

Small car companies struggle to adapt to change

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Business topics: Engineering and construction, change management, sustainability

Business language focus: Language associated with manufacturing, cost, the car industry, economies of scale

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 a specific context;
- discuss aspects of the article in greater depth;
- research an issue connected to the article and present it to another group.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student, internet access for Exercise 6 (if available)

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 talks about how smaller car companies are likely to struggle to adapt to changes in the industry such as electric vehicles and self-driving cars.

1. Warmer

Ask students to write down their ideas individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Feedback as a whole class.

To prepare students for reading the article, you may want to have a discussion about how important the size of a company is. Ask them why they think it's important and if other students agree.

The article will explore why size is important in manufacturing. Having a large-size company can reduce costs, improve negotiation power and reduce risk. This is because larger companies have access to multiple markets.

2. Key words and expressions

Elicit ideas about the meaning of 'scale' from the group. If a student gives the general meaning, 'the size of something', ask if anyone knows what it means in a business context – in simplest terms, 'the benefits of being big'.

Next, ask students to quickly read the article and write a definition of the term *scale*, setting a time limit of approximately five minutes.

When students have finished, ask them to compare their definitions in pairs and then check the ideas in open class.

Key:

scale: The benefits of being big, such as reduced costs, greater negotiating power and more resources.

3. Understanding the article and Business language

A

Ask learners to read the questions and find the word for each one in the article.

Key:

1. *consolidation / co-operation*
2. *critical*
3. *groups*
4. *mergers / relationships*
5. *susceptibility*
6. *agility*

B

Ask students to read the article more carefully and answer the questions. When they've finished, ask them to compare their answers in pairs.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *Because costs of electric and driverless cars are making business more difficult, so scale is likely to be the only way for brands to survive*
2. *Car manufacturers need more resources to adapt to changes in the industry.*
3. *BMW and Daimler / VW and Ford*
4. *Any opportunity to make the company stronger is good*
5. *Because they're globally spread*
6. *Because they're too small to get scale so need to adapt to changes quickly.*

4. Discussion

Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. Monitor and record examples of both good language and errors. Lead a general discussion and feedback session at the end of the activity.

5. Wider Business Theme – Scale

Divide students into groups of three or four. Half of the groups will be A and the other half will be B.

Explain that the A groups should prepare a presentation on the benefits of being big and the B groups should prepare a presentation on the benefits of being small and niche.

Encourage the groups to use the internet to research their ideas, if available.

As groups work, monitor and help where necessary.

Ask the groups to give their presentations. Students then discuss which ideas are the most convincing.

Note down errors and good language during the presentations and lead a feedback session with the whole class.



One-to-one teaching

Ask the student to choose one of the roles from either group A or group B and prepare the presentation for homework.