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part, please check for some tips on page 57 in your Student Book.

Exercise One Bill Cockburn, fresh from reforming the British Post Office, is the new Chief Executive of W.H. Smith, one of the country's largest stationers. Last week, while issuing a profits warning along with the interim results, he admitted what everyone has always known, that the 200 year old W. H. Smith is unbearably smug.

“ There is, ” said Cockburn, “ a culture of complacency and a culture of explaining why we haven't done what we said we would do. ” If he gets this way, all that is about to go. “ We should welcome reform as an opportunity, not a threat. I can't understand people who are content with mediocrity and accept second best when they have the potential to be terrific. ” W.H. Smith chairman Jeremy Hardie led the search to find Corkburn. ‘ I had uniformly favorable reports from everyone who had worked with him as someone who gets things done and can also bring out the best in his staff. ’ Cockburn may have little experience of retailing in its purest sense but he is an excellent choice to lead Smith out of the cozy world of tradition and bureaucracy. He rose to power at the Post Office while it was recovering from the 1971 strike and subsequent loss of image. He did much to improve overall performance, cutting out unprofitable services and shaking up an old-fashioned management. He is well aware of the parallels between the two

businesses. ‘ The old, mature operation of W.H. Smith has a culture and working practices that go back a long time. Managing change in a young business like one of our subsidiaries is easier than managing it in Smith ’ s 549-store empire with all its tradition and resistance to new ideas. Because they have been there for such a long time, there is an exaggerated sense of prominence ’ Corkburn is famously short of sentiment when it comes to management. ‘ It is a very polite environment here. ’ he says with a mischievous smile, ‘ I want it to be more challenging, so people can disagree with each other but are united by driving the business forward. I hope I am breaking down the barriers. ’ The shares have already responded to such daring talk by jumping considerably in value since Corkburn took over the running of the company. What does Corkburn say about himself and his career? Was he ambitious from the start? ‘ People would assume I was ambitious because of the speed at which I progressed through the Post Office organization. But I did not have a view I would end up anywhere in particular. I took each job as it came and I had tremendous bosses who encouraged me. I learned from them how to take pressure and to work fast and hard. In the jobs I have aimed to create success because it ’ s good for stakeholders-customers, employees and now, in the private sector, shareholders. ’ His management style is a mixture of enthusiasm and toughness. ‘ I believe you get the best out of people by motivating them, supporting them and setting challenging objectives. It seems to me the only way to work is to be open and honest and speak your mind, ’ he says. Twenty-eight days into the job, he has

done the easy part. He has traveled around the Smith group, identified the problems and presented his first financial results. Now he has just to transform the company culture to one of one of striving for excellence. ' I ' m very optimistic, of course, ' he says. ' The basics are great. ' He seems like the light man for the job.

15. What is Corkburn's attitude towards W.H. Smith? A He disagrees with people who are frightened of change there. B He warns it will be difficult to explain results to customers. C He threatens to make some people leave. D He accepts that not everyone can be first rate.

16. Jeremy Hardie thinks Cockburn possesses the ability to A get on well with other people. B make profitable business deals. C motivate other people he works with. D choose the right people to work with.

17. What difficulty does Cockburn have to deal with at W.H. Smith? A the image the public has of the company B the comparison people make with his previous job C the competition from modern, new subsidiaries D the old, established customs in existence

18. As a result of his influence, Cockburn says he would like to see A an increase in share prices. B a better educated workforce. C a more demanding atmosphere. D a less structured organization.

19. Corkburn attributes his successful career to A the support his bosses give him. B his own personal ambition. C the help he has received from clients. D his ability to do any job given.

20. What does Corkburn say is the most important factor in successful management? A always thinking positively B not demanding too much from your staff C setting an example to your staff D saying exactly what you think

Useful Words and Expressions: Interim.

smug. complacency. be content with. prominence. sentiment. challenging. end up. tremendous. Have you ever noticed the following sentences in your reading? If not, read them through and pay attention to the bold parts.

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16. I had uniformly favorable reports from everyone who had worked with him as someone who gets things done and can also bring out the best in his staff.

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