

Source: **In Business: Why are the French so productive?**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04z0y76>

I PRE-LISTENING

You're going to listen to a podcast about the French economy. Guess the answers to the questions below.

1. How do the economies of France and the UK compare ?
 - a) France is 10% more productive than the UK.
 - b) The UK is 20 % more productive than France.
 - c) The UK is 30% less productive than France.
2. Why do French manufacturers invest more in high-tech solutions (eg. complete automation of the production line)?
 - a) There's a shortage of skilled manufacturing workforce.
 - b) French workers are expensive.
 - c) Robots can work long hours beyond the statutory 35-hour week.
3. Which statement is TRUE about the French *grandes écoles* (elitist higher education establishments)?
 - a) They are full of socially awkward science nerds.
 - b) They don't prepare students for leadership roles well enough.
 - c) They produce well-rounded graduates that are flexible and adaptable.
4. Which type of businesses does France lack:
 - a) Micro enterprises
 - b) Strong medium-sized companies
 - c) Successful retailers

Check your answers as you listen to the podcast.

II VOCABUARY IN THE PODCAST

Read the sentences from the podcast and try to figure out what the expressions in **bold** mean.

1. And like the workers, the directors need **to be on top of their game** to keep a fast-running production line going. [10:50]
2. As he explains to me how **tightly he runs his ship***, (...) it's clear here is one of the killer elites of the business world. [11:17]
3. We duck into one of the labs off the main corridor where (...) dr Batrand David is undertaking **cutting-edge research**. [12:41]
4. It's easy to see what France is doing right, and on top of all that, Philippe Askenazy says France's geography **keeps it on its toes**. [16:06]
5. *Legal Start* is a start-up business that helps other French companies... start up with a website that helps them deal with **red tape**, form filling and legal problems – all for one, simple fee. [18 :43]
6. Timothé is a young entrepreneur, a former **high-flyer** at Goldman Sachs and of course, yet another graduate of an engineering grand école. [19:21]

*to run a tight ship

III GRAMMAR IN THE PODCAST – CONDITIONALS 1 & 2

Read the following sentences and answer the questions below.

1. [*Legal Start*] has a problem itself that can't be solved online – if it continues to grow, it will soon have 50 members of staff, and that is a real problem.
2. [The Chancellor of the Exchequer:] "Did you know that our national productivity is lower than that of France and Italy ? If we raised our productivity by just 1% every year, within a decade we would add £250 bn to the size of our economy."

All the questions refer to the underlined sentences only.

- Which sentence talks about a hypothetical situation or imaginary situation?
- Which sentence suggests that the speaker believes this will actually happen?
- What structures follow the *if* clause in each sentence ? What structures can you see in the result clause in each case?

Your choice of the conditional will always depend on how likely the condition is.