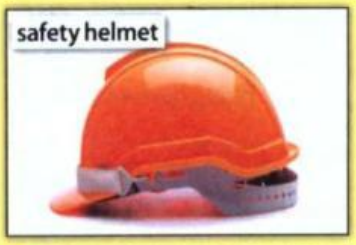
70 A successful business

Gecko Headgear Ltd is a designer and **manufacturer** of **safety helmets** for use at sea. The company was **founded** in 1993 by Jeff Sacree and it started by selling **surfboards**. However, surfing is a seasonal business, and Jeff realized he needed to **diversify**. Fortunately, he was able to **exploit** a **gap in the market**.

'As a surfer, I could see the **potential** for a light helmet that gave **protection** and **retained** heat.' He made one and sold a few to other **surfers**. He then did some research and discovered that **lifeboat crews** might also be interested in his helmet. It would have to be **adapted for** their use, and for that he needed **investment**. So, he **took out** a **bank loan** and employed more staff. 'A good relationship with the bank is crucial if you're developing an **innovative** product. In our **case** the process took three years.' The new safety helmets were **launched** in the late 90s.

After the **contract** to supply helmets for the lifeboats was successful, Jeff developed different types of helmet for different uses, and the **firm** has always used customer **feedback** to **refine** the products.

'A good **partnership** with suppliers has also been a key factor in our success. We've worked closely with different manufacturers, and this has helped us to **keep ahead** of our **rivals**.'



GLOSSARY

manufacturer	a person or a company that makes things using machines SYN **producer**; **manufacture** *v*	**investment**	the activity of putting money into sth, hoping that you will make more money as a result **invest in sth** *v*
found *v (often passive)*	start an organization. A person is a **founder**.	**loan**	money that sb/sth lends you: ***take out a (bank) loan***
diversify	introduce a wider range of products **diversification** *n*	**launch**	start sth new or show sth for the first time **launch** *n*
exploit	make the best possible use of sth **exploitation** *n*	**innovative**	introducing new ideas **innovate** *v*; **innovation** *n*
gap in the market	an opportunity to create a new product which has not been produced by other companies	**case**	a situation (*see spotlight*)
		contract	a written legal agreement: ***sign a contract***
		firm	a business company
potential	the possibility of becoming successful in the future	**feedback**	information and comments from people who have used sth: ***give sb feedback (on sth)***
protection	the act of keeping sb/sth safe so it or they are not harmed or damaged	**refine**	change sth a little to make it better
retain	keep or continue to have sth **retention** *n*	**partnership**	a relationship between two organizations
crew	all the people who work on a boat, ship, aircraft, etc.	**keep ahead (of sb/sth)**	remain in a stronger position compared to sb/sth
adapt sth (for sth)	change sth so you can use it in a different situation	**rival**	a person or thing that is competing with you SYN **competitor**

SPOTLIGHT phrases with *case*

in some cases in some situations
- *I got a reply immediately, but **in some cases** you have to wait weeks.*

in that case if that is the situation
- *I'm busy on Monday. ~ OK, **in that case**, I'll call you on Tuesday.*

in any case whatever happens or has happened; anyway
- *The traffic will be bad. **In any case**, we'll be there on time, so don't worry.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 Read the text again quickly if necessary, then answer these questions.

1 What is Gecko Headgear? .....
2 When was it founded? .....
3 Why did Jeff need to diversify? .....
4 What qualities did the helmet have to have? .....
5 Were the helmets immediately suitable for lifeboat crews? .....
6 How did he get the money for extra staff? .....
7 What happened in the late 1990s? .....
8 What information has he used to refine the products? .....
9 What was a key factor in his success? .....

2 Complete the table.

VERB	NOUN	VERB	NOUN
retain	.....	innovate	.....
invest	.....	exploit	.....
diversify	.....	launch	.....

3 Change the order of the letters to make words. Use the definitions to help you.

1 TOCCARNT ..... a written legal agreement
2 NATERI ..... keep or continue to have something
3 ONPIRCTNEOT ..... keeping someone safe from harm
4 EFKABEDC ..... comments from people who use something
5 VINVONITEA ..... introducing new ideas
6 REDYFIVIS ..... introduce a wider range of products
7 PERITNSARPH ..... a relationship between two organizations
8 LOPENITAT ..... the possibility of becoming good in the future

4 Circle the correct answer(s). Sometimes both answers are possible.

1 They are the main ***producers / manufacturers***.
2 If we can't use the product like that, we may have to ***exploit / adapt*** it.
3 You can't compete in Europe. ~ In ***that case / any case***, we'll look outside Europe.
4 We have to ***keep ahead of / retain*** our competitors.
5 She ***invested / founded*** the company ten years ago.
6 We need to know what our ***rivals / competitors*** are doing.

5 Replace the underlined words with a single word that has the same meaning.

1 You have to <u>make the best possible use of</u> your strengths. .....
2 <u>The introduction of new ideas</u> was crucial. .....
3 The product needed to be <u>improved a little bit</u>. .....
4 My partners were prepared to <u>put money</u> in the company. .....
5 They signed a <u>written legal agreement</u>. .....
6 I knew the product had <u>the possibility to become better</u>. .....
7 We try to get <u>information and comments</u> on our products. .....
8 They wanted to <u>introduce a wider range of products</u>. .....

6 Complete the sentences.

1 They were lucky because they saw a ..... in the market.
2 I needed extra money so I ..... a bank ..... .
3 They ..... washing machines, but mostly sell them abroad.
4 You need people who are willing to ..... you feedback.
5 The company will need more ..... if it wants to diversify.
6 Many of the ..... on a lifeboat have worked at sea in other jobs.
7 In some ..... people take out a loan, but I borrowed money from my parents.
8 Innovation helps a company to ..... ahead of its ..... .
9 Carol Simmons was the ..... of the company. Her decision to sell the ..... four years later was a surprise.
10 We plan to ..... the new design in Paris at the end of the month.

LIVEWORKSHEETS