

## A new approach to retail sales and ecommerce

**Level:** Advanced (C1–C2)

**Time:** 60–90 minutes

**Business topics:** Online sales, testing the market, managing growth, fulfilling orders

**Business language focus:** Factors associated with retail and sales, such as brand, order fulfilment and ecommerce

**Activities:** In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about it;
- look at business-specific words and expressions and apply them to their own personal work experience;
- discuss aspects of the article in greater depth;
- research and discuss setting up an online business and selecting a product or products to sell.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student, internet access for exercise 6

**Group size:** All of the tasks can be completed in pairs or groups, so that as much communication as possible takes place in the class. However, this lesson plan can also be used in a one-to-one teaching situation.

This lesson is based on an authentic article, republished here with its full, original text. The article discusses changing approaches to retail sales and the increasing role of ecommerce.

### 1. Warmer

Students rank the shopping methods according to their own shopping habits. In a group class, they can then compare their ranking with other students and discuss why they like/dislike each method.

### 2. Key words and expressions

Students search for words and expressions in the text and write them next to the definitions while noticing how the words are used in context.

**Key:**

- |                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>retailer</i>          | 7. <i>lead time</i>  |
| 2. <i>consumer</i>          | 8. <i>turnover</i>   |
| 3. <i>bricks-and-mortar</i> | 9. <i>warehouse</i>  |
| 4. <i>ecommerce</i>         | 10. <i>vibrant</i>   |
| 5. <i>revenue</i>           | 11. <i>inventory</i> |
| 6. <i>niche</i>             | 12. <i>minimised</i> |

### 3. Understanding the article

Students work in pairs and answer the questions with as much information as possible from the article.

**Key:**

1. *A static space with large plate glass windows, a checkout and shelves of shiny products.*
2. *With a calibrated mix of web and bricks-and-mortar sales.*
3. *Speed and focus on one niche of customer – 16-to-30-year-olds.*
4. *Risks can be exacerbated. The solution is to get suppliers to grow at the same rate.*
5. *Because people have become aware of what they are treating their skin, face and bodies with.*
6. *It updates the retailer's inventory instantly and minimises errors.*

## 4. Business language

In part a, students read the business words and phrases in the box and find and underline them in the article, noticing how they were used in context.

In part b, students then use the words and phrases to complete the sentences before, in part c, deciding which of them are likely to be useful for them and writing sentences of their own that contain these words but also reflect their own company's activity or the potential activity of a company they might work for in the future. E.g. a student decides that *growth* and *capital light* are not important for them but that being able to talk about *brand* and *stock* is, so they ignore the financial aspects of the company and concentrate on writing sentences that focus on the product and how to sell it.

### Key:

1. *order fulfilment*
2. *sector*
3. *communications director*
4. *brand*
5. *retail outlet*
6. *stock*
7. *growth*
8. *capital light*
9. *process*
10. *venture*

## 5. Discussion

In small groups, students discuss the questions which pick up on and expand on topics and quotes from the article. Hold a short whole-group feedback session and compare and contrast each group's answers and input.

## 6. Wider business theme

In part a, ask students to go online and visit the FT 1000 list: [www.ft.com/content/238174d2-3139-11e9-8744-e7016697f225](http://www.ft.com/content/238174d2-3139-11e9-8744-e7016697f225). They can either follow the link or search 'FT 1000'. First, they should look at the table to find out the top ten companies and their sectors, before choosing a company and doing further internet research on both the company and its sector, either individually or in pairs. Encourage them to make notes in the boxes. Students should then each present their company and sector to the class. Note: You may wish to assign companies to students rather than allowing them to choose, so that

students learn about all the different sectors. Encourage them to ask each other questions if there are things they don't understand.

### Key:

2019's FT 1000 lists the top ten companies and sectors as follows:

1. *Blue Motor Finance – Financial Services*
2. *Deliveroo – Food & Beverage*
3. *Taxify – Technology*
4. *Solectric – Technology*
5. *Psioxus Therapeutics – Pharmaceuticals*
6. *Housekeep – Technology*
7. *Crep Protect – Fashion*
8. *Viajes Libratur (iTravex) – Travel & Leisure*
9. *Darktrace – Cyber Security*
10. *NBWM – Fintech*

Then, in part b, ask students to work individually and think of an ecommerce business idea. They should note the advantages and disadvantages of the product or service they choose. They then present their ideas to the class. The research could be done as homework, if necessary, and the ideas presented in their next lesson.



### One-to-one teaching

This business idea task can be adapted so that the student does the above as homework and then reports back to you in the next lesson what they decided. They should also be prepared to present their ideas as a business plan.