

Listen to an interview that forms part of a radio series entitled *Fomenting Innovation* where a Google employee talks about her working environment.

**Optional activity:**

While you listen, complete the sentences with the best choice.

1. Google came into existence...
    - a. twenty years ago
    - b. in 1998
    - c. because of a suggestion in a magazine
    - d. when new technology made it possible
  2. Its new headquarters in Zurich have...
    - a. aquariums for cold water fish
    - b. a revolving restaurant
    - c. specially designed meeting rooms
    - d. 5-star hotel rooms
  3. Kate says that what she likes best about the building is that...
    - a. there are places where you can sit quietly
    - b. you can have a massage there
    - c. you can take the slide down to the restaurant
    - d. meetings are held in igloos
  4. People criticise Google for...
    - a. spending so much money on its buildings
    - b. giving its employees tough deadlines
    - c. giving its employees too much time off
    - d. not being a serious company
  5. Kate likes waking up in the morning because...
    - a. she can lie in before going to work
    - b. she chats with people on her way to work
    - c. she has a lot of respect for the people she works with
    - d. the company pays her so well
  6. Google Suggest...
    - a. was designed by a competitor to Google
    - b. translates text from one language to another
    - c. was a project that Kate worked on in Google
    - d. makes suggestions about the topic you are searching for
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P = Radio presenter; K = Kate Southerly

I: It's hard to believe, sometimes, that Google has been with us for only a decade. In a mere ten years it's become a byword for innovation and top of the list of the hundred best places to work, according to *Fortune Magazine*. So, in today's programme we're going to talk to Kate Southerly, an engineer who works at Google's new headquarters in Zurich – a pretty special building that was designed for - and partly by - the 300 people who work there.

Hi, Kate, welcome to the programme.

K: Thanks, Dave, for inviting me.

P: I've seen some photos taken inside your offices in Zurich and I must say, it looks a pretty amazing place: slides taking you down to the restaurant, Swiss chalets and igloos for meetings, fireman poles connecting different floors and a chill-out aquarium with massage chairs. So, really, what's it like to work there?

K: Well you're right, it is pretty cool. Maybe going down a slide isn't the most dignified way to enter a restaurant but it's a lot of fun.

P: But tell me, why has Google spent so much money on what, after all, is just an office, a place to work in, not a 5-star hotel.

K: I think the idea is to bring out the best in you, that everybody can find their own space, a place to be creative in. My favourite thing about the building is that it's full of mini environments. If you feel that you really need to get away and go and sit quiet somewhere to think something through, there's all sorts of little areas where you can do that.

P: Some of Google's detractors say that the offices are designed to be such great places to spend time in because its employees never leave them – they work such long hours and have such stressing deadlines.

K: Well, yeah, there might be some truth in that! But seriously, I really value the company of the people I work with and pretty well always look forward to going to work in the morning. I wake up knowing that at some point in the day I'm going to get into a great conversation with someone and, chances are, get to know someone who's far smarter than me!

P: I'd like to know what you think of Google's Innovation Time Off scheme: where you engineers can spend 20% of your time working on your own projects.

K: Well, I think the results speak for themselves. Loads of additions to Google have been created during Time Off. My personal favourite is Google Suggest, and it's something we all now take for granted, you know, that when you type in a word in a Google search you automatically get suggestions of what you're looking for. Well that was originally someone's personal project.

P: So I don't suppose you'll be in a hurry to move on.

K: No, I guess not. There's a lot of competition to get into Google, people from all over the world applied to work at the Zurich headquarters. So I plan to stay here for quite a bit longer and make the most of it.

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**Answer key: 1.b; 2.c; 3.a; 4.b; 5.c; 6. d.**