ClearVoice (CV)

Read the resources and answer the questions that follow.

Resource 1 – Background

ClearVoice (CV) is a for-profit social enterprise founded in 2021 by entrepreneur Maya Kim in Seoul, South Korea. CV designs smart glasses that provide live captions. When someone speaks, the glasses pick up the sound with a microphone and instantly display the words as text on the lens. This allows deaf or hard-of-hearing people to follow conversations in real time.

Examples of speech-to-text glasses made by CV

For every pair sold, CV donates another pair to a school for hearing-impaired children. Since launch, over 2,000 pairs have been donated across South Korea.

CV employs 90 people, many of whom are deaf or hard of hearing, while others are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Employees are trained in product testing, customer service, and social media promotion.

Maya describes CV's current situation:

- Strong social mission and inclusive culture.
- Small scale compared to global competitors.
- Growing demand for assistive technology.
- Intense competition and rising costs.

Maya explains:

> "ClearVoice exists to make communication accessible for everyone. Every pair sold not only gives someone the power to join conversations but also supports equal opportunities in education. But growth must not compromise our values."

Resource 2 – Financial Data (2022–2024)

Year	Sales Revenue (US$m)	Gross Profit (US$m)	Net Profit (US$m)	GPM %	NPM %	R&D (US$m)	Marketing (US$m)	Donations (US$m)
2022	12.0	5.0	2.8	42%	23%	3.5	1.0	1.5
2023	13.5	5.4	2.2	40%	16%	4.0	0.8	1.7
2024	14.1	5.6	1.0	40%	7%	4.5	0.5	2.0

Resource 3 – Extract from Employee Pulse Survey (2024)

The annual employee survey at ClearVoice (CV) revealed mixed results. 72% of staff said they feel proud of CV's mission, but staff turnover has increased from 10% in 2022 to 18% in 2024. Nearly half of employees (48%) reported high stress levels due to frequent product updates and tight deadlines.

Several engineers commented that performance appraisals focus too much on speed rather than innovation, while HR noted that talented software engineers continue to leave for higher-paying jobs at larger technology firms. One respondent wrote:

"I love what CV stands for, but the pressure is constant and there's no clear path to promotion."

Deaf and hard-of-hearing employees praised CV's inclusive culture but asked for more transparent career progression opportunities. Many employees suggested flexible working hours and wellness programmes to reduce stress.

Resource 4 – Extract from Market Research Report (2024)

CV continues to enjoy a positive reputation in South Korea, but brand recognition abroad remains limited. Competitors dominate global markets through high-profile campaigns. For example, *HearAble* has over 120,000 Instagram followers and strong partnerships with influencers, while *SpeakFree* has gained more than 80,000 YouTube subscribers by posting viral demonstration videos.

CV's own marketing budget has fallen to less than 0.5% of sales revenue, far below industry averages. Analysts suggest this lack of investment is a key reason why international awareness is weak.

Customer surveys highlighted both strengths and concerns:

- “Fantastic idea, but I can’t buy it outside Korea.”
- “The subtitles sometimes lag if lots of people are talking.”
- “Customer support took two weeks to respond.”

In total, 12% of customers reported problems with response times from CV’s support team.

Despite these challenges, the market for assistive technology is forecast to grow by 15% annually worldwide over the next five years, with rising demand among schools and employers seeking inclusive solutions.

Resource 5 – Internal Memo from Operations Director

To: Maya Kim, CEO
From: Jae Lee, Operations Director

Maya,

Our production workshop is under significant strain. Although the glasses are assembled locally, we rely on imported components such as microchips and display lenses. Recent supply chain disruptions have extended delivery times from 2 weeks to 6 weeks, which has led to growing customer frustration. At the same time, warranty claims have increased by 12% over the past year, mostly linked to overheating batteries.

We urgently need to improve quality control. One option is to invest around US$1.5 million in advanced testing equipment to catch faults before products are shipped. Another possibility is outsourcing assembly to a specialist partner in Vietnam. This could cut production costs by about 20% and potentially improve reliability. However, outsourcing could damage our reputation for producing “locally made” products and might result in fewer jobs for the disadvantaged communities we currently employ.

I would welcome your decision on which approach we should prioritise before the next board meeting.

– Jae Lee