Reading comprehension

Read the texts and complete the chart.

DREAMS

WHEN MIKE CLARE left college at 18 with a basic business diploma, he started working for a furniture shop in the beds department. Eventually, he became a manager, but when he was 35 and after 12 years working for someone else, he decided it was time to start his own business. He got a small loan and sold his car to raise some money, and found a small shop which was in a terrible state, but was cheap. He started the Sofabed Company in 1985 and within two years, he had three stores. After a while, he decided to concentrate only on beds because they take up less space and you can store more of them. He also found that beds were easier to sell because people are less concerned about the look of a bed than a sofa. He changed the name of the company to Dreams and has not looked back since.

Dreams has built its business on four main selling points: Choice, Price, Delivery and Comfort. This simple formula and Mike's enthusiasm have taken the business to over 150 superstores. Distribution has been the company's biggest challenge, and they now have a fleet of over 100 vans. They have also given a lot of special attention to customer service. When a Dreams driver delivers a bed, he puts on a special pair of slippers to avoid making a mess. 'The slippers cost us virtually nothing, but after a delivery it's all the customers can talk about,' explains Clare.

Dreams has established a reputation for quality and service and has won the Retailer of the Year prize three times. In 2005, it launched an online store and has recently opened its own bed factory. The company is still growing and it has branched out into the international market through franchising. Clare is optimistic about the future. 'It's not easy, and a lot of businesses do fail,' he admits. 'But it's not as complicated as a lot of people think either.'

Source: http://www.startups.co.uk/66788429083485 33189/mike-clare.html

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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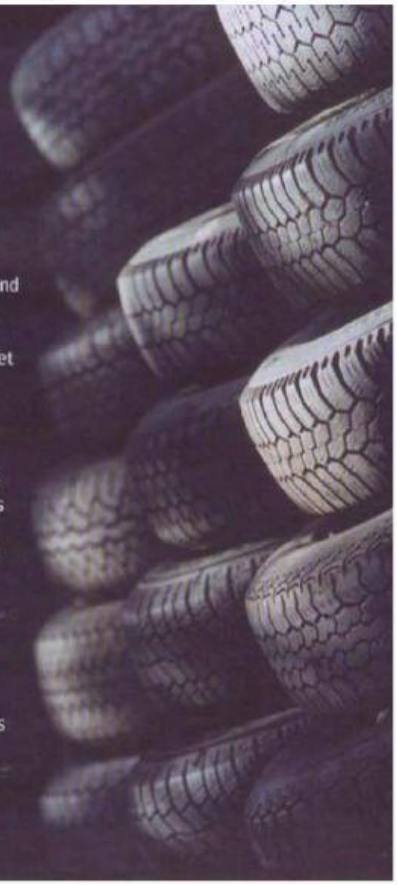
Blackcircles.com

MICHAEL WELCH left school at 16 and started work in a garage as a car-tyre fitter. He quickly learnt about the car-tyre business and decided to set up his own mail-order company. He advertised in motoring magazines and sold high-performance specialist tyres. He knew very little about running a business so he took a college course to study aspects like financial management. His next step was to get a job with the tyre company Kwikfit where he got some experience, and was able to study his future competition. After a year there and still only 20, he decided it was time to go it alone.

His company, Blackcircles.com, allows customers to order tyres on the Internet and get them fitted within a day at one of its affiliated garages. Its low-cost, speedy service has proved to be a spectacular success. Welch started in an office with a single desk which he rescued from a rubbish bin. At the beginning he needed to find reliable garages to fit the tyres and spent a lot of his time approaching and checking fitters across the country. After six months, he took on his first employee to help and the business began to grow, despite some problems with his investing partners.

These days, Blackcircles.com is a thriving business and the company has built up a network of 970 franchise outlets. The company has set up a central call centre which phones every single customer to get feedback on the service. This way Welch can see how garages are performing and identify problems. 'We've spent time on the basics, making sure customers are getting the right service,' he says. Growth has been slower as a result, but he thinks this is a secret of his success. As it says on the company website, 'Since 2001, we have supplied and fitted tyres for thousands of satisfied customers, many of whom have bought tyres from Blackcircles.com again and again.' Recently the company has launched a specific web-based service for customers with fleets of cars and has added motorbike tyres to its range of over 20,000 tyres.

Source: http://www.startups.co.uk/6678842908076678039/black-circles.html



	Dreams	Blackcircles.com
First job of founder		He worked in a garage.
Age when he started the company	He was 35.	
First business premises		
Main product		
Distribution network		
Customer services		
Recent developments		

LIVEWORKSHEETS