

Confident Communication + An Innovative Approach

1 Match the words and phrases with the definitions

- 1 someone who introduces changes and new ideas
- 2 write computer programs
- 3 planned and organised carefully
- 4 a sudden, clear understanding of something or part of something, especially a complicated situation or idea
- 5 the first form of a new design, or a model used to test the design before production
- 6 a small, useful and cleverly designed machine or tool
- 7 different from what is usual or accepted by most people
- 8 someone who studies a subject in detail in order to discover new facts or test new ideas
- 9 using the most modern machines and methods in industry or business

2 Match 1–9 with a–i to complete the phrasal and prepositional verbs related to innovation. Then answer the questions

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Can you think of a time when you got | a up with practical solutions to real life problems? |
| 2 When was the last time you tried | b into computers or computer games when you were a child? |
| 3 What kind of gadgets do some people like tinkering | c on ? Has anyone ever copied one of your ideas? |
| 4 What do you do when you're not sure how to go | d about trying to solve a problem? Who do you ask first for help? |
| 5 What kind of software do you need to read | e up in a million years, but wish you had? |
| 6 If you didn't copyright a great idea, what would happen once it caught | f with ? Electrical goods, phones, domestic appliances, etc.? |
| 7 How did you first get | g up on at your place of work or study? |
| 8 Can you think of a brilliant idea that you wouldn't have dreamt | h out a prototype to see if an idea actually worked? |
| 9 What's the best way for innovators to come | i round a tricky problem? How did you or your team solve it? |

3 Watch the video featuring Haiyan Zhang, Innovation Director at Microsoft Research, and answer the questions.

- 1** Where is Haiyan based in her current job?
- 2** What is her first top tip for getting a job in technology?
- 3** What does she recommend doing when you are faced with a new challenge?
- 4 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?**
 - 1** Haiyan gets her best ideas when she's hanging out with her work colleagues.
 - 2** She's interested in innovations that make a difference in people's lives.
 - 3** She's worked as a teacher, a software engineer and a consultant.
 - 4** When she refers to her 'old XT', she means the video game she used to play as a child.
 - 5** Project Fizzyo is a gadget that enables people with cystic fibrosis to control a TV using their breathing.
 - 6** The Emma Watch has been designed to help a person with the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.
 - 7** One of Haiyan's tips is to find people with similar interests who you can talk to and come up with ideas together.
 - 8** Haiyan's ambition is for her and her team to help a million people in the world.
 - 9** As a woman, Haiyan found it difficult to get into technology, but met people who helped her.
 - 10** Her advice to women is, even if you're unsure what to say in a meeting, it's best to speak up.

5 Discuss these questions.

1 How did Haiyan overcome the problem of being one of only a few women studying computer science and breaking the glass ceiling?

2 How easy is it for women to get into technology in your country/region?

Useful phrases

Join the conversation

- ✚ This meeting is dedicated to...
- ✚ We've gathered to discuss and decide on...
- ✚ We're here to discuss...
- ✚ It would be great to have ... as a result at the end of this meeting.
- ✚ Let's get straight into it.
- ✚ Let's move on to our main topic for today.
- ✚ Let's cut to the chase.
- ✚ The elephant in the room.
- ✚ I've been crunching the numbers.
- ✚ There are some red flags we need to address.
- ✚ Before we get started...
- ✚ Let's make sure we're all on the same wavelength.
- ✚ I'm all ears.
- ✚ This should shed some light on...

Interrupt the conversation

- ✚ I apologize. Let me hop in with a comment.
- ✚ Sorry for interrupting you.
- ✚ If I could add my two cents...
- ✚ This would lose its relevance later, so I need to interject here.
- ✚ I need to address something urgent before we continue.
- ✚ By the way...
- ✚ Before we move on...

6 Choose the phrase that is suitable

Manager: Good morning, everyone. _____. We don't have much time.

Employee A: Before we start discussing the budget, _____. We all need to understand the goals.

Manager: Great point. Sarah, could you present the report?

Sarah: Sure. _____, and the results aren't very encouraging.

Employee B: _____. I think we should also consider customer feedback.

Sarah: Absolutely. In fact, _____ regarding our latest sales figures.

Manager: Thanks. _____, let's discuss possible solutions.

Employee C: _____. I'm curious to hear everyone's ideas.

7 Write down the most appropriate expression for each situation

1. Your team has just sat down, and you want to begin the meeting immediately because time is limited. → _____

2. Before anyone starts talking, you want to make sure everyone has the same understanding of the project's goals. → _____

3. You want to explain the main purpose of today's meeting. → _____

4. At the beginning of the meeting, you explain that everyone is expected to reach a final decision today. → _____

5. You've spent hours analysing sales data and are ready to present your findings. → _____

6. While analysing the report, you noticed several worrying signs that can't be ignored. → _____

7. Everyone keeps avoiding talking about the company's biggest problem, but you decide it's time to mention it. → _____

8. Someone says they are ready to listen carefully to your presentation. → _____

9. You believe your explanation will help everyone understand the issue much better. → _____

10. The introduction is over, and it's time to start discussing the most important item on the agenda. → _____
11. A colleague is speaking, but you have an important point that won't be useful if you wait until the end. → _____
12. You politely interrupt because you have a quick comment to make. → _____
13. You want to share your personal opinion without sounding too strong or pushy. → _____
14. The discussion is becoming too long, so you suggest skipping the small talk and getting to the main issue. → _____
15. In the middle of the meeting, you suddenly remember an urgent issue that must be discussed before continuing. → _____

Interrupt the conversation

- Sorry to jump in...
- Sorry to jump in, but...
- We're getting into the weeds.
- Hold that thought.
- There's a piece of the puzzle we're missing.
- Could we take a moment to circle back to...
- Sorry to put you on the spot...
- Could you walk us through...?
- Walk us through your reasoning.

Building on ideas

- Let's assume that what you said is true...
- Taking from this...
- Moving on from...
- To add to this...
- That's a solid foundation.
- Let me piggyback on that (with a thought).
- Hit the nail on the head.
- What if we took that one step further?
- That holds water.
- Let's stress-test it.

- Let's stress-test it against...
- You've really struck a chord with that point.
- It's got me thinking about...

8 Match the expressions (1–10) with their definitions (A–J).

1. to get into the weeds
2. to hold that thought
3. to circle back to
4. to put someone on the spot
5. to walk someone through
6. to piggyback on
7. to hit the nail on the head
8. to hold water
9. to stress-test
10. to strike a chord

- A. To return to a topic later in the conversation.
- B. To explain something step by step.
- C. To make someone answer or react immediately, often making them feel uncomfortable.
- D. To become too focused on small or unnecessary details.
- E. To check whether an idea is strong enough by challenging or testing it.
- F. To build on someone else's idea.
- G. To be completely correct or describe a situation perfectly.
- H. To be logical, convincing, or believable.
- I. To ask someone to pause what they are saying because you want to return to it later.
- J. To make someone feel an emotional connection or strong agreement.

9 Speaking

- 1 Who is responsible for innovation in your organisation or an organisation you know?
- 2 What kind of technological innovations have you heard about recently?
- 3 What innovations could help people who are elderly, sick, disabled or disadvantaged?

10 Choose the correct option in italics to complete the statements

- 1 If I come up with / read up on something challenging, I *get into it* / *catch on more*.
- 2 If senior management lead by example, it's more likely that *innovator* / *innovative* thinking will be present at every level of a company.
- 3 There's always a gap between an innovative *prototype* / *approach* and everyday business. People get frustrated if they can't deliver tangible results every day.
- 4 Their manufacturing methods are hopelessly *unorthodox* / *out of date*.
- 5 Researchers / Innovations are only as good as the problem they *tinker with* / *overcome*.