

The Apprentice

A hit television show in the UK, *The Apprentice*, has just come to an end. The host of the show, business entrepreneur Sir Alan Sugar, says it taught the participants a lot about how to do business.

1. Approximately how long do you need to train to do the following jobs? Discuss your answers with a partner.

doctor	lawyer	teacher	secretary
	accountant	salesperson	hairdresser
manager	lorry driver	mechanic	

Apprentice /əprentis/ Noun [C] someone who is learning how to do a particular job (Macmillan Essential Dictionary)

2. Read the headings a–d. Match them with the paragraphs in the article.

- (a) Future shows (b) Winner announced (c) The prize (d) Key business lessons

“You’re ... hired!”

[1] Nearly three million television viewers in the UK have finally heard the words “You’re hired!”. They had been waiting for 12 weeks for the results of one of the toughest job interviews ever. At the end of each programme so far, they had only heard the words, “You’re fired!”, as the contestants were reduced from 12 to one. Now at last there is a winner, a 27-year-old transport manager called Tim Campbell.

[2] In the show, called *The Apprentice*, participants were given tasks such as selling flowers or designing a child’s toy. Each week, someone was eliminated, until one winner emerged. This formula of eliminating losers is like the controversial show *Big Brother*, where participants are voted out until only one remains. The prize? A £100,000-a-year job with Amstrad. Amstrad belongs to the shows host, tycoon Sir Alan Sugar. “A lot of business lessons can be learnt from the show”, Sugar maintains.

[3] What key lessons were learnt? One individual, who tried to go ahead with their idea although all the team were against them, failed. They tried to shine individually in a competitive situation. The lesson? To respect authority. One candidate was found exaggerating her CV. Never try to be someone you are not – you may well get caught out. Other lessons, such as “know your market” and “never forget about profit margins” seem rather obvious, but being able to make decisions based on these principles in the heat of the task distinguishes the winners from the losers.

[4] The programme is based on Donald Trump’s successful US show, also called *The Apprentice*, which had an audience of 20 million. The show may well spread to other countries. A second UK series is already planned. Viewers are likely to be fascinated as to who makes it through the rounds and is finally hired, not fired.

3. Read the article. Would you be interested in watching this programme? Would you like to be a contestant? Why / Why not?

4. Find words or expressions in the article that match the following definitions:

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| (a) removing someone from a competition | (paragraph 2) |
| (b) someone rich and powerful who is involved in business or industry | (paragraph 2) |
| (c) situation in which companies or teams are competing against each other | (paragraph 3) |
| (d) members of a group who have power | (paragraph 3) |
| (e) describing something in a way that makes it seem better than it really is | (paragraph 3) |
| (f) difference between the cost of providing a product, and the amount charged | (paragraph 3) |
- (Definitions from or based on Macmillan Essential Dictionary (2003) Text © Bloomsbury)

5. Consider the training you have received in your company. Discuss these questions and report back to the class.

- (a) Which is more valuable: pre-service training, in-service training or practical experience? Why?
 (b) What key lessons have you learnt in your job, which you would pass on to newcomers? Make a list of three “business tips”.