

# 4 | New ideas

## Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about ideas and innovations
- Presenting an idea, product or service
- Thanking and responding
- Talking about present, past and future ability

## Case study

- Investing in a new idea

## Starting point

- 1 What is the difference between an 'invention' and an 'innovation'?
- 2 What is your favourite invention, and why?
- 3 What innovation would improve the quality of your life at work? And outside work?

## Working with words | Ideas and innovations

### 1 Read the text and answer questions 1–4.

- 1 What are the aims of the Ashden Awards?
- 2 How does the charity achieve its aims?
- 3 What is 'sustainable energy'? What kinds of sustainable energy can you think of?
- 4 Do you know of any local schemes in your country or around the world that might qualify for an Ashden Award?

### the Ashden Awards for sustainable energy

The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy is a charity that rewards and promotes excellent sustainable energy solutions in the UK and the developing world.

Each year, the Ashden Awards holds a competition to find and reward organizations which have carried out practical and innovative programmes that demonstrate sustainable energy in action at a local level. These are based on the use of local, renewable energy sources.

The charity raises international awareness of the potential benefit of local sustainable energy projects to deal with climate change and to improve the quality of people's lives. It also aims to encourage more people and communities across the world to take up the challenge of finding new ways of meeting their energy needs.



The charity helps the development of sustainable energy projects in several ways. It gives cash prizes, to enable winners to take their work forward. It also publicizes the winners and their work through a worldwide media campaign, which aims to inspire others to follow their example. And by bringing together the winners with the main decision-makers and opinion formers, they aim to change thinking and policy among governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

### 2 12, 13▶ Listen to details of two projects that have won an Ashden Award.

- 1 What is the main purpose of each project?
- 2 What are the advantages of the technology in each project?

3 Match the adjectives in A to the nouns in B to make phrases used in the text and audio 12▶ and 13▶. What other combinations are possible?

A		B	
technological	practical	concept	design
key	potential	feature	proposition
cutting-edge	innovative	benefit	idea
major	commercially-viable	breakthrough	solution
revolutionary	state-of-the-art	technology	advantage

4 Work with a partner. Create a sentence for each phrase in 3.

5 Match these phrasal verbs from the text and audio 12▶ and 13▶ to a verb 1–9 with the same meaning.

*carry out   come up with   pay off   take up   bring down*  
*bring about   take forward   get round   set up*

- avoid (a problem): \_\_\_\_\_
- cause (something to happen): \_\_\_\_\_
- create (an idea, a solution to a problem): \_\_\_\_\_
- develop (a plan, a project): \_\_\_\_\_
- have a good result: \_\_\_\_\_
- perform (an activity, research): \_\_\_\_\_
- reduce (costs): \_\_\_\_\_
- respond to (a challenge): \_\_\_\_\_
- start (a business, a project): \_\_\_\_\_

6 Complete the texts with the correct form of a phrasal verb from 5.

At the Barefoot College, we've <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ an idea to <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ the problem of sustainable energy for lighting in remote mountain villages in India. We've <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ a project to supply solar power to these villages, and we train local people to install and maintain the systems. Many of our new engineers are women – they've really <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ the challenge of learning new skills. The main advantage of our training programme is that the new technology we install works properly and has a long life – so it can <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ real improvements to people's lives, and to the environment.

At KXN we've developed the technology to <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ a plan for improving the refrigeration of vaccines in northern Nigeria. Standard refrigerators are useless in remote areas because the mains electricity supply is so unreliable or not available at all. After <sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ research and trials, our solution was to buy special refrigerators which use photovoltaic (PV) cells to generate and store electricity from sunlight. The initial investment was high, but it has <sup>8</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. This type of refrigerator has excellent insulation, so it needs relatively little electricity to keep the contents cool. This has helped to <sup>9</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ the overall cost of vaccination for people in these remote areas.



» For more exercises, go to Practice file 4 on page 108.

7 Work with a partner. Prepare to talk about an innovative idea for a new invention or new system. This can be connected with the place you work, live or study. Choose at least eight words from 3 and 5 to use in your talk.



# Business communication skills

## Context

PharmaLab is a medical research company seeking to increase security in its research centre. Securikey develop and supply hi-tech security systems. Shireen Casey from Securikey has been invited to present her company's solution to PharmaLab's management team.

## Presenting | Presenting an idea, product or service



- 1 How is security managed in your workplace? Is there too much security or not enough?
- 2 14▷ Read the *Context*. Listen to Part 1 of Shireen's presentation and make notes to complete the slides.

### Presentation to PharmaLab Shireen Casey

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Questions

### What is DiScan?

- A <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
system, based on  
<sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
Two years' <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
Three months' <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

### How does DiScan work?

- Employees <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
The system <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and  
<sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

## Tip | Linking ideas

Use *although*, *however*, *in comparison to* and *whereas* to link contrasting ideas or facts.

**Although** it may sound radical, it's up to you how far-reaching you want it to be.

It's a very sophisticated system.

**However**, it's really easy to use.

This means that DiScan is extremely secure **in comparison to** systems where a code is needed.

You can learn someone else's code, **whereas** you can't copy their fingerprints.

**3 14▶ Listen again and complete these phrases.**

- 1 Good. OK. What I'd like to \_\_\_\_\_ three things.
- 2 First, I'll \_\_\_\_\_ of the product.
- 3 After that I \_\_\_\_\_ a short demo film.
- 4 Does that sound OK? ... OK. We \_\_\_\_\_ DiScan.
- 5 ... based on fingerprint scanning. It's \_\_\_\_\_ intensive R&D.
- 6 How does it work? Well, \_\_\_\_\_ – employees are identified by their fingerprints.

**4 15▶ Listen to Part 2. What are the main advantages of DiScan?**

**5 15▶ Listen again and answer questions 1–2.**


- 1 Make a note of the phrases Shireen uses to
  - a explain the advantages of DiScan
  - b compare current and future ability.
- 2 What phrases does Shireen use to
  - a check that the audience are following what she is saying?
  - b move on to the next point?

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 4** on page 108.

**6 Use the slides and your notes from 2 to 5 to give a similar short presentation about DiScan.**

**7 Prepare a short presentation about a new idea, a product, a system or a service that you know about, or are interested in. It doesn't have to be connected with work, but it can be. Make sure you**

- preview your talk
- talk about benefits
- discuss current and future ability.

 » Interactive Workbook » Email

## Key expressions

### Introducing / Previewing a talk

What I'd like to do in this presentation is ...  
 First, I'll give you a brief overview of the product.  
 Then I'll talk about ...  
 After that I'd like to show you ...

### Introducing a product or service

We call the system (DiScan).  
 Basically, (DiScan) is ...  
 It's the result of ...  
 It is already being used ...  
 It's a pretty simple concept.

### Explaining benefits

There are two main benefits of using (DiScan).  
 The biggest potential benefit of (fingerprint scanning) is ...  
 This means that ...  
 Another advantage is that ...  
 The other major advantage of (DiScan) is ...  
 And this is another great thing about (DiScan) ...

### Comparing current and future ability


With your current system ... (they) can / can't ... However, with (DiScan), (they) will / won't be able to ...  
 At the moment, you can / can't ..., whereas in the future, you'll / won't be able to ... as well.

### Moving on

OK, let's look at what (DiScan) has to offer.  
 OK, now I'd like to move on to ...

### Checking

Does that sound OK?  
 So, is everything clear so far?

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## Practically speaking | Thanking and responding

- 1 **16▶ Listen to six short conversations at work. What has happened in each situation?**
- 2 **16▶ Listen again and make a note of the phrases used to thank someone and respond. Which phrases might be more suitable for a more formal situation, and which for a more informal situation?**
- 3 **We often add a comment when we thank someone or respond. Turn to audio script 16▶ on page 153 and look at the comments the speakers made.**
- 4 **Work with a partner. Take turns to thank each other and respond in the following situations. Make sure you choose an appropriate phrase for the situation, and add a comment. Refer to the *Useful phrases* on page 134.**
  - A colleague brings you a cup of coffee.
  - A taxi takes you to the station after work.
  - A friend pays for lunch.
  - A stranger holds the door for you.
  - Your manager supports you at a difficult meeting.
  - Someone on a train lends you their mobile phone.
  - A client invites you to present your new project to their team.
  - Your team leader helps you with a report – which took until midnight to finish!



## Language at work | Present, past and future ability

**1** 17▷ Listen to Richard Lake talking about his new business idea to some potential investors and answer questions 1–4.

- 1 What is Boatnet?
- 2 What is the current situation for boat owners who want to use the Internet?
- 3 What will Boatnet enable them to do in the future?
- 4 What protection does Boatnet have against competitors?

**2** Read these extracts from the presentation.

- a I **could see** that there was definitely a market.
- b Boat owners want to **be able to access** the Internet.
- c You still **can't access** the Internet from your boat.
- d Our subscribers **will be able to access** the Internet for a basic monthly fee.
- e We **were able to test** the system extensively.
- f We **can offer** the service for £25 a month.
- g We'd like to **be able to increase** this.
- h Have you **been able to get** any sort of protection for it?
- i We **couldn't get** a patent.
- j So other companies **won't be able to compete** with you?

Which extracts refer to

- 1 present ability? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 past ability? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 future ability? \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Use the extracts to complete the rules with these words and phrases.

*has / have been able to can couldn't was / were able to  
be able to could is / are able to wasn't / weren't able to*

- 1 To talk about general or present ability, we use \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 To talk about future ability, we use \_\_\_\_\_ after *will, might* and *may*, and verbs like *want to* or *would like to*.
- 3 We use \_\_\_\_\_ to talk about past ability with a connection to the present.
- 4 We use \_\_\_\_\_ to talk about general ability in the past, and before *hear, see*, etc.
- 5 To talk about a specific situation in the past, if we mean 'tried and succeeded', we use \_\_\_\_\_. But if the sentence is negative we can use \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 4** on page 109.

**4** Look at these rapidly-changing technologies and talk about past, present and future ability when using them.



*Example: In the past, I wasn't able to use my mobile phone for taking photos – I could only text or make calls. With my current phone, I can take photos and video clips, play games and download music files. In the future, I'd like to be able to use my phone for international videoconferencing as well.*

**5** Work with a partner and discuss similar changes affecting your own lives, in or out of work. Talk about technology, systems or methods of working, or choose from the list.

- electronic equipment
- vehicles
- travel
- work practices
- education
- medicine

🔗 » Interactive Workbook » Exercises and Tests

### Tip | managed to

*Managed to* can also be used when talking about a specific action in the past especially when we succeed in doing something difficult after trying hard.

*I managed to pass my driving test at the fifth attempt.*



## Investing in a new idea

### Background

# Concrete Canvas – the building in a bag

Will Crawford and Peter Brewin are joint directors of Concrete Canvas, and have developed an innovative product – an inflatable concrete shelter. They came up with the idea in response to a competition to find new uses for cement. They visited refugee camps in Africa to do further research. They believe their product could get round the problem of supplying cheap, easy-to-use shelters in disaster situations such as earthquakes and tsunamis.

The shelter is basically a sealed plastic sack that measures under two metres square. Inside is a fabric that has been soaked in cement and this is attached to the outside of an inflatable plastic liner. To inflate the shelter, the sack is filled with water, the fabric is unfolded and a chemical pack releases gas into the plastic liner. Twelve hours later, the

thin concrete fabric has set in the shape of the inflated liner, creating a rigid but lightweight shelter. No training is needed, and the weight and size are similar to those of tents used by aid organizations and the military.

Crawford and Brewin aim to test their idea with an aid organization such as Médecins Sans Frontières or CARE. If the testing goes well, they hope to raise the necessary funding to take the project forward. Initially, they need an investment of \$300,000 to build and field-test prototypes.

**SOME FIGURES**

- Useful life of a tent in some conditions: less than 3 weeks
- Useful life of Concrete Canvas shelter: minimum 10 years
- Time needed to put up shelter: 40 minutes
- Time until shelter is ready to use: 12 hours

## The Expert View

Two essential factors for the success of a new venture are a unique business opportunity, combined with an excellent understanding of the market and resource requirements. To convince an investor, the entrepreneur needs to make a business pitch that is well presented and easily understood – and which covers the business idea, the market, resource requirements and future growth potential. As an investor, you need to pick an idea which offers a good return on investment and has a management team with good leadership skills and market understanding. Be aware the greater the risk, the greater the need to gain a higher rate of return!

Dr Stephanie Hussels, Lecturer in Entrepreneurship  
Cranfield School of Management.

### Discussion

- 1 What advice would you give to Will Crawford and Peter Brewin about obtaining the investment they need?
- 2 What information would potential investors need before deciding to put their money into this product?
- 3 Do you think this is a good project to invest in? Why?

### Task

In this activity you will be both an entrepreneur and an investor. Your aim is to be either the winning entrepreneur or the winning investor. The winner is the person or team with the most money at the end.

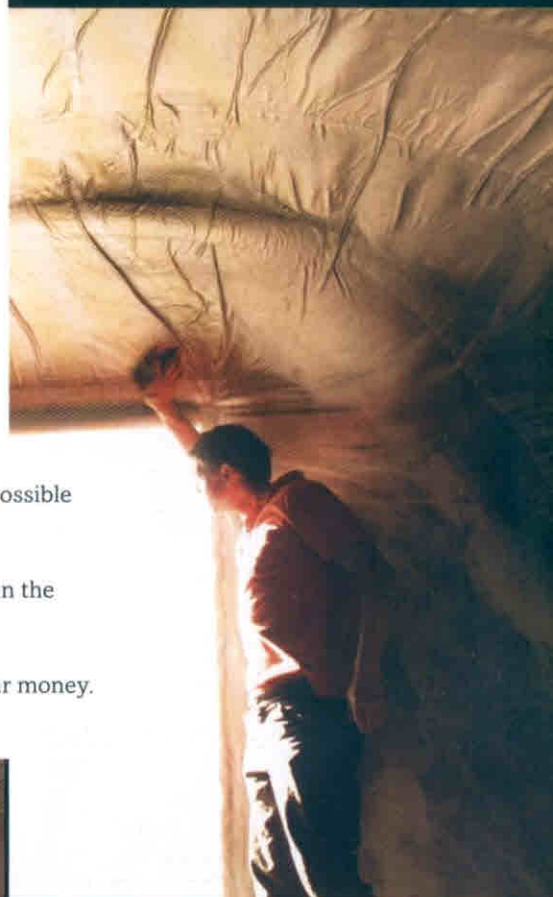
#### Entrepreneurs

- Present a new idea to the investors and get them to invest as much money as possible in it. You have three minutes to make your 'pitch'.

#### Investors

- You have \$500,000 to invest. Your aim is to invest as much money as possible in the winning idea.
- You can invest all your money in one idea or divide it between different ideas.
- You can't invest in your own business idea, and you don't have to spend all your money.

Turn to File 09 on page 138 and follow the instructions.



# Case study