

PART THREE

Questions 15–20

- Read the following article about a successful British businessman and the questions on the opposite page.
- For each question **15–20**, mark one letter (**A, B, C or D**) on your Answer Sheet, for the answer you choose.

Every year British universities turn out 15,000 graduates in business studies. Many dream that they will one day be running a major business, wielding power and influencing markets. But only a very few will climb to the top and realise their fantasies. For the rest, compromise, disappointment, mediocrity and an alternative career away from the mainstream action will be their lot. Peter Blackburn is chairman and chief executive of Nestlé UK, which employs more than 12,000 people and has a turnover of £1.8 billion. His advice to those who wish to move ahead of the pack is as straightforward as the man. "Take all your qualifications seriously. Although many top executives do not have first-class honours and it is often a disadvantage to be an intellectual, qualifications are increasingly important, as is the quest for improvement."

"I do feel that an international dimension helps every career. It says something about the person and if they have worked in another language, it gives a manager the important dimension of realising that each market is part of something bigger. Also it is always important in any career to keep your options open as events can take an unexpected turn. When they did for me, I acted accordingly. I still have to pinch myself to remind myself what I am doing. Even 10 years ago I didn't think this is what I would end up having achieved."

"In the end, those that get right to the top retain their 'people touch', which can be very difficult as one gets swept up on the fast track of corporate life. But those who never forget where they have come from and keep their feet on the ground have a real advantage. The important thing is that you should never ask someone else to do something you couldn't do yourself. I am always looking for those who have the determination, the steel to see through our corporate objectives. I also want managers who can be role models for the next generation, people who will be an inspiration."

Blackburn started out working for a small confectionery company and was responsible for clearing up a major financial scandal when it was taken over by a larger company, Rowntrees. This was a project which marked him out and gave him visibility in Rowntrees. While many successful careers can easily be seen as an almost predictable procession, there are always one or two moments when success in a project promotes the executive, bringing star quality and something of an aura. However, if at the decisive moment a mistake is made, then the executive, instead of moving sharply forward, disappears into the pack and others are given their chance.

When Rowntrees was later taken over by Nestlé, Peter Blackburn went on television and argued against the takeover. When the dust settled, the winners rewarded their spirited adversary. "I have always believed in doing the best that I can in any situation. Sometimes you have to make difficult decisions and then it's important to meet them square on. I have been fortunate in that the evolving company that I am now involved with has always believed in strong social values and has behaved as humanely as possible when it has been forced to close or to sell one of its businesses."

Peter Blackburn's career has been marked by two company takeovers. Many successful takeovers have been characterised by the new owners looking at the second layers of management and giving them a free rein. Mr Blackburn has benefited from this process twice and says: "In both the takeovers I have been involved with, success has been achieved because the new owners have not gone in for wholesale clearouts. They have realised that it is the existing people who understand the business and they must be the platform for any growth."

- 15 Peter Blackburn says that to compete successfully in the job market, people should
- A be realistic about their abilities.
 - B make sure they choose the right post.
 - C improve their relations with other executives.
 - D have a good educational background.
- 16 In the second paragraph, Blackburn says his present day achievements are due to
- A being able to adapt to changing circumstances.
 - B deciding to learn other languages.
 - C having worked for an international company.
 - D staying in the same job for several years.
- 17 Blackburn says that it's important for a manager to
- A lead their staff by example.
 - B put ambition above everything else.
 - C demand high standards from their workforce.
 - D move as quickly as possible up the corporate ladder.
- 18 The writer uses the example of Blackburn's involvement in the Rowntrees Project to show
- A how problems within a company can be highlighted.
 - B how competitive executives are within a company.
 - C how easily mistakes can be made by executives.
 - D how the management's attention can be drawn to someone.
- 19 What is Blackburn's attitude towards the company he now works for?
- A He has some regrets about its public image.
 - B He approves of the way it treats its employees.
 - C He dislikes the demands it makes on him.
 - D He admires the way it explains its decisions.
- 20 Blackburn attributes the success of the company that have involved him to
- A the role he played in each of them.
 - B the abilities of the new managers.
 - C the decision not to make radical personnel changes.
 - D the financial support provided by the owners.