

Unit 6 ➤

1 Before you read, look at the words in bold in the article. Match them with their definitions (1-5). Use a dictionary if necessary.

- 1 an aim, belief or organisation that a group of people support (e.g. by raising money) or fight for _____
- 2 borrow money from a bank _____
- 3 a course in which you learn a lot about something in a very short time _____
- 4 in large amounts, to sell to individual people _____
- 5 talking a lot to other people about all the good and great things you have done _____

2 Read the article and match the headings (1-4) with sections A-C. There is one extra heading you do not need.

- 1 Writing books: the best way to promote oneself
- 2 Dynamism, generosity and flexibility
- 3 Learning from both success and failure
- 4 Never too young to start learning how to do business

3 Read sections A and B again. Choose the option (a, b or c) which best completes each sentence.

- 1 As a young child, Mr Devlyn often crossed the border into Texas because he wanted
 - a to visit his American father, who was an eye doctor in El Paso.
 - b to look for other children who could work for him.
 - c to buy goods that he could then sell back home.
- 2 Two of the things Mr Devlyn learnt as a young child were
 - a buying wholesale and promoting one's business.
 - b selling houses and translating from English into Spanish.
 - c examining eye patients and making glasses for them.
- 3 The main reason for Mr Devlyn's success seems to be that
 - a he never failed in anything.
 - b he took risks and had some good opportunities.
 - c he adopted innovative ideas from Japan.
- 4 One of the most important things Mr Devlyn learnt is that
 - a first-class service makes your customers want to come back.
 - b strong competition in business is in fact better than no competition at all.
 - c very few people learn from their mistakes.

4 Decide if these statements are *true* (T) or *false* (F).

- 1 Mr Devlyn opened a small shop in Ciudad Juárez to sell imported chocolate bars.
- 2 He was not an only child.
- 3 He can speak both Spanish and English.
- 4 He began to learn how to make glasses when he was a teenager.
- 5 He advertised the family business only in Ciudad Juárez.
- 6 He has shops in more than three different countries.
- 7 Mr Devlyn is not a shy, reserved person.
- 8 He has helped people in need.

Hyperactive businessman builds opticians' empire from Mexico

A As an adult, Frank Devlyn built his parents' small optician's into the biggest chain in Latin America. But it was selling U.S. sweets in Mexico as a young boy in the 1940s that gave the president of Devlyn Group his first taste for business.

5 'Mars, Snickers, Milky Way – they didn't exist in Ciudad Juárez,' says Mr Devlyn. At the age of eight, he would cross from the northern border town into El Paso, Texas, buy the chocolate bars and sell them to his neighbours back home. 'I was selling house to house,' he says, recalling that he got a good price: 'I had no competition.'

It was a **crash course** in business. 'I learnt how to buy **wholesale**,' he says, and within two years he had eight other children working for him selling the sweets.

10 At the same time, as the eldest of six children, he was beginning to learn the family business, which was set up in 1936 by his American father and Mexican mother, both opticians, in Ciudad Juárez. He translated while 'the American eye doctor', who had never learnt Spanish, examined patients. By the age of nine he had learnt how to make glasses.

15 He also learnt the benefits of publicity and promotion by knocking on doors both sides of the border and giving out advertisements and calendars to shopkeepers.

B After his father died when Mr Devlyn was 22, he was asked by American Optical to take over a factory. He accepted, **took out** his first **loan** and then went from success to success. Now he is the president of a business with 1,200 opticians' shops, mainly in Mexico but also in Guatemala, El Salvador and the USA.

20 An early lesson was to go where there was no competition and 'to offer such good service [that] people are customers for life.' He was also open to new ideas, such as conducting eye tests in the middle of a shop, not behind closed doors – something he had seen in Japan.

But there have been downs as well as ups. Mr Devlyn at one point wanted to use only frames that he had manufactured himself. It was a failure. 'I learnt from that. I learnt like crazy,' he says.

25 **C** Now in his late 70s, Mr Devlyn is not afraid of **self-promotion** and says he wants to stand out. He talks easily and with confidence, telling anecdotes and showing off selfies, including one with Mexico's president, Enrique Peña Nieto. Melanie, his eldest daughter and president of the board of Devlyn Holdings, says her father is an internet addict: 'I don't think his brain is ever off. He's a hyperactive adult, which is very good for the business,' she says.

30 The former president of charitable body Rotary International, Mr Devlyn is also the author of a series of books, including *Frank Talk*, *Frank Talk on Leadership* and *Frank Talk on Public Speaking*. He also wants to write several more books, including one on the history of the optical industry.

He has helped a number of social **causes** and has provided free glasses to one million Mexicans who can't pay for eye care.

35 He has experienced the transformation of Ciudad Juárez from a sleepy town to a busy centre manufacturing a lot of goods for export.

Mr Devlyn also understands the need to keep moving with the times. In 2014, his company merged with Opticas del AH, which is owned by Linzor Capital Partners. 'You've got to move forward. What got you here won't get you there,' he says.