

EBC International TEFL Certificate Teaching Business English Guide



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Introduction

What is Business English?

Teaching **Business English** involves teaching English to adults working in businesses of one kind or another or preparing to work in the field of business. The companies could be large multinationals, small private companies or even state-run concerns involved with providing products or services. Courses may be long or short. Classes may be taught in-company, in a language school, in rented premises or online.

Business English has much in common with General English. However, the aims of a Business English course may be radically different from those of a General English course.

The aims of **Business English** teaching, whether broad or narrow, will always relate to students' work. Sometimes this will mean teaching generalised business skills such as giving presentations, and sometimes it will mean something much more technical or academic.

Some course organisers don't differentiate between **Business English, ESP** (English for Specific Purposes) and **EAP** (English for Academic Purposes); you need to be open-minded about the area referred to as **Business English**.

The main thing to remember when considering what **Business English** is, relates to expectations. Not so much your expectations, but those of your students or their sponsors. Course organisers will have requested **Business English** because they want a course related to occupational or professional language needs. Investigating, analysing and fulfilling **Business English** students' needs are critical to the success of any **Business English** course. Therefore, investing time in the language needs research process is crucial. This process is usually called a "**Needs Analysis**". You can only plan, design and give a good Business English course if you truly know your target audience. Without a good understanding of what your students need, how can you develop a Business English course tailored to their needs and requirements?

You may think that your role as a **Business English** teacher is well-defined. However, you must consider tasks or concerns which may seem outside a standard English teacher's role. Your priority is to run successful courses. To make this possible in the field of **Business English**, you will need to consider broader issues.

The student population

The students on Business English courses might have (or be preparing for) a wide range of jobs. They could be clerical staff, executive-level directors or anything in between. They might equally well have a speciality, such as advertising or patent law. If they are young or still studying, they are unlikely to know much about their work. If they are older and more experienced (which is more likely), they may be experts in their field.

Instead of working in an office, they may work in a factory, a laboratory or out in the field (e.g., in market research or sales). The students may be studying in a group with colleagues, with total strangers, or even on their own. If bosses and their subordinates are in the same class, internal politics may affect the learning atmosphere. The subordinates may feel uncomfortable if their level of English is better than their boss.

Other factors also influence the atmosphere of Business English classes, including paying for the classes, timing, and motivation. Significant factors can be whether or not students are paying for the course themselves and whether or not lessons are inside or outside work time.

The importance and value of English at work influences student motivation. Another motivation factor is each student's attitude towards learning English and training. A final motivational factor could be future promotion prospects for employees who have superior knowledge of English. Sophisticated and stimulating management training seminars or on-the-job training focusing on tangible, immediate results can make students cynical about what they perceive to be 'traditional' classes. Alternatively, students with no formal training since leaving school may be dazzled by your modern Business English teaching techniques!

Whether students are overly confident or unmotivated, you need not worry! Even students preoccupied with work and seem uninterested in English can become highly motivated. If the need for English in their work is made clear to them and they are treated as partners in the business of learning, they will want to learn. This is because of Business English's scope for language learning that is quantifiably useful to your students.

The purpose of a Business English course

The purpose of a Business English course is to fulfil students' work-related needs. These needs are usually specific and can cover many language areas. For example, suppose a multinational corporation employs your students. In that case, their prime needs will probably be to talk over the phone, report to English speaking managers, reply to or write letters and e-mails, read publications about their subject area and perform other tasks typically associated with the workplace. On the other hand, suppose your students do business with companies abroad. In that case, their primary needs could be to survive on business trips, phone conversations, email correspondence and contract negotiation.

Students who work in an industry where the primary language is English (e.g., telecommunications or computing) will need to digest large quantities of material written in English. They may also need to give presentations or discuss their work using English.

The content of a Business English course

Since courses get set up for many different reasons, the content of individual Business English courses can vary considerably. However, the content of any particular course is usually specific. Your students' needs and objectives will always determine it.

The most successful courses are the ones that identify appropriate content and fulfil your students' needs in the shortest possible time. Since language training is expensive, your students and the companies paying for their staff to learn Business English will want cost-effectiveness. Therefore, you can fulfil your students' needs most quickly if the content suits their learning needs and is closely related to their job.

The balance of specific elements will depend on your students, their managers, priorities, and the learning process. Remember that some things get learnt faster than others, and your students will have specific strengths. For example, some students will be better at speaking, and some will be better at writing or comprehension. However, you must be sure that if you ignore the principle of needs-directed teaching, it is justifiable to you, your students and your superiors.

Language in class

The language studied is governed by your students' needs which often means high technical content and the frequent use of standard business terms.

It also means a focus on styles of speaking or writing which are appropriate to your students' working environment and the tasks they must perform. This means that your students need to develop a keen awareness of style to notice formality versus informality and directness versus indirectness. Most importantly, through language study in the classroom, your students need to understand the cultural context of language use, i.e., national culture, local culture, industrial culture, and corporate culture.

As well as the language studied in class, teacher talk (i.e., a teacher's meta-language) can also provide valuable input and exposure for students. To capitalise on this opportunity, you must make your teacher talk as adult and business-like as possible and your TTT (teacher talking time) meaningful, to the point and concise.

Teaching objectives

Your objectives for lessons and lesson stages need to be made crystal clear to students on a day-to-day basis. Your students will work with enthusiasm and intelligence if your goals are clear, thus making your life easier. If possible, give your students some of the decision-making and goal-setting. Your students may be used to making decisions, setting goals, and respecting deadlines in their day-to-day work. If they are, give them the practice and let them do it.

Methods used

While objectives are concerned with what you teach, activities and techniques focus on the 'how'. Since these can affect whether or not learning occurs, they must be selected and used with sensitivity and according to teaching aims and your students' responses.

Variety is desirable. You can successfully use a wide range of teaching techniques. However, it is vital to develop teaching principles. Your teaching principles give you a benchmark against which you can evaluate your success and the effectiveness of specific methods. In addition, you must combine methods effectively to deliver a coherent class or course.

Your students will appreciate knowing why certain methods get used for specific language areas. In addition, they will usually cooperate with more enthusiasm if they understand why things happen.

Student-teacher relationships

On the most effective courses, students and teachers work in partnership to build a constructive learning environment appropriate to individual students' professional and personal situations. As well as being a learner, the student is also a provider of information, material, and frequently business expertise. If you are teaching businesspeople, they will adopt the role of customer, and you, the teacher, will be seen as the service provider. It helps if you get used to this business model when you teach.

Accountability

Never forget that one of your roles is that of a progress tracker. Students are often used to working under pressure. They usually take for granted the idea of being accountable to their bosses. They will expect that you keep the promises you make in class. They will also expect that you are responsible for the training programme results. In addition, your students' bosses, supervisors, and the person setting up the English training in a company may want to attend and observe classes. You may also get asked to write reports regularly

that track attendance and progress. Companies paying for training expect regular progress and attendance reports.

Since your students are your customers, their level of satisfaction is also essential. If they are dissatisfied with you, you may find yourself without a job! Although business practices and contractual agreements should ensure that you get professional treatment, results-oriented managers are the norm.

Why is Business English special?

Business English is unique because of the opportunity to fulfil students' immediate needs for English. In General English classes, students' needs are rarely quick or urgent. However, work is central to most people's lives. Business English relates to students' occupational or professional needs; therefore, you have the opportunity to make a real difference to your students' day-to-day work experience.

An example of a real-life experience might serve to illustrate how real your link with students can be. I asked a student returning from a trade fair how it was. He said that there had been one valuable piece of equipment. However, he had written off the possibility of getting this for the company because he had been made well aware of budget constraints for his department.

I decided to take a less cynical attitude about budgets and helped this student. He was studying in a class of six students. He had to put together and practise a short presentation on the virtues of the equipment. I incorporated his presentation into the class.

He delivered this impromptu and informal mini presentation to his boss the next day. He came to my next class glowing. His supervisor had appreciated the longer-term advantages and cost-cutting features of the equipment and had found a way of approving its purchase.

To make Business English special, you need to build a good working relationship with your students. Relationship building is essential for people who are used to being in control and who may have limited time to attend classes. So, what do you need to do to build this relationship?

Firstly, you need to address your students appropriately and communicate with them openly and informatively.

Secondly, you need to give your students more power than is sometimes the case in a student-teacher relationship.

Thirdly, you are the teacher and the English expert, but you and your students are collectively a team. They have a problem, and you have the solution, so try and create team spirit rather than the traditional teacher-student relationship.

When students meet you halfway in a constructive working relationship, Business English is not only memorable; it can become an exciting and surprising area of teaching. As a result of your efforts to improve a few people's lives, you will likely have enlightening classes, increased job satisfaction and a window into other people's worlds. You may also see and uncover opportunities in other areas of work.

ESP / Business English

Defining ESP/Areas of specialisation

ESP (aka Business English) students need English to perform a specific work-related task, for example, welcoming guests to a hotel or reading technical manuals.

WHAT DO THEY NEED?

The most critical initial step in ESP is to determine what exactly your students need to perform their job – the Needs Analysis

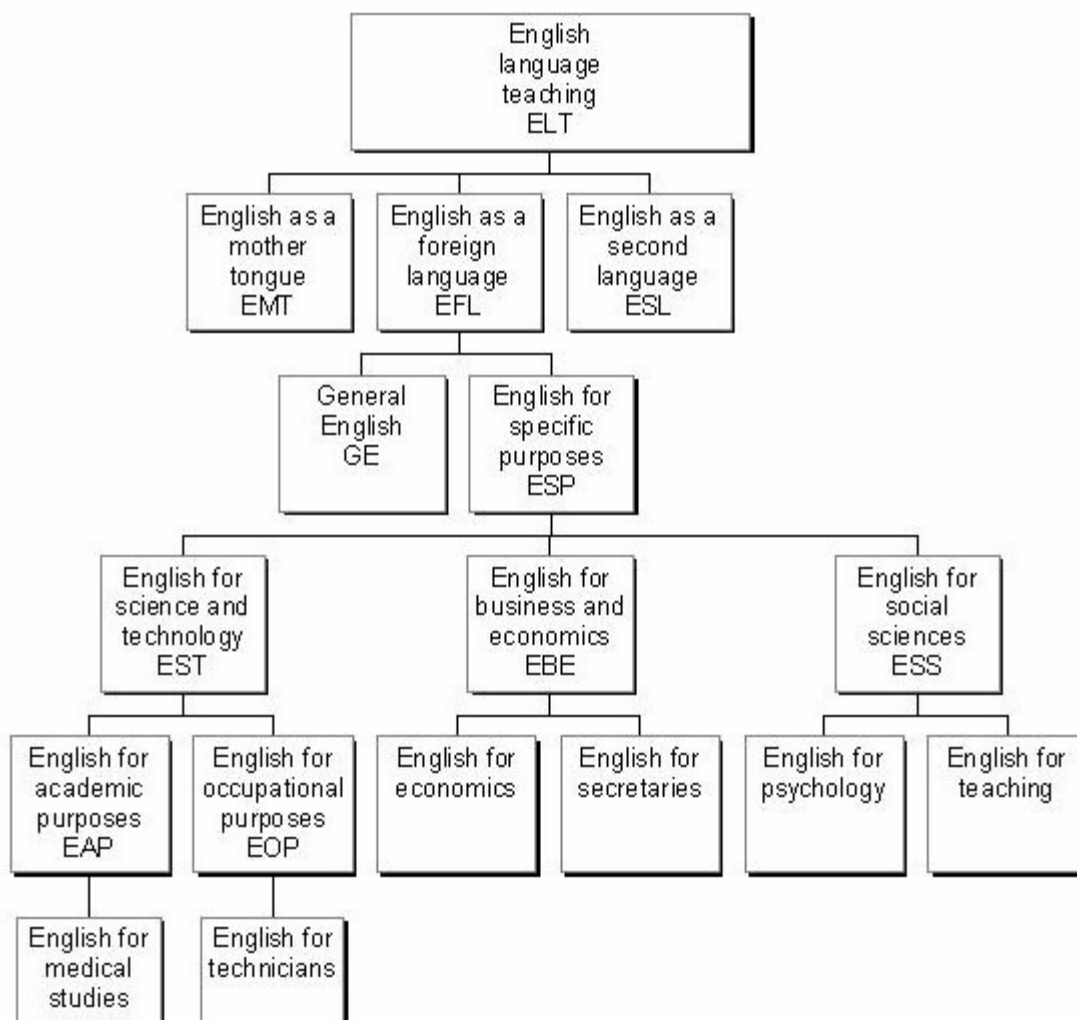
Needs Analysis

The Director of Studies usually performs the needs analysis. Here is a list of what a needs analysis involves.

- Listening and speaking needs
 - To whom do your students talk or listen?
 - Are they communicating with native English speakers?
 - What is the context of the talk?
 - Is the situation formal or informal?
 - Do they speak in public?
 - Do they have to answer questions?
 - Do they have to interrupt and correct or provide additional information?
 - Do they use the telephone or a computer?
 - Are they in charge of taking instructions in English?
- Reading/writing needs
 - What do they read or write?

- Do they work with reports, minutes, manuals?
- Do they need to act on written instructions?
- Do they read for detail? or simply skim?
- Do they write letters, emails or memos?
- Does someone help them?

English Language Teaching Tree



Teaching Business English as ESP

WHAT DOES BUSINESS ENGLISH COVER?

Business English is, as its name conveys, the use of English for business purposes. Business English is helpful in almost all business situations.

In a Business English class, you may need to target standard requirements to all the students in your lesson. Some topics might include:

- Functional language:
 - Greeting clients
 - Bargaining
 - Negotiating
 - Talking on the telephone
 - Meeting protocol
 - Conducting job interviews
 - Interviewing strategies
 - Speeches and presentations
- General business vocabulary used in:
 - Multinationals to small companies
 - Telecommunications
 - Business travel
 - Advertising
 - Finance
 - Insurance

- Business correspondence:
 - The layout of a letter, form, memo, report, etc.
 - Common standard phrases, terms, jargon, punctuation
 - Many executives rely on their secretaries for letter writing, so be prepared to teach material for writing and speaking
 - Written materials may include:
 - Memos, letters, and emails
 - Order forms: import, export, billing, invoicing
 - Resumes and cover letters
 - Results, analyses, and recommendations
 - Project, monthly and annual reports
 - Contracts, engagement letters, memoranda of understanding

Sample Needs Analysis

Here is a sample needs analysis questionnaire to be filled out by each student.

Needs Analysis Questionnaire			
What does the company you work for do?			
What is your job?			
What are your responsibilities?			
In which areas of English do you want most practice?	Speaking?	Listening?	Reading?
	Writing?	Grammar?	Vocabulary?
What do you need to do in English?	To whom do you give them?		
Give presentations	What are they about?		
Negotiate	What about?		
	With whom?		
Make phone calls	To whom?		
	What about?		
Write letters, emails, telexes, reports etc.	What about?		
Show visitors around your place of work	Who are the visitors?		
Take part in meetings and discussions	What are they interested in discussing?		
Describe technical machinery or processes	What about?		
Explain figures, graphs etc.	What?		
Socialise with clients	What is the purpose?		
Anything else?	Where?		
What areas do you feel weakest in, and what are your priorities for studying this course?			
Have you ever studied English before? Where and for how long?			
How do you intend to continue with your studies after this course?			

Day-to-day concerns

Daily planning

Effective lesson planning involves two things:

1. Honouring promises made to clients
2. Producing lessons that make a coherent course

When planning, link everything you will do in each class with the material you will use. In addition, consider the results of your needs analysis and supporting notes you took. You are translating the promises you made before the course into practical classroom reality by doing this. Finally, make sure that the activities you use are a good fit with their supporting material to create a coherent and valuable course.

On a day-by-day basis, adjust your approach in class according to students' responses. The reactions you should look for are enthusiasm and measurably improved learning. If things go well or badly, you must determine why and adapt. Never look for excuses. Based on your conclusions, consider whether your future lessons need adjusting.

Remember to teach the specific business-related English identified in the needs analysis. This should both sustain student motivation and ensure client satisfaction. Generalised grammar or fluency practice is not usually appropriate in business English. Work done in class must be helpful and linked to a learning area.

Suggested procedure for lesson planning

1. Select one or more learning areas from the needs analysis, considering individual students' specific needs and experience. Use your course outline as a guide if no needs analysis was conducted. Next, choose procedures that help you learn about your students' professional and linguistic needs.
2. When you have chosen a learning area (e.g., report-writing or departmental meetings), break it down into parts by considering questions like the following:

- Which area(s) of lexis will students need to understand or use?
- Which language functions will come into play?
- How many illustrative examples need to be taught for each language function?
- How can your students identify the stylistic differences between the illustrative examples?
- Are any significant pronunciation features for this area of language? For example, does intonation affect your students' success in meetings?
- Do any grammatical points need to be mastered to perform effectively?
- Is accuracy important for this learning area in your students' situation?
- Is fluency of particular importance for each student's success in their situation?
- Is there a big difference between the receptive and productive skills involved?
- What can your students do or understand already?
- What kind of approach will be most helpful at this stage?

3. Plan the lesson, focusing on one of the components for your selected learning area. Carefully consider the following questions at this stage:

- How much can or should be taught in the lesson?
- Do all students need this area of language equally? If not, what can be done?
- Where can I obtain good models of language to demonstrate what is required?
Do I need to produce some myself?
- What should the level of difficulty be?
- What kind of practice will students need?
- Which materials and methods would be appropriate?
- Can the students' work situation be used to determine the parameters for practice?
- Which students would benefit most from practising which roles?

- Can any other language areas be incorporated into this lesson as a form of recycling?
- Are any problems to be anticipated? (Nerves, low attendance, specific linguistic difficulties, etc.)

Aim to create the best possible learning environment for your students and fulfil their need for language use in the workplace. As well as experimenting with the procedures described in this section, brainstorm ideas with other teachers.

On an ongoing basis, encourage students to bring materials (e.g., e-mails, memos, industrial periodicals) to class. This helps you plan appropriate lessons, gives you evidence to revalidate the initial needs analysis and identify material that can provide valuable reference material.

Your students will help you find out about appropriate corporate styles or layouts. They might even provide material for lessons as discussion starters. The material they bring could inspire lessons where, for example, writing skills need improving. When preparing worksheets or learning models, keep copies of all materials for future use. You must respect confidentiality and intellectual property rights when you use these samples.

Periodically review what you include in the course. Take special care to ensure that you are teaching what has been promised to your students before the course starts. You should also consider the weighting of elements in the course. For example, activities to increase the students' cross-cultural awareness should be included. However, these activities should not disadvantage other learning areas you have explicitly or implicitly promised to cover.

Selecting and using methods

The use and meaning of the word 'method' differ. 'Method' can be used to mean an approach that reflects a full-blown or carefully considered theory of learning. Alternatively, it can refer to a classroom technique for an activity. We use the term in its broadest sense to mean any way of proceeding in the classroom. 'Method' is used to refer to short-term, medium-term, and long-term approaches because any procedure used in a classroom will influence how learning takes place.

Business English courses seem most successful when various methods are used and carefully selected to suit individual students. Using different methods at different times should maximise classroom learning. In addition, varying the methods you use should help overcome your students' learning styles, differing responses and mood variations.

To select appropriate methods, you must remain sensitive and alert to your students' linguistic, intellectual, social, emotional, and professional needs. A certain amount of experimentation is inevitable when doing this. However, try to 'tune into' your students when selecting the methods you will use. Doing this brings enormous benefits in improved class dynamics and natural learning. You must listen to your students, watch their reactions, and respond appropriately.

Give students models of language in use

Many commonly used methods ask students to produce language before hearing or reading a suitable model. You cannot realistically expect your students to use language they have never seen or heard before. In the same way, they cannot be expected to visualise an entire picture if they have only been given a pile of jigsaw pieces. This explains why it is difficult for students to write good business letters if they have never seen a business letter before. Likewise, it is difficult for students to participate in a meeting in a foreign language and culture armed only with a list of functional examples. In some cultures, both written and spoken communication styles are different from English.

To overcome this problem, make sure you include methods that focus on how discrete language items are addressed. In addition, explain how they relate to spoken and written English models, e.g., whole conversations, emails, or memos.

Realistically contextualise language practice

Some methods ask students to practise discrete language items out of context. Some also involve asking students to practise the language in contexts that have no relevance to their work. These methods are known as "decontextualised" or "poorly contextualised" language practice.

If you use methods that involve decontextualised or poorly contextualised language practice, make sure you follow up with usefully contextualised language practice as soon as possible. In this way, you help students appreciate the value of a global approach to language practice resulting in their understanding of what they need to learn.

Encourage students to use language to communicate

Since language and communication in real life are intertwined, non- communicative classroom practice (however suitable the method) can sometimes alienate or bore students. Therefore, make sure language is practised as often as possible in a ‘communicative’ way. This will make the language practice relevant to students’ needs because language use will be genuine. This will help classroom dynamics and will increase your students’ motivation.

In practice, this means getting students to exchange information, opinions, and comments and formulate logical sentences. Things that have meaning to your students are easily relatable to their lives in the classroom or their personal and work environments. Allowing and encouraging free comments in English, even during controlled practice, also facilitates and improves communication skills.

Insist that students focus on pronunciation

Improving students’ pronunciation is often something teachers attempt to do in isolation. It is usually more effective to make pronunciation a backdrop to speaking practice activities. Make it something you incorporate in your speaking activities. Using appropriate intonation patterns and stress keywords helps your students develop confidence. Focusing on pronunciation also gives you an excuse to ask students to repeat what they said.

Furthermore, focusing on pronunciation before or during role-plays and other language practice makes students’ language sound more realistic. This is highly motivating for them. Most importantly, it helps students develop a style of speaking that is readily intelligible in business contexts. Make sure that you set break-points to give pronunciation corrections because you want your students speaking to flow. For example, suppose you correct after

every one or two words. In that case, the speaking flow will be interrupted, and your students may lose their motivation.

Use role-play as often as possible

Getting students to role-play dialogues has various advantages. Firstly, it is enjoyable, so it is likely to motivate students. Secondly, and more importantly, it should help students realise how discrete language items fit together in real-life use. This is a critical point since some classroom practice may involve using less natural methods, where language is practised out of context. Thirdly, role-play allows students to develop fluency and confidence. Finally, students' awareness of cultural differences in the international business environment should increase as you point out appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for specific situations. In conclusion, since role-play involves simulated real-life language use, it should be the centrepiece of classroom practice.

Recycle language using different methods

Repeating language practice using the same method is less engaging and stimulating to students than using different ways. Therefore, even though you may be teaching the same language point, mix up your teaching methods.

Balance methods

When experimenting with teaching and learning methods, ensure that you provide your students with several routes to improve their English. There are many views about how language is best acquired. Over-dependence on one method might mean you close yourself off to some unexpected but pleasant surprises. Allow your students to comment on the methods you use because their perception of its value might differ from yours.

Develop your principles

Do not stop using methods just because you hear negative things about them. Some ways are discredited, then readopted when new theories are accepted or if research finds

unexpected results. Many methods remain controversial due to the wide range of ideas about how second language learning occurs.

Instead, develop your theories and principles by watching and listening carefully to what goes on in the classroom. Work concerns, personal issues, boredom, confusion, mood swings, failure to understand and the level of difficulty are some factors that affect your students' reactions.

Similarly, your mood and attitude, and teaching skill or language proficiency can influence your ability to use a method successfully. Use "working hypotheses" about methods rather than jumping to conclusions. You may find that making slight adaptations create different student reactions, the amount of learning and your popularity.

To summarise, when using any method, one must:

1. Relate all class language practice to more extensive learning areas so that your students can see how everything fits together.
2. Make your objectives always clear to your students.
3. Tell your students what you expect of them to know how to behave. Do not jump from a teacher-controlled activity like drilling to a dynamic activity like role-playing, and expect your students to become active suddenly.
4. At the start of the class, explain the time sequence you will use. This will reduce confusion when you tell your students that one type of activity has finished and another is beginning.
5. Sell methods to your students. They will not respond well if you have no faith in your chosen teaching methods. If possible, show your students how effective the teaching method is.
6. Be realistic about why teaching methods succeed or fail at different times.
7. Adapt your teaching methods to suit the situation.

8. Elicit feedback from your students, then act on it. Remember, as adults on an expensive Business English programme, your students are partners in the learning process. You should consult them.

Warming into things

The beginning of a lesson is critical because your students decide whether the class is worth their time, attention, and enthusiasm. It is also when your students might evaluate your effectiveness or the value of what is done in class. In other words, if you do not establish your credibility and get your students' attention at the beginning of each lesson, the rest will be difficult.

When starting a lesson or when moving from one activity to another, your aims might be:

1. To wake your students up and motivate them.
2. To get your students thinking faster, in a more focused way.
3. To encourage your students to go beyond their standard patterns of behaviour.
4. To clarify or communicate objectives.
5. To show your students how your teaching methods will help them achieve their goals.
6. To teach, practise or raise awareness of language area.
7. To tap into your students' real-life learning needs by finding out more about their work.
8. To establish a positive atmosphere in class.

When considering how to begin a lesson, you will need to consider the realities of teaching. For example, some students may be late (especially early in courses), and some may be on the list but never attend. In addition, you may have to deal with disruptive students or students who have never attended who suddenly turn up. All sorts of things are possible.

However, your selection of procedures from those listed in this section will mostly depend on:

1. Your objectives for the course
2. Your aims for that lesson
3. Your students
4. What has succeeded or failed with those students before

Try to vary your approach, using as many different procedures as possible so that your students get a varied introduction to lessons.

Every class will be different, so experiment, find out what works and keep using it.

Sample Business English Lessons

Preparation

Preparing learners for meeting simulations

Making sure you have lively, engaging, productive, and motivating debates is not easy. First, clarify the tasks and what is expected before starting the simulation. Some of your students may have no experience of meetings, some may have had some, and some may have a lot. You should also remember that many different meeting cultures come into play. Here are the golden rules that will make these simulations a success:

1. Everybody must join in; they all must have points to make and arguments to put forward
2. The simulation must have a straightforward task, a clear objective, a problem to be tackled, and actions to be taken. The latter encourages analytical thinking.
3. Discuss the problem in-depth and ensure that all participants state their arguments, points of view and suggested solutions.
4. Everybody must listen, take account of points and issues discussed and be prepared to compromise or change their plan of action or even their final decision.

Dos and don't's

Before the meeting:

DO

1. The chairperson should encourage everyone to participate. They must encourage everyone to participate actively.
2. Emphasise the importance of keeping to the point and answering the questions.
3. Emphasise that what is said is of more importance than how it is said.
4. Instruct learners to stick to the facts and arguments in their roles.

During the meeting

DO

1. Put on your moderator's hat, take on the back seat role and intervene as little as possible.

DON'T

1. Intervene more than is necessary.
2. Correct language mistakes during the debate, but be careful not to overdo it.
3. Do not participate in the simulation unless necessary; for example, if you need to take a role because you need to make up numbers.

Choosing students for the roles

The Managing Director/President/CEO always chairs the meeting and has the most important role. You need someone who can chair the meeting well, get everyone to join in, ensure they respect the rules and the facts, and conclude the meeting appropriately. As far as possible, try to change the student playing the chairperson for each meeting/situation to have a turn at this role. You will also find similar job roles in different situations, e.g., there is usually a personnel or marketing manager. In this case, try to vary the students' roles and avoid one student having the same job in two different debates. The primary rule here is: to change around as much as possible but give critical roles to those capable of doing them well.

How to manage different class sizes

It is challenging to have a productive debate with less than three people: if you have only two or three, take a role yourself. With a large group, divide the students up into smaller groups. Do not worry if you cannot use all the roles because your class is too small. In all simulations, there are always contradictory opinions. The probability of lively discussion is high for the simulation roles indicated by letters 'A', 'B' and 'C'. Give each student an 'A', 'B' or 'C' role and leave out the rest.

Taking feedback notes during the meeting

Listen to the discussion and take notes. Of course, it will be impossible for you to note all mistakes, so do not note down repeated errors, inappropriate language or lack of skills. Attach particular importance to anything that makes communication difficult.

It is also essential to give positive feedback. Add notably appropriate or skilful language use and gesture to your notes. If one student persistently makes a mistake that hinders the discussion, write a 'correcting' message just for them and slip it to them during the debate.

Things to look out for

Accent	Grammar
Answering the questions	Intonation
Appropriacy	Keeping to the point
Chairing the meeting	Language skills
Comprehension	Meetings skills
Expression	Participation
Gesture, body language	Vocabulary

The use of an audio recorder

You can record parts of the discussion as this will enable you, out of class and before the next lesson, to do some of the feedback analysis work suggested above in 'Taking feedback notes during the meeting'. You will also have the added advantage of giving feedback using extracts from the recording, helping the students recognise their own strong and weak points. However, avoid playing the entire discussion with your learners, as this can become boring and counter-productive.

The use of video

It is an excellent idea to video parts of the discussion because you will later use the video to illustrate your students' strong and weak points during the meeting. The best way to use the video is to pick out relevant extracts from the discussion and ask the students to:

1. Give comments on the quality of the debate and the positive and negative points of their contributions.
2. Positively criticise themselves and others, addressing ways to correct mistakes.
3. Recommend ways to help them communicate well through language intonation, gesture, expression, and body language.

Avoid showing the whole video, as this could get very tedious. Try not to do all the corrections and suggestions yourself; these can be much more constructive and productive if done by the students themselves. By making them do a self-critique, they will feel more inclined to take a serious look at what they did not do correctly. Before videoing, make it clear that you are doing it for follow-up work; they should not feel they are debating for the camera. You might have reluctant students or camera shy. Try to convince them of the usefulness of videoing, but do not go ahead if they really cannot be persuaded. Another way around camera-shy students would be to initially video small extracts of the debate to get them used to being filmed.

Learner follow-up and evaluation

The evaluation, follow-up and feedback phase after a discussion is essential. It will help learners with their language skills and their future debates. A good way of putting this phase in is by including it in the video section if you video the learners. For example, suppose you have had several discussion groups because you have a large class. In that case, it will be interesting for the whole class to discuss and compare the conclusions reached by these groups. If the conclusions are different, they should try to find out why and explain and defend their decisions.

Hand out the evaluation sheets to the learners and give them time to read through and answer the questions. They can then discuss their evaluation, perhaps in pairs or small

groups, before talking together as a class. Be careful not to turn this phase into a 'trial' of those who did not participate fully or were not too successful in getting themselves understood. On many occasions, criticism from fellow students is often easier to accept and more effective than the teacher.

The ideal outcome is for learners to analyse and evaluate themselves; the next best thing is to analyse and assess each other. When you give feedback, never criticise the individual/class. Instead, indicate where a mistake was made and encourage the individual/class to correct it.

Remember that the feedback, follow-up, and evaluation phases are extremely helpful in improving confidence and accuracy but are not central in developing fluency. However, if the students actively participate in class, they can practice fluency. Your timing is essential. For example, suppose there are ten minutes left in the lesson. In that case, if the students are still engaged in productive, learning-relevant discussion, do not stop the simulation for a follow-up; just let them carry on.

Evaluation sheet

Question	Self-evaluation response
Was I well prepared for the meeting?	
Did I contribute to the outcome of the debate?	
Did I participate sufficiently?	
Did I talk too much?	
Was I successful in convincing the others with my arguments?	
Was it clear what I meant when I spoke?	
Did I understand what was said? If not, why not?	
Was it a good discussion? Why/Why not?	
Did I listen carefully to the others and consider what they said?	
Did I change my mind in the face of convincing arguments?	

Could I have improved my vocabulary, accent or intonation?	
Could I have improved my other communication skills?	
Did the meeting go the way I expected? Why / Why not?	

Business English Role-Play Simulations

Deciding where to invest

Introduction

You work for an international investment firm. You want to select a significant new investment project. You have to choose a project, country, and region to invest in. What criteria do you use to make your choice?

Look at this list of possible criteria. Work with a partner. Indicate what you think are the important and unimportant criteria. Ignore the unimportant criteria. Order your criteria important criteria, e.g., 1 = most important and 5 = least important.

1. the political situation in the country or region
2. the climate
3. the viability of the project
4. the level of development of the country or region
5. the availability of subsidies
6. the return on investment
7. the friendliness of the local people
8. the duration of the loan
9. the amount of investment you already have in the country or region
10. who your partners will be?
11. the life expectancy of the local people
12. exchange rate variations
13. religious beliefs and practices
14. guarantees

Situation

You work for Banca Latina. Its head office is in Buenos Aires, and it has branches worldwide. It is one of the world's ten largest banks. You are meeting today to discuss significant investment projects. These are the projects in which you are considering investing:

1. a dam for hydroelectricity
2. an irrigation and water supply project
3. a shipyard
4. a road bridge in Spain between San Sebastian and Navarra

You want to choose the most suitable project. You must, in particular, consider:

1. the political stability in the countries concerned
2. the viability of the project
3. the return on investment
4. the duration of the loan
5. potential partners
6. exchange rate fluctuations
7. guarantees

You must decide:

1. which is the most promising project for the bank
2. for which project the bank should begin detailed negotiations

Projects

Project	Country	Estimated cost in Euros	Estimated duration	Probable partners	Estimated yield
Dam for hydroelectricity	Malaysia	500 million	5 years	Malay Industrial Bank	7%
Irrigation and water supply	Senegal	290 million	1 year	World Bank, European Union	9%
Shipyard	South Korea	360 million	2 years	None	6%
Road bridge	Spain	475 million	4 years	Spanish Govt	5%

Work sheet

	Malaysia	Senegal	South Korea	Spain
political stability				
viability				
return on investment				
duration of the loan				
partners				
exchange rate				
variations				
guarantees				
other				
criteria				

Roles

The President

Chairing the meeting: You chair the meeting and ensure everyone joins in. It is essential to consider each project and how well it meets all investment criteria.

Organise the meeting in the following way:

1. Ask each participant to give their opinion of each project. Then, they can fill in their

Worksheets when different projects get discussed.

2. Choose the most suitable project for the bank.

You favour the dam in Malaysia. It is the most expensive project, but political stability is good in Malaysia. The average economic growth has been higher than in most countries

over the last twenty years. The currency is stable against other currencies in the region. You have already financed two other significant projects in Malaysia and Singapore. Your bank is the second largest in the country. You have a close partnership with the Malay Industrial Bank, the largest commercial bank in the country.

The Investment Manager, West Africa

Your bank should back the Senegalese irrigation and water supply project. Political stability is better in Senegal than in most African countries. The President is strong and democratically elected. The country desperately needs this project to stop the advance of the Sahara Desert, and half of the money will come from the World Bank. The local currency has only been devalued once since independence in 1960. As investors are reluctant to consider Senegal because economic growth is almost zero, the rate of return would be higher than on any other project. The European Union would guarantee it. The water would be used mainly to irrigate new farms and market gardens. The new water supply would become profitable within a year.

You are against the Malaysian project because it is very costly. In addition, the currency has been volatile in recent years. You also feel that because you have already invested in major projects in Malaysia, it would be more prudent to invest in other parts of the world now.

The Investment Manager, South Korea

You want to back the shipyard in South Korea. This would be the biggest shipyard in the world and would build a new generation of tankers that no other yard could make. Orders for ships have already been placed, so you can be sure that this project will be extraordinarily successful. It must be stressed that if your bank does not join the project, other banks will, and the yard will be built without you. Along with all South-East Asian countries, South Korea had economic problems in the late nineties, but this means that it is now an excellent time to invest there. The South Korean economy is very sound. The workforce is skilled and hard working. You want your bank to participate in renewed

economic expansion in this country and benefit from the increasing strength of the currency that is likely to follow.

You are against the Senegalese project. It would be very risky. There has been an armed rebellion in the south of the country. The economic situation is poor. When the CFA was devalued, it was by 50%. Another devaluation of this kind would wipe 50% off the value of your investment.

The Investment Manager, North America

You favour the Spanish bridge project. The bridge will be built for the Spanish government, who will then charge tolls for its use, ensuring a rapid and profitable return on investment.

You are against the South Korean project. The South Korean government is not prepared to back the project, and the market for supertankers is depressed, as it has been for several years. And you do believe that your bank should spread its investment more evenly around the world.

The Financial Research Officer

You are against the Spanish project in particular. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the Euro is too strong against the dollar. This means that it would probably be costly to buy all materials in the Eurozone. The impact will give the project a high operating cost, making the return on investment slower.

Secondly, although it might seem as if Spain is a politically stable country, the possibility of continued political problems in the Basque area could pose a threat to businesses. You, therefore, think Malaysia or South Korea would be a safer investment.

The Political Research Officer

You have done careful research into the four countries' political stability. Spain is the most stable, and Senegal the least because of armed rebellion in the mainly Christian south of the country. The political situations in both South Korea and Malaysia are usually stable.

However, your colleagues should be reminded of the armed rebellion in Malaysia in the 1960s. In addition, there is the challenge of the division of North and South Korea. This is why you would favour Spain most. Still, you accept that factors other than political stability need to be given consideration.

The Head of Loan Scheduling

You prefer the Senegalese project. The engineering involved is the least heavy. It would be the first to be finished, and repayment of the loan could begin sooner than other projects. However, the country is poor, so the loan would have to be a long one of about twenty years.

You think your bank should choose this project or the South Korean one. The shipyard could be building ships within two years. Therefore, repayment could begin then, and the loan could be spread over ten years.

Structure and procedure of the simulation

In brief

Before beginning detailed negotiations about a loan, a big Argentinian bank must decide which project looks most suitable for investment. Would it be a dam in Malaysia, an irrigation project in Senegal, a shipyard in South Korea or a road bridge in Spain?

Various criteria must be considered. The most important criteria are the viability of each project and the return on investment. Also relevant are who the bank's partners would be, how much political stability there is in the countries concerned, the loan duration, guarantees, and possible exchange rate variations. Three investment managers at the meeting favour three different projects. The President favours the other one, so there is much disagreement at the beginning of the meeting.

Introduction (optional): 10-20 minutes

Preparation: 10-20 minutes

Simulation: 30-45 minutes

Follow-up (optional): 10-20 minutes

Total: minimum 40 minutes, maximum 105 minutes

Introduction

The unimportant criteria that students are likely to eliminate are religious beliefs and practices, life expectancy, friendliness of the people, level of development, and climate. There might be some disagreement on the criteria that should be considered essential and not unimportant. Like most investment projects, the viability of the project and the return on investment will be amongst the most important. The loan duration is not significant because banks (in many cases) usually prefer the loan to be a long one to increase the total amount of interest paid.

Running the simulation

Refer to the “Sample Business English Lessons” “Preparation” section to prepare learners for the simulation.

Business background

Investment tends to follow investment. In other words, some countries attract a lot of investment and others do not. And international companies and financial institutions tend to invest where they have already invested rather than in new places. The viability of a project and the return on investment are the most important criteria when selecting areas for investment. Still, experience shows that if an investor has to choose between two projects that look equally safe and bring in the same return, they will choose a country, region, business, or partner they have already worked with. In the last few decades, more international investment has gone to developed (including recently developed) countries than developing countries, and Africa, in particular, has had a low investment rate.

You may find the economic situation different from the published description when doing this or other simulations. Therefore, you will probably find that the best course of action in this event is to amend the facts in line with what you and your students know to be the

current situation. Alternatively, you could explain that this is a simulation and stick to the facts given in the text, particularly if you or your students are unsure of the current situation.

Outline of roles

- A. President: favours the Malaysian project, where the bank already has a partner and other significant projects.
- B. Investment Manager, West Africa: backs the Senegalese project, which will bring in a good return quickly. 'B' is against the Malaysian project: it is too costly, the local currency is unstable, and the bank already has enough investment.
- C. Investment Manager, South Korea: supports South Korean project: the shipyard already has orders, and the bank can join in renewed economic expansion. 'C' is against the Senegalese project as it is too risky.
- D. Investment Manager, North America: favours the Spanish bridge project as tolls charged will help to bring in a rapid return on investment. 'D' is against the South Korean project. The market for supertankers is depressed, and the bank should spread investment more evenly worldwide.
- E. Financial Research Officer: thinks the Malaysian or South Korean projects would be the safest investments. 'E' is firmly against the Spanish project.
- F. Political Research Officer: supports the Spanish project for reasons of political stability.
- G. Head of Loan Scheduling: backs Senegalese or Korean projects, as repayments for both of these would begin quickly.

Possible outcome

The information in the business background favours the dam in Malaysia and rejects the Senegalese project. However, every time you use this simulation, you will probably have a different decision. If several groups are discussing simultaneously in a big class, each group will likely reach a different conclusion. There are good reasons for and against each project. The outcome will, as usual, depend on how well different participants argue their cases. For example, if your group has seven participants, three people are arguing in

favour of the South Korean project, which might swing the decision in that direction. This is not certain, though, as Spain only has one person arguing against it.

Vocabulary

armed rebellion	resistance, using arms, to authority, usually governments
availability	how easily something can be obtained
a criterion (the singular form of criteria)	standard by which something can be judged or decided
democratic	following the ideas of democracy, that is, the government of the people by elected representatives
depressed	in poor economic or financial condition
to devalue a currency	to lower the value of a currency against other currencies
duration	how long something lasts
economic growth	the expansion of the economy, an increase in wealth
exchange rate	the value of one currency compared to another, how much of one currency you get if you sell it and buy another
exchange rate variations	risers and falls in the different values of currencies
a guarantee	assurance, promise, security
hydroelectricity	electricity generated from the power of water released from a dam
irrigation	supplying water through canals and pipes, for watering plants

life expectancy	A statistical calculation of how long people are expected to live
partnership	alliance, association, collaboration, co-operation
political stability	how stable a political system or government is, how often it changes
promising	likely to give good results
prudent	sensible, wise, advisable
return on investment	the money you get back on the money you have lent
a shipyard	a place where ships get built
a subsidy	monetary aid, grant or contribution, often made by a government
a tanker	ship often used to transport liquids and gas
a supertanker	big tanker
a toll	payment to use a road, bridge or tunnel
viability	how probable it is that something will work well

Selling off a line of business

Introduction

Do this quiz. Begin at number 1, choose, and then go to the number indicated in brackets.

1. You work for an international bank. This bank is in severe financial trouble, with losses in all lines of business. Do you:
 - a. make some staff redundant? (go to 6)
 - b. sell off part of your business? (go to 8)
2. The strike stops. You sack some staff, but compensation payments are so high that your losses worsen. Do you:
 - a. close down some branches? (go to 6)
 - b. amalgamate with another bank? (go to 7)
3. Your losses get worse. Do you:
 - a. close down some branches? (go to 6)
 - b. amalgamate with another bank? (go to 7)
4. A lot of customers leave to buy unit trusts from another bank. Do you:
 - a. start a new unit trust subsidiary? (go to 3)
 - b. look for another way of reducing your losses? (go to 12)
5. The new owner closes half of your branches. Do you:
 - a. stay on and hope for the best? (go to 9)
 - b. look for another job? (go to 10)
6. The staff go on strike. Do you:
 - a. back down? (go back to 1 and start again)
 - b. threaten to sack all those who go on strike? (go to 2)

7. No other bank is interested in amalgamating. They are willing to take over your bank.

Do you:

- a. accept the takeover? (go to 5)
- b. refuse? (go back to 1 and start again)

8. What do you sell off?

- a. direct banking, the fastest expanding part of your business? (go to 3)
- b. the unit trust subsidiary, or the easiest to sell? (go to 4)

9. You are made redundant yourself- Do you:

- a. look for a new job in banking? (go to 10)
- b. set up your own business? (go to 11)

10. You get an excellent job in a new bank.

- a. Unfortunately, this bank is losing money.
- b. Go back to 1 and start again.

11. You go to the bank to ask for a loan to set up your own business. Unfortunately, your request is refused because the bank has serious financial problems. Do you:

- a. accept the offer of a job as a management consultant with the bank? (go back to 1 and start again)
- b. ask your grandmother for a loan to set up your business? (go to 13)

12. Do you decide to:

- a. sell off part of the business? (go to 8)
- b. increase bank charges? (go to 3)

13. Your grandmother dies suddenly. Do you think:

- a. you have to look for another way to raise a loan?
- b. she left you all her money?

(Your teacher has the answer.)

Situation

You work for Hababino, the French insurance company. Your head office is in Paris, and you have offices all over France.

You are in severe financial trouble. All your lines of business: vehicle, life, property, health insurance and personal pensions have been losing money for the last two years.

You have made significant efforts to remedy this situation. Amongst other things you have:

1. increased the number of sales staff, given them training in new sales methods, and increased their sales commission
2. significantly increased productivity, with organisational changes, and further investment in information technology
3. worked extremely hard to improve total quality management
4. extended the range of products at the same time as simplifying policies and speeding up the settlement of claims

Unfortunately, these efforts have led to no increase in sales or reduction in your losses. Competition from other insurance companies is too intense. Last year, you reduced many of your prices, but this led to no increase in sales and merely reduced your income further. You also considered raising your prices but realised that this would lead to a loss of business.

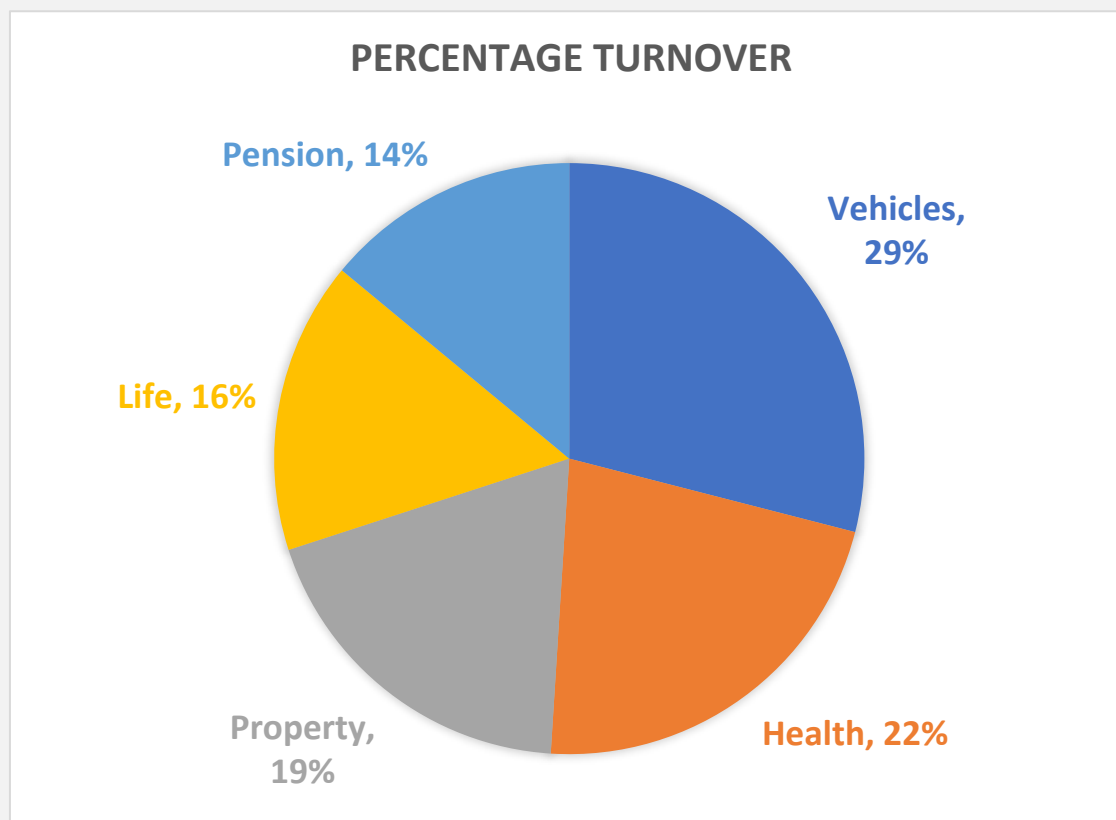
Your financial advisers have recommended that you should sell off part of the business to save the company from closure or from being taken over by a competitor. This would give you money to cover your losses, continue investing, and enable the remaining lines of business to survive until the market improves or competitors go out of business.

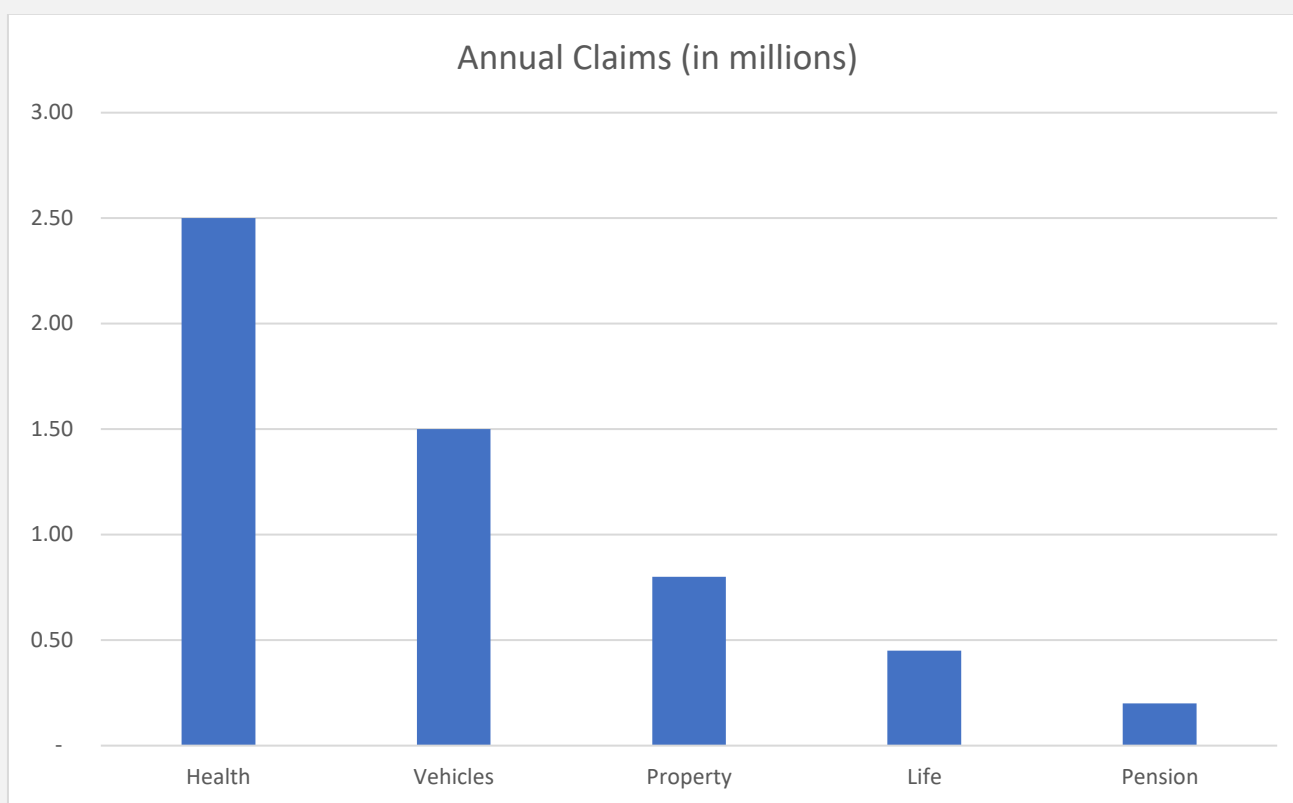
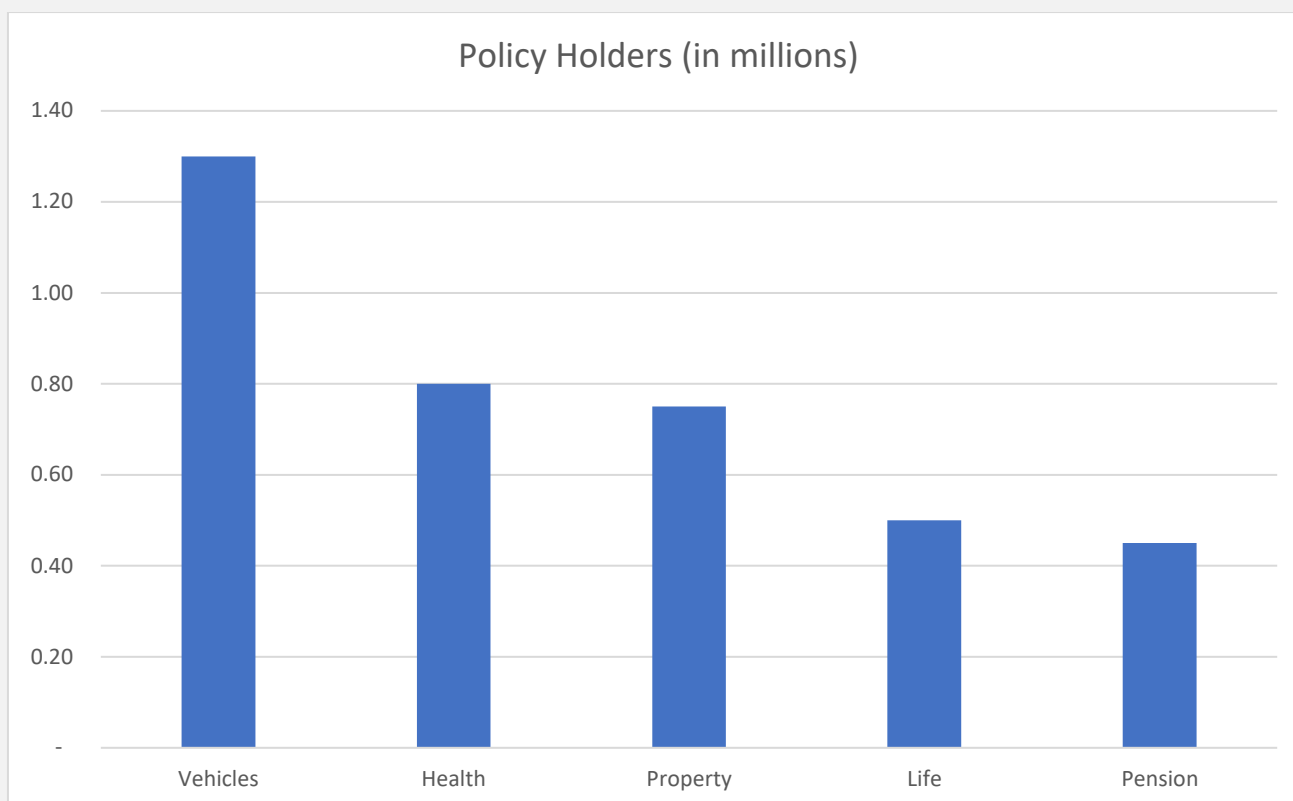
You are meeting today to consider the financial advisers' recommendation. You must consider the degree of integration of different lines of business and how easy and profitable it would be to sell off any one of them.

You must decide:

1. if it is possible to sell off one of your lines of business
2. and if it is, which line you should sell

Fact sheets





Roles

The Chief Executive

Chairing the meeting: You chair the meeting and make sure everyone participates.

Organise the simulation as follows:

1. Get everyone's opinion as to whether selling off a line of business is possible.
2. If you agree it is possible, discuss which line to sell. Write the 'candidates' for sale and reasons for and against each sale on the board.
3. Decide together which line of business to sell.

You think you have no choice but to sell off a line of business. You cannot risk the company going bankrupt. The best line to sell would be personal pensions because it would be the easiest to separate from the rest of the company. It is an almost autonomous entity, and the business is relatively different from the other lines. However, it is unlikely to be profitable in the long run because of the ageing population - the number of people who are retired and drawing their pension will increase, whereas the number of people working and making contributions is going to fall.

The Sales Manager

You believe that it would be exceedingly difficult to separate and sell off any line of business. Your department sells all the company's products. Most of the central office sales staff specialise in one or two lines. However, in many branch offices and agencies, there is only one salesperson selling all products. If you sell off one line, you decrease productivity and take business away from your agents.

If you really must sell part of the firm, you would favour selling the health line. This is vastly different from the other activities: you often sell vehicle and property insurance together, for example, but health insurance is usually sold separately. And with an ageing population in South Africa, it will be increasingly difficult to make it profitable.

You are very much against the sale of the vehicle line of business. This is by far your most prominent business and will, in your opinion, be the fastest growing in the next ten years. If the company wants profitability to return, it must not sell it.

The Claims Manager

You can see no reason not to sell off a part of the business to save the firm. In your department, staff handle claims by insurance line. For example, someone who deals with car accident claims will not deal with home insurance claims. This means that employees handling claims for one insurance line could be transferred and work for a new employer.

You would like to sell off the vehicle insurance line of business. It isn't easy to profit from it because there are so many claims. Life insurance, for instance, is much easier because you only ever receive one claim. In addition, the number of claims for car theft has increased tenfold in South Africa in the past ten years.

You are against selling off the personal pensions line of business. Pensions will become more profitable as people buy pensions policies to prepare for their retirement in the knowledge that state pensions are becoming less and less generous.

The Investment Manager

Your job is to invest the company's customer income. You are worried about losing part of your investment funds. The more money you have to invest, the easier it is to get a good return on your investment. Therefore, you would rather not sell off any line of business at all. From your point of view, the different lines of business can be divided into two distinct parts. On the one hand, you have a long-term investment in life insurance and personal pensions. On the other, you have a short-term investment in vehicles, property and health.

If you really must sell off one line, it would be better if it were a short-term one. You can get a reasonable rate of return on short-term investments, but it is much riskier than the long term, and you must admit that you lost money in the short-term last year. The best candidate for a sell-off would be property insurance. You think this is likely to grow more

slowly than vehicles and health. At the same time, claims for burglaries will no doubt rise steeply.

The Marketing Manager

You can see no reason not to sell off a line of business if this is what is needed. Your choice would be life insurance because it is different from the others. From a marketing point of view, when you sell life insurance, you must find customers who are prepared to invest in something they will never use. This is different from buying car or house insurance or even contributing to a pension.

You feel that vehicle, property and health insurance are the core of your business and should on no account be sold off.

The Personnel Manager

You are worried about the whole idea of selling off part of the business. It is true that most of your employees work for one line or another, and not for two or more at the same time. From a practical point of view, it is perfectly possible to sell off part of the business and transfer the staff concerned to the new company and new offices. But there is nonetheless a human problem, even a moral problem. Will your former employees get work in the new company? Won't the buyer buy the business and the market and make their new employees redundant within a few weeks?

These concerns lead you to believe that if you really must sell off a line of business, it should be life insurance. Life insurance has only one claim per customer and an annual contribution; therefore, it employs the fewest people.

The IT Manager

Each line of business has dedicated computer programs, and you could sell them with the business line. The most sophisticated programs are for vehicle insurance and personal pensions. There are hundreds of different types and models of vehicles for vehicle insurance and numerous claims. Personal pensions manage monthly contributions and pay-outs.

You would get the best price for these lines because of the value and sophistication of the computer programs. However, Hababino needs the money, so you suggest selling vehicle insurance or personal pensions.

Structure and procedure of the simulation

In brief

Hababino, a French insurance company, is in severe financial trouble. It has already done all it can to return to profitability, but the competition is too intense. One way to avoid being closed down or taken over could be to sell off one of the lines of business - vehicle, life, property, health or personal pensions. Managers meet to decide if this is the solution, and which line, if any, to sell.

Introduction (optional); 15-20 minutes

Preparation: 15-20 minutes

Simulation; 30-60 minutes

Follow-up (optional): 10-30 minutes

Total: minimum 45 minutes, maximum 130 minutes

Introduction

This quiz is in the form of a maze. Students can do it alone or in pairs. It is a light-hearted introduction to the subject of what a firm can or should do if it is in financial trouble. Tell them to try the other option if you notice that they are going round in circles, for example, from number 2 to number 6 and back to number 2. The way out of the maze is number 13. The answer to the question is: She has left you all her money. To encourage discussion when they have finished, you can ask students to explain their choices, particularly in numbers 1, 2, 8 or 12.

Running the simulation

Refer to the “Sample Business English Lessons” and “Preparation” sections to prepare learners for the simulation.

Business background

Firms regularly seek to sell off part of their activity for several reasons. For example, financial losses, a wish to concentrate on core activities, or raising capital for expansion in other areas. Selling off any sector is never easy, even if it is involved in an activity quite different from other lines of business. Inevitably, different lines of business are integrated. It could be in sales (you do not usually compete with your products), communication (a subsidiary must give the same image as the parent company), personnel (employees will have been transferred to other departments, retrained, or promoted within the group) or production (products and parts are standardised). Hababino, being an insurance company, might find it particularly difficult to sell off a line of business. The problem in sales is just one illustration of this: many branches and agencies sell all the products, and salespeople would be unhappy about losing part of their business.

Outline of roles

- A. Chief Executive: thinks selling off a division is essential; favours selling off personal pensions line of business as it is the least integrated.
- B. Sales Manager: does not want to sell off any part of the business but would propose the health line necessary. ‘B’ is against the sale of the vehicle line.
- C. Claims Manager: suggests vehicle insurance line of business for sale. It is difficult to make profitable because of the high number of claims. ‘C’ is against the sale of the personal pensions line.
- D. Investment Manager: does not want to sell off any line of business, as this would diminish the amount of funds for investment. However, if one line must be sold, ‘D’ proposes selling property insurance line of business, as this is a short-term investment area.

- E. Marketing Manager: wants to sell off life insurance, as it is quite different from the other lines. 'E' is against selling vehicle, property or health insurance.
- F. Personnel Manager: is unhappy about the idea of selling off any sector and very concerned about the redundancies it is likely to cause.
- G. IT Manager: thinks that vehicles or personal pensions would be the best to sell because of the high price the firm would get for the sophisticated computer programs.

Possible outcome

The outcome is difficult to predict. There is a good chance that participants will choose to sell off one line of business or another rather than deciding to keep them all. Although specific roles have good arguments against a sale, there are only three of them. They also have suggestions for lines of business to sell. There are good arguments in favour of selling any line of business, and the outcome depends on how well students argue their case. Life insurance is the only line of business with two people arguing in favour of its sale and only one person against it. This might give it a chance of being chosen when you have seven participants.

Vocabulary

ageing	getting old
to amalgamate	to join together, to create one business out of two
autonomous	independent
to back down	to give in, to accept the other person's point of view
bank charges	what a bank might make you pay for its services
a burglary	when a thief breaks into a property and steals things
a candidate	something suitable, a possibility

a claim	what you make to your insurance company to get reimbursed for loss or costs
core	the central or principal part
direct banking	using a bank without going to a branch, e.g. by telephone or mail
an entity	a whole, something distinct
integrated	part of a unified whole, not autonomous, possibly difficult to separate from the whole
a line of business	one particular area of business
on no account	in no case, by no means
a pension	money paid to retired people
productivity	efficiency, how much employees do or make to earn money for the company
property	buildings and, in insurance terms, furniture and belongings you have inside them
to be made redundant	to lose one's job, usually because your employer's firm is closing down or reducing the number of employees
a strike	refusal to work by employees, as a form of protest
a subsidiary	part of a group owned by a parent company
a takeover	purchase of one company by another
tenfold	ten times, multiplied by ten

a unit trust

an investment trust which allows investors to invest in a variety of companies chosen by the bank

A blockbuster new feature film

Introduction

You are a film producer with your own company. Work with a partner. Read the questions and choose the best answer.

1. You have four plans for a new film. Which project is likely to be most successful world-wide and why?
 - a. a love story set in an exotic country with a background of war and revolution
 - b. a detective story with a complicated plot and an unexpected end
 - c. a tale of everyday life in a western country, with psychological insight into the minds of ordinary people
 - d. a science fiction film set in the 22nd century with lots of special effects
2. What is the most critical factor in ensuring the success of your project?
 - a. secure finances
 - b. a well-written screenplay
 - c. a good plot
 - d. the right location
3. Who will best provide a box-office hit?
 - a. the film director
 - b. the actors
 - c. the cameraman or woman
 - d. the screenwriter

4. What actors will you choose for the leading roles, and why?
 - a. stars, for publicity
 - b. trained, experienced, but little-known actors to save money
 - c. amateurs because they are easy to direct
 - d. people who have experienced what happens in the film, for authenticity
5. You own the rights to the book your movie is based on, but you need \$50 million to make the film. Who will you go to for the money?
 - a. a prominent American movie company
 - b. a television channel
 - c. another producer
 - d. a bank
6. You want to make the film yourself but can only do this if you accept one of the following conditions imposed by a prominent American film company. Which will you accept?
 - a. you sell them the rights to the book
 - b. you become an employee of their company
 - c. they buy 51% of the shares in your own company
 - d. they pay you 2% of takings and keep the rest

Situation

You work for Mabuhay Productions, a small Filipino film production company based in Manila. Mabuhay makes television films and series. It sells them to Europe, southern Africa, and the Far East. The company has only been in existence for ten years. However, in the last five years, it has expanded very rapidly since the arrival of a new and dynamic production manager. The production manager has given an international dimension to the company's films, casts, directors and sales. Mabuhay makes most of its movies and series in Tagalog (the Filipino language) but has recently started making some in English.

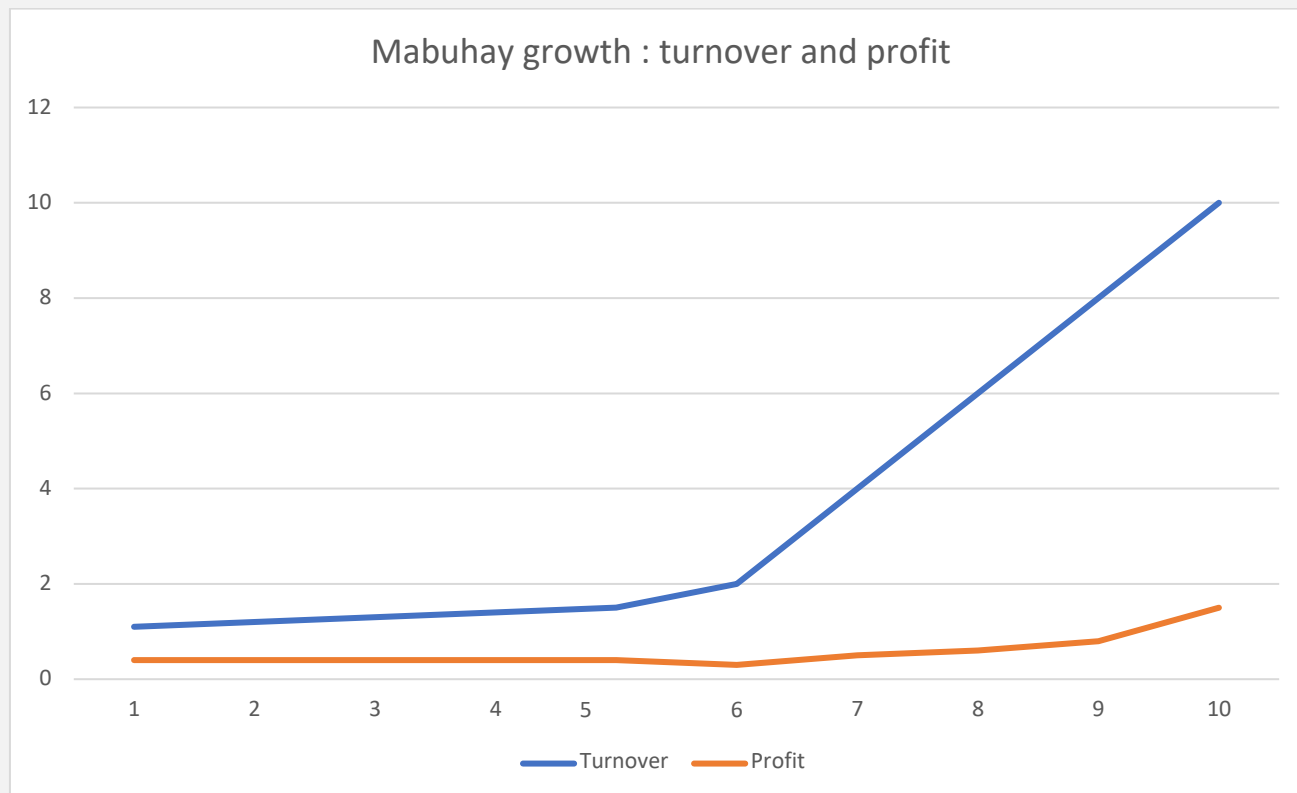
The production manager wants the company to make a blockbuster Hollywood-style feature film in English. The story will be based on the best-selling novel “Mi Amor en Canton” (My love in Canton) by Pedro Bardem, to which Mabuhay owns the film rights. The book has sold over 500,000 copies in Spanish but is not translated into English. It is a love story set in Canton in the context of civil war and revolution in the early part of the twentieth century. It would be a big-budget film, costing at least \$50 million if a Filipino location, little-known actors, and a little-known film director and screenwriter were chosen. The budget doubles if a Chinese location, big-name actors, and a well-known director and screenwriter are chosen.

Preliminary studies, and the experience of other production companies, indicate that the return on a \$100 million investment is 10% if the film is a box-office success and is distributed worldwide. The same study shows a \$50 million budget with distribution in the Philippines and in other countries that are regular customers of Mabuhay Productions; returns 5 to 6%. Mabuhay could not make either investment alone (see turnover and profit figures). It would have to find partners to co-produce, finance and distribute the film.

You must decide:

1. if Mabuhay should find partners and undertake the production of “Mi amor en Canton”
2. and if so, whether the company should choose the low-budget (\$50 million) or high-budget (\$100+ million) solution, who the partners could be, and what role those partners should have.

Fact sheet



Roles

The President

Chairing the meeting: You chair the meeting and make sure everyone joins in. Organise the meeting as follows:

1. Get each participant's opinion on whether your company should undertake the production of "Mi Amor en Canton", and decide on this question.
2. Then, if you decide to undertake this production, choose a \$50 million production or a \$100+ million production, after careful evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each budget.

Mabuhay is a profitable and growing company, but you think it is absurd to try to undertake an enormous and over-ambitious project of even \$50 million, let alone \$100+ million. Your colleagues must remember that in its first year of existence ten years ago the company only

made three short television films. Last year's turnover was under \$10 million, and profits, although healthy, were only \$500,000 after tax. If the company continues to expand as rapidly as at present, you will be able to consider a gigantic project like “Mi Amor en Canton” in five or ten years. But for the moment, you should be less ambitious and perhaps plan a major Filipino film on a budget of, at most, \$20 million.

The Production Manager

You are responsible for the everyday running of the company, and all the rapid growth and good ideas of the last five years. Your colleagues have no right to doubt your ability to turn this new project into a fabulous hit. You think you can make Mabuhay so big that it will compete with major American film production companies. By choosing the \$100+ million project, you can film on location in China and hire world-famous American actors, film directors, and screenwriters. If you found an American film producer to co-produce the film, you are sure you could get financial backing from a major American film studio.

You feel it would be a terrible mistake to choose the \$50 million budget. For a story set in China, everyone can understand that a Filipino location could not possibly replace China. What is more, you are sure that, as a low budget would mean working with unknown actors, directors and screenwriters, the Americans would not be interested in the project. You are worried that it would be a failure outside the Philippines without the Americans to back and distribute the film.

The Company Accountant

It would be an error not to make “Mi Amor en Canton”. It is a wonderful book, and it would make a fantastic film. With an excellent British film director and screenwriter, a suitable location in the Philippines, and little-known but up-and-coming Filipino actors of Chinese ethnic origin, it would be possible to find financial backing from several major Filipino television or film companies, make the film for \$50 million, and then sell it to an American distributor.

But you must not co-produce and co-finance this film with the Americans, as they will make it into an American movie and take all the profits.

The Production Assistant

This is a brilliant project, and “Mi Amor en Canton” must be made. A Singaporean television channel you work with is prepared to invest \$25 million in the film provided they can co-produce the movie with Mabuhay. You favour the \$100+ million budget with a location in China but refuse to work with American actors, directors, and producers because they will insist on making the film on their terms. As a result, it would become an American film, which is entirely inappropriate because it is based on a Spanish book made by Filipino producers.

The Singaporean channel and you have already worked together on several successful television films and series. You have succeeded without the Americans up to now and do not see why you should bring them in on this film.

The Head of Casting

You have a close friend who is the president of a major American film production company. This company is ready to invest heavily in “Mi Amor en Canton”, provided the \$50 million budget is chosen. You are sure that the Americans must distribute the film if you want it to be a worldwide box-office success. You also know that they will not distribute it if Mabuhay does not take an American partner.

It is not necessary to use big names. Although the movie is in English, Filipino actors and a Filipino director and screenwriter could be used. A suitable location that looks like China found in a region of the Philippines.

The Head of Marketing

You are opposed to this project and would not risk the money. The book “Mi Amor en Canton” has sold well in French and is not translated to English. Therefore, it is impossible to judge if the film would succeed worldwide. More importantly, this film is much too big for Mabuhay. How can a company with an annual turnover of under \$10 million possibly take on a project of at least \$50 million?

You should continue to do what you do well, namely make television films, and aim to continue the rapid growth of the last few years. Then, in a few years, Mabuhay can start big feature films with budgets of several million dollars. Finally, thanks to acquired experience, Mabuhay can launch a big-budget Hollywood-style project.

The Technical Adviser

You know the book, “Mi Amor en Canton”, very well. You are convinced that the story is perfect for the cinema. It has all the ingredients for success - romance, suspense and exotic locations. Of course, it needs a big budget, that is, \$100+ million. Your experience of working for other production companies, including some American ones, makes you sure that this film will be a hit.

Friends and colleagues have calculated that the film could make a \$10 million profit. This is because the \$50 million budget would be enough to make a good box-office success. However, according to these same calculations, the return would, in that case, be much lower, in percentage terms, for your company - at most \$3 million.

Structure and procedure of the simulation

In brief

Mabuhay productions, a small Filipino film productions company, must decide if it should produce its first major feature film. The company owns the film rights to a best-selling novel, which the production manager and some staff want to make into a Hollywood-style production. However, there is disagreement about whether or not this film should be made and about the size of the budget - \$50 or \$100+ million.

A further disagreement is who Mabuhay’s partners should be if the film is made and their role. Some participants think that Mabuhay must take American partners, and one believes they must not. However, even these pro-Americans disagree about whether the partnership should concern production, finance or distribution.

Introduction (optional): 10-25 minutes

Preparation: 15-20 minutes

Simulation: 30-60 minutes

Follow-up (optional): 5-15 minutes

Total: minimum 45 minutes, maximum 2 hours

Introduction

This consists of multiple-choice questions and is designed to introduce students to the sort of choices film producers have to make. Naturally, there are no correct answers. Students might well give answers that correspond to their taste in films, but this is of no importance. To do the introduction quickly, work through the questions with the whole class, asking students to explain their choices. Ask students first to work in pairs or small groups and choose their answers if you have more time. Then work as a class and ask students to explain their answers. Comparing responses will probably lead to further discussion.

Running the simulation

Refer to the “Sample Business English Lessons” and “Preparation” sections to prepare learners for the simulation.

Business background

A film producer is usually the person who takes overall responsibility for all aspects of making a film. This will include financing, choosing the location, shooting, selecting the director and screenwriter, editing, marketing and launching. The producer will be, in many cases, a supervisor of the whole process of making the film, from beginning to end, but will find partners and subcontractors to undertake different parts of the work. Very often, production companies are small companies that work with other small companies to make major films. This explains why it is common to see the names of several different production companies in film credits. Some of these companies will have had little involvement in the actual making of the film other than financing. Making a big feature film always involves several partners and investors working together. The American film industry dominates the

world. So much so that it is hard to find examples of worldwide box-office successes which do not have some American involvement. The Americans are influential in production financing, film crews, actors, screenwriters, or simply owning cinemas.

Outline of roles

- A. President: thinks the company is too small to undertake such a big project at the moment.
- B. Production Manager: wants to make the big-budget film and make Mabuhay big enough to compete with American film producers.
- C. Company Accountant: prefers the \$50 million project, but not with the Americans, as they would turn it into an American film.
- D. Production Assistant: favours the big project with a Singaporean partner.
- E. Head of Casting: would choose the \$50 million project with an American partner.
- F. Head of Marketing: is totally against this project; thinks it is too big for Mabuhay.
- G. Technical Adviser: is in favour of a big project that would bring in, relatively, a much bigger return.

Possible outcome

With seven participants, three are in favour of the big project, and two favour the \$50 million project. There is an excellent chance that Mabuhay will choose to make “Mi Amor en Canton”. Looking at the two projects, logically, the bigger one should be selected. However, \$100+ million is a lot of money for anyone to spend, especially Mabuhay, which might be fast-growing, but is a small company. So you might well find your groups choosing the smaller project. The partners chosen will probably be American. Three people favour having American partners; only one is against them. The arguments favouring a partnership with the Americans would seem to be good ones.

Vocabulary

amateur	inexperienced, unpaid, unqualified, non-professional
ambitious	having a strong desire for success
backing	support, funding, help, assistance
big-budget	costing a lot of money, needing a lot of investment
a box-office hit, blockbuster	a film which a lot of people go and see
context	background, environment, situation, setting
dynamic	energetic, enthusiastic, active, forceful
a feature film	big, important, major movie
a film director	a person who directs the actors and supervises the shooting
a film producer	a person who supervises the whole planning, production and financing of a film
gigantic	excessively big
insight	the ability to understand the mind and thinking
a location	place (outside the studio) where parts of a film are made
a movie over- ambitious a	American English for a film, also widely used in the UK trying to do more than is possible
plot	the story, what happens in a film
rights	permission to use something which belongs to someone else; here, permission to use the story from a novel in a film

a screenplay	text, the words spoken in a film
a screenwriter	a person who writes the screenplay
takings	the money paid by audiences to see a film
up-and-coming	becoming more famous, increasingly successful

Luxury perfumes

Introduction

1. In what sort of retail outlets do you find these goods in your country? Work with a partner and fill in the names of the shop(s).

Books	
Bread	
Cameras	
Cars	
Clothes	
Flowers	
Food	
Furniture	
Glasses/spectacles	
Jewellery	
Meat	
Medicine	
Newspapers	

Perfume	
Shoes	
Sweets	
Toys	

2. Which of the goods above would you never find in a supermarket? Why is this so?
Analyse the reasons with your partner.

3. Are there any examples of goods that are always only found in one type of outlet?
Why is this? Talk about the reasons with your partner.

Situation

You work for the Italian multinational company Selena, which makes and sells cosmetics, perfumes, detergents, soaps and household products worldwide. In addition, you have a French subsidiary called Veronique, which exports its range of famous perfumes and beauty products to the five continents.

You are meeting today to discuss the question of marketing and distribution of Veronique perfumes. The present policy is that Veronique perfumes are sold in big cities and fashionable resorts through exclusive Veronique perfumeries, supplied with your perfumes provided they sell no other perfume brands. Therefore, a customer buying a Veronique product will only find it in a Veronique shop. Furthermore, they will only find Veronique products in this shop, nothing else.

This policy has a significant advantage, namely the very select, exclusive, luxury, up-market image of Veronique. This exclusive image allows you to charge high prices and have a considerable profit margin. It also has drawbacks. One is that the shopkeepers of your exclusive shops only have your products to sell and thus have a limited turnover, even if their profit margins are high. Another drawback is that most people in most cities worldwide do not have a Veronique shop near them and cannot buy your products.

The different problems linked to this 'exclusive outlet' policy are the subject of today's meeting.

You must decide:

1. if the policy of selling the Veronique range only through exclusive outlets is the most profitable one and should be continued
2. If you should change this policy, sell through other sorts of outlets, and sell additional products in your perfumeries

Roles

The President

You chair the meeting and make sure everyone participates. Organise the meeting as follows:

1. Ask each participant to say if you should change Veronique's marketing policy or not, and explain their opinion in detail.
2. Discuss this question thoroughly and come to a decision.
3. If you agree to a change, what is the new policy? For example, should the company sell its products through other outlets than your exclusive ones, should it sell different brands and products in its outlets, etc.?

You are sure that if Veronique keeps its exclusive luxury image and the high-profit margins this allows, you must not change your marketing policy. It is impossible to keep your image and sell in ordinary perfumeries alongside other perfumes or in pharmacies, supermarkets, hairdressing salons or beauty parlours. The Selena Group sells different brands of beauty products in these sorts of outlets, and it would be foolish for Veronique to move down-market in this way.

The Marketing Manager

You want a complete change in policy. You have only one shop in most big cities around the world. You cannot open more shops, because the independent shop owners would be

unhappy about the increased local competition. Your shops have a significant profit margin on each product sold. Still, turnover is low, and overall profits for the shop itself are much lower than in perfumeries selling a selection of different makes.

This is what you propose:

1. allowing your perfumeries to sell a limited range of prestigious products from competitors
2. all towns which do not have a Veronique shop provided these perfumeries put selling in perfumeries in the 'Veronique' sign exclusively in their window
3. limiting the number of French perfumes that all your outlets are allowed to sell alongside Veronique

Experts from your department have calculated that this new policy would allow you to double sales within three years, without affecting profit margins.

The Financial Controller

You think your present marketing policy is a catastrophe. With it, you only increase sales if you add products to the range, increasing turnover, but not profits. You have studied the German market as an example. You have calculated that if you sold in all perfumeries in Germany, you would increase sales by 400%. Profit margins on each product sold would only drop by about 20%, thus leading to much increased overall profits.

You have concluded that all your exclusive perfumeries should be closed or allowed to sell any make of up-market perfume. In addition, you believe that any perfumery anywhere should be allowed to sell the complete Veronique range.

The Communications Manager

Your policy for Veronique is to concentrate on the luxury, up-market image. Market studies in your biggest markets show that in the top category of wealthy women customers, awareness of Veronique is better than that of any other perfume in the world. This

reputation for quality and prestige allows you to charge prices up to 25% higher than your competitors.

Your communications policy, and your exclusive outlets, are the two main reasons why your image is so good. Your perfumes are quite simply the best in the world. You have to charge more for them than your competitors do for their perfumes, and you have to have your exclusive outlets. Any change to this policy would ruin your image and damage your market.

The Company Lawyer

You think that the present policy of supplying only your perfumeries is simply unlawful in many markets. It goes against all the principles of free trade. You have not, as yet, had any problems - nobody has taken you to court, but this could happen. The legal position is to allow your perfumeries to sell what they like. They are independent traders, and Veronique does not own their shops.

It is also quite unlawful to refuse to supply other perfumeries, pharmacies, supermarkets, beauty parlours and hairdressing salons, as you do now. It would be much safer to reverse your policy entirely and supply any retailer who wishes to sell your products.

The Sales Manager, USA

You want to maintain your present policy of having only exclusive Veronique outlets. Still, you think you could and should have more of them. Having only one store in some big cities is a mistake in the USA, the company's biggest market. For example, in Los Angeles, you have only one store - in Beverly Hills - and none in Hollywood or downtown Los Angeles.

You have a perfumery in San Francisco, but not in Berkeley. It is also a mistake not to have a store in well-known cities like Santa Barbara or San Diego. All big cities should have two or three of your outlets, and all fashionable resorts should have at least one.

The Sales Manager, Japan

Japan is Veronique's second-largest market after the USA. Having Veronique shops in big cities and fashionable resorts is perfect for the Japanese retailing system. If you tried selling in other perfumeries, you would harm your prestigious image. You might gain sales in these outlets, but you would probably lose them in the Veronique shops. These shops would then have to close down or become ordinary perfumeries selling competitors' products.

You strongly advise your colleagues to maintain your present policy, not just in Japan, but worldwide. The Veronique image is a worldwide image. A policy change in any major market would damage this image in other markets.

Structure and procedure of the simulation

In brief

Veronique, the French subsidiary of a Dutch multinational, sells its perfumes worldwide. Their products are sold only in big cities and fashionable resorts in their exclusive outlets. These perfumeries sell only Veronique products. In this discussion, managers must decide if this retailing policy is still the best for the company or should be changed. Would a policy change, allowing Veronique perfumes to be sold in other outlets or allowing Veronique outlets to sell different perfume brands, lead to an increase in Veronique profits? Or might it, on the contrary, lead to the loss of the perfumes present exclusive up-market image?

Introduction (optional): 15-20 minutes

Preparation: 15-20 minutes

Simulation: 30-60 minutes

Follow-up (optional): 10-30 minutes

Total: minimum 45 minutes, maximum 130 minutes

Introduction

For each question, ask students to work in pairs first and then work as a class to compare notes and further discussion.

Answers

Many objects can be found in most countries both in supermarkets and in a specialised shop - for example, sweets (candy) in a sweet shop, candy store, or confectioner.

Goods you would probably never find in a supermarket are cars, medicine, and furniture. The reasons for this will vary. It may be size, furniture or vehicles, or the need for a prescription for treatment.

This is the most important question when preparing for the simulation. For example, cars are often found for sale only in car showrooms, furniture in furniture stores, beauty products in chemist's (pharmacies) or perfumeries, and medicine in a chemist's (pharmacy/drug store). For medication, this is due to regulations based on the belief that a pharmacist is specially qualified to advise customers on their use. For beauty products, including perfume, it is for reasons of image and marketing.

Running the simulation

Refer to the "Sample Business English Lessons" and "Preparation" sections to prepare learners for the simulation.

Business background

Customers often believe that they will find the best quality bread at a bakery, get the best advice about cameras from a photographer and get the best meat from a butcher. In other words, a specialised outlet is often synonymous with quality in the customer's mind. So one way of giving an up-market image to your product is to sell it in an exclusive, specialised outlet. There are many examples of different products sold only in certain outlets. For example, some perfume makers sell only in their shops.

In contrast, others sell only in a limited number of specially selected outlets. The same is true of manufacturers of cars, beauty products, food, wine, spirits, clothes, luggage, sports equipment, hi-fi equipment, etc. In some cases, refusal by manufacturers to supply any retailer who orders their goods may be unlawful. For instance, there have recently been legal battles over the supply of medicine, perfumes, and beauty products to supermarkets.

Outline of roles

- A. President: wants no change to present policy.
- B. Marketing Manager: wants Veronique's outlets to sell other perfumes and allow other perfumeries to sell Veronique's products.
- C. Financial Controller: wants to close all exclusive perfumeries or allow them to sell any up-market perfume.
- D. Communications Manager: wants no change to present policy.
- E. Company Lawyer: thinks the present policy is unlawful in many countries.
- F. Sales Manager, USA: thinks Veronique should have many more exclusive outlets.
- G. Sales Manager, Japan: wants to maintain the present policy.

Possible outcome

There are good reasons for maintaining the present policy. Veronique's products are, according to the President, the best in the world. An exclusive outlet's policy would seem to be the most suitable to keep this image. However, there are also good reasons for change. The present policy limits turnover. If participants can find a good way of increasing turnover while maintaining an up-market image, as the Marketing Manager will argue, this could be the solution.

Vocabulary

awareness	how well something is known
down-market	cheap, inferior quality
a drawback	disadvantage
an exclusive outlet	a shop which sells only one make or range of products
fashionable	chic, in vogue, elegant, stylish
an outlet	a place where products are sold
prestige	high status, renown, reputation
prestigious	famous, well known, renowned
profit margins	the money a company makes over and above the costs it has
a resort	a place where people go to for holidays
a subsidiary	part of a group owned by a parent company
turnover	the amount of business you do, expressed in figures, is usually the same thing as total sales
unlawful	against the law, not allowed
up-market	expensive, of superior quality

No smoking

Introduction

1. Do you smoke?
 - a. If yes, do you always ask other people for permission before smoking?
 - b. If not, do you object to other people smoking in your presence? Do you like other people to ask you if it is all right before they start smoking?
2. Should employers ban smoking at work?
 - a. If so, should this ban be extended to be a complete ban on smoking on employees, wherever they are working? Or even a ban on smoking in their own homes?
 - b. Should tobacco advertising be banned? Is such a ban possible in all media?

Situation

You work for Michael Powers Incorporated, the New Zealand multinational communications group. Your company owns newspapers, magazines, radio stations, film studios and television channels in Australia, Europe, North America and South-East Asia.

Your Chief Executive is a non-smoker who wants to ban smoking everywhere in the group. The ban is for everyone on all company premises, and all employees during work hours even on other premises.

You must decide:

1. if such a ban is desirable
2. if it is possible to implement
3. what exact form the ban should take

Fact sheet

THE OWEN GROUP WORLDWIDE

Main publications. TV and radio stations

Owen Incorporated, World Headquarters, Ipswich, Queensland, Australia

Ipswich	London	Hong Kong	Midlothian, Virginia
Australian	European	S-E Asian	North American
head office	head office	head office	head office
Owen TV (satellite)	TV Ashton TV (satellite)	Kwang Yu TV (satellite)	Wolf Films
Sydney Monitor	The World	Hong Kong Herald	Midlothian Monitor
Melbourne Mail	Paris-Photo	Chinese Woman's Weekly	VRST (Virginian Radio)
Tingle TV News	Radio Pucelle	Manila Radio	Lockie News
Orwell Radio	Wye TV (terrestrial)	Photo Flash	Karis TV (terrestrial)

Roles

The Chief Executive

Chairing the meeting: You chair the meeting and ensure everyone joins in. Organise the meeting as follows:

1. Get everyone's opinion on the desirability of a ban.
2. If most of you agree that such a ban is desirable, discuss whether such a ban is possible to implement.
3. If you agree that such a ban is possible, decide what form it should take. For example, who exactly should be prevented from smoking, and where?

Your point of view: You gave up smoking last year after your partner died of lung cancer. You are now determined to prevent employees who are smokers from damaging the health of non-smoking employees or business partners. You have tried to persuade your executives to give up, without success, and now think that the only way to implement a ban is to impose it. You would not go so far as to fire employees who smoke at home. Instead, you want to ban smoking at work and employees smoking while working for or representing any company in the group.

The Marketing Manager

You think this proposal would be disastrous for the group. You have calculated that nearly 20% of the advertisers who buy space in your different media are tobacco firms. If you ban smoking in the group, these advertisers will feel that you are not sufficiently committed to increasing the sales of their products. As a result, they would take their business elsewhere, and some of your media - newspapers and magazines in particular - would go out of business.

Besides, even if the tobacco advertisers remained as customers, wouldn't it be paradoxical, not to say hypocritical, to ban your employees from smoking while accepting payment to encourage readers, listeners, and viewers to smoke?

It so happens that you are a non-smoker and do not like friends or colleagues smoking in your presence, but this is a problem you deal with by politely asking smokers not to smoke. The problem could only be made worse by a ban. It would lead to conflict and be extremely difficult to enforce.

You think it would be fantastic for the group's image if smoking were banned. Statistics show that most people in the countries where you do business are non-smokers. They will have an incredibly positive image of your group and, more importantly, your products if they know that the whole group is 'non-smoking'. So this ban would be good for business, and good for profits.

True, you would have to enforce the ban by firing employees who smoke at work. But, you would go further and fire employees who smoke at home. Persistent smokers are bad workers. They are tense, nervous, and more often ill than non-smokers. Workers who cannot smoke at work but who smoke at home will damage their families health and perform poorly because they cannot smoke in the office. You want to transform Michael Powers into a non-smoking group whose employees are all non-smokers all the time.

The Director of Human Resources

You only smoke at home, never at work, and you just like a good cigar after dinner. This has never done you any harm, and you think that smoking is, like everything else if done in moderation, quite all right.

You think a complete ban on smoking at work would be impossible to enforce. It might even be unlawful in some countries. The only way of forcing people not to smoke would be to fire them if they did. In many countries, this might lead to claims for compensation for unfair dismissal. The cost to the group could be enormous.

You admit that it is very unpleasant for a non-smoker to have to share an office with a smoker or attend a meeting with smokers. Therefore, you would suggest a ban on smoking in all meetings and a deliberate policy of grouping smokers together in the same offices.

The Advertising Sales Manager

You are in favour of the ban. You agree that revenue from tobacco advertisers is extremely important to the different businesses in your group. Still, cigarette advertising has already been entirely banned in some countries, and your media in those countries have remained profitable. You are convinced that sooner or later, most governments will ban cigarette and tobacco advertising anyway. It will be hard for your group at first, but you will be able to adapt.

You would like a 'gentle' ban on smoking at work in the presence of non-smokers. All offices should have a smoking room on each floor for employees to smoke in if their non-smoking colleagues object to them smoking in front of them.

The Head of Satellite Television

Your satellite TV companies are the fastest-growing and most profitable parts of the group. Up to 25% of your advertising revenue comes from tobacco advertising. You simply cannot impose a ban on smoking in your group and hope to keep this revenue. It is just like saying to your customers: "We will advertise your products, but we do not like them." If employees do not like working in the smoke-filled rooms that have always characterised the world of journalism, they should look for another sort of job.

You cannot take a moral standpoint and choose your customers. If you did, wouldn't you have to refuse other advertising? For example, alcohol for health reasons, meat and dairy produce advertising for animal rights, and all car advertising because of the environment? What would be left?

The Director of Publishing

You are in favour of a complete ban on smoking and smokers. When you advertise a job with the Michael Powers Group, you should state that: 'Michael Powers Incorporated is a non-smoking group of companies.'

Of course, you cannot fire people because they smoke at home, but you can and should enforce a ban on smoking at work or on business and in your television studios. As new

people come to work for the group, all will be non-smokers and you will gradually become a non-smoking group.

Structure and procedure of the simulation

In brief

The Chief Executive of a New Zealand multinational communications group wants to impose a complete ban on smoking everywhere in the group. Managers meet to decide if such a ban is desirable and possible and what form any ban could take. The Chief Executive has a personal wish to ban smoking because their partner died from lung cancer. Opponents of a ban point out that it would be dangerous for business. They are worried that the group would lose revenue from tobacco advertisers. They also think that the ban would be difficult to enforce and possibly unlawful in some countries. Supporters of the ban say that it would be good for the group's image, would lead to better quality work by employees who would be in better health, and would not be damaging for advertising revenue, as many countries have banned tobacco advertising.

Introduction (optional): 10-30 minutes

Preparation: 10-20 minutes

Simulation: 30-50 minutes

Follow-up (optional): 10-20 minutes

Total: minimum 40 minutes, maximum 2 hours

Introduction

If you want to do this quickly, work as a class and ask the students yourself. If you can spend more time, you can do an opinion poll of the class using the first question. Then you can get students to work in small groups and discuss questions 2 and 3. It is interesting to see if there is a correlation between students who smoke and refuse a ban on smoking at work.

Running the simulation

Refer to the “Sample Business English Lessons” and “Preparation” sections to prepare learners for the simulation.

Business background

A decision to ban smoking in a company could be based simply on a desire to protect the health of non-smokers, who are, in many cases, the majority of employees. However, as the simulation shows, the question is more complex than that. Such a ban might change the company's image, for better or for worse. It could improve the image because non-smokers generally see the company in a better light. In this case, it could lead to an increase in sales and profits. Alternatively, it could damage its image because the ban might be seen as authoritarian or hypocritical and lead to a drop in sales and profits.

The tobacco industry is huge, profitable, a significant employer and a major advertiser. So what line can anti-smoking campaigners take when they find themselves in the position of potential employees, customers or suppliers of a cigarette firm? What damage might be done to the image, sales and profits of companies associated with the tobacco industry?

Outline of roles

- A. Chief Executive: wants a ban on employees smoking at work or while representing the group.
- B. Marketing Manager: is worried about losing advertising revenue if there is a ban. ‘B’ thinks it would be hypocritical to impose such a ban.
- C. Communications Manager: thinks it would be fantastic for the group's image if smoking were banned. ‘C’ would even fire employees who smoke at home.
- D. Director of Human Resources: thinks a ban would be impossible to enforce. ‘D’ suggests putting smokers together in the same offices.
- E. Advertising Sales Manager: favours a ban because government bans on cigarette advertising are inevitable.

F. Head of Satellite Television: is against a ban. 'F' thinks that choosing customers on moral grounds means refusing other business advertising (e.g., alcohol, meat, cars).

G. Director of Publishing; is in favour of a complete but gradual ban.

Possible outcome

It is doubtful that your students will ban smoking for employees even when at home. Maybe the ban on smoking at work will be chosen, as the Chief Executive proposes. If you have seven participants, four of them will favour a ban, which will increase the chances of a ban. However, those against a ban have a strong argument: the potential dangers to advertising revenue from the tobacco industry.

Vocabulary

animal rights	the rights of animals to be protected from exploitation and cruelty
to ban	to stop, prohibit, forbid, restrict, disallow, veto
compensation	(in this context) money given as damages for loss of employment
deliberate	premeditated, intentional, planned, prepared
to fire	to sack, dismiss, terminate employment
a hard-liner	someone who takes an uncompromising position, an extreme attitude
highly-strung	tense, nervous, excitable
hypocritical	doing the opposite of what you say you believe
to implement	to put into action, carry out
to inflict	to impose something unwelcome
paradoxical	seemingly absurd or self-contradictory a persistent
smoker	someone who smokes

satellite TV	television channels which are transmitted via a satellite in space
terrestrial TV	television channels which are sent from a transmitter on land
unfair dismissal	being dismissed from a job for unjust or unlawful reasons
unlawful	against the law, not allowed

Being accountable

We are accountable to our students, their sponsors, and our bosses. Therefore, we need to provide them with information at various points or access information by observing or seeing materials. As well as being transparent, any written information we provide should also be accurate. Decisions about people's careers may well be based on this information, especially if presented in the form of test results or reports.

Providing information

Make sure that students, sponsors, and bosses know what decisions have been made about course objectives, approaches and materials. If you are not in consultation with all parties while deciding on these, they need to be told afterwards. Provide key people with information in the ways described below.

Provide a course outline or copies of the syllabus

A course outline is invaluable as a general summary. If any confidential documents are requested (e.g., syllabi or tests), explain that you will show and discuss them but cannot provide copies. If challenged, demonstrate the need for confidentiality and say: "I'm sorry, I can't give you a copy."

Inform all parties about changes

If changes are made to any documents or information initially given out, make sure that everyone concerned is informed as soon as possible. People have a right to know about changes before they take place because they may well affect the success of the course. It is unlikely that anybody will challenge your professionalism when you make changes that seem necessary. However, make sure that you have remembered the course's objectives and noted any comments (about preferences, etc.) made during the initial needs' analysis.

Keep channels of communication open on a day-to-day basis

Course coordinators will appreciate being kept up to date on your ongoing objectives. If the coordinators and managers understand your rationale, they are more likely to make positive

comments to the people who make the ultimate decisions about follow-up courses. A quick phone call is helpful if you do not meet with key people on a day-to-day basis. Giving students ongoing updates is also essential because students represent our primary contact with our clients. If students understand your thinking, you are more likely to get their enthusiastic participation.

Being observed

Your bosses and company sponsors may periodically wish to observe you teach. Allow and encourage this because people are likely to be reassured by what they see.

You must also allow observation because your clients have a right to check up on what you are doing! However, for your benefit and protection, try to establish the following:

1. All observations must be arranged in advance so you can be sure only one person will be observing at a time!
2. The observer should speak to you beforehand to explain the rationale behind the observation.
3. The observer may make no interruptions during the observation.
4. The observer must talk with you after the class to give you feedback and clarify and explore further points for improvement.

You will probably also find it helpful to provide your observer with a lesson plan because this will allow you to explain your rationale and the context of specific activities on paper.

Writing reports

You may be asked to write reports on your students occasionally, or it may be a good idea for you to provide these without prompting. Take them seriously! Decisions about students' careers may be made because of the reports you write. Your reports may determine whether a student gets sent away on business trips, for example, or whether they get promoted to a position with a more 'international' flavour.

Before you start writing

1. Think carefully about the most appropriate format to use. Numerical scores are favoured because progress is easily tracked. Still, numbers may not provide a reliable indication of real progress, so alternatives may be preferable. For example, written comments may be necessary to supplement or counteract false impressions created by scores.
2. Remember that all information must be understandable! Paraphrase EFL terminology or provide keys to explain confusing terms.
3. Consider how you can provide information on real-life skills because managers are primarily interested in knowing whether a person can do a specific task.

Sample reports are provided below. Note that no details about student performance are provided on the report because its primary function is to show managers whether the course was worth running in terms of investment, i.e., money invested in training people.

Sample end of course report template for an individual student

For the attention of:	Date:			
Company:	Department:			
BUSINESS ENGLISH END-OF-COURSE STUDENT REPORT				
Student's name:	Teacher's name:			
Student's position:	Course:			
Department:	Overall performance grade:			
Attendance grade:	Attitude %:			
Final test marks (%):	Pass/fail course:			
Grades for learning areas covered during the course				
Speaking				
• Dealing with visitors	A	B	C	D
• Telephoning	A	B	C	D
• Presentations and Q&A sessions	A	B	C	D
• Meetings	A	B	C	D
Writing				
• E-mail	A	B	C	D
• Report-writing	A	B	C	D
N.B. Grades relate to the standard expected at this level. A = Excellent, B = Good, C = Acceptable, D = Poor				

General comments:	
Suggested follow-up:	
Teacher:	Coordinator:

Sample end of course report template for the group

For the attention of:		Date:	
Company:		Department:	
BUSINESS ENGLISH END-OF-COURSE GROUP REPORT			
Course:		Teacher's name:	
Materials used:			
Summary of attendance			
Student name	Department	Hours attended	Overall % attendance
Teacher's comment:			
Teacher:			
Coordinator:			

Evaluating courses

What's an evaluation all about? Why evaluate?

Evaluation can be concerned with:

1. Attitudes - how positively are our courses viewed?
2. Effectiveness - how well do we achieve our objectives in terms of actual learning?
3. Appropriacy - how appropriate are our programmes to our client's real needs?

It is crucial to evaluate the success and effectiveness of your courses to make improvements on an ongoing basis. It is also vital to ensure continued survival since students and sponsors evaluate our courses (formal or informal). When programmes are not working, they seek alternative solutions to fulfil their genuine need for English, e.g., programmes offered by rival language schools, multi-media self-study or simply a subscription to Newsweek. However, our evaluation must be effective for real improvements in future courses.

How to evaluate?

The most common approach to evaluation is to collect comments or ratings using feedback forms, which are distributed at the end of each course, and then interpret them. Another critical approach is to sit back and reflect on what seems to constitute successful teaching. Finally, a third often revealing strategy is collecting and analysing objective data from registration numbers vs attendance, non-attendance numbers, exam, and test results.

All information - statistical or impressionistic, objective, or subjective - will need to be considered concerning the course's objectives, format (intensive or extensive, with or without self-study component, etc.), teaching approach and materials used, amongst other things. You will need to find out whether any variable was in effect that might distort your conclusions. For example, it could be that the materials were adequate, but either your approach or your attitude was unhelpful. You will also need to be careful not to assume that things are effects when they might be causes. For example, student absences could either

indicate deficiencies in a course (if classwork was irrelevant to students' work), or a cause of failure (if no absence policy were in operation).

Sample form for end of course feedback from your students

BUSINESS ENGLISH END-OF-COURSE FEEDBACK								
Please help us to improve our courses by filling out the following form. Circle your answers. A = excellent, B = good, C = acceptable, D = poor. If you would prefer to remain anonymous, just leave the first space blank!								
Name:				Course:				
Company:				Site:				
Teacher:				Term:				
Self-evaluation:								
How would you rate your own progress and performance for this course?								
Attitude: A B C D		Performance: A B C D			Progress: A B C D			
In your opinion, how much progress have you made in the following areas:								
	Improvement				Performance			
Dealing with visitors	None	Little	Some	Great	A	B	C	D

Telephoning	None	Little	Some	Great	A	B	C	D
Presentations and Q&A sessions	None	Little	Some	Great	A	B	C	D
Meetings	None	Little	Some	Great	A	B	C	D
E-Mail	None	Little	Some	Great	A	B	C	D
Report-writing	None	Little	Some	Great	A	B	C	D
Course evaluation:								
How would you rate your own progress and performance for this course?								
Attitude: A B C D			Performance: A B C D			Progress: A B C D		
When scoring 1 = useful, 5 = not useful								
In general this course was ...						1 2 3 4 5		
because								
The teacher was ...						1 2 3 4 5		
because								

The class activities were ...	1 2 3 4 5
because	
Materials were ...	1 2 3 4 5
because	
The homework assignments were ...	1 2 3 4 5
because	
The most useful thing we did was ...	1 2 3 4 5
because	
The least useful thing we did was ...	1 2 3 4 5
because	
I spent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 hours per week doing homework,	
because	
Plans for next term	
What do you want to do next term?	
a) Go on to the next level	

- b) Continue at the same level
- c) Stop studying English because:
- d) Study in a different way. I want to

Suggestions

What kind of class activities would you like to do more of?

What can we do to improve our courses?

What other course(s) would you find useful?

Any other suggestions?

Getting feedback from students

Collecting feedback from students with a course feedback form at the end of each course is probably the most straightforward approach. The sample form will, of course, need to be adapted according to the specific content of your course. When designing a form, phrase questions carefully to prompt valuable responses. You can back up the use of feedback forms with formalised interviews or informal chats whenever possible. When considering completed feedback forms, be sure to carefully analyse ratings and comments because effective evaluation involves finding out the reasons behind a course's apparent strengths or weaknesses. You can clarify unexpected ratings and unclear comments by asking students and their managers indirect questions or by seemingly innocuous chatting.

If the reasons behind low course ratings or poor student performance are unclear or vague, ask your clients to co-operate in discovering the causes! The need for English is sufficiently strong in today's businesses for clients to appreciate our efforts to probe their real needs.