

1

A Factory Tour

Unit

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, Ss should be able to:

- comprehend basic vocabulary and sentence patterns related to a factory tour;
- identify and understand the basic elements of a factory tour;
- understand the importance of a factory tour in business.

Business Profile

Supplier Assessment Programme—A Factory Tour

Selecting the right suppliers is one of the most important conditions for successful sourcing. Supplier assessment enables you to evaluate manufacturers' capabilities, to ensure compliance to regulations and to get products in line with the contracted quality and quantity within a specified time frame. How do you evaluate the suppliers effectively? You can make a factory tour to assess their quality, service and technology. In fact, a factory tour is one of the most important parts of the assessment of a potential supplier. During or before the factory tour, you should be able to do financial and cost reviews. During the tour you will want to see the working environment, product development and the quality control and manufacturing systems. You can evaluate a supplier in the following ways:

Financial review

Ask the supplier to provide the following materials:

- The last two fiscal years' income statements and two years' balance sheets. (Ask for an explanation of any unusual trends or relationships.)
- The final audit report of any independent accounting firms (if available, from the last three years).
- An analysis of aging of accounts payable and accounts receivable for the past three years. This information may be provided in summary, stating the dollar amount

and percent outstanding for under 30 days, 30 to 60 days, and over 90 days. (Discuss any unusual trends or relationships, and ask for an explanation of any write-offs for bad debt.)

- Detailed capital equipment expenditure plans for the next three years, including plans for any facilities.

Cost review

Ask the supplier to answer the following questions:

- Do you have any long-term agreements with other suppliers or customers? Do any of these contracts/agreements have built-in price adjustments?
- Do you have any programmes/incentives in place to deliver cost reductions? If so, explain. If not, why? Can you provide two examples of implemented ideas which have resulted in lower costs to your organisation? Were any of these savings passed on to your customers?
- Do you use cost-based or market-based pricing? Could you please explain your reasoning for selecting your method?
- Compared to your competition, how would you rate your company on pricing competitiveness, quality, and delivery? How would your customers rate you?
- Do you currently share cost information (raw materials, labour, manufacturing overheads, profit, etc.) with a customer? Would you be willing to share this during the quotation process?

Working environment

Ask the supplier to answer the following questions:

- How extensive are your employee training and education plans?
- Do employees receive incentives, bonuses, or profit-sharing? If so, what are they based on?
- Can you explain your housekeeping and workplace guidelines?
- Can you explain how you evaluate your employees' performance?

Product development

Ask the supplier to answer these questions and provide any related materials:

- Do you currently use CAD (Computer-Aided Design) for product design? Tooling design? If yes, detail the type of equipment, software packages and data transmission requirements. If no, give reasons or future purchase plans.
- Please detail all measures which will be taken to ensure a successful transition to manufacturing upon completion of the prototype phase.
- Can you explain the planning process used to validate a new product design and/or manufacturing process?

Quality control and manufacturing systems

Ask the supplier to answer the following questions and provide any related materials:

- Describe how you organise quality control.
- Describe the system for controlling documentation of drawings, specifications, data, etc.

- Describe how suppliers are chosen.
- Do you measure supplier performance? And if so, how?
- Please explain the system for controlling the supply of raw materials.
- Describe your inspection and testing systems for incoming purchased materials, in-process and finished goods.
- Do you have a certified lab? If so, please provide a copy of accreditation certification.
- Detail your gauge control and calibration.
- What is your system for identifying and isolating of internal/external nonconforming products?
- What machinery maintenance procedures are in place? How regularly are they implemented?
- Describe how you deal with malfunctions or breakdown in production.
- Explain your internal quality audit system.
- Do you have a continuous improvement programme within your facility?

After the factory tour, you should be able to come to a conclusion about the supplier. The conclusion may be:

- The factory will not be considered as a supplier at this time.
- The factory will be considered as a potential supplier after they improve the conditions that are currently unsatisfactory.
- The factory is considered a suitable supplier.

Language Expansion

Factory tour (I)

Expressing requests to visit a factory

We'd very much like to have a tour of your factory.

I'm eager to visit your company.

I hope to visit your factory next month.

I would be happy to come to see your newest facilities.

When could I visit your factory? The sooner the better!

Safety measures for factory tours

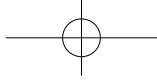
I'm afraid you'll have to wear an overall. It's a hygiene requirement.

Please follow the arrow. This will take you safely to the assembly line.

Watch your step, please.

You need this for security.

It's very important not to touch the machinery.



Expressing further requests during a factory tour

If it is not too much trouble, we would like to talk to your plant manager.

I hope to meet your general manager.

Would you mind arranging for me to meet the director of your Delivery Department?

I wonder whether I could talk to your workers?

Could I visit your product-design centre?

Factory tour (II)

Asking for impressions

What do you think of our factory?

What's your general impression?

Having had the tour, what's your opinion?

Did you like the factory tour? I hope you enjoyed it.

I wonder if you enjoyed visiting our factory.

Expressing gratitude for the tour's arrangements

Thank you. I'll keep in mind everything you have told me.

I really appreciate you helping me during my tour.

Thank you for helping me learn about the new technology in wine making.

Thank you for your kindness during the tour.

I'm truly grateful for your help during the tour.

All the arrangements for the tour are greatly appreciated. Thank you very much.

Expressing apologies

I hope the noise isn't annoying you.

We are running a little short of time, so perhaps we should move on now.

I'm sorry, I'm not familiar with that part. I'll ask our engineer to explain it to you.

I hope you don't mind having Chinese food for lunch.

If you have any problems with the tour, please tell us.

Scripts & Key

Part I Warm-up

Key:

1) eat 2) tour 3) taste 4) enjoy 5) make 6) closed 7) shop

Part II Listening Practice

Task 1

Script:

- (1) I hope the noise isn't bothering you?
It's no bother!
- (2) Why don't we start at the workshop?
Sure. I'll follow you.
- (3) What did you think of our factory?
Very big and modern.
- (4) What's your overall impression?
I'm very favourably impressed.
- (5) How big is your factory?
The multiplex of 9 buildings totals 767,708 square feet of floor area.
- (6) What is your market share?
45%.
- (7) How many workers are there in your factory?
At present, there are 2,000 workers at the plant.
- (8) Well, shall we have a break? You must be tired, having seen all of our plants all at once.
Not really. But there is a lot to take in. Let's have a break!
- (9) Are all the products available now?
Of course. We have good stock levels.
- (10) Is there anything else you'd like to see?
I'd like to visit your research department.

Key:

(1) f (2) e (3) g (4) j (5) c (6) h (7) b (8) a (9) d (10) i

Task 2

1

Script:

Boeing is one of the world's leading aerospace companies, with its heritage mirroring the history of flight. It is the largest manufacturer of commercial jetliners, satellites and space flight and launch services. The Boeing Everett Factory tours are conducted to showcase the Boeing and Everett production lines, featuring the 747, 767, 777 and 787. On the production line, visitors will see airplanes in various stages of manufacture. Afterwards, they will also be able to watch a flight test. As Boeing is also a leading producer of military aircraft, helicopters, space vehicles and missiles, visitors will also have a chance to see advanced fighter planes such as the F-15 and F/A-18. On the tour, visitors will tour the largest building by volume in the world.

During this tour, we believe visitors from every region of the globe will realise that they have witnessed the work of the number one aerospace leader in the world: Boeing Everett.

Key:

- | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1) aerospace | 2) manufacturer | 3) services | 4) showcase | 5) production |
| 6) various | 7) producer | 8) advanced | 9) globe | 10) leader |

2

Script:

Richard: Good morning. Welcome to our company.

Thomas: Good morning. Thank you for your reception.

Richard: I'm Richard Black, the Sales Manager.

Thomas: Nice to meet you, Richard. I'm Thomas Brown, the Purchasing Manager from ATC.

Richard: How was your journey?

Thomas: Not too bad. Thank you. Er... Let's turn to business. Could you tell me how large the plant is?

Richard: It covers an area of 25,000 square metres.

Thomas: When was the plant set up?

Richard: In the early 1960s.

Thomas: What are your newest products?

Richard: Here are some brochures about our products. Please look on Page 13; all the new products are listed there.

Thomas: These products are pretty good. Could you briefly tell me about your production methods?

Richard: Of course. I can show you our production systems on video.

Thomas: OK. But if you don't mind, I prefer seeing the factory for myself.

Richard: That's fine. I was hoping you would. If you have enough time, we'll be pleased to give you a tour.

6

Thomas: That's very kind of you. I've been looking forward to seeing your factory.

Richard: When can we arrange the tour? What time would be convenient for you?

Thomas: I'm free tomorrow. There's nothing like seeing products being produced firsthand.

Richard: That's for sure. You'll know all about them after the tour.

Thomas: I hope to learn a lot from this visit.

Key: (1) F (2) F (3) F (4) T (5) F

Part III Language Focus A

Follow-up Practice

1

Script:

Richard: Thank you for coming today, Thomas. We can start any time you're ready.

Thomas: Hello, Richard. I'm all set.

Richard: You said yesterday that you wanted to see the production line. The tour will last about an hour.

Thomas: No problem.

Richard: First, you'll have to put on this helmet, I'm afraid.

Thomas: OK. But, this one seems a little small.

Richard: Please try this one.

Thomas: That's much better.

Richard: Well, this is our production shop. We will start with the assembly line.

Thomas: That's fine. I'll just follow you.

Richard: Please stop me if you have any questions.

Thomas: OK. I'd like to know if the assembly line is fully automated.

Richard: No, it is half-automated.

Thomas: What's the monthly output?

Richard: 5,000 units per month. But we'll be making 6,000 units at the beginning of November.

Thomas: That's wonderful. What's your usual percentage of rejects?

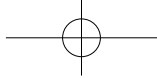
Richard: Only 1% in normal operations.

Thomas: It's amazing. How do you control the quality?

Richard: All products go through three checks during the whole manufacturing process.

Thomas: How do you do that?

Richard: First, our workers will confirm the quality of each part according to the regulations at every point in the process. We also have computer-controlled equipment to test the quality of the semi-finished product and of the final product as well. Lastly, we send some products to our public quality-control centre for checking.



Thomas: Wonderful. One more question: Is every part of the process, from the first stages to the finished product, carried out at this plant?

Richard: Absolutely. That keeps us competitive in the tough international market.

Thomas: Is that where the finished products come off?

Richard: Yes.

Key: (1) c (2) b (3) c (4) a (5) a

2

Key:

(1) 6,000 units.

(2) Only 1%.

(3) First, they will confirm the quality of each part according to the regulations at every point in the process. Also, they have computer-controlled equipment to test the quality of the semi-finished product and of the final product. Lastly, they send some products to the public quality-control centre for checking.

Part IV Video 1

Pre-viewing

1

Teaching tips:

- Show the logos and the names of the automobile companies on PPT slides.
- Let Ss match the logos with the names of the automobile companies.

Key:

(1) These are car logos.

(2) Open.

Viewing

Script:

Ford Rouge Factory tour

Welcome to our Ford Rouge Factory tour.

First, let me give you a brief introduction of Ford. Ford Motor manufactures and distributes automobiles in 200 markets across six continents. With about 300,000 employees and 108 plants worldwide, the company has core and affiliated automotive brands.

The Ford Rouge Factory is located in the south of Detroit at the meeting of the Rouge and Detroit Rivers. The original Rouge complex is a mile and a half wide and more than

a mile long. The multiplex of 93 buildings totals 15,767,708 square feet of floor area. Buildings include plants for tire-making, stamping, engine casting, frame and assembly. A massive power plant produces enough electricity to light a city the size of nearby Detroit, and a soybean conversion plant turns soybeans into plastic auto parts.

Our factory tour has four parts:

First, you will take the Historic Driving Tour. Buses will transport you for a narrated tour past famous landmarks and behind the scenes of this massive manufacturing complex. It will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Second is the Rare Historic Footage Viewing. Here you will see a short film of rare, never-before-seen historic footage. You will learn about the triumphs and tragedies surrounding the Rouge. It takes 13 minutes.

Third is the Virtual Reality Experience. A virtual reality theatre will provide you with a 360-degree look at how automobiles are made! The approximate time for this is 15 minutes.

Finally, we come to the Assembly Plant Walking Tour. You will tour the factory and see where the new Ford F-150s are assembled in the new, lean and flexible manufacturing plant. Visitors will have the opportunity to view the final assembly process from an elevated walkway. The tour takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

Key:

1

- (1) 200 markets across six continents (2) About 300,000 (3) 108
(4) 8 (5) 93

2

- (1) 20 to 30 (2) 13 (3) 15 (4) 30 to 45

Post-viewing

Teaching tips:

- Have Ss role-play a scene by asking and answering the questions.
- Ask one or two group representatives to role-play in class.
- Give comments and help Ss to complete the answers.

Key:

- (1) Famous landmarks and the massive manufacturing complex.
(2) The triumphs and tragedies surrounding the Rouge.
(3) How automobiles are made.
(4) The new, lean and flexible manufacturing plant where the new Ford F-150s are assembled.

Part V Language Focus B

Follow-up Practice

1

Script:

Richard: That's the end of the factory tour, Thomas.

Thomas: It's very kind of you, Richard. Thank you. The tour of the production shop has given me a very good idea of your production process.

Richard: My pleasure! What's your general impression, Thomas?

Thomas: Very impressive. I especially enjoyed the speed of your assembly line. It gives you an edge over your competitors.

Richard: It does. No one can match us where high performance production speed is concerned, and you know, we owe that to our engineers and technicians. They designed and built the assembly line and succeeded in making it operational within six months.

Thomas: How much do you spend on new product development every year?

Richard: About 8% to 10% of the gross sales.

Thomas: That's a lot of money. Terrific! If I placed an order right now, how long would it be before I got delivery?

Richard: It would largely depend on the size of the order and the items you want.

Thomas: Yes. What's that building opposite us?

Richard: That's the warehouse. We keep a stock of the faster moving items so that urgent orders can be met quickly.

Thomas: Could you give me some brochures on your products? I'd like to let my manager know more about your production; and if possible, maybe he could also visit the plant someday.

Richard: OK. Here's our sales catalogue and some literature. Just let me know if you want to bring anyone else for a tour.

Thomas: Thank you very much.

Key: (1) c (2) b (3) c (4) c (5) b

2

Sample:

Thomas and Richard had a factory tour. Thomas was very impressed by the speed of the assembly line of the factory. Richard said that the high-speed assembly line was designed and made by their engineers and technicians. Then Thomas wondered how much the factory spent on new product development every year and how soon the order would be delivered. Richard told him that 8% to 10% of the gross sales was spent on new product development. He also said that delivery of new products depended on the size of the order and the items. Finally, Thomas asked Richard to give him some brochures on the products because he wanted his manager to know about them. Richard also said that Thomas's manager would be welcome to visit the factory.

Part VI Video 2

Pre-viewing

1

Teaching tips:

- Show some pictures of instant food to help Ss figure out more examples.

Reference answers:

instant jelly	即食凉粉
instant milk powder	速溶奶粉
instant noodle and soup stock	带汤料方便面
instant rice	速煮米
instant skimmed milk	速溶脱脂乳
instant snack	快餐
instant soup	速溶汤粉
instant tea	速溶茶

Reasons for likes or dislikes of instant food:

- Yes. I like instant food because it is convenient and cheap. Instant food can help me not only to save a lot of time when I'm busy, but also to save a lot of money when I travel by train where the food is terribly expensive. In short, speed, convenience and low price are the reasons I choose instant food.
- No. I don't like instant food because it is bad for health. Many magazines tell us how damaging fast food is to the body. For example, we will become fat yet lack basic nutrition if we eat too much instant food.

Viewing

Script:

Victory Instant Noodle Factory tour

Hello! Everyone, I'm Lily Wu. Welcome to our factory and to the virtual Victory Instant Noodle Factory tour. I will be your guide for the tour.

First, I want to give you a brief history of the manufacturing process of instant noodles.

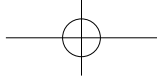
The first instant noodles were made in Japan in 1958. Today noodles are known around the globe. All over the world, every year, they are consumed at about 80 billion meals.

Do you know how instant noodles are made? For such a simple-looking product, the manufacturing process is actually quite complex. Here we reveal the secrets of how instant noodles are made. All the facts are waiting for you on this virtual instant noodle factory tour.

Please look at the PowerPoint slides.

First, flour is transported by truck from storage silos.

The flour is mixed and kneaded in a mixing machine to produce noodle dough.



The dough is passed through a pair of rollers to roll it into sheets.

The sheets are cut into fine strands.

Pre-steaming gelatinises the noodles for easier digestion.

The noodles are separated into meal-sized blocks which are shaped into moulds.

Noodles are first cooked in oil and then dried for easy storage and quick preparation by the consumer.

The end! Packages of noodles are packed in boxes for shipping.

That is the process required to produce instant noodles!

Now let's go to the production shop.

Key:

1

d → g → e → a → c → h → b → f

2

1) history 2) first 3) consumed 4) manufacturing 5) secrets

Post-viewing

Teaching tips:

- Divide the class into pairs and ask Ss to allocate the roles.
- Encourage Ss to refer to the expressions in the video when role-playing the dialogue.
- Walk around the classroom to monitor Ss' performance.
- Ask two pairs of Ss to present their dialogues in class.
- Give comments and suggestions for improvement.

Sample:

A: Could I visit your factory some time?

B: Of course you can. I can set up a tour next week.

A: I'm free next Monday.

B: OK. I'll wait for you in front of the factory gate at 9 a.m. Is the time suitable for you?

A: Yeah. I'd like to see the production shop and the new technology development centre.
Could I?

B: Sure you can visit them.

A: I'd also like to meet your General Manager.

B: No problem, I will arrange for it.

A: Thank you very much.

B: It's my pleasure.

Text Bank

Factory Tour Policy

We often receive requests for a factory tour. We fully understand your curiosity in seeing how we build a house and as such have endeavoured to give you as much information as possible, including photos, on our website.

A modular home employs the same basic materials and construction methods of any good quality on-site builder; in fact our definition of a modular home is “it is a stick built home, constructed in a factory under ideal conditions, structurally engineered to be built in sections (modules) which can be transported to your site”. Its purpose is simply to give you:

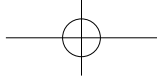
- a better than site-built product,
- a more economical product,
- a shorter period of construction,
- a far lower risk of cost overruns, which banks favour highly,
- less on-site work to perform, hence a more dependable and cost-effective construction.

Frankly, there is no major mystery to modular construction any more. It has been around for over 50 years. There are good, better, best manufacturers just like good, better, best on-site (stick) builders. How will you decide in whom to place your trust? At the risk of seeming to blow our own horn and of alienating you, we shall endeavour to tell you the truth.

- A factory tour will not help you make any decisions since every factory will tell you they are the best.
- It is difficult enough to figure out what is being done in a factory that builds houses in sections; never mind trying to accurately conclude which factory is producing a better product.
- As a one-time buyer, you simply do not have the expertise to differentiate between factories.
- What you typically see being built in the factory is someone else’s house, which may not impress you and may in fact “turn you off”.
- In the typical time between your initial enquiry and final delivery of your home, the factory may undergo major management changes, get sold or even go out of business.
- What in fact are you trying to see at a factory other than satisfying your curiosity?

Now let us provide you with some meaningful information and state our policy regarding plant visits:

- We have been in the Modular Business since 1975, much longer than most current manufacturers.



- We have engaged in all phases of the business including full on-site construction and management of individual homes and projects.
- As a result of our experience we are able to counsel and guide you on most facets of construction, not just the modular.
- Our reputation is one we are proud of and we suggest you check us out with the proper agencies. No, we do not give references because we respect the privacy of our customers and will not open them up to thousands of enquiries and calls. Our reputation speaks loud and clear.
- We have a website that is second to none and are proud to share with you free information for which others charge substantial fees.
- We cover an area larger than any other modular sales office in America.
- We are able to coordinate specialty needs including your total financing and crane and set needs, over our marketing area.
- We sell directly to builders, developers, government agencies and commercial clients and of course private home owners.
- Because of our size we have developed the Hallmark Series Home and have several factories that produce our product. Which factory is used will be based on several factors, such as the location of your project, project scheduling and the degree of complexity of your home.
- It is OUR job to ensure that we employ the best possible source for each project and we have successfully done so since 1975.
- We receive thousands of enquiries every year. As such if we were to indulge every person that wanted a factory tour, we would need a substantial staff and tour buses. As an example, when you buy a car, do you ask the dealer to arrange a tour to Detroit to visit the factory?
- We will consider a factory tour once certain conditions have been met:
 - You have been fully guaranteed by a bank,
 - You have made a plan selection and know what you want to build,
 - You have made a commitment (paid a deposit) toward developing plans or buying a house.

You may now ask—what if after visiting your factory, I do not like your product? If you are first of all qualified enough to distinguish between the various products and methods of construction available to you and now desire to take a factory tour prior to ordering your home and after having taken a factory tour can be specific as to why you feel we are not qualified to build your house, we will refund your deposit.

We do not believe that we can be more accommodating and fair than this. Usually by the time we get to this stage you will have a better understanding of the product, the service we provide and thus have developed confidence in us as your modular representative and supplier.

Discussion:

1. Why does the company make such a policy?
2. If you were a boss in a factory, would you initiate a similar policy?
3. If you were a potential buyer, would you accept such a policy?