

## Unit 10 Luck

Business studies: Career success

Reading skills: Identifying cause and effect; understanding logical relationships

Writing skills: Linking ideas to describe cause and effect

### 1 SPEAKING

**a** Think about your career up to now (school, studying, jobs you have done). How did you get to where you are now? How much was it because of ... ?

- your own hard work
- your natural ability
- things other people did
- chance and luck

Think about other people you know. Do you think the same is true of them?

**b** Discuss the careers in the pictures.

- 1 How important do you think luck is in deciding whether the people will be successful or not?
- 2 Can you think of examples of people who you think have been very lucky?



politician



musician

### 2 VOCABULARY Chance

**a** Add words and phrases in the gaps and match them with the definitions.

chance coincidence control (x2) fortunate

- 1 ☐ He's good at his job but he was also very \_\_\_\_\_ to marry the daughter of the CEO.
- 2 ☐ She holds weekly meetings because she likes to show she's in \_\_\_\_\_ of the company.
- 3 ☐ I became a tour guide completely by \_\_\_\_\_. When I graduated I just took the first job I could find.
- 4 ☐ They tried to stop the company going bankrupt, but the situation was beyond their \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 ☐ Fifteen years later, we met in a Cairo café. It was an incredible \_\_\_\_\_.

- a power, ability to influence something
- b when something surprising happens that you can't explain
- c when things happen for no special reason
- d a more formal word for 'lucky', having good things happen to you

**b** In the examples, what words come before and after ... ?

- a chance
- b control

#### STUDY SKILLS: RECORDING VOCABULARY

When you write down new words, which of these are useful? Why / Why not?

- a write just the word: *chance*
- b write information about the part of speech: *chance (n)*
- c write complete phrases: *by chance*
- d write a translation: *by chance (Eng.) = kazayla (Turkish)*



company director

### 3 READING

- a** Read the text. Which sentence below does not summarise what the text says?
- 1 Chance plays a significant role in what career you choose and how successful you are.
  - 2 People generally believe that their success is mainly due to their own efforts.
  - 3 Success in careers doesn't depend on how wealthy your parents were.
  - 4 You may be more successful if you recognise that everything isn't under your control.
- b** Look at some things people say about careers. What general points in the text does each one illustrate? The answer may be one sentence or more than one.
- 1 'I grew up in a poor neighbourhood where the schools were terrible. That's why I never went to university.'
  - 2 'People say I was lucky to become a manager, but I got where I am now through hard work – luck didn't come into it.'
  - 3 'I've got a great job and I'm doing well, but you never know what might happen in a year's time – maybe I'll be doing something completely different ... perhaps something even more interesting.'
  - 4 'A school friend of mine is now a top lawyer. It was all because his father knew the right people, but he never mentions that!'
  - 5 'Sue and her husband are both hospital doctors. She's better qualified but she earns far less than he does. It doesn't seem fair.'

## How does luck contribute to success?

Many successful careers are based as much on a certain amount of luck as they are on hard work, and whether you're a company director or an artist, your achievements almost certainly won't be based on hard work alone. This is plain to see if you consider the place where you were born, which will affect your education and may even determine whether you learn to read, write or get qualifications – which then influences your career choices.

Many people believe success is due to talent and hard work, but Williams (2014) notes that the reason for this is that most people underestimate the role of chance. We do a lot of work to prepare for our careers, such as education, training and getting advice, all of which tend to be under our control. People don't like to accept the role of luck in their work, as it makes us feel that they are not in control.

Psychologists have found that people believe that their present situation was caused by the things they remember most clearly. Everyone remembers working hard, so people are likely to believe that their success is the result of studying or working hard all their lives and not that it is partly due to luck, which is much easier to forget.

The real reasons for success (at least in financial terms) are less clear. In the UK, studies show that where you are born and your social background are likely to be a factor in how much you earn. 2017 research from the Social Mobility Commission also found that black graduates earn up to 23% less per hour than white university leavers, and women earn 14% less on average than men.

People's social background also plays a big role in the profession they enter. A recent study by the Debrett's Foundation found that seven in every ten young people aged 16–25 use family connections to get their first job. Research has also shown that less intelligent, richer children are 35% more likely to become high earners than more intelligent, poorer children.

Chance and coincidences have a greater effect on people's careers than is often thought. People may be unwilling to accept that parts of their career are beyond their control. On the other hand, accepting the role of luck in one's career can actually make people more fortunate. This is because when people accept the role of luck in their work, they often become ready to take advantage of more fortunate moments. Williams (2014) suggests that success results from staying optimistic, keeping an open mind about the future and being willing to take a risk.

Although talent and hard work are the basis of almost all success stories, they clearly aren't enough on their own. It is also important to recognise the role played by luck in contributing to success.



## C CRITICAL THINKING

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND RESEARCH-BASED FACTS

Discuss the questions.

- 1 The comments in 3b refer to personal experiences. Are all the experiences supported by data from research? Check in the text to see.
- 2 Most of the article is based on research. Is research into areas like this important? Why / Why not?

## 4 LANGUAGE FOCUS Cause and effect

- a** Cover the text and look at sentences 1–4. Add one word from the box in each gap.

caused   results   due   result

- 1 Many people believe success **is** \_\_\_\_\_ **to** talent and hard work.
- 2 People believe that their present situation **was** \_\_\_\_\_ **by** the things they remember most clearly.
- 3 People are likely to believe that their success **is the** \_\_\_\_\_ **of** studying and working hard.
- 4 Williams believes that success \_\_\_\_\_ **from** staying optimistic.

Check your answers in the text

- b** Answer the questions below.

- 1 Which word in the box is ... ?
  - a a main verb
  - a past participle
  - an adjective
  - a noun
- 2 What is the last word in each highlighted expression?
  - a noun
  - an adverb
  - a preposition
- 3 Each expression can be followed by a noun or a gerund (verb + *-ing*). Find examples of each in 4a.

- c** Match items in columns A and B to make sentences, using the words in brackets (you may need to change the form). More than one answer may be possible.

A

- 1 Most people think the company's success ...
- 2 Her success as a pop star at the age of 16 ...
- 3 The company went bankrupt in 2010. This ...
- 4 His death at the age of 55 ...
- 5 Her promotion to CEO of the company ...

B

- ... incredible good luck. (*due*)  
 ... competition from a rival software company. (*result*)  
 ... a sudden rise in the price of aluminium. (*cause*)  
 ... her skill at taking difficult decisions. (*due*)  
 ... working too hard and being under constant stress. (*result*)

Compare with other students. Do you have the same sentences?

- d** Look at this example from the text.

This is plain to see when you consider the place where you were born, which will **affect** your education.

Does this mean the same as ... ?

- a help   b have an effect on   c make possible

- e** Find three other verbs or phrases in the text which have a similar meaning to *affect*. How could you use them in the sentences below?

- 1 Your gender could \_\_\_\_\_ how much you get paid.
- 2 What job you do may be \_\_\_\_\_ where you grow up.
- 3 Luck \_\_\_\_\_ whether or not you are successful.

## 5 WRITING

- a** Read a student's notes about success in exams and find answers to the questions.

- 1 What do we know from research?
- 2 What did Gidden's research show?
- 3 What other factors are important?
- 4 What part do personality differences play?
- 5 What are 'external factors'? How can they affect performance?

### Students' performance in exams – reasons

- Research: success in exam – hard work, long hours of study – not in-depth knowledge, intelligence.
- Recent research (Gidden, 2015): less intelligent students (studied 8 hrs/day) – better grades than more intelligent students (2–3 hrs/day).
- Low marks in exams: other factors, e.g. stress, preparing at last minute. Also personal or family problems.
- Bad performance – personality differences (hard-working, confident, lazy)
- External factors, e.g. hot weather, crowded room, noise. Some students affected, others not.

- b** Work in pairs. Discuss how you could develop the notes into a paragraph.

- 1 Where could you use expressions from 4a to join ideas?
- 2 How could you begin the paragraph? (Think of a general 'topic sentence'.)

- c** Write the paragraph.

- d** Compare your paragraph with a partner. Did you use the same expressions from 4a?



## 6 READING EXTENSION

a What do you know about ... ?

- 1 Bill Gates
- 2 Microsoft
- 3 IBM

Make a few brief notes.

b Before you read, check that you know what an *operating system* is. Read the definition.

An **operating system** (OS) is software that allows the computer to do basic jobs, such as opening and closing files, displaying data, storing data, printing. All computer programs need an operating system in order to work. The most widely used operating system in the world is Microsoft Windows.

c Read the text about Bill Gates. The text says Bill Gates was lucky three times. Which of these lucky things happened to him?

- 1 A teacher at his school taught him a lot about computers.
- 2 He was offered work by IBM because someone else didn't want to do it.
- 3 IBM gave him money so he could start his own company.
- 4 He bought an operating system very cheaply from another company.
- 5 He decided not to sell his operating system to IBM but to keep it himself.

c Read the text again and make notes on these points.

- 1 Bill Gates's school
- 2 Bill Gates in 1980
- 3 Gary Kildall
- 4 Seattle Computer Products
- 5 DOS
- 6 Bill Gates's contract with IBM
- 7 Nicolo Machiavelli

d What points in the text ... ?

- 1 did you already know about
- 2 surprised you

# The luck factor in great decisions

**Bill Gates made a bad decision early in his career. In fact, if some other people hadn't made even worse mistakes, we might not ever have heard of him.**



Yes, Gates was and is brilliant, and he worked hard. Malcolm Gladwell, author of *Outliers*, says his success was due to the 10,000 hours he spent learning computer programming at an early age. Gladwell also points out that Gates had the benefit of good education. He went to a private school with a computer lab long before such facilities were normal.

There is more to Gates's success, however, than his talent, hard work, and education. It might be that we know his name only because of his amazing luck as a negotiator. He was lucky three times in a row at a critical point in his business life.

In 1980, Gates and a few fellow programmers had a small company in Seattle. The computer company IBM asked them if they could develop an operating system (OS) for personal computers that it was about to start selling. Gates had never built an OS, however, so he suggested Gary Kildall, a much better known programmer at a company called Digital Research. Luckily for Gates, Digital Research didn't immediately sign a contract and they wouldn't agree to the money that IBM offered. It was only because of that problem that IBM came back to Gates and he took the job.

There was a second piece of luck after that. Both IBM and Gates knew of another operating system that had been developed by Seattle Computer Products. With IBM's secret support, Gates bought the software very cheaply. Again luck came into play: SCP didn't discover that IBM was involved, otherwise the price could have been far higher. Microsoft then changed the program slightly and called it DOS (Disc Operating System), the name everyone knows today.

Then Gates was lucky a third time when he negotiated the contract with IBM. IBM agreed to pay a small amount of money for each copy of the DOS that they would sell with their new machines. But the important point was that IBM didn't buy the DOS program from Gates – Gates and his friends still owned it.

Of course, it was clever of Gates and his friends to see that the real money would be in software, not in computers. But he was also extremely lucky. Who knows what would have happened to Gates and Microsoft if they hadn't been able to keep the DOS program? It became the centre of their business, and it's what made Gates a billionaire.

So it is this way with any decision: the events that bring you to make a choice will be affected by luck, good or bad. Philosophers, political theorists, and strategists have always accepted the large role that luck plays in our lives. Even Nicolo Machiavelli, the 16th century Italian political thinker, wrote in 1532 that 'I believe that it is probably true that fortune is the arbiter of half the things we do, leaving the other half to be controlled by ourselves.' What was true in Italian politics centuries ago is just as true in management today.