

PICSEL® BROWSER - BUSINESS STUDIES/MANAGEMENT

Student Activity 1

PicseL® hold innovation and patent workshops where employees can put forward their ideas and work on the development of new products. Discuss the costs and benefits to PicseL® of involving the employees in this way.

Teacher's notes Activity 1

Students are likely to focus on the motivational aspects of the perceived benefits. These might include improved loyalty and a reduced staff turnover if employees feel they are seeing projects through personally. Additional points may include cost effectiveness: for example, using employees, instead of paying outside agencies. More able students may identify that, in such a rapidly changing environment as technology, new employees are likely to bring in ideas, experiences and expertise that may not have previously existed in the organisation. Vibrant workshops are also likely to lead to innovative and original ideas. Comparisons could be made with the way that ideas are developed through laissez-faire management styles in the advertising industry.

On the costs side, there is the risk that greater involvement of the employees may result in raising their interest in becoming entrepreneurs themselves, resulting in greater competition. Increasing the number of people who are involved in confidential product development also increases the risk of ideas being passed onto competitors at early stages. This can be avoided by drawing up Non-disclosure Agreements to be signed by employees and others involved in the project, such as suppliers and other outside agencies, but this will incur legal costs and employees may be demotivated, perceiving such a requirement as a lack of trust.

Student Activity 2

The Director of Technologies at Picsel® tells the interviewer that they need to raise finance. One of the sources of finance that Picsel® sought was venture capital. Venture capital is the money and resources made available to start-up firms and small businesses in the UK that would otherwise find it difficult to raise funds because they have no previous record of business success. Most venture capital money comes from organised groups of wealthy investors who seek out businesses with innovative ideas and exceptional growth potential.

You will need to work in pairs for this role-play activity. One of you should play the role of the Director of Technologies at Picsel® and the other a representative of a venture capital investment group. The director will be trying to convince the venture capital group to invest in his project, and the representative of the venture capital group will need to find out how risky or safe this investment is likely to be.

- (i) Individually plan out the questions that each of your characters is likely to ask.
- (ii) Together, review the questions and plan your individual answers.
- (iii) You may find it useful to write a script that could be acted out to the rest of the group.

Teacher's notes Activity 2

Students should be encouraged to include the points below in their questions. Venture capital group:

- What evidence do Picsel® have that their product will be a success?
- How have Picsel® protected their ideas from being developed by competitors?
- In answering the questions, the director should refer to market research, the gap in the market and any intellectual property. The director is likely to want to know how much return/control the venture capital group would want. Students should visit the Picsel® website <http://www.picsel.com/> to gain data for this activity.

Student Activity 3

Imran Khand would be described as an entrepreneur. From the case study about Picisel® Technology explain how intellectual property supported Imran in his quest for entrepreneurship.

Teacher's notes Activity 3

Students should show understanding that entrepreneurship involves risk. New ideas are being introduced to a market, which perhaps have not been seen before, so the consumer response to them is unknown. In the same way as the entrepreneur will keep his or her developments secret, so too will their competitors and there is further risk involved that a competitor is developing a similar idea and gets it onto the market sooner. Ownership of IP reduces the risk in that it enables Imran to register his own new designs and patents, and then develop them, safe in the knowledge that he is protected by law should anyone copy his ideas before he can gain financially from them.

Lesson plan Business Studies/Management Suggested lesson structure [45 minutes/one hour]

Lesson objectives

- For students to understand the responsibilities that organisations have towards the health and safety of their employees.
- For students to enhance their understanding of intellectual property.

Prior learning

- Students should have some understanding of employees' and employers' rights and responsibilities.

Teacher preparation

- The website http://www.hse.gov.uk/costs/costs_of_injury/costs_of_injury.asp gives statistics linked to industrial injury which may provide useful material for leading the starter discussion. Start a class discussion on health and safety issues in the workplace supported by examples - safety helmets on building sites, danger of trailing cables, training in lifting patients for nurses, room temperatures. The discussions should include the concept of ergonomically designed furniture and the issue of repetitive strain injury (RSI).

Main

- Refer students to the text in the Ergonomic Café case study .
- Ask students to identify features in these two inventions that would have led to the designer's need to apply for patents for them. (Encourage students to focus on the use of the terms 'innovative' and 'different from other products' to identify that these are likely to be products new to the market with few rivals, and the fact that the compute industry is a highly competitive and multi-million pound market.)
- Students to assume the role of an employee who perceives there is a health and safety hazard in their workplace. They are to write a letter to their employer requesting a change to the workplace, or the purchase of a new piece of equipment, to make their environment safer. (Encourage formal business-like language, and reference to health and safety legislation and statistics.)