

Trial and error paves the way to success

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes (plus extra time to create an infographic)

Business topics: Space ventures, experimentation, trial and error, decision-making, measuring risk

Business language: Useful business vocabulary, noun phrases

Activities: Discussing experimentation and failure, key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, critical thinking & problem solving (proposing a pilot)

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

Overview: This article discusses how most companies can learn from the space industry's trial-and-error mindset. It cites several companies that successfully encourage experimentation and addresses the risk of being on perpetual pilot.

1. Warmer

- a. Ask students to work in pairs and discuss the scenario. This will help to set the scene for the reading. Elicit main ideas that arise from the discussion from the whole class.

2. Key words

Divide the class into pairs and ask each pair to answer either the first (1-6) or second half (7-12) of the questions. Then regroup students so they can share and exchange their answers with someone who completed a different set. Then go over answers with the whole class.

Key:

1. *record*
2. *condemn, condemned*
3. *trial*
4. *trigger*

5. *predictable*
6. *revert to, reverted to*
7. *pilot*
8. *mindset*
9. *unconstrained*
10. *hierarchy*
11. *perpetual*
12. *paralysed*

As an extension you can focus on pronunciation, and ask students to identify the word stress in each word. For example:

record, trial, trigger, pilot, mindset, condemned, revert, paralysed, unconstrained, hierarchy, perpetual

3. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to scan the article to complete this activity and then to compare their answers. Remind them that they don't need to read the whole article each time but that they should rather look over it very quickly to locate the information and then read that section carefully.

Key:

1. *Alice Bunn*
2. *Rita McGrath and Ram Charan*
3. *All Turtles*
4. *Costas Andriopoulos*
5. *Elon Musk*
6. *LauncherOne*
7. *Phil Libin*

4. Business language

- a and b. Ask students to work individually to match the words and scan the article. Then ask them to compare their answers in pairs or small groups and match them with their meanings.

Key:

1. *flight heritage, d*
2. *launch system, e*
3. *trade body, a*
4. *target orbit, g*
5. *space venture, f*
6. *product studio, b*
7. *customer experience, c*

- c. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to recall how the phrases were used in the article.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *Flight heritage was mentioned after Virgin Orbit's rocket exploded after launch. (A failure after some success)*
2. *Flight heritage describes the success record of a launch system (e.g. of a satellite or rocket).*
3. *UKSpace is an example of a space trade body.*
4. *LauncherOne did not reach its target orbit.*
5. *Virgin Orbit is (Richard Branson's) a private space venture.*
6. *All Turtles is a product studio.*
7. *Digital companies can change customer experience at the touch of a button or test different options at the same time.*

5. Discussion

- a. Have students first make some notes individually and then get them to discuss the statements in small groups. Allow someone from each group to summarise their opinions to the rest of the class.

6. Wider business theme – critical thinking & problem solving

- a. Put students in pairs or small groups. Have them choose an area of opportunity in a place of work or study. If they struggle to reach an agreement, you can refer them back to the Warmer business dilemma. Ask students to discuss the questions in as much detail as possible.
- b. Go over useful language with the class and elicit any other phrases that might be useful for their presentation. Ask students to work together to come up with their visual, but tell them that they are all going to present their ideas. Once students are ready, regroup them, so that one person from each pair or group is now in a new group with someone from two to three other pairs or groups. Have them present their proposals and provide feedback to each other.

This can also be done as a recorded speaking activity for homework.