

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

Level: Intermediate to upper intermediate (B1–B2)

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;
- test their understanding of the text;
- 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 their boss 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 news 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 the students time to read through the questions and make notes before discussing their answers together in a short feedback session.

2. Key words

Ask the students to match the key words in the box to the definitions. Then, they should find the words in the text using the paragraph numbers. Encourage them to notice how the words are used in context.

Key:

1. *commonplace*
2. *sufficient*
3. *multidisciplinary*
4. *application*
5. *prospective*
6. *retaining*
7. *talent*
8. *diminished*
9. *resume*
10. *hurdles*

3. Understanding the article

Ask the students to test how well they have understood the text by deciding whether the statements are true or false. They should correct any false statements.

Key:

1. *False. Even before the pandemic there was a strong trend towards more digital knowledge courses being taught that involved subjects such as artificial intelligence and cyber security.*

2. *False. It is held face-to-face over 2 days, and if the participants want it, course tutors provide extra materials online.*
3. *True.*
4. *True.*
5. *False. The course gets them to think about the business models created by new technology and helps them learn new skills that will help them deal with and understand this.*
6. *True.*
7. *True.*
8. *False. After the crisis, more courses are likely to be delivered in blended and online formats as staff, professors and students will most likely be much more willing and open to this.*

4. Business language – collocations

For part a, ask students to match the words to make collocations from the article. Point out that although other collocations may be possible, they are looking for the ones that they already read in the article. Then, in part b, they should scan the article to check their answers, before saying whether each of the collocations is more connected with technology or with learning in part c. Finally, for part d, students should take turns to explain to a partner what the collocations mean using their own words wherever possible. This whole task can be done in pairs or small groups to encourage speaking and collaboration.

Key for Parts a, c, d

1. *digital knowledge; T; things you know about anything to do with computers and new technology*
2. *artificial intelligence; T; the use of computer technology to make computers and other machines think and do things in the way that people can*
3. *cyber security; T; safety when relating to computers and the internet*
4. *remote tuition; L; teaching done from a distance; not face to face in a classroom but probably online*
5. *IT networks; T; groups of computers that are linked together (IT = information technology)*
6. *supplementary materials; L; course papers and information that are in addition to the ones deemed essential*
7. *technical insight; T; a chance to understand something or learn more about technical matters*
8. *prospective learners; L; people who are likely to want to learn or do a course in the (near) future*

5. Business language – Multi-word phrases

For part a, ask students to find two 3-word phrases in the article which match the definitions and write them on the lines. The paragraph numbers are also given to help them.

In part b, the students should use the phrases to complete the business-related sentences.

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

Key:

- a.
 1. *embracing the trend*
 2. *unique selling point*
- b.
 1. *embracing the trend*
 2. *unique selling point*
 3. *unique selling point*
 4. *embracing the trend*

6. Discussion

In small groups, students should 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. You could also find out what IT safeguards they use on their own personal devices.

7. Wider business theme – An in-work training course

Explain that for the purposes of this task the students all work in the same department of a company.

Working on their own for part a, students should read the instructions for the task and the box with the information about the versions of the course that are available to

them. They think about the pros and cons of each version of the training course and make notes about which version they prefer and give at least two reasons why.

For part b, ask students to work together and hold an informal department meeting in which they must agree on the version of the training course they will do. They may need to hold further discussions and make compromises, but they must come to an agreement.

Finally, for part c, students collaborate on the wording of an email which will be sent to their boss stating the version of the course the department will take and the main reasons for this decision.