

## Creature comforts

**Level:** Intermediate upwards

**Timing:** Approximately 90 minutes

**Material needed:** One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

**Group size:** Any

### Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 4/2011. In the article, which deals with many aspects of the pet-care industry, the author discusses the estimated global revenue of the industry as well as its many sides – innovative, necessary and emotional.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language and also to develop and practise skills that could be useful in business situations, especially when discussing innovative business ideas and franchises.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

### Warmer

These questions aim to introduce the topic of animals and pets. They will help you find out which of the students has a pet or works with animals. This knowledge will be useful for later tasks. It also aims to introduce the diverse reasons people may have for keeping a pet. To extend the task, you could ask the students to divide the reasons they came up with into emotional and rational, e.g. having another living being around (emotional) or to help on the farm (rational).

### True or false?

The students should read and discuss the statements and decide which are true. As all the statements are true, find out if the students were surprised by any of them and why.

### Pet facts

- Global revenues for the pet-care industry are estimated at \$81 billion (€57 billion) a year. Source: Euromonitor International consumer

research ([www.euromonitor.com](http://www.euromonitor.com))

- Sixty-five per cent of UK pet owners believe that having pets in the workplace is "beneficial to health and well-being". Source: Petplan insurance report, "Petplan Pet Census 2011" ([www.petplan.co.uk](http://www.petplan.co.uk))
- Sixty-three per cent of US households have at least one pet. Source: American Pet Products Association ([www.americanpetproducts.org](http://www.americanpetproducts.org))
- Dog ownership is responsible for about 100,000 jobs in Germany, according to a 2006 study. Source: "Ökonomische Gesamtbetrachtung der Hundehaltung in Deutschland", University of Göttingen
- Fifty-four per cent of Britons say they would include a pet in a will. Source: "Petplan Pet Census 2011"

### Key words

Looking at these key words and their meanings prior to reading will help the students understand the article. Scanning the article to find the words will give the students a good insight into what the article is about. The task can be done communicatively by asking the students to work in pairs and compare their answers with the group. After they have answered these questions, they can quietly read the article for themselves. The words 1-15 appear in the task in the same order as they appear in the article.

#### Key

- franchise;
- revenue;
- lucrative;
- prescription;
- vet;
- profitability;
- will;
- innovation;
- conflict;
- guilt;
- litter box;
- cater for;
- doubt;
- companionship;
- grief councillor

### Find the information

This task can be done using the article for reference or as pair work with the article turned face down to see how much the students understood and can remember.

#### Key

- the American Pet Products Association (see paragraph 2) and Petplan (see paragraph 6)
- Dogtopia (see paragraph 4). DoodyCalls (see paragraph 8)
- acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, osteopathy, dentistry, ophthalmology and dermatology
- small animals such as cats, dogs and hamsters
- because they are more physically active
- police and watchdogs, guide dogs, search-and-rescue dogs and "therapy dogs" (see paragraph 11)

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### Compound adjective + noun phrases

Students should look at the example and then try to find ten further examples of compound adjective and noun phrases in the article using the words in the word cloud. Let them know that the words may be used more than once.

**Note:** the bigger the words in the word cloud, the more often they appear in the phrases.

**Key:** *day-care centres; cost-cutting measures; cost-cutting strategies; pet-food producers; financial systems designer; multimillion-dollar businesses; large-animal veterinarians; dog-grooming businesses; healthcare programmes; search-and-rescue dogs*

### Teaching and learning strategy: Compound adjectives

Compound adjectives are made up of two or more words put together to create a new adjective. They are often joined together by a hyphen and are usually used to describe or modify a noun. The example phrases in the article are of three kinds: adjective + adjective + noun, adjective + verb + noun and adjective + noun + noun. These kinds of descriptive phrases are common in business English, especially in the areas of sales and marketing.

Compound adjectives are not as restrictive as many other aspects of English and so students can be encouraged to experiment with the language and make up their own combinations.

### Discussion

Get the students to discuss some or all of these questions. If you have a large group, you could divide the questions between small groups of students, set a time limit on the discussions and then ask for class feedback

### Web task

The students choose an animal and carry out internet research to find out the approximate yearly costs of keeping it. They should compare the costs in their country to those in either the US or the UK. If you have a large group, divide the students into pairs or small groups and allocate them an animal to research. Each pair or group should then present the results of their research to the others.

### Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

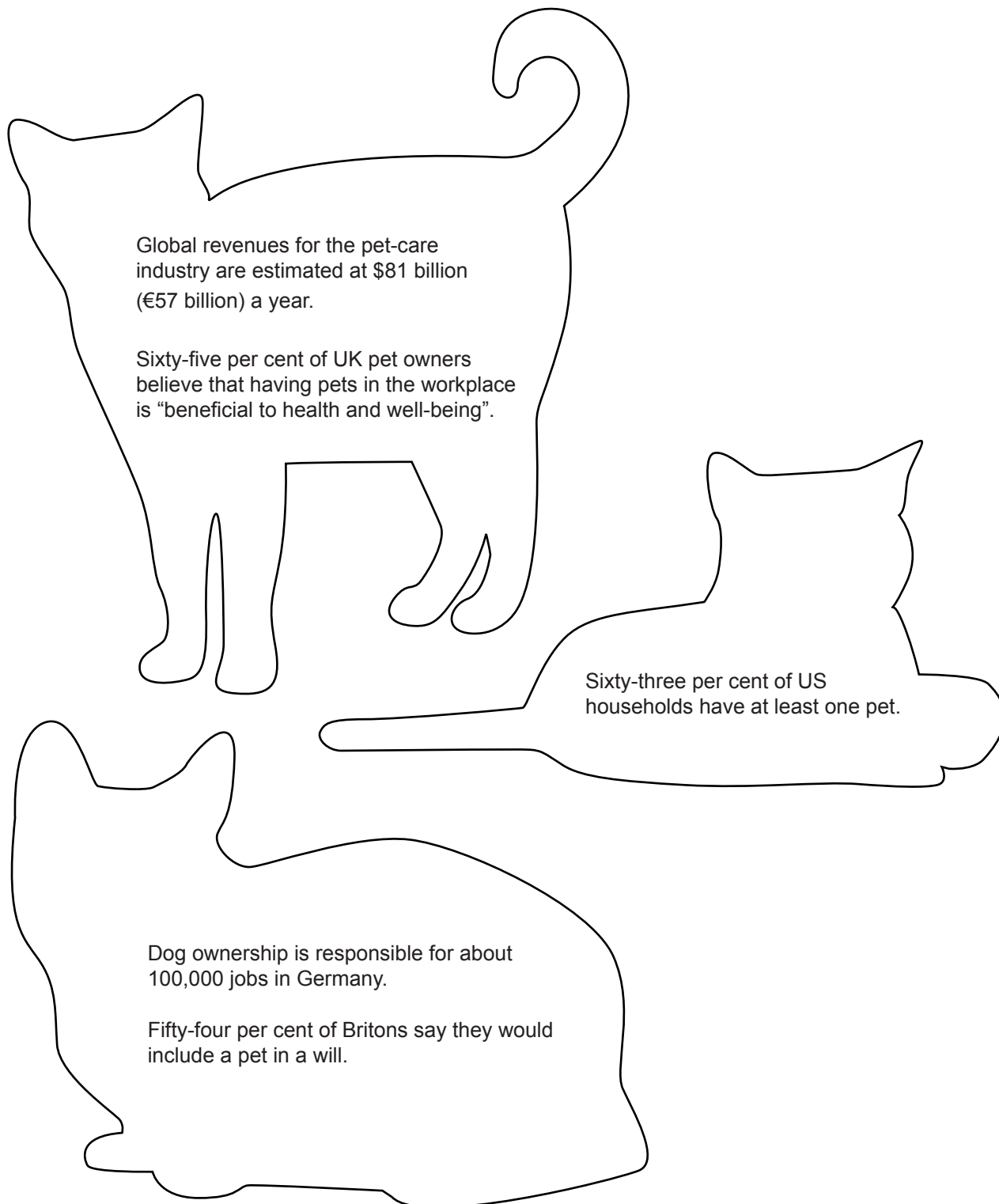
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### 1 Warmer

Why do people keep animals? Think of at least ten reasons.

### 2 True or false?

Which of these statements do you think are true?



## Creature comforts

### 3 Key words

Match the key words in the box with their meanings and then scan the article to read them in context.

lucrative   vet   prescription   revenue   franchise   conflict   guilt   litter box  
will   innovation   profitability   cater for   grief councillor   companionship   doubt

1. an agreement for someone to sell a company's products or services in exchange for a payment or part of the profits \_\_\_\_\_
2. income from business activities \_\_\_\_\_
3. bringing a lot of money \_\_\_\_\_
4. a particular medicine that a doctor has told you to take \_\_\_\_\_
5. an animal doctor \_\_\_\_\_
6. the degree to which something gives you financial benefits \_\_\_\_\_
7. a legal document that explains what you want to happen to your money and possessions after you die \_\_\_\_\_
8. the invention or use of new ideas, methods, equipment, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
9. a situation in which it is difficult for two things to exist together or be true at the same time \_\_\_\_\_
10. a feeling of being ashamed and sorry because you have done something wrong \_\_\_\_\_
11. an indoor cat toilet \_\_\_\_\_
12. to provide people with everything they want or need \_\_\_\_\_
13. a feeling of not being certain about something \_\_\_\_\_
14. the relationship you have with a good friend or pet who spends a lot of time with you \_\_\_\_\_
15. a person who helps you through difficult and sad times after someone has died \_\_\_\_\_

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by Margaret Davis

**Delicacies, collars with precious stones, medication for a weak heart, animal hotels: Who wouldn't do everything for their dog or cat just to make sure their darling is happy? Margaret Davis reports about what's become a very lucrative industry.**



pet-insurance company, did a survey of 10,000 pet owners in Britain ("Petplan Pet Census 2011"). Over 80 per cent said they had not taken any cost-cutting measures, despite the recession. Reported cost-cutting strategies included buying cheaper brands of pet food (11 per cent) and reducing the number of toys and treats (seven per cent). Two per cent said they had found another

1 Leo had liver disease. When the vet suggested that the 16-year-old cat might well benefit from prescription cat food, his owners gulped – just once – at the price, but decided to provide it for him until his death, over a year later. Did the special cat food help? Well, no one is really sure, but Leo was part of the family, and if a special diet could keep him happy longer, his people wanted to try it.

home for a pet after the birth of a child. Only one per cent said they had found another home for an animal because of their own financial situation.

2 Leo's owners – 'parents', as the pet-care industry likes to call them – are not alone. According to the American Pet Products Association (APPA), pet owners in the US spend nearly \$10 billion a year on veterinary services. In fact, a 2011 APPA survey of pet owners found that 16 per cent of dog owners and 13 per cent of cat owners said they would provide medical treatment for their pets before getting any sort of treatment for themselves.

7 Innovation is key to the profitability of the industry. On the medical side, treatments for heart disease and cancer have become more and more complex. The number of complementary treatments has also increased to include areas such as acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, osteopathy, dentistry, ophthalmology and dermatology. Pet-food producers are now diversifying into organic products, as well as speciality foods for different breeds, age groups and medical problems. Special pet foods cater for ethical and religious beliefs – for example, vegetarian or kosher. Exclusive – some might say bizarre – ingredients in speciality foods include elk antler, cranberries and blueberries.

3 Medical care is only one aspect of the pet-care industry, which has total global revenues estimated at about \$81 billion (€57 billion). Pet owners also spend billions on food, on typical accessories such as dog collars and leashes, as well as on services like grooming and boarding kennels. Kennels are sometimes called "pet hotels" and, increasingly, working pet owners put their animals into dog day care.

8 New professions have also developed as a direct result of the pet industry, including 'grief counsellors' to help individuals and families deal with the death of a pet. Websites, blogs and new business opportunities are everywhere. DoodyCalls, for example, is an 11-year-old franchise that removes animal excrement from private property. Its 34-year-old founder, Jacob D'Aniello, is a former financial-systems designer for a technology company. With more than 40 franchises in 23 states, DoodyCalls is a multimillion-dollar business. Asked by *Washington Business Journal* how he described his job, D'Aniello answered: "I tell people we pick up poop, but we pick up more of it than anyone else." The company plans to expand into the cat business by offering a cleaning service for litter boxes.

4 "Helping pet parents all over the country" is the motto of Dogtopia, a chain of franchise dog day-care centres founded near Washington, DC, in 2002. Founder Amy Nichols, 37, knows from experience the conflicts between the demands of a job and pet ownership. Dogtopia, which now has 23 franchises, charges between \$27 and \$33 a day for care (or about \$8,000 a year). Dogtopia now has yearly revenues of over \$11 million.

5 "We aren't in the doggie business," Nichols told *The Washington Post*. "We are in the business of guilt relief." Guilt: that's something that working parents of human children could identify with – and it's one of the reasons the pet-care industry has been so successful. Not only are pets considered part of the family, but many people treat their animals as though they actually were children – 54 per cent of Britons, for example, say they would include a pet in a will.

9 Meanwhile, the popularity of pets such as cats and dogs has led to a shortage of large-animal veterinarians in the US. The

6 Although the recession has forced some consumers to change their spending habits, the care and feeding of household pets has been only marginally affected. Petplan, the world's largest

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10 American Veterinary Medical Association says that only about four per cent of new vets want to work in large-animal practices, where farm animals are treated. The reasons are simple: working with cats, dogs or hamsters brings in more money, with shorter working hours and better working conditions.

10 Germans spend more than €3 billion a year on their pets, the third-highest figure in Europe after Britain and France. Those who still doubt the economic worth of pets might want to consult a 2006 study on the value of dogs to the economy (“Ökonomische Gesamtbetrachtung der Hundehaltung in Deutschland”) by Dr Renate Ohr and Dr Götz Zeddies of the University of Göttingen. The authors calculate yearly revenues of around €5 billion in Germany, including about 100,000 jobs in fields such as veterinary medicine, dog-breeding and dog-grooming businesses, as well as the manufacture of dog food and other products. Local communities earn more in dog tax than it costs them to clean up after the animals, the authors say, adding that dog owners in general are healthier because they are more physically active and therefore use state health-care programmes less often than people without dogs.

11 Further benefits, according to the authors, are provided by a variety of working dogs, such as police and watchdogs, as well as guide dogs. Sniffer dogs are trained to find drugs or bombs, while search-and-rescue dogs find lost hikers or people trapped by avalanches. In the relatively new field of “therapy dogs”, pets are trained to visit hospitals and other institutions.

12 As for Leo, although no one could ever have described him as useful, he provided his owners with many years of companionship. And, like most pet parents, they thought that this was more than enough.



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#### 4 Find the information

Read the article and answer the following questions:

1. Who ran the two surveys of pet owners? What did they find out?
2. What kinds of businesses are Dogtopia and DoodyCalls. What do you know about them?
3. What complementary medical treatments for animals does the article mention?
4. Which animals are newly qualified vets most likely to treat and why?
5. Why are dog owners often healthier than people who do not have a dog?
6. Which type of working animals are mentioned in the article? What do they do?

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### 5 Compound adjective + noun phrases

Combine sets of three words from the word cloud to make ten further descriptive phrases from the article. You may use the words more than once.



Example: *pet-care industry*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

### 6 Discussion

- Do you have a pet? Have you ever had one in the past? Are you likely to get one in the future?
- How much money do you think you (or your people you know) spend on their pets?
- Are there any working animals in your line of business?
- Can you think of any further pet accessories or services that are not mentioned in the article?
- Would you like to work in the pet-care industry?
- Comedian WC Fields is reputed to have said: "Never work with animals or children". Do you agree with him?

### 7 Web task

Find out the approximate yearly costs of keeping one of the following animals: dogs, cats, horses, rabbits or another of your choice. Then fill in the table below.

provisions	approximate annual costs – my country	approximate annual costs – US or UK
food		
medical care		
insurance		
holiday care		
(e.g. kennels, cattery)		
equipment and accessories (e.g. collars, coats, beds)		
other (e.g. stables, training, day care, grooming)		

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Vocabulary record: Creature comforts

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
estimate			
	survey		
		complementary	
			successfully

Vocabulary record

