

Coffee shops take a hit in Silicon Valley – Advanced Teacher's notes

Title of the lesson: Coffee shops take a hit in Silicon Valley

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: 90 minutes

Groups: one-to-one, small groups, whole class

Business topics: meetings; networking

Business language focus: first and second conditionals, prepositions

Skills: reading, speaking, writing

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Overview: This lesson is based on an authentic article from a trusted news source. The article is about the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on Silicon Valley's coffee shops, which rely on trade from tech professionals. The author suggests that the dramatic increase in remote working could be a permanent move, but that if tech professionals can no longer serendipitously meet in real life then this could stifle creative ideas.

1. Warmer

- a. Put students in small groups of two or three to look at the images and discuss the questions. Get a few groups to feed back to the class on the **advantages and disadvantages of each of these type of meetings.**

2. Key words and expressions

- a. Ask the students to find the words or phrases in the article that match the definitions.

Key:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. ramshackle | 7. ambient |
| 2. venture capitalist | 8. hang-out |
| 3. hipper | 9. low-key |
| 4. serendipity | 10. pre-eminent |
| 5. nerdy | 11. hub |
| 6. hubbub | 12. mass exodus |

3. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to work in pairs to do this. They should identify first what is said and then whether it is a fact or an opinion

Key:

1. *It was a favourite spot for venture capitalists.* **F**
2. *It can be irritating for them to hear the constant tech talk.* **O**
3. *It's hard to witness when it is surrounded by so much money.* **O**
4. *In the early days, the team used to do work in Red Rock Coffee.* **F**
5. *They will allow their employees to work from anywhere after the pandemic passes.* **F**
6. *Everyone has been grateful for the existence of social media and video conferencing during the coronavirus pandemic.* **O**
7. *The shift to more remote working will further reduce the opportunities for serendipity post pandemic.* **O**
8. *It is very expensive and would still feel expensive even if rents dropped by 25 per cent.* **O**

4. Business language – first and second conditionals

- a. Students should first look at the ideas in the prompts to understand which type of conditional sentence to write. There is more than one possible correct answer for these sentences. For example, students can choose to use *not able* or *can't*. 1, 2, 5 are probably going to be written in first conditional. 3 and 4 are probably going to be written in second conditional.

Key: Possible answers:

1. *If Red Rock doesn't raise enough money, it will have to shut down.*
2. *If tech workers can't meet in real life, there will be fewer opportunities to meet people unexpectedly.*
3. *If the tech companies gave money to help Red Rock, it would be able to stay open.*
4. *Even if rents dropped in San Francisco by 25 per cent, it would still be expensive.*
5. *If there are no physical places for tech workers to meet unexpected people, Silicon Valley could become less important in the tech world.*

- b. When students have written their sentences about the pandemic in their area, get them to share the sentences with a partner. Then ask for some examples from the class.

5. Business language – prepositions

- a. Tell students that all the phrases are in the article. Ask them to try not to look back at the article to complete the activity, but let them read it to check their answers.

Key:

1. *to;* 2. *on;* 3. *to;* 4. *on/upon;* 5. *away*

- b. Ask the students to complete the sentences with the correct phrase from activity a. Let them know that they will need to modify some of the expressions to the correct tense.

Key:

1. *fell victim to*
2. *ebbing away*
3. *thrives on*
4. *thrust; on*
5. *upped sticks to*

- c. Have students work individually. Then, ask a few members of the class to share their sentences.

6. Discussion questions

Put students in small groups of three or four to discuss the questions. Start by getting them to consider the first question separately to analyse the language. Get groups

to feed back on their opinions of the style of writing.

You could use this opportunity to share other phrases with the class and discuss them.

Then, allow the groups more time to discuss the following three questions before getting feedback from each group.

7. Wider business theme – Creative meetings

- a. Put students into groups of three or four. Tell them that they are going to have a business meeting about how to make meetings more creative and productive. Give each group a different scenario for their meeting. Here are some ideas. Choose those that are practical for your teaching situation. Set a time limit of 15-20 minutes.

- Walking (have students leave the room they are in and go for a walk outside)
- Play a game (before the meeting, have students play an icebreaker game, e.g. 'Two Truths, One Lie' where each person thinks of two truths and a believable lie about themselves and has the others try to guess the lie)
- Brainstorm (have students brainstorm all their ideas individually before discussing them one-by-one)
- Snacks (make sure students have some light snacks, e.g. biscuits or fruit at the start of their meeting)

- b. Ask each group to present their ideas on how to make meetings more creative to the class. Then ask them for their opinions about their meeting scenario. Tell students to take notes on the other teams' scenarios while they are presenting. Explain that they will need these notes to write an article.

- c. The article on creative meetings is best set as homework. You could set a word limit of 200–300 words.