Business Listening, lesson 3

**For these questions, choose the correct answer. You have 45 seconds to read the questions. You will hear the recording twice.**

**F**: I’ve got with me Don Demolina, the founder of Taste, the phenomenally successful sandwich bar chain, which has been voted the food industry’s most successful franchise of the year for the fifth year running. Congratulations Don.

**M**: Thanks very much.

**F:** I’d like to talk about your international success as our listeners might not be so familiar with the extent of your operations abroad …

**M**: Sure.

**F**: Taste’s oldest international outlet isn’t where you might expect …

**M**: Yes. Well. Hong Kong does predate Canada as our first market outside of the United States. It just so happened that the first person who showed an interest in becoming an international franchisee was, strangely enough, an Italian gentleman who had contacts in Asia. Our attitude then was, “If you like Taste, and you think it would work, then we’ll teach you the concept and how it works and you go make it work.” Things are a little more structured now.

**F**: How do you decide which countries to target for expansion?

**M**: We have to look at a number of things. In some new markets only a certain percentage of the population may be interested in our product. So we have to look at population and demographics. In some established markets there’s no room for growth so we’ve decided to really focus on the ten markets that are growing quickly and have the biggest potential for expansion.

**F**: How do you explain your recent worldwide expansion?

**M:** One thing we’ve been able to develop, in partnership with our franchisees, of course, is opening non-traditional outlets away from main streets and the shopping mall. Not just in gas stations, which have been our biggest success in the US, but in large organisations such as colleges, hospitals, stadiums … . Plus airport lounges. They’ve all worked really well.

**F**: Why do you think Taste has been voted franchiser of the year? Is it your global strength?

**M**: Our size undoubtedly gives us a high profile but I believe the key to Taste’s ongoing success in such diverse markets is its menu – in fact, many franchisees join the network not just because they see a good business opportunity but also because of their belief and commitment to offering a healthier alternative to traditionally fatty fast foods.

**F:** It must be difficult to maintain standards over such huge distances?

**M**: Well, that’s where a franchise system has so many advantages. The franchisees are our partners – not our employees – so checking up on them isn’t necessary in the same way that it would be in a different business model. We have different groups of franchisees who are responsible for making sure the Taste experience is the same in every country. They meet regularly to discuss the direction of the company and to ensure staff have the training they need.

**F**: What is it about the Taste franchise model that makes it so successful?

**M**: Basically, our aim is to keep the investment low and the operation simple, and make it appealing to a lot of people who couldn’t get into business before. We’re very proud of the fact that a high percentage of Taste franchisees become multi-unit owners. We encourage them to do this by reducing the franchise fee they pay and providing financing programmes for owners to open more outlets.

**F**: Well that’s … fade)