving people what they want Five articles on Customer Relationship Management	Boris Shulov on Customer Relationship Management	
	<b>6 Competitive advantage</b> 32–35	How the JJ Group prepares tenders	William Brook-Hart, Gifford Engineering Consultancy, on competitive advantage; William Brook-Hart on winning contracts	
	<b>7 A proposal</b> 36–39	Proposal for adding to our product range An email requesting a proposal	Extending the product range	A proposal for investigating new markets
	<b>8 Presenting at meetings</b> 40–43	Nestlé in Thailand; The Philippine market; Nestlé expands ice-cream lines in China	Presentation on the Chinese ice-cream market	A proposal for breaking into the Chinese market
<b>Grammar workshop 2 (Units 5–8)</b> 44–45 Speaking hypothetically, Compound nouns, Embedded questions				
Advertising and sales	<b>9 Advertising and customers</b> 46–49	The effectiveness of advertising Five extracts on measuring the effectiveness of advertising	Neil Ivey, MediaCom, on the effectiveness of advertising	
	<b>10 Advertising and the Internet</b> 50–53	Motoring online	Internet sales Neil Ivey, MediaCom, on advertising and the Internet	A report on advertisers and target audiences
	<b>11 Sales reports</b> 54–57	A brief sales report Report on Seville Sales Event	Mehtar Tilak on sales activities	A sales report based on a chart Report on a sales event for a product launch
	<b>12 The sales pitch</b> 58–61	Cracking the big company market	Rosa Levy, CSS Ltd, cold-calling a client; Rosa Levy making a sales pitch	
<b>Grammar workshop 3 (Units 9–12)</b> 62–63 Position of adverbs, Present perfect simple and continuous, Cleft sentences				

Speaking	Vocabulary	Language work
Describing company culture Why is it important to have a strong corporate culture?	Company culture Phrasal verbs <i>Board, bottom line, revenues, etc.</i>	Defining and non-defining relative clauses
Talking about good leaders Getting the most from staff Producing a more effective workforce	Leadership skills: <i>founder</i> , etc. Types of management	As or like?
The best way of communicating different things Must a manager be a good communicator?	Abbreviations	Future simple or future continuous?
The function of the chair Holding meetings	Evaluating meetings	Language functions for chairs
or future continuous?		
Discussing customer–supplier relationships Discussing the 80–20 rule, etc. The shortcomings of CRM, etc.; A CRM strategy	<i>Helpdesk</i> , etc.	
How does your company achieve a competitive advantage? Pricing	Elements that give a company an advantage; Submitting tenders; <i>Dedicated, resources</i> , etc. Phrasal verbs; Verb–noun collocations	Speaking hypothetically
	Linking words and phrases <i>Existing, identify</i> , etc.	Compound nouns The passive
The ice-cream market in your country Presenting information from charts Presenting from a text		Embedded questions
How does your company advertise? Cost-effective advertising How to advertise software	<i>Brand-building</i> , etc. Types of advertising <i>Households</i> , etc.	Adverbs
How you use the Internet to buy things How could your company use the methods of the car industry?; Using the Internet for advertising	<i>Straightforward</i> , etc.	<i>Although, however, despite</i> , etc.
The best medium for selling different products and services Structure of a report	Synonyms for <i>increase</i> and <i>decrease</i>	Present perfect simple or continuous?
How do you react to a cold-call?; Finding out about work problems; Role-play 1: Cold-calling; Advising on breaking into a new market; Role-play 2: Making a sales pitch	<i>Solicit, risk-averse</i> , etc.	Cleft sentences

	Unit	Reading	Listening	Writing
Finance	<b>13 Forecasts and results</b> 64–67	Forecasting disaster	Forecasting sales	
	<b>14 Financing the arts</b> 68–71	A proposal for festival sponsorship	Philip Franks on the theatre business Paul Keene on arts sponsorship	A proposal for sponsoring an arts or sports event
	<b>15 Late payers</b> 72–75	The impact of late payments on small businesses	Conversation with a late payer William Brook-Hart on late payers at Gifford Engineering Consultancy	Letter complaining about late payment
	<b>16 Negotiating a lease</b> 76–79	Negotiating your office lease	Negotiating business agreements Conditions for leasing office space	Email summarising results of negotiation
<b>Grammar workshop 4 (Units 13–16)</b> 80–81 Conditional sentences, Infinitive and verb + <i>-ing</i> , Complex sentences				
The work environment	<b>17 Workplace atmosphere</b> 82–85	Giving employees what they want: the returns are huge Stress in the workplace	Mariella Kinsky on work-related stress	Short report on stress and absenteeism
	<b>18 The workforce of the future</b> 86–89	The millennium generation	Job sharing How people feel about their jobs	
	<b>19 Productivity</b> 90–93	Magro Toys – report on productivity	Interview with three production managers	Report on changes to company organisation
	<b>20 Staff negotiations</b> 94–97	Memo from CEO about expansion plans	Staff complaints and demands at Travelsafe Insurance Horse-trading at Travelsafe Insurance	Memo summarising agreement
<b>Grammar workshop 5 (Units 17–20)</b> 98–99 Reference devices, Modal verbs to express degrees of certainty, Variations on conditionals				
Corporate relationships	<b>21 Corporate ethics</b> 100–103	CSR – worthy cause?	Professor Bernard Hill on fair trade	Proposal to give your company a more ethical image
	<b>22 Expanding abroad</b> 104–107	Wolseley's strategy Wolseley's Chief Executive	Richard Coates on how Wolseley expands into new markets Richard Coates on supervising subsidiaries	
	<b>23 An overseas partnership</b> 108–111	Letter to a potential partner Letter replying to a business approach	Finding an overseas partner Reasons and problems with moving into a new market	Letter to prospective customers; Letter expressing interest in business approach
	<b>24 A planning conference</b> 112–115	Risk management	Fedor Brodsky on how to protect your brand's reputation Nicole Frère on risk in business	
<b>Grammar workshop 6 (Units 21–24)</b> 116–117 Articles, Future time clauses, Concession				
Communication activities		118		
<b>EXAM SKILLS AND EXAM PRACTICE</b>		121–153		
Contents of exam section		121		
Answer key		154		
Transcripts		170		

Speaking	Vocabulary	Language work
How different elements help to make forecasts What makes forecasts inaccurate? How to prepare a sales forecast, etc. What type of forecaster do you think you are?	Phrasal verbs and expressions <i>Go bust, stock price, etc.</i> Vocabulary from profit-and-loss account and balance sheet	Conditional sentences
Should the arts be subsidised? How sponsorship can promote a company's image, etc. Role-play: Continental Bank and Tate Modern	Theatre vocabulary <i>Break down, running costs, etc.</i>	Infinitive and verb + <i>-ing</i>
How late payers affect a business Discussion: How should you deal with late payers? Presentation: How to deal with late payers, etc.	<i>Bank charges, bookkeeping, etc.</i> Formal expressions	Complex sentences
What you need to know before negotiating Negotiation, problems and advice Role-play: Negotiating an office lease	<i>Compromise, the bottom line, etc.</i>	Conditional sentences: alternatives to <i>if</i>
What makes people work harder Types of management-employee relationship; Trends in accidents and stress, etc.; Our attitudes towards stress	<i>Trends, pronounced, etc.</i>	Reference devices
Workers of the future; Working practices in the future Talk: teleworking, etc. Talking about your present job	Types of worker; Ways of working <i>Stuck in a rut, going rate, etc.</i>	
What factors affect productivity?; Describing charts: productivity at Magro Toys; Presentations on productivity; Raising productivity	<i>Assembly line, churn out, etc.</i>	Expressing causes and results
Company reorganisation; Would you be prepared to relocate?; Thinking about an offer Role-play: Negotiating an agreement	Phrasal verbs and expressions Phrases for negotiating	Variations on conditional sentences
Corporate responsibility CSR and corporate culture; Fair trade What is the connection between fair trade and CSR, etc.?	<i>Benefits, premise, etc.</i> Adverbial phrases	Articles
Expanding into foreign markets Describing the company you work for Wolseley's expansion strategy; Supervising subsidiaries The advantages of making acquisitions	<i>Acquisitions, year on year, etc.</i> <i>Surged, FTSE 100, etc.</i> Adjectives and adverbs of frequency	
The problems of expanding into a new market Replying to a letter		Complex sentences Tenses in future time clauses
Useful hints for making presentations Making a presentation; Business risks Discussion: Staff retention, market share	Discourse markers for short talks	Concession

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# Corporate culture

## Getting started

1 Work in small groups. Match the sentence beginnings (1–7) with their endings (a–g).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 My company/organisation has a <b>vision</b> ; | a for example, it doesn't have a <b>dress code</b> .   |
| 2 We have an <b>entrepreneurial</b> culture;    | b I know where it's going; I share its <b>goals</b> .  |
| 3 People in my company are highly competitive;  | c the boss is <b>autocratic</b> , and we do as we're told without question.                                  |
| 4 My company is pretty bureaucratic;            | d there are lots of regulations and 'correct procedures'. We're encouraged to <b>do things by the book</b> . |
| 5 My company has a supportive culture;          | e we battle each other for promotion and for <b>bonuses</b> .  |
| 6 My company has a controlling culture;         | f when we need them, we're sent on training courses. Every employee has a <b>mentor</b> .                    |
| 7 My company is quite informal;                 | g we're encouraged to look for new business and take risks.  |

2 Look at the words and phrases in bold above and match them to the following definitions.

- |   |
|---|
| 1 a person who gives another person help and advice over a period of time and often also coaches them in their job<br><i>mentor</i> |
| 2 a set of rules for what you can wear  |
| 3 aims  |
| 4 demands total obedience from staff  |
| 5 extra amounts of money given to you as a reward   |
| 6 follow the rules exactly  |
| 7 view of how the company will be in the future   |
| 8 involving risk-taking   |



## Aspects of corporate culture

### Talking point

Discuss these questions in small groups.

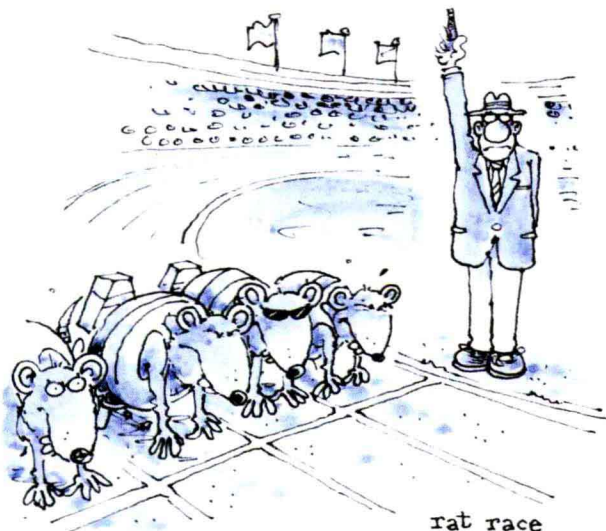
- 1 Which of the things mentioned in Exercise 1 on page 10 are typical of your company's/organisation's culture?
- 2 Which would you like to be part of your company's culture? (If you don't work for a company or organisation, talk about one you would like to work for.)

### Listening

You will hear four students on an MBA course discussing their companies' cultures.

- 1 Before you listen, match these words or phrases (1–10) with their definitions (a–j).**

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 cut-throat           | a informal meetings   |
| 2 back-up              | b Internet company  |
| 3 get-togethers        | c making more efficient   |
| 4 sink or swim         | d paperwork   |
| 5 red tape             | e responsible to the government   |
| 6 publicly accountable | f standard by which you can judge the success of something                    |
| 7 streamlining         | g fierce; not involving consideration or care about any harm caused to others |
| 8 dotcom               | h struggle of individuals in a competitive environment                        |
| 9 yardstick            | i succeed or fail without help from anyone else                               |
| 10 rat race            | j support   |



- 02 2** Look at the list of aspects of company culture in *Getting started*. Listen to the four speakers, and for each one, decide which aspect of their company's culture he/she mentions. Write one number by each speaker. You will not use all the numbers.

Candela: ..... Sonia: .....  
Henry: ..... Omar: .....

### Task tip

The speakers talk about the subject without using the exact words in the list. You must listen for clues in what they say to decide which is the correct answer.

### Vocabulary

- 02** Complete each of the phrasal verbs below with one or two words (the definitions are given in brackets). When you have finished, check your answers by listening to the conversation again.

- 1 starting *out* (beginning)
- 2 talk things ..... (discuss thoroughly)
- 3 come ..... ideas and solutions (produce ideas and solutions)
- 4 stick ..... (follow, obey)
- 5 ..... up (arrive)
- 6 ..... ahead (making progress)
- 7 it boils ..... to (the essential thing is)

### Speaking

Work in pairs or groups of three. Describe the culture of the company where you work, or a company you are familiar with, using the following procedure.

- Before you speak, plan what you are going to say and select words and phrases from the vocabulary you have studied so far in this unit.
- Speak for about a minute.
- When you are listening to your partner's talk, think of a question to ask at the end of it.

### Useful language

I think there are three main aspects to my company's culture: first, there's ...  
Another feature is ...  
Finally, I should say that ...  
So, it's a good place to work, especially because ... /  
I'd prefer it to be more ...

## Creating a corporate culture

### Reading

1

1 Read this passage fairly quickly and find out:

- 1 who is responsible for influencing the culture within a company.
- 2 how company culture affects a company's performance.
- 3 what weakness many companies have with regard to corporate culture.

2 When you have finished, discuss your answers with a partner.

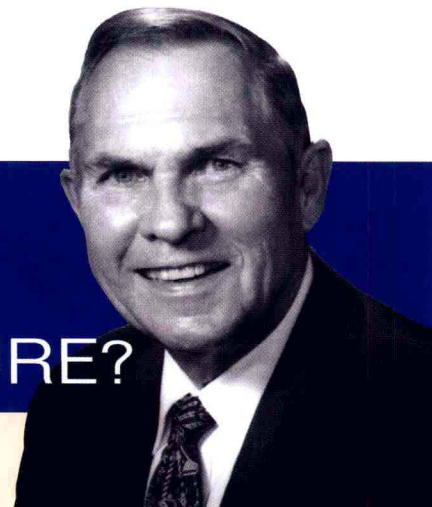
3 Choose the correct sentence (A–G) from page 13 for each gap in the text (1–6). There is one sentence you will not need.

### Company background



Nucor Corporation is the largest steel producer in the United States. It is also the nation's largest recycler.

*It's Our Nature.*



*F. Kenneth Iverson*

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CORPORATE CULTURE?

How should a director think about the "corporate culture" of the company on whose board he or she serves? Consult a management text on organizational culture and you'll find a chapter or more of definition which boils down to something like "a pattern of shared basic assumptions." Peter C. Browning, dean of the business school at Queens University, North Carolina says: "Every organization has a culture which manifests itself in everything from entrepreneurship to risk-taking all the way down to the dress code. **1** ..... " In some cases, it can do both. Recall how IBM's insular, conservative culture first helped the company soar to success—and then nearly destroyed it before a new CEO, Louis Gerstner, arrived in 1993 and saved the company.

Browning considers corporate culture an important part of a board's responsibilities. And he's not alone. In a recent survey, an overwhelming majority of directors say that culture has a powerful effect on their company's ethics, risk-taking, and bottom-line performance. **2** ..... Furthermore, 79% say they believe a board can alter a company's culture.

Even so, many directors are less comfortable dealing with issues of corporate culture than they are with more easily quantified concepts like profitability or market share. Says Edward Lawler, a professor at the University of Southern California: "**3** ..... An understanding of corporate culture is one of the main things missing on boards, but they really need it if they're going to monitor what's going on inside the corporation."

So what should directors be doing to evaluate corporate culture, and what actions can they take to influence it?

Peter Browning's favorite example is Nucor, the steel company. Nucor's culture, which he describes as "extraordinarily powerful, effective, and unique," can be traced back to the values and vision of its legendary founder, F. Kenneth Iverson. The Nucor story—of an egalitarian, collaborative, high-performing business that's been consistently profitable in a notoriously tough industry—has been recounted in dozens of newspaper and magazine articles and books: **4** ..... Although the company earns \$6.3 billion in revenues and has 9,900 employees, it has fewer than 60 people in management. There

are no company cars or corporate jets. The company offers four-year scholarships to children of employees to help them pursue higher education or vocational training after high school. When business is slow, Nucor reduces hours but doesn't make workers redundant. There's a highly effective incentive program. **5** ..... Ditto for the shareholders: Nucor's total return to investors last year was 37.9%, better than almost two-thirds of the other companies in the Fortune 500.

To ensure that Nucor's collaborative, trusting culture continued, Browning recounts how he "went out and visited innumerable factories. I walked around, talked with people on different shifts." Then he made sure the other non-executive directors did the same. **6** ..... "It was important for the board to get to know the culture so that we could support the next generation of management as they move forward, while preserving the values that really distinguish this company," Browning says.

*From Corporate Board Member*

## Grammar workshop

### Defining and non-defining relative clauses

#### 1 Read these five extracts from the text. Find and underline the five relative pronouns.

- 1 How should a director think about the “corporate culture” of the company on whose board he or she serves?
- 2 Consult a management text on organizational culture and you’ll find a chapter or more of definition which boils down to something like “a pattern of shared basic assumptions.”
- 3 Every organization has a culture which manifests itself in everything from entrepreneurship to risk-taking all the way down to the dress code.
- 4 An understanding of corporate culture is one of the main things missing on boards, but they really need it if they’re going to monitor what’s going on inside the corporation.
- 5 Nucor’s culture, which he describes as “extraordinarily powerful, effective, and unique,” can be traced back to the values and vision of its legendary founder, F. Kenneth Iverson.

#### 2 Decide which relative pronouns above could be replaced with *that*.

➤ **page 26** (Defining and non-defining relative clauses)

### Talking point

#### Discuss these questions in small groups.

- Why is it important for a company to have a strong corporate culture?
- What sort of culture would work best for you?
- What aspects of corporate culture do you think can have a negative effect on performance?
- What things can managers do to change the corporate culture of the company where they work?

#### Task tip

- Before you start discussing, take a little time to think about what you want to say.
- You can talk in general, but try to give examples from your knowledge and personal experience, too.
- Make sure that everyone in your group has a chance to express their opinions.

- A The result is that employees have come to trust management and share its vision.
- B And having a supportive culture can produce surprising gains in terms of productivity.
- C CEO, Daniel R. DiMicco, answers his own phone and email and shares an assistant with CFO, Terry Lisenby.
- D Most boards are poorly equipped to deal with their organization’s corporate culture, because their staffing is not right.
- E The entire board now goes once every year to a mill or plant and spends two days observing operations and talking to workers and managers.
- F When asked to rate its importance for these issues on a scale where 1 equals “greatly affects” and 10 means “no effect”, the respondents ranked corporate culture at 2.
- G It can be a very powerful influence for good, or it can get companies in lots of trouble.

#### Task tip

Look at the clues in the sentences, e.g. in **A**, what has caused the result that is mentioned? In **F**, what does *these issues* refer to?

### Vocabulary

#### Match these words and phrases from the text (1–7) with their definitions (a–g).

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 board                   | a dismiss employees, so they no longer have a job             |
| 2 bottom-line performance | b group of people appointed to manage a company               |
| 3 revenues                | c money earned from sales                                     |
| 4 make workers redundant  | d people who own shares in a company                          |
| 5 shareholders            | e set periods of time when people work, e.g. 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. |
| 6 return                  | f the amount of profit on an investment                       |
| 7 shifts                  | g whether the company makes a profit or a loss                |



# Leaders and managers

## Getting started

- 1 Read each of these things people said about their business leaders or managers (1–8) and match them with one of the qualities or skills listed in the box (a–h).

1 'Amongst other things, she has this tremendous ability to see how things could be in the future, and how the organisation should develop.'

2 'He's just great at producing new, unusual ideas, things other people would never have thought of.'

3 'I really like the fact that he gives us all plenty of responsibility. We all feel so empowered.'

4 'I'd say one of his strong points is his ability to get down to the nitty-gritty; nothing is so minor that it escapes his attention.'

5 'One thing I have to say about him is that he has excellent people skills; he can handle even the most awkward member of staff.'

6 'One thing she's particularly good at is problem-solving. You know, in our line of work we seem to go from crisis to crisis, but she seems to be able to get everything running smoothly again.'

7 'She has a totally practical approach. I mean, she doesn't just sit in her office theorising. She rolls up her sleeves and gets down to work with the rest of us.'

8 'She's just excellent at getting her ideas across. To give you just one example ...'

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a A hands-on approach       | e Good interpersonal skills |
| b Ability to delegate       | f Originality               |
| c Attention to detail       | g Trouble-shooting skills   |
| d Good communication skills | h Vision                    |

- 2 Discuss the following questions in small groups.

- Which of the above skills or qualities do you think are necessary for business leaders, which for managers and which for both? (Write 'L' for leader, 'M' for manager or 'B' for both by each of them.)
- Add three other skills or qualities to the list and say whether they are more necessary for leaders, their managers, or both.

## Great leaders and great managers

### Reading

#### Company background

Started in 1971, the Virgin Group operates in a wide range of markets, from music to finance and travel.



- Before reading, discuss in small groups what you know about Richard Branson and Virgin.
- Skim the web page very quickly (in two or three minutes) to find out what qualities Branson has which make him a good leader.

# leader of Virgin

**R**ichard Branson – the founder and owner of the Virgin Group, an empire of 350 companies that includes Virgin Atlantic airlines as well as ventures in other industries like telecommunications, trains, cosmetics and credit cards – says his goal is to turn Virgin into ‘the most respected brand in the world’. Branson’s skill as a brand builder is one of the reasons underlying his longevity as a business leader.

It is difficult to separate the success of the Virgin brand from the flamboyant man behind that brand. He travels the world weekly, reinforcing his good-natured, visible, jet-setting, billionaire reputation – a reputation like the reputation of the companies he owns. ‘Generally speaking, I think being a high-profile person has its advantages,’ he says. ‘Advertising costs enormous amounts of money these days. I just announced in India that I was setting up a domestic airline, and we ended up getting on the front pages of the newspaper. The costs of that in advertising terms would have been considerable.’

What is the most important quality of a good leader? ‘Being someone who cares about people is important,’ he says. ‘You can’t be a good leader unless you generally like people. That is how you bring out the best in them.’

How does a man who owns 350 companies get it all done? Branson places enormous value on time-management skills. As chairman of a large group of firms, Branson says he spends about a third of his time on trouble-shooting, another third on new projects, both charitable and business, and the last third on promoting and talking about the businesses he has set up. ‘As much as you need a strong personality to build a business from scratch, you must also understand the art of delegation,’ says Branson. ‘I have to be good at helping people run the individual businesses,

and I have to be willing to step back. The company must be set up so it can continue without me.’

In order for this process to work, employees must be happy. Branson says his philosophy of ‘look for the best and you’ll get the best’ helped him build an empire recognised for its young, fun culture. ‘For the people who work for you or with you, you must lavish praise on them at all times,’ Branson says. ‘It’s much more fun looking for the best in people. People don’t need to be told where they’ve slipped up or made a mess of something. They’ll sort it out themselves.’ Branson feels strongly that if an employee is not excelling in one area of the company, he or she should be given the opportunity to do well in a different Virgin Group job. Firing is seldom an option.

Motivational strategies extend to innovative ideas. The key to encouraging innovation within the Virgin ranks, suggests Branson, is to listen to any and all ideas and to offer feedback. Employees often leave companies, he reasons, because they are frustrated by the fact that their ideas fall on deaf ears. Interaction between employees and managers is fundamental.

Branson has developed a level of trust with his top managers by setting the direction and then stepping back to let them navigate. ‘I come up with the original idea, spend the first three months immersed in the business so I know the ins and outs, and then give chief executives a stake in the company and ask them to run it as if it’s their own,’ explains Branson. ‘I intervene as little as possible. Give them that, and they will give everything back.’



From <http://www.knowledge@wharton>

### 3 Read the text again and check that you have understood the main points by choosing the best answer, A, B, C or D, to these questions.

- What is Branson’s business aim?
  - To diversify Virgin’s activities
  - To make Virgin a global company
  - To survive longer than other business leaders
  - To enhance Virgin’s brand image
- What, according to Branson, is the business advantage of being well known?
  - It is easier to establish new ventures.
  - It saves money on publicity.
  - He is offered special advertising rates.
  - It makes his brands easily recognisable.
- What, for Branson, is the key to managing his workload?
  - Being continuously involved at all levels of the enterprise
  - Concentrating on problem-solving
  - Making his companies independent of him
  - Continually expanding his empire

- How, according to Branson, can you ensure optimum performance from staff?
  - By having an enjoyable corporate culture
  - By pointing out your employees’ mistakes
  - By dismissing incompetent workers
  - By telling people that they are performing well
- Why, says Branson, do many businesses lose good employees?
  - Managers do not listen to employees’ suggestions.
  - Managers do not know how to communicate with staff.
  - Managers do not encourage innovation.
  - Managers do not delegate.
- How does Branson optimise performance from his CEOs?
  - By giving them specialist training
  - By giving them a financial interest in the company
  - By giving them a three-month trial period
  - By offering them innovative ideas

## Vocabulary 1

2 UNIT

Find words or phrases in the text which mean the following.

- 1 someone who establishes an organisation (para. 1)  
*founder.*
- 2 a new activity, usually in business, which involves risk or uncertainty (para. 1)
- 3 which are real but not immediately obvious (para. 1)
- 4 very confident behaviour (para. 2)
- 5 from the beginning (para. 4)
- 6 say a lot of nice things about (para. 5)
- 7 made a mistake (para. 5)
- 8 dismissing (para. 5)
- 9 completely involved (para. 7)
- 10 the detailed or complicated facts (para. 7)
- 11 share or financial involvement in a business (para. 7)

### Talking point

Discuss these questions in groups of three.

- How much of Branson's leadership style do you think is a question of personality, and how much is a question of technique?
- Which things do you most admire about Branson's leadership style?
- Would you like to work for him?

### Listening

- 03 Listen to Rachel Babington, Head of PR at Disney Channel UK, talking about leaders and managers. Complete the notes at the top of the next column, using up to three words in each gap.

#### Company background

Disney Channel is a cable TV network run by The Walt Disney Company and started in 1983.



© Disney Enterprises, Inc.

### Task tip

Before you listen, read through the notes and predict:

- what type of information you will need in each gap
- what type of words (nouns/adjectives, etc.) you will need.



Good leaders ...

- have 1 ..... , i.e. to make the business progress
- inspire staff.

Managers deal with the 2 ..... of leaders' ideas.

Good leaders also ...

- avoid being too 3 .....
- are not too involved when working with 4 .....
- give people the 5 ..... their professional lives.

### Grammar workshop

#### As or like?

Study the examples from the text about Richard Branson (a-d) and say which one includes **as** or **like** in a sense that ...

- 1 means 'he is that thing' (e.g. a brand builder)
  - 2 means 'for example' or 'such as'
  - 3 means 'similar to'
  - 4 is included in an expression which means 'and also'
  - 5 can be used with adjectives or adverbs as a form of comparison
- a ... an empire of 350 companies that includes Virgin Atlantic airlines **as** well **as** ventures in other industries **like** telecommunications, trains, cosmetics and credit cards ...
- b Branson's skill **as** a brand builder is one of the reasons underlying his longevity **as** a business leader.
- c ... reinforcing his good-natured, visible, jet-setting, billionaire reputation – a reputation **like** the reputation of the companies he owns.
- d **As** much **as** you need a strong personality to build a business from scratch, you must also understand the art of delegation.

▶ page 27 (Some meanings of **as** and **like**)