

Background

Technology review: video cameras

Normally, when we think of video cameras, we think of well-known brands like Sony or Panasonic and large hi-tech machines with lots of *buttons to press. They are great if you have the money and you want high quality Hollywood-style films. But the market for this kind of camera isn't growing very quickly at the moment. This is surprising because video is everywhere these days. At work we can video a meeting or a new product and send it to colleagues. At home we can video the children and email the film to their grandparents. So how are people making videos?

Well, most laptops come with a webcam. The quality isn't great, but it's OK for making *simple films. If we want to video family and friends at the weekend or on holiday then the mobile phone is popular. The problem for manufacturers of large video cameras is this – most people don't want complicated technology and don't need perfect pictures. Most customers want *simplicity. One company in San Francisco understands this. Pure Digital Technologies produces easy-to-use video cameras which fit in your *pocket. Its CEO, Jonathan Kaplan, explains his company's philosophy: 'We believe video can help change the world.'

Kaplan doesn't want to *compete with the large traditional manufacturers like Sony because the mass market is happy with basic video technology. Pure Digital Technologies has had huge growth in the last two years. Its latest camera sold a million in its first year of production – that's about 13% of the video camera market. The 'Flip' is similar in size to an iPod and it's easy to use. There's one big red button in the middle for recording and 'simplicity' is its main competitive advantage. After you record your video, you put it into your laptop and then download the video onto a DVD or even onto your favourite website. The cameras come in lots of different bright colours and there's even a special case for filming underwater. The quality isn't the same as your standard video camera, but it's better than mobile phone quality.

Pure Digital Technologies has had success because of its main selling point – quality at a reasonable price. The other reason is that it hasn't had much competition. That's going to change. Other companies, including Sony, are *launching similar camera products onto the market. Kaplan and his company will have to find new ways to *stay ahead.

Glossary

**buttons* = switches you press to control equipment

**compete* = to try to be more successful than something / someone else

**pocket* = a place in trousers, coats, or shorts to put things

**launch* = to begin something / introduce a new product into the market

**simple* (adj) = easy, not complicated

**simplicity* (noun) = see *simple*

**stay ahead* = to continue to be number one in the market

Reading file 4

Exercises

1 Work with a partner and discuss these questions.

- 1 What kinds of technology do you use at work or at home?
- 2 What's your favourite piece of technology at the moment?

2 Read the text quickly and answer these questions.

- 1 What kind of technology is the text about?
- 2 Why is Pure Digital Technologies doing well?

3 Read the text again and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 Sony and Panasonic are two of the main manufacturers of large video cameras.
- 2 The majority of people are currently buying large video cameras.
- 3 Many people make videos with webcams and mobile phones.
- 4 Pure Digital Technologies is trying to compete with the larger producers.
- 5 Customers choose 'Flip' cameras because they have lots of buttons.
- 6 Pure Digital Technologies' profits are increasing.
- 7 You can use their cameras in the water.
- 8 Pure Digital Technologies is not going to have any competition in the future.

4 Match the words in A and B to make common adjective + noun collocations. Check your answers in the text.

A	B
traditional	market
well-known	manufacturer
huge	brands
hi-tech	advantage
competitive	quality
high	price
mass	growth
reasonable	machines

5 Which collocations from 4 could replace the words in bold in sentences 1–8?

- 1 There's always a **big increase** in sales in November and December.
- 2 We're an **old company that produces goods**.
- 3 Let's sell this product to the **largest number of people possible**.
- 4 This new range of computers includes **products using the latest technology**.
- 5 For most hotels, location is the main **thing which makes one hotel more popular than another competitor**.
- 6 We produce **very well-made** items.
- 7 Twenty dollars is a **fair amount to pay**.
- 8 Our shops sells **all those kinds of products that lots of people know and buy**.

6 Work in pairs. Take turns to ask and answer these questions.

- 1 What are some of your country's traditional manufacturers and well-known brands? What do they produce or provide?
- 2 How hi-tech is your area of business? Is it having huge growth at the moment?
- 3 Does your company sell to the mass market?
- 4 Do you think that your company offers high quality services or products at a reasonable price?
- 5 What is your company's main competitive advantage?

7 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use to describe your area of business.

8 Work in groups. Discuss these questions.

- 1 The article says, 'Pure Digital Technologies ... will have to find new ways to stay ahead'. Make a list of ways the company can 'stay ahead' of the competition.
- 2 Compare your list with another group.