

Trial and error paves the way to success

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes (plus extra time for case development)

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

Business language: Useful business vocabulary, phrases, word formation (experimentation)

Activities: Discussing experimentation and failure, key words, understanding the text, business language, word formation, 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. Answers may vary.

2. Key words

Have students complete the task individually and compare their answers in pairs. Elicit answers from the whole class.

Key:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>launch</i> | 8. <i>status quo</i> |
| 2. <i>postmortem</i> | 9. <i>immutable</i> |
| 3. <i>anomaly, anomalies</i> | 10. <i>pilot</i> |
| 4. <i>payload</i> | 11. <i>vocal</i> |
| 5. <i>blot</i> | 12. <i>unconstrained</i> |
| 6. <i>pioneering</i> | 13. <i>pitfall, pitfalls</i> |
| 7. <i>trial</i> | 14. <i>paralysed</i> |

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

payload, status, pilot, vocal, pitfall, paralysed, postmortem, anomaly, immutable, unconstrained pioneering

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. *All Turtles*
2. *Rita McGrath and Ram Charan*
3. *Alice Bunn*
4. *Costas Andriopoulos*
5. *Elon Musk*
6. *Costas Andriopoulos*
7. *LauncherOne (rocket)*
8. *Phil Libin*
9. *World Economic Forum*

4. Business language – word formation

- a. Ask students to work individually to transform the words and complete the statements. Then ask them to compare their answers in pairs or small groups.

Key:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. <i>Experimentation</i> | 4. <i>perpetual</i> |
| 2. <i>failure</i> | 5. <i>opportunities</i> |
| 3. <i>error</i> | 6. <i>shot</i> |

- b. Ask students to complete the task and share their opinions in pairs. Elicit some answers to explore any interesting ideas.

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 into pairs or small groups. Have them discuss areas of opportunity in their company. They can refer back to the Business dilemma in Activity 1a if they cannot find a real situation from their workplace. Ask students to discuss the questions in as much detail as possible. Explain that the questions will help them organise their ideas while analysing the case they would like to develop.
- 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 workflow but tell them that they are all going to present their own group's 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 workflow proposals and provide feedback to each other.

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