



BBC Radio International 50 Things That Made the Modern Economy 2017

BBC Radio International's fascinating Features selection treats a wide range of subjects in a varied and entertaining way, from history and science, to music and popular culture...

One of the most popular series of programmes is '50 Things That Made the Modern Economy', in which Tim Harford examines fifty of the inventions, ideas, developments, and innovations that have helped to create the modern economic world.

The total package includes 51 Things – the 51st episode was the winning Thing that won the vote of the BBC listeners around the world – BBC received thousands of votes that were cast on the shortlist of six. Discover what was the winning 51st Thing by licencing the full series of '50 Things That Made the Modern Economy'.

Each episode is a stand-alone programme, 10 minutes duration. The total duration of the fifty one episodes is 8 hours 30 minutes.

'50 Things That Made the Modern Economy'

FE454
51 x 10'

1. **Diesel Engine.** Rudolf Diesel dies in strange circumstances after changing the world with his engine.
2. **Haber-Bosch Process.** Saving lives with thin air - by taking nitrogen from it to make fertiliser.
3. **Shipping Container.** How a simple steel box changed the face of global trade.
4. **Concrete.** How it has improved health, school attendance, agricultural productivity and farm worker wages.
5. **iPhone.** How Uncle Sam played an essential role in the creation and development of the iPhone.
6. **Barcode.** How vast mega-stores emerged with the help of a design originally drawn in the sand.
7. **Banking.** Warrior monks, crusaders and the mysterious origins of modern banking.

8. **Light Bulb.** Once too precious to use, light is now too cheap to notice.
9. **M-Pesa.** Transferring money by text message is far safer and more convenient than cash.
10. **Compiler.** Installing Windows might take 5,000 years without the compiler.
11. **Billy Bookcase.** The Billy bookcase epitomises the pursuit of lower costs and acceptable functionality.
12. **Antibiotics.** The tale of antibiotics is a cautionary one, and economic incentives are often to blame.
13. **Paper.** The Gutenberg Press changed the world – but it could not have done so without paper.
14. **Insurance.** Insurance is as old as gambling, but it's fundamental to the way the modern economy works.
15. **Google.** The words 'clever' and 'death' crop up less often than 'Google' in conversation.
16. **Clock.** The clock was invented in 1656 and has become an essential part of the modern economy.
17. **Disposable Razor.** King Camp Gillette created the disposable razor. But his influence extends beyond shaving.
18. **Robot.** Robots threaten the human workforce, but they are crucial to the modern economy.
19. **Public Key Cryptography.** Geeks versus government – the story of public key cryptography.
20. **Battery.** The story of the battery begins inside a dead murderer. It's a tale that's far from over.
21. **Gramophone.** 'Superstar' economics – how the gramophone transformed the performing industry.
22. **TV Dinner.** The TV dinner, and other inventions from the same era, made a lasting economic impression.
23. **Contraceptive Pill.** The pill wasn't just socially revolutionary, it also sparked an economic revolution.
24. **Elevator.** The safety elevator is a mass transit system that has changed the shape of our cities.
25. **Air Conditioning.** Invented for the printing industry, air conditioning now influences where and how we live.
26. **Cuneiform.** Cuneiform, the earliest known script, was used to create the world's first accounts.

27. **Video Game.** From Spacewar to Pokemon Go, video games have shaped the modern economy in surprising ways.
28. **Intellectual Property.** Intellectual property reflects an economic trade-off when it comes to innovation.
29. **Passport.** In anyone could work anywhere, some economists think global economic output would double.
30. **Tally Stick.** The tally stick shows us what money really is: a kind of debt that can be traded freely.
31. **Index Fund.** Warren Buffett is one of the world's great investors. His advice? Invest in an index fund.
32. **Infant Formula.** For many new mothers who want, or need, to get back to work, infant formula is a godsend.
33. **Tax Havens.** Gabriel Zucman invented an ingenious way to estimate how much wealth is hidden offshore.
34. **Barbed Wire.** 'Lighter than air, stronger than whiskey' – barbed wire wreaked huge changes in America.
35. **Department Store.** Harry Selfridge pioneered a whole new retail experience with his London department store.
36. **Leaded Petrol.** When lead was added to petrol it made cars more powerful – but it also poisoned people.
37. **Dynamo.** The big story behind the way dynamos made electricity useful.
38. **Limited Liability Company.** How some legal creativity has created vast wealth down the centuries.
39. **Paper Money.** Currency derives value from trust in the government which issues it.
40. **Seller Feedback.** Without seller feedback, companies like eBay might not have grown as they have.
41. **Plastic.** We make so much plastic these days that it takes about eight percent of oil production.
42. **Market Research.** Market research marked a shift from a producer-led to a consumer-led approach to business.
43. **Radar.** A high-tech 'death ray' capable of zapping sheet led to the invention of radar.
44. **S-Bend.** The S-bend was a pipe with a curve in it, an invention that led to public sanitation.

45. **Double-Entry Bookkeeping.** Renaissance man Luca Pacioli wrote the definitive book on double-entry bookkeeping.
46. **Management Consulting.** If managers often have a bad reputation, what about those who tell them how to manage?
47. **Property Register.** Property rights for the world's poor could unlock trillions in 'dead capital.'
48. **Welfare State.** Do welfare states boost economic growth, or stunt it? It's not an easy question to answer.
49. **Cold Chain.** Refrigeration revolutionised the food industry, and other industries too.
50. **The Plough.** The plough kick-started civilisation – and ultimately made out modern economy possible.

51. The winning 51st Thing – discover what BBC listeners from around the world have voted for!

END

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