UNIT 7A · BUSINESS C1

By 2030 we will have shipped

Class Book and Workbook · one complete unit

OBJECTIVES

What you'll be able to do

4 min

- • Write the paragraph a CTO defends at a December board — completed releases in the future perfect, shape of the team in the future continuous.
- • Diagnose a present-continuous roadmap and rewrite it, sentence by sentence, into a defensible three-year commitment.
- • Distinguish a ship-date over-promise from a shape-of-team commitment — and know which tense carries which.
- • Read a competitor's public roadmap and price the tense they wrote it in.

LEAD-IN

The paragraph you would defend to the board in three years' time

8 min

FRAME · THE CTO'S DESK, NIGHT BEFORE THE BOARD

On your own, in writing, answer the following:

- • Write three sentences, in the future perfect, that you would want to be able to say about your company at the end of 2030 (what it will have shipped / compressed / re-shaped).
- • Now write two sentences, in the future continuous, about the shape of the team defending the company at that date (will be working on / defending / selling).
- • Look back at your last three quarterly updates. Underline every 'we are working on' and 'we are exploring'. Which one, honestly, has been in the present continuous for more than three quarters?
- • Which member of your board would, on hearing the present-continuous version, silently reprice your budget? What future-perfect sentence would have prevented that?

Bring the five sentences to the next class. Your teacher will collect the boldest and the most cautious versions and put them side by side.

READING

The paragraph a CTO will have to write before Christmas

15 min

There is a paragraph a Chief Technology Officer writes, on average, once a year — the paragraph that answers the question a board asks in one form or another every strategy day: what will, in fact, be in the market three years from now? The paragraph is short. It is judged by whether the tenses in it do the work that the numbers underneath are supposed to do.

The junior version of the paragraph is written in the present. 'We are working on three platform bets. We are investing in a next-generation stack. We are considering a partnership with a foundational-model provider.' The paragraph is truthful and, in the room, invisible. A board that has heard the present-continuous three years running has, in effect, been told that the company is still deciding. A company that is still deciding is, in the mind of an activist shareholder, a company that has already lost the horizon.

The senior version of the paragraph is written in the future perfect. By the end of 2030, the team will have shipped four platform releases into full production, will have compressed time-to-market from

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

22 months to under 9, and will have re-shaped the R&D pipeline around the two H3 bets that today absorb 14% of the budget. Notice what the future perfect does. It puts the board inside the year in which the promise has already been kept, and it forces the writer to defend a completed action rather than an intention. A writer who cannot, on demand, write the future perfect for their own roadmap is a writer whose roadmap is still, in candid moments, an ambition.

The paired discipline is the future continuous, used for the state of the team, not for the completion of the ship. By 2030 our engineers will be working on the next platform, not on patching this one; our commercial teams will be defending a second-generation product in a market that, when we started, did not exist. The future continuous protects the writer from the accusation of over-promising a specific ship date on a bet whose exact quarter is unknowable. It nevertheless commits to the shape of the company that will be selling and defending. Boards who read only the future perfect suspect the writer of naming a ship date they cannot hold; boards who read only the future continuous suspect the writer of drifting. The two together compose the paragraph.

The uncomfortable corollary is that a CTO who reaches for the present continuous under pressure is a CTO whose roadmap will be read as a wish. Over three board cycles the reading compounds — into a reduced R&D budget, a compressed remit, and the quiet arrival of a competitor whose CTO has, in the same year, written the paragraph in the future perfect.

Choose the best answer.

- The writer's central claim about the future perfect in the CTO's paragraph is that it:
  - (a) sounds impressive
  - (b) puts the board inside the year in which the promise has been kept, forcing the writer to defend a completed action rather than an intention
  - (c) hedges the ship date
  - (d) is the house style

  Answer key: (b) puts the board inside the year in which the promise has been kept, forcing the writer to defend a completed action rather than an intention
- The 'present continuous' version of the roadmap paragraph fails because it signals to the board that:
  - (a) the writer is overwhelmed
  - (b) the company is still deciding — and, three years in, a company still deciding has lost the horizon
  - (c) the budget is too small
  - (d) the strategy is complex

  Answer key: (b) the company is still deciding — and, three years in, a company still deciding has lost the horizon
- The future continuous is used, in the senior paragraph, for:
  - (a) the ship date
  - (b) the state of the team that will be selling and defending, not for the completed release
  - (c) the P&L
  - (d) the customer count

  Answer key: (b) the state of the team that will be selling and defending, not for the completed release
- A board that reads only the future perfect, without the future continuous, tends to suspect the writer of:
  - (a) over-hedging
  - (b) naming a ship date they cannot hold
  - (c) under-investing
  - (d) excessive caution

  Answer key: (b) naming a ship date they cannot hold

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- The three-cycle compounding cost, for a CTO who defaults to the present continuous, is:
  (a) staff turnover
  (b) a reduced R&D budget, a compressed remit, and the arrival of a competitor whose CTO wrote in the future perfect
  (c) regulatory scrutiny
  (d) customer churn
  Answer key: (b) a reduced R&D budget, a compressed remit, and the arrival of a competitor whose CTO wrote in the future perfect

Teacher notes

Follow-up: Ask the student which single future-perfect sentence in the text they would pin above the R&D team's writing room. Why that one?

AUTHENTIC READING · REAL TEXT

Clayton Christensen (in memoriam) on the paragraph the disruptor's CEO writes about you before you notice

Source: Adapted from Clayton Christensen, 'The Innovator's Dilemma' and later HBR essays on disruption theory · Excerpted for classroom use under fair-dealing for educational commentary.

C1+

≈ 460 words

The late Clayton Christensen — whose theory of disruption is more often invoked than read — on the specific paragraph, tense included, that a disruptive entrant's CEO writes about the incumbent long before the incumbent's board notices there is a problem. Read this adapted synthesis and answer the questions.

There is a paragraph, written in a small office by the CEO of a company you have not yet heard of, that decides the shape of your next five years. The paragraph does not name you. It describes the customer you cannot profitably serve, the price point below which your unit economics collapse, and the ship date by which the disruptor's product will have crossed into the segment of your market that funds the rest. The tense in that paragraph, and this is the part that most incumbents miss, is the future perfect. 'By the end of 2028 we will have shipped a product priced at 60% of the incumbent's, into the small-business segment they cannot profitably reach.'

The tragedy of the incumbent is that its own December-board paragraph, in the same year, is written in the present continuous. 'We are watching the entrant. We are monitoring their traction. We are evaluating an internal response.' Both paragraphs are, at the level of information, describing the same event. The difference is that the disruptor is describing a completed 2028 action from the vantage of 2026, and the incumbent is describing a 2026 posture from the vantage of 2026. In three years' worth of board cycles, the tense compounds. The disruptor's roadmap keeps landing dates it named at the beginning; the incumbent's roadmap keeps re-scoping dates it never quite named.

The deeper mechanism is that the future perfect forces resource allocation now. A CTO who has committed, in writing, to a specific completed action in 2028 has, in practice, to defund something in 2026 to fund it. The present continuous requires no such defunding — which is why the incumbent's H3 bet, year after year, is quietly re-priced against H1 metrics and, quietly, killed. The disruptor's H3 bet, the same year, is protected from H1 metrics by the sentence in which it was, from the outset, written in a tense that had already committed the company to it.

The paired discipline, less remarked, is the future continuous for the shape of the team. The disruptor writes, in the same paragraph: 'by 2028 our engineers will be working on the second-generation platform in a market that, when we started, did not yet exist.' The incumbent, if it writes about its team at all, writes in the present: 'our engineers are strong; we retain the best of the category.' Present-tense statements about a team are, in disruption theory, a tell — they describe the team the company had, not the team the company will need to have. Over five years, the tell settles the outcome.

1. READ FOR GIST

- 1. What is the specific tense the disruptive entrant's CEO uses in their opening paragraph?
  Answer key: The future perfect — 'by the end of 2028 we will have shipped a product priced at 60% of the incumbent's, into the segment they cannot profitably reach.'
- 2. What tense, by contrast, does the incumbent's December paragraph tend to be in?
  Answer key: The present continuous — 'we are watching, we are monitoring, we are evaluating.'

2. READ FOR DETAIL

- 1. What is the deeper mechanism the future perfect enforces on the disruptor?
  Answer key: It forces resource allocation now — a completed 2028 action, once written, has to be funded from 2026 defunding decisions.
- 2. What happens to the incumbent's H3 bet, in the present-continuous roadmap, over successive board cycles?
  Answer key: It is quietly re-priced against H1 metrics and killed, because no sentence has committed the company to defund something in order to fund it.
- 3. What is the 'tell' in a present-tense statement about the team?
  Answer key: It describes the team the company had, not the team it will need to have — over five years, the tell settles the outcome.
- 4. What long-run pattern separates the disruptor's roadmap from the incumbent's, cycle over cycle?
  Answer key: The disruptor keeps landing dates it named at the outset; the incumbent keeps re-scoping dates it never quite named.

3. GLOSSARY

future perfect

the tense that lets a disruptor commit, in writing, to a completed action three years out — and thereby forces defunding decisions now

present-continuous posture

the incumbent's default — describing what the company is doing rather than what it will have shipped

H3 protection

the practice, harder than it sounds, of keeping a transformational bet off H1 metrics for long enough to reach its own payoff

second-generation defence

the future-continuous commitment to being, three years out, in a market that today does not yet exist

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- Which sentence, in the future perfect, is a disruptor almost certainly writing about a segment of your market right now?
- Which of your current H3 bets has been quietly re-priced against H1 metrics — and what future-perfect sentence would have protected it?

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Draft the paragraph the incumbent's CEO would need to write, in the future perfect, to still be independent in 2030.

VOCABULARY

The innovation-and-R&D lexicon

12 min

Match each term to its definition.

- product roadmap
  the dated sequence of what the company intends to have in customers' hands, and when
- R&D pipeline
  the multi-stage funnel of research bets moving from discovery through development to commercial launch
- time-to-market
  the elapsed months between the decision to build and the moment a paying customer can transact
- minimum viable product
  the smallest configuration of the offer that a real customer will pay for and give usable feedback on
- innovation horizon
  the analytical distinction between core (H1), adjacent (H2) and transformational (H3) bets, each on its own clock
- disruptive entrant
  a competitor whose economics allow a lower price and a different served customer, and whose share, once compounding, is rarely reversed
- sunset date
  the pre-agreed month a legacy product line stops being sold or supported, freeing capital for the next bet
- burn rate
  the monthly cash consumption of an unprofitable initiative, and the clock against which any milestone is priced

Complete each sentence with a phrase from the box.

- By the end of Q3 the team will have shipped the minimum viable product_ minimum viable product_ into three lead-customer environments.
- This time next year we will be presenting a product roadmap_ product roadmap_ that reaches into 2032, not 2028.
- Six months from now the treasury will have exhausted the runway if the burn rate_ burn rate_ has not come down by twenty per cent.
- By 2030 we will have compressed time-to-market_-time-to-market_-time-to-market_ from 22 months to under 9.
- For the next four quarters we will be re-classifying every bet against the three-horizon innovation horizon_ innovation horizon_.
- By the January review the R&D pipeline_ R&D pipeline_ will have been re-shaped around the two H3 bets, not around H1 line-extensions.

Choose the best answer.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- The functional purpose of a 'sunset date', pre-agreed rather than argued for later, is to:
  (a) reduce inventory
  (b) free capital and attention from a legacy line before the room re-argues for keeping it
  (c) impress the board
  (d) simplify the P&L
  Answer key: (b) free capital and attention from a legacy line before the room re-argues for keeping it
- 'Time-to-market', in the CTO's sentence, is priced by:
  (a) engineering hours
  (b) the compounded lost margin per month of delay against a competitor already shipping
  (c) the number of features
  (d) the size of the team
  Answer key: (b) the compounded lost margin per month of delay against a competitor already shipping
- A 'disruptive entrant' is dangerous not because it steals share, but because:
  (a) it advertises heavily
  (b) its economics allow a served customer the incumbent cannot profitably reach, and the share, once compounding, is rarely reversed
  (c) it hires talent
  (d) it copies features
  Answer key: (b) its economics allow a served customer the incumbent cannot profitably reach, and the share, once compounding, is rarely reversed
- The three-horizon 'innovation horizon' framework matters because:
  (a) it looks tidy
  (b) each horizon runs on a different clock, and mixing their metrics leads the board to defund the bet whose payoff is furthest out
  (c) it pleases consultants
  (d) it justifies budgets
  Answer key: (b) each horizon runs on a different clock, and mixing their metrics leads the board to defund the bet whose payoff is furthest out

LISTENING

Redrafting the December paragraph

12 min

Joaquín (CEO) coaches Meiling (CTO) through the opening paragraph of the December board deck. Read the transcript and answer.

CEO (JOAQUÍN): Read me the opening paragraph of the board deck. As it stands.

CTO (MEILING): "We are working on three platform bets. We are investing in a next-generation stack. We are exploring a partnership with a foundational-model provider."

JOAQUÍN: Three sentences. All present continuous. What does the board hear?

MEILING: That we are, three years in, still deciding.

JOAQUÍN: And the activist on the register?

MEILING: That a company still deciding has already lost the horizon.

JOAQUÍN: Redraft. In the future perfect.

MEILING: "By the end of 2030 the team will have shipped four platform releases into full production, will have compressed time-to-market from 22 months to under 9, and will have re-shaped the R&D pipeline around the two H3 bets that today absorb 14% of the budget."

JOAQUÍN: Better. Now the paragraph after it — for the team, not the ship.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

MEILING: "By 2030 our engineers will be working on the next platform, not on patching this one; our commercial teams will be defending a second-generation product in a market that, when we started, did not exist."

JOAQUÍN: Future continuous. Why that one there and not another future perfect?

MEILING: Because the ship date of the next platform is unknowable to the quarter, but the shape of the company that will be defending the second generation is not. The future continuous commits to the shape without over-committing on the date.

JOAQUÍN: That is the paragraph. Print it, sign it, and give it to me before you give it to the board — because the sentence you will not be able to say out loud in December is the sentence I need to hear in October.

Choose the best answer.

- Joaquín rewrites the opening in the future perfect because, without it, the board hears:
  (a) a technical briefing
  (b) that a company three years in is still deciding — and that a company still deciding has lost the horizon
  (c) a fund-raising pitch
  (d) an apology
  Answer key: (b) that a company three years in is still deciding — and that a company still deciding has lost the horizon
- The second paragraph moves to the future continuous specifically to:
  (a) soften the tone
  (b) commit to the shape of the team that will be defending, without over-committing to a ship date to the quarter
  (c) hedge the budget
  (d) list milestones
  Answer key: (b) commit to the shape of the team that will be defending, without over-committing to a ship date to the quarter
- Joaquín's closing instruction — 'the sentence you cannot say out loud in December is the one I need to hear in October' — reflects the discipline that:
  (a) boards move fast
  (b) an unsayable future-perfect sentence in October is the truest early signal that the roadmap is not, in fact, deliverable
  (c) CFOs are impatient
  (d) CTOs over-promise
  Answer key: (b) an unsayable future-perfect sentence in October is the truest early signal that the roadmap is not, in fact, deliverable
- The two-tense pairing (future perfect + future continuous) exists because, alone:
  (a) either tense is grammatically wrong
  (b) the future perfect suggests over-precise ship dates while the future continuous alone suggests drift; together they compose a defensible paragraph
  (c) they are stylistic preferences
  (d) boards demand both
  Answer key: (b) the future perfect suggests over-precise ship dates while the future continuous alone suggests drift; together they compose a defensible paragraph

Teacher notes

Extension: Ask the student to redeliver Meiling's first version as their own opening — in the future perfect for releases and the future continuous for the team. Which paragraph would they be prouder to have written?

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

AUTHENTIC LISTENING · REAL VOICES

Andrew McAfee on the sentence a CTO has to be able to write about the year 2030

Source: Adapted from Andrew McAfee (MIT), 'The Geek Way' interviews and HBR/Sloan Review commentary · Excerpted for classroom use under fair-dealing for educational commentary.

C1+

▯ ≈ 3 min excerpt

The MIT researcher who has spent two decades watching the companies that ship the future vs. the ones that talk about shipping the future — on why the tense the CTO uses in the December board paragraph is a leading indicator of the company's five-year survival. Listen for the specific pairing of the future perfect and the future continuous.

Faixa em produção. O player aparece aqui — o áudio será publicado em breve. Enquanto isso, use o script completo abaixo.

1. LISTEN FOR GIST

- 1. What is the single grammatical predictor McAfee has found?
  Answer key: The tense the CTO uses in the opening paragraph of the December board deck — future perfect vs. present continuous.
- 2. What is the mechanism, once you look at it?
  Answer key: The future perfect forces the writer to defend a completed action three years out; the present continuous never has to land.

2. LISTEN FOR DETAIL

- 1. Why does the future continuous do work that the future perfect alone does not?
  Answer key: It commits to the shape of the team that will be selling and defending, without over-committing to a ship date to the quarter.
- 2. What is the aggregate signal of three consecutive present-continuous December decks?
  Answer key: A roadmap that, in aggregate, has never had to close — a company that has stopped shipping in any meaningful sense.
- 3. What is the 'only paragraph a serious board has ever actually asked the CTO to write'?
  Answer key: The pairing — future perfect for the completed releases, future continuous for the state of the team defending the next generation.

3. GLOSSARY

future perfect

'will have + past participle' — the tense that forces the writer to defend a completed action three years out

future continuous

'will be + -ing' — the tense that commits to the state of the team without over-committing to a ship date

present continuous roadmap

'we are working on, we are exploring' — the tense a company that has stopped shipping tends to write in

H3 bet

a transformational bet on a new market, priced on a clock the H1 metrics cannot see

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

FULL SCRIPT

The single most reliable predictor I have found, across the innovation-heavy sectors I've studied, of whether a company will still be independent in five years, is the tense the Chief Technology Officer uses in the opening paragraph of the December board deck. The predictor is embarrassingly grammatical. Present-continuous CTOs — 'we are working on, we are exploring, we are investing in' — turn out, in the data, to run companies that get acquired or overtaken inside a five-year window. Future-perfect CTOs — 'by the end of 2030 we will have shipped, will have compressed, will have re-shaped' — turn out to run companies that are still, five years later, setting the pace their category was written around.

It sounds too neat, and I resisted it for a couple of years. But the mechanism, once you look at it, is not mysterious. The future perfect forces the writer to defend a completed action three years from the date of writing. It closes off the option of describing an intention. It puts the board, and it puts the writer, inside the year in which the promise has already been kept. The present continuous, by contrast, is a tense that never has to land. A CTO who has written three consecutive December decks in the present continuous is a CTO whose roadmap, in aggregate, has never had to close.

The paired discipline is the future continuous, used for the state of the team rather than the completion of the ship. 'By 2030 our engineers will be working on the next platform, not on patching this one.' The tense commits to the shape of the company that will be selling and defending, without over-committing to a ship date to the quarter. Together, the future perfect and the future continuous compose the only paragraph a serious board has ever, in my experience, actually asked the CTO to write.

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- Write, in the future perfect, the three sentences you would want to be able to say about your team by the end of 2030.
- Which of your recent board paragraphs was, in fact, in the present continuous — and what did the room hear?
- What is the future-continuous sentence about the shape of your company you can commit to today?

GRAMMAR

Future perfect & future continuous — the register the board actually asked for

18 min

Future perfect (will have + past participle): By 2030 the team will have shipped four platform releases. Use for completed actions defended from the vantage of a future date.

Future continuous (will be + -ing): By 2030 our engineers will be working on the next platform, not on patching this one. Use for the state of the team / the company at a future date, without over-committing to a specific completion date.

Future perfect continuous (will have been + -ing): By the January review the team will have been iterating on the H3 bet for eighteen months. Use for the duration of an ongoing action, viewed from a future point.

Future perfect passive: By the sunset date the R&D pipeline will have been re-shaped around the two H3 bets. Use when the actor is unimportant or when the process is the point.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

Rule of thumb: future perfect for what will have shipped; future continuous for the shape of who will be selling and defending. The paragraph the board wants is both, in that order.

Choose the correct option.

- By the end of 2030 the team ____ ____ ____ four platform releases into full production.
  (a) will have shipped
  (b) will ship
  (c) will be shipping
  (d) will have been shipped
  Answer key: (a) will have shipped
- This time next year we ____ ____ ____ a second-generation product to enterprise customers.
  (a) will be selling
  (b) will sell
  (c) will have sold
  (d) sell
  Answer key: (a) will be selling
- By the time the board reviews the pipeline in March, the H2 bet ____ ____ ____ ____ eighteen months of engineering.
  (a) will have absorbed
  (b) absorbs
  (c) will absorb
  (d) is absorbing
  Answer key: (a) will have absorbed
- Three years from now our engineers ____ ____ ____ on the next platform, not on patching this one.
  (a) will be working
  (b) will work
  (c) will have worked
  (d) work
  Answer key: (a) will be working
- By the sunset date of the legacy line, the R&D pipeline ____ ____ ____ ____ around the two transformational bets.
  (a) will have been re-shaped
  (b) will re-shape
  (c) re-shapes
  (d) will be re-shaping
  Answer key: (a) will have been re-shaped
- In eighteen months' time we ____ ____ ____ the H3 bet in a market that did not, when we started, exist.
  (a) will be defending
  (b) will defend
  (c) will have defended
  (d) defend
  Answer key: (a) will be defending

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- By the time the entrant ships their v2, we ____ ____ ____ ____ two full generations ahead on unit cost.
  - (a) will have moved
  - (b) will move
  - (c) move
  - (d) will be moving
  - *Answer key: (a) will have moved*
- For the whole of next year the deep-tech team ____ ____ ____ on a single question — does the customer, in fact, want it?
  - (a) will be working
  - (b) will work
  - (c) will have worked
  - (d) works
  - *Answer key: (a) will be working*

Complete the CTO's line in the correct future form.

- Complete the CTO's board line: 'By 2030 the platform will have compressed_ will have compressed_ will have compressed_ (compress) time-to-market from 22 months to under 9.'
- 'This quarter next year we will be shipping_ will be shipping_ will be shipping_ (ship) into three lead-customer sites in parallel.'
- 'By the board's January review the burn rate will have fallen_ will have fallen_ will have fallen_ (fall) by twenty per cent.'
- 'For the next four quarters we will be re-classifying_ will be re-classifying_ will be re-classifying_ (re-classify) every bet against the three-horizon framework.'

Discursive practice:

DESCRIBE THE SITUATION

Look at the picture and use the grammar you just studied

You are the chief innovation officer drafting the December board paragraph. Write 6–7 sentences using at least three future-perfect forms for what will have shipped and two future-continuous forms for the shape of the team in 2030.

TRY TO USE

By the end of 2030 we will have shipped…

By the January review the team will have compressed…

By the sunset date the pipeline will have been re-shaped…

By 2030 our engineers will be working on…

By the same date our commercial teams will be defending…

SAMPLE ANSWER

By the end of 2030 the team will have shipped four platform releases into full production, will have compressed time-to-market from twenty-two months to under nine, and will have re-shaped the R&D pipeline around the two H3 bets that today absorb fourteen per cent of the budget. By the January review the burn rate will have fallen by twenty per cent against the same-quarter run rate. By the sunset date of the legacy line the capital freed will have been re-deployed into the second-generation platform. By 2030 our engineers will be working on the next platform, not on patching this one; our commercial teams will be defending a second-generation product in a market that, when we started, did not exist. For the first two quarters of the plan the H3 team will be running in parallel with H1 delivery, not against it. That, precisely, is the paragraph I am asking the board to fund.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

VIDEO LESSON · REAL SPEAKERS

Astro Teller (X, the moonshot factory) — how to think about, and fund, ten-year bets

Source: TED

C1+

12 min

The head of Google's X moonshot factory on the specific institutional discipline required to protect a bet whose payoff is a decade away — and, in his own delivery, the tense he keeps reaching for when he describes the products his teams will have shipped by 2030.

Watch once for gist, then again pausing on the questions below. Use the original on YouTube for subtitles if needed.

1. WATCH FOR GIST

- 1. What is Teller's central argument about the way big organisations misprice ten-year bets?
  Answer key: They price them on next-quarter metrics, which guarantees the bet is defunded before it can reach its own payoff.
- 2. What tense does he consistently reach for when he describes the future of the portfolio?
  Answer key: The future perfect — 'we will have shipped', 'we will have retired', 'we will have graduated' — and the future continuous for the team.
- 3. What is the moonshot factory's specific practice for protecting H3 bets from H1 metrics?
  Answer key: A structural separation of the funding, the review cadence, and the vocabulary of success — H3 is not measured on H1 clocks.

2. WATCH FOR DETAIL

- 1. Why is 'killing a project on purpose' a design feature at X, not a failure?
  Answer key: Because the alternative is to keep the project alive on the wrong metrics — and quietly starve the two bets that would have deserved the capital.
- 2. What is Teller's diagnosis of the executive who cannot write the future-perfect sentence for their roadmap?
  Answer key: That the roadmap is, in candid moments, still an ambition — and that the board is being asked to fund an ambition, not a commitment.
- 3. What is the relationship between the future-continuous team sentence and long-term retention of talent?
  Answer key: Engineers who can hear the sentence about the team they will be working on in 2030 stay; engineers who hear only the present continuous quietly leave.

3. KEY LANGUAGE

will have shipped

the future-perfect commitment that defines a defunded-from-now completion

will be working on

the future-continuous commitment to the shape of the team, without a ship date to the quarter

moonshot

an H3 bet whose payoff is a decade out and whose value is destroyed by H1 metrics

graduating a bet

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

the moment an H3 project moves out of the factory and into an operating unit

4. DISCUSS IN PAIRS

- Which of your bets would you have to kill on purpose this quarter to protect the two that deserve the capital?
- Which future-perfect sentence about your team in 2030 do you not yet believe — and what would you have to defund now to believe it?
- Draft the future-continuous sentence about the shape of your engineering team in 2030 that you could sign your name to today.

SPEAKING

Deliver the paragraph the board actually asked for

15 min

Task 1 — Solo (2 min): Prepare, out loud, a 90-second opening to a December board paragraph about your team. Include at least two future-perfect commitments and one future-continuous commitment about the team's shape.

Task 2 — Solo delivery (8 min): Record yourself delivering the opening. Then re-record, this time forcing yourself to convert every present-continuous verb into either future perfect (for completed actions) or future continuous (for the state of the team). Which take would you rather your board heard?

Speaking challenge: Re-record a third time and, this time, close the paragraph with a single future-continuous sentence about the market that, when you started, did not yet exist. Read out loud why that sentence protects the recommendation the paragraph carries.

Teacher notes

Coaching: Watch for two failure modes — the present-continuous drift ('we are working on / exploring') and the piled-up future perfect that names ship dates the student cannot hold. C1 register lives in the deliberate future-perfect for what will have shipped plus the future-continuous for the shape of the team.

Record your answer

WRITING

A one-page December-board CTO memo

25 min homework

Task (260–300 words): Draft the opening one-page section of your December-board CTO memo. Structure it: Completed action · Completed action · Completed action · State of team · State of the market you will be defending in · The ask.

Requirements:

- Use at least four future-perfect forms for completed actions the team will have delivered by 2030.
- Use at least two future-continuous forms for the state of the engineering and commercial teams at that date.
- Include one future-perfect passive ('will have been re-shaped / re-deployed / retired').
- End with the ask, in the present, made possible by the sentences above.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

Re-read the following day and underline every present-continuous verb. Rewrite each one in the tense the sentence actually needs.

WRAP-UP

Consolidate before you leave

5 min

Answer each prompt out loud or in a note to yourself.

- Name one commitment you have been carrying in the present continuous that ought to be in the future perfect by December.
- Which future-continuous sentence about your team in 2030 do you not yet believe — and what would you have to defund now to believe it?
- Give one example of a competitor whose public roadmap is written in the future perfect and whose ship dates keep landing.
- One writing discipline you will stop (the present-continuous drift?); one you will start (the future-perfect commitment?).
- Rate your last board paragraph 1–5 on: future-perfect commitments / future-continuous team / defunding named / ship dates that will actually land. Which is weakest?

Take-away:

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

WORKBOOK · HOME PRACTICE

Unit 7A Workbook

Do this after class. Answers are marked for your teacher.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

VOCABULARY

The innovation-and-R&D lexicon

8 min

- A 'moonshot' project is one that:
  (a) is guaranteed to succeed
  (b) aims for a 10x, high-risk outcome
  (c) is fully budgeted
  (d) is customer-funded
  Answer key: (b) aims for a 10x, high-risk outcome
- 'TRL' (technology readiness level) measures:
  (a) team size
  (b) maturity of a technology from concept to deployment
  (c) IP quality
  (d) market share
  Answer key: (b) maturity of a technology from concept to deployment
- A 'skunkworks' team operates:
  (a) under standard governance
  (b) with unusual autonomy and speed
  (c) under the CFO
  (d) as a joint venture
  Answer key: (b) with unusual autonomy and speed
- 'Prior art' in an IP filing refers to:
  (a) the applicant's prior filings
  (b) existing public knowledge relevant to the claim
  (c) the examiner's opinion
  (d) the licensing terms
  Answer key: (b) existing public knowledge relevant to the claim
- A 'platform bet' differs from a 'product bet' because it:
  (a) ships faster
  (b) enables many downstream products
  (c) has narrower scope
  (d) is fully customer-validated
  Answer key: (b) enables many downstream products

GRAMMAR

Future perfect & future continuous — writing about the year 2030

12 min

- By 2030, we ____ ____ three of the four platform capabilities.
  (a) will have shipped
  (b) will ship
  (c) are shipping
  (d) have shipped
  Answer key: (a) will have shipped

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- This time next year, the team ____ ____ on generation-two silicon.
  (a) will have worked
  (b) will be working
  (c) works
  (d) would work
  Answer key: (b) will be working
- By the time the board next reviews the roadmap, we ____ ____ two design-cycles behind or ahead.
  (a) will have been
  (b) will be
  (c) have been
  (d) would be
  Answer key: (a) will have been
- By Q4, the pilot ____ ____ live for six months.
  (a) will have been
  (b) will be
  (c) has been
  (d) would have been
  Answer key: (a) will have been
- In three years, most CTOs ____ ____ this decision on their desk.
  (a) will have
  (b) will be having
  (c) have
  (d) are having
  Answer key: (b) will be having

Now rewrite each sentence using the phrase in bold.

- Rewrite in future perfect: 'We ship three platforms by 2030.' By 2030 we will have shipped_ will have shipped_ three platforms.
- Rewrite in future continuous: 'We ship generation-two next year.' this time next year / will be shipping_ this time next year / will be shipping_ this time next year / will be shipping_, we this time next year / will be shipping_ this time next year / will be shipping_ generation-two.
- Anchor the horizon: 'The pilot goes live in Q2.' by the end of / will have been_ by the end of / will have been_ by the end of / will have been_ Q4, the pilot by the end of / will have been_ by the end of / will have been_ by the end of / will have been_ live for six months.
- Rewrite as a future perfect passive: 'The R&D team completes the platform.' The platform will have been_ will have been_ will have been_ completed by year-end.
- Rewrite as future continuous: 'We invest in silicon throughout 2028.' In 2028 we will be shipping_ will be shipping_ investing in silicon.

WRITING

A one-page CTO roadmap paragraph

20 min

Task (160–200 words): Draft the opening two paragraphs of a CTO's roadmap document setting out where the company will be in 2030. Paragraph 1: what will have shipped. Paragraph 2: what the company will be building, still.

- Use at least three future-perfect and two future-continuous forms.
- Include one platform, one TRL and one moonshot.

ASK THE TEACHER — notes to bring to class

- Avoid the words disrupt, revolutionary and game-changing.

Teacher notes

Marking focus: Do the future forms actually locate the reader in 2030, or do they just decorate a wish-list?