

Keeping up with technology – what managers and executives need to know

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Business topic: technological developments, cyber security, digitalization of education and job training

Business language focus: language associated with new technology, cyber security, and the various ways of delivering (online) training courses.

Activities: In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about the article;
- learn or revise and define some business collocations or word pairs;
- learn or revise a set of multi-word phrases and use these in business-related sentences;
- discuss aspects of the article in greater depth;
- hold a meeting which leads to a unanimous decision and write an email informing management about this decision.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student.

Group size: This lesson can be used with pairs or groups, with some whole class discussion. With some adaptation, use for one-to-one teaching or online teaching.

Teaching online: Ensure that all students (either in a group or in a one-to-one online teaching situation) are sent the worksheet well in advance of the lesson. This will give them time to print out the document if necessary. When the lesson starts, work through the various activities in the order presented but always ensure that you allow sufficient time for feedback and discussion after each activity.

Overview: This lesson is based on an authentic article from a trusted new source. The article talks about how the coronavirus crisis has sped up the need for new training programs that focus on leadership in a crisis situation, as well as the need to learn about new technologies and how to protect against cyber attacks. It discusses the various ways this necessary knowledge can be imparted to executives and others in the company even if they are working from home.

Procedure

1. Warmer

Give students time to read through the questions and make notes before discussing their answers together in a short feedback session.

2. Key words

Ask students to search for words in the text that match the definitions provided. Encourage them to notice how the words are used in context.

Key:

1. *tackle*
2. *sufficient*
3. *multidisciplinary*
4. *application*
5. *prospective*
6. *retaining*
7. *diminished*
8. *blended*
9. *hurdles*
10. *delivering*

3. Understanding the article

Tell students to answer the questions with information from the article trying to be as detailed and specific as possible. At this level, they should be coming up with their own wording and not simply copying what is written in the article.

If students are working in pairs or small groups, they can collaborate on the answers to promote peer teaching. Then, they should check answers as a class.

Key: (suggested answers)

1. They need knowledge of cyber security and they need to know what to do if their company suffers a cyber attack. They need to know what threats this kind of attack could pose to their business, and what to do to protect the company. They often need to develop a greater understanding of the digital world in general and gather specific knowledge of new topics such as artificial intelligence. It's important too for them to know what the competitive impacts of these new technical developments have on their business.
2. The Covid-19 crisis has led to more people working from home causing more business to be carried out online. This has meant that an understanding of the digital world has gained even greater importance. On top of this, many important technological developments such as the introduction of artificial intelligence and voice-activated assistants are becoming more commonplace in business.
3. The course takes place over two days of face-to-face lectures, followed by questions. Any participants who wants more information will be provided with extra materials online, giving the course an additional blended format.
4. The Iese Business School looks at the use of AI for leadership and how executives can put AI to good use in their companies in a socially responsible way.
5. A study in 2018 said that two thirds of prospective adult learners wanted some kind of online element in their courses. This was twice as many people as five years previously. Course tutors are now having to think about how to teach online and adjust their courses for the new digital world. Students, professors and staff are showing that they are open to these new formats and willing to try them.

4. Business language – collocations

For part a, ask students to match the words on the left with those on the right to make collocations from the article. Point out that although other collocations may be possible, they are looking for ones that they already read in the article. Then, in part b, they should scan the article

to check their answers, before writing their own definitions in part c. This task can be done in pairs or small groups to encourage speaking and collaboration.

To extend this task, students swap their written definitions with another pair of students. The other pair should match the first pair's definitions with the collocations. This will encourage the students to write concisely and clearly so that others understand – a very useful business skill!

Key: (plus suggested or possible definitions)

1. artificial intelligence: the use of computer technology to make computers and other machines think and do things in the way that people can
2. cyber security: safety when relating to computers and the internet
3. remote tuition: teaching done from a distance; not face to face in a classroom but probably online
4. supplementary materials: course papers and information that are in addition to the ones deemed essential
5. technical insight: a chance to understand something or learn more about technical matters
6. socially responsible: when someone is aware and concerned about matters that affect other people so that they ensure they always try to do the right thing
7. strategic management: analysing, evaluating, formulating and implementing a company's major goals and initiatives
8. target audiences: the people you hope to reach

5. Business language – Multi-word phrases

Ask students to find four multi-word phrases in the article and use them to complete the sentences. The number of words in the phrase and the paragraph number are given to help them. Talk about the meaning of any phrase they are not sure about, or have them look up the meanings.

To extend this task, ask students to come up with additional sentences that include these phrases. Allow them to change the verb form where necessary.

Key:

1. sparked a wave of
2. embracing the trend
3. unique selling point
4. necessity is the mother of invention

6. Discussion

In small groups, students discuss the questions which expand on topics from the article. Hold a short whole-class feedback session and compare and contrast each group's answers and input. If you are teaching an online class or a one-to-one lesson, give the learner(s) plenty of time to consider their responses to each of the discussion questions.

If your students are not yet in employment, adapt the questions to make them relevant to a university or college situation. For example, you could also find out what IT safeguards they use on their personal devices.

7. Wider business theme – A mandatory in-work training course

Encourage students to discuss the pros and cons of each version of the mandatory training course. Explain that for the purposes of this task they all work in the same department of the company and that the head of the Department has insisted that they come to a consensus on the version of the course they will all take.

The students should hold a department meeting in which they must agree which version of the training course they will take. They may need to hold further discussions and make compromises, but they must come to an agreement.

Lastly, they need to agree on the wording of the email which will be sent to the head of department stating which version of the course the department will take and the main reasons for this decision. They should take into account that they need to copy in the next level of management.