

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**.'

safety helmet



surfboard

surfer



lifeboat

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 <i>spotlight</i>)
potential	the possibility of becoming successful in the future	contract	a written legal agreement: sign a contract
protection	the act of keeping sb/sth safe so it or they are not harmed or damaged	firm	a business company
retain	keep or continue to have sth retention n	feedback	information and comments from people who have used sth: give sb feedback (on sth)
crew	all the people who work on a boat, ship, aircraft, etc.	refine	change sth a little to make it better
adapt sth (for sth)	change sth so you can use it in a different situation	partnership	a relationship between two organizations
		keep ahead (of sb/sth)	remain in a stronger position compared to sb/sth
		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.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

6 Complete the sentences.

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

