

Background

Working in teams

When you watch sports like football or basketball it's obvious that team work is important. Players need to work together on and off the field or court. But how important is teamwork in sports with famous individuals? For example, what about the tennis player, Roger Federer? When he wins another championship, we don't think about his 'team'. ¹ _____

Another sport with brilliant individuals is Formula 1. It's the biggest motor sport in the world with the biggest names – drivers like Michael Schumacher or Lewis Hamilton. Lewis Hamilton is the youngest driver to become the Formula 1 world champion. His photograph is often on the front and back pages of newspapers and magazines. ² _____ He earns millions in sponsorship deals. But in the interviews after his winning races, Lewis always thanks his team at the racetrack and at the factory.

That's because at McLaren – the team he drives for – there are 1,115 people working with him. They are spread over three factories and before every race, they work towards making him number one again. McLaren's mission is the same now as it was when it began in 1966: ³ _____

Success starts at the factory with everyone working on different components. The factory in the United

Kingdom is called the Technology Centre and covers 57,000 m². There are design studios, laboratories, research and testing facilities, electronics development, machine shops, and prototyping and production facilities. Every time there is a new component for the car, there is a test stage. The results and feedback go back to each section of the factory. ⁴ _____

When Lewis describes the reason for his team's success, he uses a word that you often hear inside successful Formula 1 teams – communication. Even when the driver is at the race track, he can call and teleconference with the factory. He tells them what he needs and he has to be very direct. As a young driver Lewis admits that at first it was difficult to give feedback. He didn't always have the confidence or experience, but teams don't work without feedback.

His team is also part of something more complicated than just designing, building, and racing cars. The Formula 1 business includes logistics, marketing and PR, and the financial management of hundreds of millions of dollars. The McLaren group has a catering division, it owns a race track, and it runs an e-commerce business. So, nowadays, when we talk about McLaren as a team, what we really mean is McLaren as a business. ⁵ _____

Exercises

1 Discuss as a class.

- 1 Which sports need teamwork?
- 2 Describe why teamwork is important in one of these sports. Who is in the team?

2 Read the text and decide which title is the best.

- 1 Some sports don't need teams.
- 2 When individuals are more important than teams.
- 3 How Lewis Hamilton became the youngest Formula 1 driver in the world.
- 4 Success is all about the team.

3 These sentences are missing from the text. Match a–e to gaps 1–5 in the text.

- a 'To win races and world championships'
- b A very successful one, because it's never about the individual but always about the team.
- c Many companies also want the face of Lewis next to their products.
- d We think about his genius on the court.
- e Sometimes they have to completely rebuild a component and start again.

4 Complete this profile of the McLaren team using information from the text.

McLaren

- 1 Number of employees: _____
- 2 Number of factories: _____
- 3 McLaren's mission statement: _____
- 4 Size of UK technology centre: _____
- 5 Types of departments: _____
- 6 Other business interests: _____

5 Look at paragraph five in the article. Find six words to match these definitions.

- 1 saying exactly what you think: _____
- 2 the activity of giving and receiving information: _____
- 3 comments on good and bad points: _____
- 4 agree something is true: _____
- 5 knowledge and skills learned over a long period of time: _____
- 6 the belief you can do things well: _____

6 Work with a partner. Discuss these questions.

- 1 How good is communication where you work? How do you communicate with your colleagues and team members (e.g. informal emails, formal meetings)?
- 2 How often does your boss give you feedback? Is it useful?
- 3 When you are wrong or make a mistake, do you always admit it?
- 4 Do you have the confidence and experience to be direct with your colleagues? Is it easy to be direct and to give feedback?

7 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.