

**Listen to an automobile expert being interviewed on radio.**

**Optional activity:**

While you listen, decide whether the following sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True or false?
1. Both speakers think many cars now have a similar appearance.	
2. Lee says cars look the same because companies are copying each other.	
3. Four major car manufacturers have about half the worldwide car market.	
4. Ferrari are an independent company.	
5. Morgan are an independent company.	
6. Morgan's design mixes classic and contemporary.	
7. Morgan cars are made from wood.	
8. The Life car uses a special type of battery.	
9. Morgan cars cost £200 000.	
10. Lee claims more car companies will be like Morgan in the future.	

A : Radio presenter

B: Lee Smith

A: Hello there! I'm talking to Lee Smith, an automobile sector specialist. Lee, I'm not an expert, but it often seems to me that cars now are becoming more standardised...

B: How do you mean?

A: Well, basically, if I look at the traffic passing me as I drive to work each morning...well, all the cars look the same!

(laugh)

B: Sure – you're not entirely wrong. Developments in technology – and fuel efficiency is a major factor here – mean that in some ways a standard design is inevitable...

A: Companies are all finding the best way to design a car...

B: Exactly – at least, a car that the market wants right now.

A: But you're here to tell us about an exception.

B: Yeah. The other factor in this "standardisation" – as you call it – is that quite simply – even though there are still a lot of brand names on cars – there are actually very few automobile manufacturers left...

A: Really?

B: Yeah - Toyota, General Motors, Ford and Volkswagen have around 50% of the global market. Even classic British names such as Rolls Royce and Aston Martin are owned by multinationals - BMW and Ford, respectively. But there is at least one British company who remain proudly independent...

A: And who's that?

B: They're called Morgan.

A: And what's so different about them?

B: Well, they're a historic company, founded as long ago as 1913, and they've always concentrated exclusively on sports cars...

A: Like, say, Ferrari?

B: No – because Ferrari are part of Fiat – one of the other major manufacturers!

A: Oh! (laugh)

B: Morgan have never tried to go commercial on a big scale.

A: Is that viable, though? How can they compete against such giants?

B: By doing what they do best – and not changing in a changing world.

A: They're still making the same cars they made in 1913?

B: Well, no – of course not – but the style of the cars has remained strikingly constant.

A: They are very unusual looking, aren't they? Especially these new models...

B: Yeah - the Aero Max and Life cars. They have a design which is both traditional and very modern...

A: Yeah – they look quite futuristic, actually...

B: Exactly – and that's only the outside! The Life car for example...

A: Why's it called "Life"?

B: "Life" stands for "lightweight fuel efficient"...

A: Ok, but surely all cars today claim to be light and fuel efficient...

B: They do – but none of them like this one.

A: How come?  
B: Well, like all Morgan cars, the frame is made of wood.  
A: Wood?  
B: Yes – not only is it light weight, the company claim that it is also safer...  
A: Safer?  
B: Yes.  
A: So why don't more companies make wood-frame cars?  
B: One simple reason – it's not cheap!  
A: Ok, I see...  
B: Added to that, the Life car uses a fuel cell.  
A: Is that a kind of battery?  
B: Yes – kind of, but it allows for better performance.  
A: Interesting. Why aren't these cars everywhere, then?  
B: Well – as I already mentioned, they're not cheap – a basic model will cost you around £30 000, while top of the range models can cost up to £200 000.  
A: Phew!  
B: And that's not all – there's a one year waiting list for these cars.  
A: Why so long?  
B: They're all entirely hand built.  
A: Wow!  
B: Yeah – the company have ignored advice from consultants and experts, and continue to produce their cars the way they want.  
A: Very brave...  
B: ...and very successful, apparently.  
A: Would you say, then, that Morgan is an exception, or the way forward?  
B: That's a difficult question to answer – there's no way Ford are going to restructure themselves along those lines!  
A: A year before you can buy a Mondeo!  
B: No way! (laugh), but for a niche market, Morgan are a company to watch.  
A: Lee, thanks.  
B: Thank you.

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**Answer key: 1T; 2F; 3T; 4F; 5T; 6T; 7F; 8T; 9F; 10F.**