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FÜR IHR BUSINESS-ENGLISCH

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## Cashless

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## Personal branding

There are plenty of reasons for using  
LinkedIn as an efficient tool. Learn how  
to leverage your profile and network with  
other professionals.

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# Link up with LinkedIn

 **SOCIAL MEDIA** Whether or not you're a fan of social media, there are plenty of reasons for using LinkedIn as a professional tool. It's quick, easy and free to sign up and create a profile – but that's only the start.

Like a website with no traffic, a LinkedIn profile with little information and interaction will hardly be noticed. Conversely, a profile rich in content, well connected and interacting on a regular basis will attract attention. It's an efficient way to network – and a great place to find jobs.

## Get started

Before signing up on linkedin.com, be prepared with a good professional photo and a 'banner picture' for your profile. After that, the process is similar to writing your CV, so if you have that ready it will also help to complete the steps. You'll need to write a short heading and a summary paragraph or two that describes you and what you do. Be prepared to list work experience and companies you have worked for, as well as your skills, education and qualifications, with the relevant dates. All of this will get you started.

## Connect, follow, message, join

The most important first step is to build up a network. Small networks achieve little, so set a target of connecting with a defined number of people each week. The algorithm suggests 'people you may know'. With 875 million members worldwide, there's a lot of potential. I've read that 500 connections is optimal for increasing a network exponentially, but I only have 385 and am doing just fine – although if you can connect with me, I may reach my 500 sooner! Search my name to connect, or just 'follow' me.

There's one catch to the free version, which is also the key advantage of the platform: you can only connect with 'first level' connections (who you've worked or studied with), but not with people who have no existing link to you – unless you pay for a premium subscription. This will allow you a number of direct messages to anyone each month. But even with the free version, you can 'follow' people in order to see their posts, interact via comments, and join relevant groups for information, discussion or support.

## Build your personal brand

Once your network of connections is growing, you can start to build your personal brand. It's not only your profile that shows this off, but also the way you interact. Make regular posts on relevant and interesting topics for your network. I post an English tip every Friday and find this starts conversations with contacts in my network but also with people I don't know, who are interested in my advice. Over time, posting and taking part in discussions on others' posts attracts new followers and contacts to your personal brand.

## Find job opportunities and apply

I'm a big fan of LinkedIn, because I got both of my current jobs (writing this, and online Business English training) through the platform. At least 72 per cent of recruiters use LinkedIn, and up to 97 per cent of HR professionals. You can also search for jobs using advanced filters – by location,

industry, company size, experience level, salary requirements and more. For some jobs you can apply in one click, sending your application straight from the platform.

## Make use of other opportunities

LinkedIn has many other uses; these include creating company pages, learning new skills from training modules, following thought leaders, or even becoming a thought leader yourself by writing articles and posting videos. LinkedIn is as useful and inspiring as you want it to be.

## Timing matters

Beyond profiles and posting, LinkedIn's real power lies in intentional behaviour. The platform quietly tracks how you spend your time: what you read, who you engage with, and how others respond to you. This data influences not only what you see, but also how often you are shown to others.

One overlooked lever is relationship depth. Repeated interactions with the same people strengthen network ties and increase mutual visibility. A short, thoughtful comment or



### Checklist: What drives real visibility

Most LinkedIn profiles fail not because people lack expertise, but because they misunderstand how visibility actually works on the platform. LinkedIn rewards completeness, consistency, and interaction—not passive presence.

- ✓ **Profile completeness is non-negotiable:** Professional photo, banner image, clear headline, summary, experience, skills, and dates signal credibility to both humans and the algorithm.
- ✓ **Your headline must communicate value, not just a title:** Focus on outcomes, expertise, or problems you solve—not job descriptions.
- ✓ **Network size matters—but strategically:** Around 500 connections is a tipping point where reach grows exponentially due to overlapping networks.
- ✓ **Activity beats perfection:** Regular connecting, commenting, and reacting tells the algorithm you are an “active node.”
- ✓ **Free accounts still have leverage:** Following experts, joining niche groups, and commenting early on relevant posts increases exposure without paid features.
- ✓ **Think system, not snapshot:** LinkedIn is a living network: profiles that evolve and interact get surfaced; static ones disappear.



### Checklist: How to build a visible, trusted personal brand

- ✓ **Choose one clear expertise lane:** Repeated topics train your audience—and the algorithm—to associate your name with a specific skill or insight.
- ✓ **Consistency beats frequency:** One high-quality post per week (tip, insight, micro-lesson) is enough to build recognition.
- ✓ **Comments are a growth multiplier:** Thoughtful comments on others' posts often reach more people than your own content.
- ✓ **Interaction signals authority:** Asking smart questions and adding perspective positions you as a peer, not a spectator.
- ✓ **Recruiters notice before you apply:** Over 70% of recruiters use LinkedIn actively—visibility often precedes job offers.
- ✓ **Low friction, high impact:** Advanced filters and one-click applications work best when your brand already creates trust.

follow-up message builds more long-term value than dozens of superficial reactions.

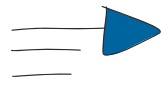
Timing also matters. Posts published during business hours in your audience's time zone tend to receive faster engagement, which increases distribution. Early comments—especially those adding insight rather than agreement—signal relevance to the algorithm.

Finally, credibility compounds. Profiles that combine expertise with generosity (sharing knowledge without selling) are perceived as trustworthy. Over time, this positioning attracts opportunities organically—often before roles are advertised. On LinkedIn, visibility is earned through contribution, not self-promotion.

GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND TRAINER



# Feeling industrious



**VOCABULARY** From time to time working@office covers different industries with articles. Can you work out what it being discussed in each excerpt below? If you're stuck, check the list of options.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a mixture of methane, CO<sub>2</sub>, and other gases which can be used for cooking, heating, or electricity. It is produced when biomass is “digested” (anaerobic digestion) by micro-organisms.

2. In the UK, 24 million consumers use \_\_\_\_\_—that’s about 35 percent of the adult population of about 53 million. The Covid pandemic had a massive impact, as consumers looked for safe ways to access food.

3. Today a number of vocational schools with dual programs provide training in carpentry, glasswork, ceramicmaking, wood-carving, jewelry or gemstone production, musical instrument manufacturing, or engraving and enameling. Some people also learn their \_\_\_\_\_ by apprenticing themselves to an established business and learning on the job.

4. The EU’s \_\_\_\_\_ label signifies that a certain food product must be fully produced in a specific region in order to be marketed under a particular name.

5. Leadersnet, a business news media company, estimates the turnover of the entire \_\_\_\_\_ in Germany alone to be €2.5 billion, with more than ten percent of couples spending over €25,000.

6. Having premiered in Vienna on May 7th, 1824, this monumental work is celebrating its 200th anniversary of embodying Germany’s great \_\_\_\_\_ tradition. [Bonus trivia question: What “monumental work” is being discussed here?]

7. If the patent search results show that you may have a new \_\_\_\_\_, it’s time to develop a prototype (also known as a mock-up). For something quite simple to sketch out and make—a fabric product, for example—the fast and low-cost option is to do this yourself.

8. Products such as creams or lotions, nutritional food and drink, sleepwear, pillows, socks, and exercise gear are a big part of the German \_\_\_\_\_ industry. The word may also conjure images of saunas, thermal baths, cosmetic salons, and massages.

9. Spanish deli The Ojos Foods reports 90 pages of documentation and delivery delays of two months. The impact

## Industry terms list:

Protected designation of origin (PDO), robot, insurance, food delivery apps, wedding industry, biogas, classical music, FreightTech, leather, Brexit, photography, crafts, invention, wellness

of \_\_\_\_\_ on small UK importers and EU exporters is crushing. In some cases, trade has even ceased.

10. Technology has created new ways of exchanging information and goods, enabling logistics companies and truck drivers to improve efficiency in real time. \_\_\_\_\_ has arrived—and so have the disruptors.

11. \_\_\_\_\_ is huge in the market of fashionable handbags, clothing, and footwear. In this segment, it is still seen as a classic, a luxury, and a symbol of status and wealth.

12. As companies have a constant need to produce images showing off their brands, products, and services to best advantage, the demand for professional \_\_\_\_\_ has been steadily increasing in recent years and does not look set to slow down.

13. Artificial intelligence is set to revolutionize the process of \_\_\_\_\_. Faster and easier claims for policyholders will be one feature; gone will be the tedious form-filling and frustrating phone calls.

14. One way to define a \_\_\_\_\_ is by the three things it must be able to do: (1) sense the environment; (2) compute and make choices; (3) take action.

KEL BARKSDALE, AUTHOR AND TRAINER

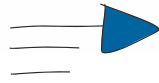


## Vocabulary

ENGLISH	GERMAN
carpentry	Zimmerei
enameling	lackieren, emaillieren
industrious	fleißig, eifrig
tedious	langweilig, nervig



# Top 20 phrasal verbs for business



**QUIZ** There's no avoiding phrasal verbs – they are commonly used in both formal and informal English. However, we can look at some of the most important ones that you are likely to encounter in business settings. Here I've selected some to remember, and possibly some new ones to learn.

These first ten tricky phrasal verbs are all used in context in the box on the right, to help you with their meaning.

## Exercise 1: Match the verbs to their definitions:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1) pencil in           | a) make sth. succeed                        |
| 2) drum up             | b) take the place of/act for                |
| 3) fill in for         | c) make a provisional appointment           |
| 4) write sth. off      | d) have too much work to do                 |
| 5) bring sth. off      | e) make redundant (loss of job)             |
| 6) run sth. by someone | f) gain support for by 'making some noise'  |
| 7) step up             | g) agree that sth. is lost, not recoverable |
| 8) wind sth. up        | h) show someone sth. so they can check it   |
| 9) to be snowed under  | i) volunteer to complete a challenge        |
| 10) lay off            | j) bring to an end                          |

## Exercise 2: Select the correct option in each sentence:

All of the options are real phrasal verbs.

- Make sure to (a) back up (b) back out (c) backtrack all the data correctly so we don't lose anything.
- We need to (a) bring back (b) bring forward (c) bring up the meeting from Friday to Wednesday.
- Take the work slowly – we don't want you to (a) burn up (b) burn out (c) burn away so that you are unable to work.
- Advertising via social media influencers is a trend we should (a) cash in (b) cash on (c) cash up.
- Norman will (a) draw down (b) draw in (c) draw up the plans next week.
- The merger has (a) fallen out (b) fallen through (c) fallen in so won't now take place.

## Phrasal verbs used in context

We need to drum up support for our new project but I'm not sure if we can bring it off in the end. Run the timeline by me today and we'll pencil in a meeting for next week – I'm snowed under this week. If I can't make the meeting, Christos will step up and fill in for me. If there's no enthusiasm for the project after two months we'll wind it up and just write off the budget. We won't need to lay anyone off as we can transfer them to other projects.

- If we can (a) get ahead with (b) get along with (c) get over with the work this week, there won't be so much to do next week.
- It's too late to (a) pull through (b) pull down (c) pull out of this contract now—we're signing today.
- Are you going to (a) sign up for (b) sign in to (c) sign off the five-a-side football team?
- Anna is (a) taking in (b) taking away (c) taking over part of my job so that I can deliver some training.
- With a reduced budget we need to (a) cut away (b) cut back on (c) cut out unnecessary expenses.
- It's easy to promise big changes but more difficult to (a) carry them out (b) carry them in (c) carry trecoverable

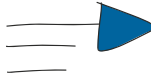
GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND TRAINER



**Answers:**  
 Exercise 1: 1 - c 2 - f 3 - b 4 - g 5 - a 6 - h 7 - i 8 - j  
 Exercise 2: 1 - a 2 - b 3 - b 4 - a 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a  
 8 - c 9 - a 10 - c 11 - b 12 - a



# Cash or cashless – a very modern dilemma

 **ECONOMY** Euro banknotes and coins celebrated their 27th anniversary on 1 January. The European Central Bank (ECB) is currently redesigning its future banknotes, to make them ‘more secure, sustainable and relatable’. That sounds like a noble ambition until you suddenly wonder—will we need banknotes in the future?

As of 2026, euro banknotes and coins have been in circulation for 27 years. The European Central Bank (ECB) continues to work on redesigning future euro banknotes to make them “more secure, sustainable and relatable.” This raises the familiar question: will we still need banknotes in the future? Are we moving toward a fully cashless society, and would that actually be beneficial?

The euro remains the currency of 20 EU countries and is used daily by more than 346 million people. The ECB has confirmed that cash will continue to play an important role. Its cash strategy explicitly aims to ensure that cash remains widely available and accepted, both as a means of payment and as a store of value. While the digital euro is progressing

toward pilot testing from around 2027, it is designed to complement cash, not replace it. ECB President Christine Lagarde emphasised that euro banknotes are “here to stay,” serving as a tangible symbol of European unity, particularly in times of crisis, and noted that demand for cash remains strong.

## **New banknotes – but not overnight**

Since 2021, EU citizens have been involved in the banknote redesign process. Surveys gathered ideas for potential themes and symbols, including rivers, hands, birds, and core European values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. Once a main theme is selected, motifs will be chosen, followed by a design



competition and another public consultation. A final decision is expected around this year, with new banknotes entering circulation several years later. Meanwhile, the current series will remain in use well into the next decade.

## Cash use remains high – but declining

In countries such as the UK or Denmark, card payments and digital wallets dominate daily transactions, and in parts of Scandinavia, it is possible to go several days without using cash. However, across the euro area, cash is still frequently used. By 2024, around 52% of point-of-sale transactions were made in cash, down from 59% in 2022. Card payments accounted for 34%. The trend toward contactless and digital payments continues, but cash remains firmly embedded in many everyday transactions.

## Leaders of the cashless world

Norway remains a global frontrunner: almost the entire population owns a debit card, mobile payment apps are widely used, and only 3–5% of point-of-sale transactions are made in cash. Sweden, Finland, Hong Kong, and China are similarly advanced in digital payments. In China, many professionals report not having used cash for several years, relying mainly on mobile wallets such as Alipay and WeChat Pay. Even in Norway, the government has instructed banks to continue providing access to cash, highlighting the need for inclusivity.

## Why Germany still favours cash

Germany continues to stand out for high cash usage. Since the euro's introduction, the Bundesbank has issued more cash than any other euro area country. Surveys from 2024 indicate that while cash usage is gradually declining, many Germans still carry around €65–70 and prefer using cash

### Why cash still matters for society



- Enables financial participation for unbanked individuals
- Supports older adults and people with disabilities
- Functions without electricity, internet, or devices
- Helps small businesses avoid card transaction fees
- Protects privacy and personal data

Cash is therefore not just a payment method but a pillar of social inclusion and economic resilience.

### Cash or digital? A personal checklist



- ✓ Do I have reliable access to a bank account and digital payment methods?
- ✓ Am I confident using cards, apps, and online banking?
- ✓ Do I manage my spending better with fixed cash budgets?
- ✓ Is privacy and anonymity important to me when paying?
- ✓ Do I rely on cash for travel or small daily purchases?

The more items you tick in favour of cash, the more it makes sense to maintain a mix of cash and digital payments.

for certain purchases. Cultural preferences, concerns about privacy, mistrust of large tech and financial companies, and fears of cyberattacks or bank failures all contribute to this trend. The saying “nur Bares ist Wahres” (“only cash is real”) remains widely recognised.

## A global perspective: cash as a necessity

Worldwide, many people remain unbanked and rely heavily on cash. In Morocco, approximately 71% of people lack bank accounts; in Romania, about 42% are unbanked, reflecting high cash usage. Kenya and Egypt also rely heavily on cash. While countries like India have rapidly adopted digital payments, achieving similar shifts requires substantial infrastructure and policy investment.

## Cash and social inclusion

A fully cashless society carries social risks. Older adults, people with disabilities, and those with low or unstable incomes often struggle with digital payment technologies. Many find it easier to budget and manage money using cash. A 2022 UK survey found over ten million people would struggle in a cashless society. Beyond convenience, cash protects privacy, works without electricity or internet, and helps small businesses avoid transaction fees. It remains popular for gifts, private payments, and travel. Central banks increasingly emphasise cash as a fallback in times of crisis, underlining its continued relevance.

GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND TRAINER

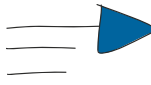




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# How to use a focus group



 **MARKETING** Getting paid for sharing your opinion sounds like a great deal! From e-scooters and mobile banking apps to wellness products and lifestyle services, companies are increasingly eager to hear your feedback through focus groups.

These sessions can be held online or in-person and aim to gather genuine insights into how consumers use and experience products and services. Running a successful focus group requires careful planning: recruitment must be strategic, and the questions thoughtfully crafted. While it may seem straightforward, achieving meaningful results is more nuanced than it appears.

## Clear criteria define a focus group

Professional market research firms specializing in qualitative research are often hired to set up focus groups. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numbers and statistics, qualitative research explores people's true opinions, emotions, and behaviors. It seeks to understand the "why" behind consumer

choices, uncovering motivations, attitudes, and perceptions that data alone cannot reveal. Almost any topic related to consumer experience can work well. There are six key criteria that contribute to a successful focus group:

1. The number of participants is small, typically between 6 and 12, ensuring everyone can contribute.
2. If held in-person, the location should be neutral and comfortable—far from company offices or settings that might influence responses.
3. A trained, experienced moderator guides the discussion and poses questions in a structured yet flexible way.
4. Participants are encouraged to interact naturally, generating discussion that often uncovers deeper insights.



5. Sessions usually last between 45 and 90 minutes, with 120 minutes as the maximum to maintain engagement.
6. The environment should feel safe and non-judgmental, allowing participants to share honest thoughts freely.

## How focus groups really help companies

There are multiple reasons why focus groups remain a popular research method. Primarily, they provide the opportunity to hear unfiltered opinions about existing products or gain reactions to new concepts directly from your target audience. Participants often bring fresh perspectives and creative ideas that internal teams may overlook. The discussion can also adapt in real-time to explore unforeseen but relevant topics—highlighting the crucial role of a skilled moderator. Other advantages of focus groups include:

- Testing marketing messages or strategies before launch.
- Identifying emerging consumer trends and behavioral patterns.
- Evaluating the need or demand for a new product or service.
- Understanding the emotional connection consumers have with a brand or product.

## Correct recruitment methods are essential for success

Effective recruitment is vital. You need to define whom to include, whom to exclude, and the reasoning behind these choices. Do you want participants with similar characteristics or a more diverse mix? Should they be current customers, potential customers, or a combination? Selecting the right participants relies on various sampling methods:

### Top 7 tips for getting valuable feedback



1. Ask open-ended, unbiased questions.
2. Encourage participants to speak freely.
3. Avoid leading or yes/no questions.
4. Observe non-verbal cues.
5. Keep sessions focused but flexible.
6. Mix participant backgrounds for diverse perspectives.
7. Summarize and verify key insights before concluding.



### Checklist: Setting up a successful focus group

- ✓ Define clear objectives.
- ✓ Choose 6–12 participants.
- ✓ Select a neutral, comfortable location.
- ✓ Recruit carefully (current vs. potential customers).
- ✓ Use a skilled moderator.
- ✓ Prepare open-ended questions.
- ✓ Allow group interaction and flexibility in discussion.
- ✓ Schedule 45–90 minutes; max 120.
- ✓ Record insights for analysis.

- Voluntary response sampling collects participants from those who respond to open calls.
- Stratified sampling selects participants based on criteria such as age, gender, income, occupation, or location.
- Judgment sampling focuses on a carefully chosen group that meets specific research needs.

## Asking good questions: some examples

Time and scope are limited in focus groups, making question design critical. Open-ended questions encourage detailed and thoughtful responses. For example, when testing a product packaging redesign, a moderator might ask:

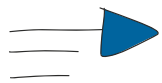
- What comes to mind when you see this design?
- Which aspects of the design stand out positively, and why?
- Is there anything about the design that you find unappealing?
- How could the visual elements be improved?
- What is your overall impression of the packaging concept?

Focus groups are sometimes criticized for yielding predictable answers. Yet their influence should not be underestimated. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton once called participants in focus groups “the most powerful people on earth.” Their ability to shape products, services, and marketing strategies is a testament to the value of honest, consumer-driven insights.

GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND EDITOR



# Mastering key terms in Artificial Intelligence



**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)** AI is re-shaping businesses worldwide, from automating routine tasks to generating insights and improving customer experiences. Understanding current AI concepts is essential for professionals aiming to stay competitive. Test your knowledge with this updated quiz and enhance your Business English while learning about AI!

**Instructions:** Fill in the blanks with the correct AI-related term. Choose from the word bank below.

**Word Bank:**

Algorithm - Machine Learning - Neural Network - Automation - Chatbot - Deep Learning - Natural Language Processing - Data Mining - Artificial General Intelligence - Supervised Learning - Generative AI - Ethical AI

1. An \_\_\_\_\_ is a set of rules or instructions a computer follows to solve problems or process information efficiently.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ allows systems to learn from historical data and improve their predictions without explicit programming.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a computational model inspired by the human brain, capable of recognizing patterns and making predictions.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ involves using technology to perform tasks with minimal human intervention, improving efficiency and consistency.
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a virtual assistant that communicates with users through text or voice interfaces.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ uses multiple layers of neural networks to analyze complex data, such as images, speech, or text.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ enables computers to interpret, process, and generate human language in a way that feels natural.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the practice of analyzing large datasets to uncover patterns, trends, and actionable business insights.

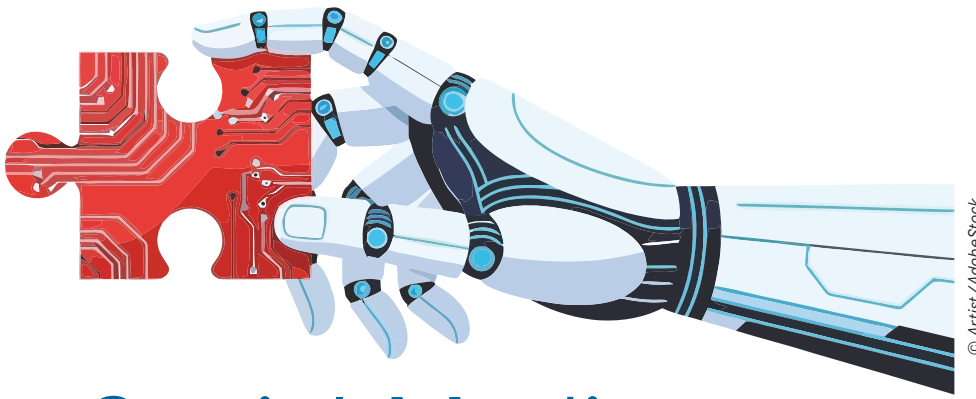
9. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to AI systems capable of performing any intellectual task a human can, a level of intelligence not yet achieved.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is a training method in which AI models learn from labeled datasets to make accurate predictions.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to AI systems that create new content—like text, images, or music—based on learned patterns.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ ensures AI technologies are designed and deployed responsibly, considering fairness, transparency, and accountability.

GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND TRAINER



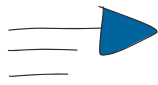
**Answers:**

1. Algorithm
2. Machine Learning
3. Neural Network
4. Automation
5. Chatbot
6. Deep Learning
7. Natural Language Processing
8. Data Mining
9. Artificial General Intelligence
10. Supervised Learning
11. Generative AI
12. Ethical AI



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# Social Media Marketing 2.0



## TRENDS FOR MODERN DIGITAL MARKETING

Social media marketing continues to evolve, helping brands engage audiences, drive conversions, and build loyalty. Understanding current terms and strategies is key for professionals aiming to excel in the digital landscape.

Fill in the blanks to test your knowledge and improve your Business English!

### Word Bank:

Engagement - Influencer - Hashtag - Algorithm - Viral Marketing - Content Strategy - Paid Advertising - Reach - Call to Action - Analytics - User-Generated Content - Social Commerce

- \_\_\_\_\_ measures how actively users interact with content, including likes, comments, shares, and saves.
- An \_\_\_\_\_ is someone with a large social media following who collaborates with brands to influence their audience.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a word or phrase preceded by “#” used to categorize content and increase discoverability.
- A platform’s \_\_\_\_\_ decides which posts appear in users’ feeds based on relevance, engagement, and personalization.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is a marketing technique where content spreads rapidly, often organically, leading to massive visibility.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ defines the types of content a brand publishes, aligning with marketing objectives and audience preferences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ enables brands to boost content visibility through paid campaigns on social media platforms.
- The term \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the number of unique users exposed to a brand’s content, whether organically or via paid posts.

- A \_\_\_\_\_ (CTA) encourages users to take a specific action, such as “Shop now” or “Sign up today.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ provides insights into content performance, audience behavior, and campaign effectiveness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is content created by users or fans, often shared by brands to increase authenticity and engagement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ allows users to purchase products directly through social media platforms, combining engagement with sales.

GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND TRAINER



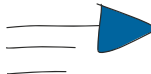
**Answers:**

1. Engagement
2. Influencer
3. Hashtag
4. Algorithm
5. Viral Marketing
6. Content Strategy
7. Paid Advertising
8. Reach
9. Call to Action
10. Analytics
11. User-Generated Content
12. Social Commerce



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# Learning your way into a creative future

 **FUTURE SKILLS** The number of skills required for a single job is increasing by around 10% per year, and over 30% of skills relevant just three years ago may soon become obsolete. That’s according to a report by Gartner, based on millions of job postings. Alarming as this may seem, understanding the root cause and how to adapt is key to staying relevant in the workforce.

The primary factor behind this shift is technology—particularly artificial intelligence (AI). Employees now need to develop what Gartner calls AI aptitude: knowing when to use AI tools, how to prompt them effectively, and how to critically evaluate their outputs for accuracy and bias.

For example, some copywriting roles now involve working directly with AI to train and refine content generation. While initially unfamiliar, using AI can free professionals from repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on creative decisions. It’s a collaboration: humans and machines working in harmony, faster and more productively.

## Upskilling and reskilling are urgent

The *Future of Jobs Report 2023* by the World Economic Forum emphasizes that “new waves of highly skilled workers aren’t coming.” Instead, companies must help the existing workforce develop new skills. By 2027, six in ten workers will require training.

While upskilling—adding skills to improve current performance—is important, reskilling may be even more critical. A Harvard Business Review study, *Reskilling in the Age of AI*, notes that millions of workers may need to retrain completely,



adopting new skills to transition into different roles. Encouragingly, 77% of workers globally report willingness to learn new skills or retrain entirely.

## Soft skills and creativity are in high demand

Technology is automating routine tasks, making soft and creative skills increasingly essential. Top skills identified by the WEF include analytical thinking, creative thinking, AI and big data literacy, leadership, resilience, flexibility, and adaptability.

A UdeMy Business study highlights four critical skills for modern leaders:

- Interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and empathy
- Creating and fostering an inclusive environment
- Effective coaching and feedback
- Collaborating through technology

## Leaders must develop a skills-based strategy

The *UdeMy 2024 Global Learning & Skills Trends Report* emphasizes that leaders must focus on skills, not solely education or experience. This includes reshaping recruitment, engagement, development, and reward strategies. Companies cannot “hire themselves out of trouble”—training existing employees for critical skills is essential. Key focus areas for leaders include:

1. Adapting to AI, which could automate up to 30% of U.S. working hours by 2030 (McKinsey).
2. Becoming “ultimate learners” themselves, leading teams with creativity, adaptability, and innovation.
3. Supporting employee resilience, engagement, and retention.
4. Providing purpose and vision in the workplace.

### 7 Tips to thrive in a skills-based workplace



1. Embrace lifelong learning.
2. Learn to collaborate effectively with AI.
3. Prioritize creative and analytical thinking.
4. Build resilience to adapt to change.
5. Seek mentorship and coaching.
6. Focus on empathy and interpersonal skills.
7. Apply skills actively, not just theoretically.

### Checklist: Future-proof your skills



- ✓ Identify skills needed now and in 3–5 years.
- ✓ Assess personal strengths and gaps.
- ✓ Upskill in technical tools and AI literacy.
- ✓ Develop soft skills: creativity, empathy, leadership.
- ✓ Use flexible learning platforms.
- ✓ Practice applying skills in real projects.
- ✓ Review progress regularly and adjust learning plan.

## Conduct a skills gap analysis

Auditing existing skills across a company identifies gaps and priorities. These may include technical skills, business skills, or practical job skills. For example, while machine translation covers language basics, customer service may still require empathetic, knowledgeable human speakers.

## Delivering skills via flexible platforms

Online learning platforms are an efficient way to develop and validate skills—both technical and soft. In addition to traditional courses, programs on empathy, resilience, team building, and coaching are growing in demand.

### Top learning platforms to consider

- **LinkedIn Learning:** Boost creativity, communication, negotiation, and emotional intelligence. Free trial available.
- **IBB Business Akademie:** German-language platform with courses in management, leadership, AI, and customer service.
- **UdeMy Business:** 24,000+ courses covering technical, business, and personal skills; strong focus on soft skills and wellness.
- **FutureLearn:** English-language platform offering project management, agile leadership, digital education, and intercultural awareness.

Investing in continuous learning ensures both personal growth and organizational competitiveness. The future belongs to those willing to adapt, learn, and embrace creativity alongside technology.

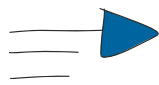
GARRY BRITTON, AUTHOR AND TRAINER





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# The battery vehicle revolution



**ECONOMY** Although electric and hybrid vehicles are now common on the roads, questions still linger: How far can they drive without recharging? Are better batteries coming? Are EVs more expensive to buy or run? While not all answers are clear, one fact is certain: the electric vehicle revolution is well underway.

Overall, EV sales are trending upward globally, though some markets show counter-trends. In the third quarter of 2025, 3.71 million electric vehicles were sold worldwide—35% more than in the same period in 2024. China accounted for most of this growth, but intense competition there has reduced manufacturers’ profit margins.

In Germany, electrification has rebounded after the abrupt end of the previous purchase subsidy at the end of 2023. In 2025, new battery electric vehicles (BEVs) reached around 545 000 registrations, with an approximate market share of ~19 % of all new passenger car registrations—significantly higher than in the immediate post-subsidy period and showing continued growth in demand. Norway continues to lead globally, with nearly 96 % of new car registrations being fully electric in 2025—far above other nations. Sweden and the Netherlands both show high BEV adoption, each with shares around ~35 % of new car sales.

## A new EV language

The rise of EVs has brought new terminology, which is not yet standardized. Here’s a quick guide:

### EV Language

TERM	DEFINITION
ICE	Internal combustion engine (petrol/diesel)
HEV	Hybrid electric vehicle; battery charge generated by engine, which runs at higher speeds
PHEV	Plug-in hybrid; larger battery, charged via charging station
RFID cards	Access cards for charging stations; may need several for different networks
kWh	Kilowatt hours, measuring battery capacity and energy input
CHAdeMO	Japanese rapid charging system (charge for moving); full charge takes ~30–40 minutes, perfect for a cup of tea!



## Batteries: from smartphones to cars

Charging and driving an EV is like charging a smartphone: care is needed to avoid fully depleting the battery or charging too quickly. Lithium-ion technology has scaled from phones to laptops and now cars, but range is still limited—typically around 300 km per charge.

Many early EV drivers, myself included, have experienced range anxiety: the fear of running out of battery before reaching a charging point.

### The race for better batteries

Battery technology is evolving rapidly to increase range, reduce costs, and improve longevity. Current lithium and cobalt supplies are limited; alternatives include sodium-ion and, most promisingly, solid-state batteries, which replace the liquid electrolyte with a solid ceramic.

- **Volkswagen & Quantumscape:** Solid-state batteries for faster charging, lower cost, and longer lifespan
- **Nio ET7:** Covered 1,046 km in testing
- **Toyota:** Plans mass production from 2027 with ranges up to 1,200 km

Better batteries mean longer trips and lower costs, making EVs even more appealing.

### Production leaders in the EV era

**Volkswagen:** Volkswagen's Zwickau plant became the first large-scale facility worldwide to switch fully from ICE to EV production in 2022. Six models across Volkswagen, CUPRA, and Audi brands are manufactured there, supported by 9,000 employees and 1,625 robots at 90% automation.

**BMW:** BMW Munich will end ICE production in 2027 after 75 years. The €650m investment already enabled six all-electric vehicles alongside combustion engines. The new "Neue Klasse" models are also produced in Hungary, China, and Mexico. MINI Oxford will introduce two all-electric models in 2026. By 2030, all MINIs will be electric.

**Tesla:** Tesla's Grünheide gigafactory opened in March 2022, aiming to produce 500,000 EVs per year in Europe. The site will also host the world's largest battery cell production facility. However, environmental protests and workforce cuts have posed challenges.

**Ford:** Ford transformed its Cologne plant into an EV production hub with a €2bn investment. Capacity is 250,000 vehic-



#### Batteries & driving: Key takeaways

- EVs are increasingly practical but still require careful battery management.
- Range anxiety is real but mitigated by infrastructure and improved batteries.
- Solid-state batteries will transform affordability, range, and charging speed.
- Norway shows that policy incentives and infrastructure drive adoption.

les/year, beginning with the all-electric Explorer SUV. Innovations include self-learning machines, autonomous transport systems, and big data management.

### Case study: How did Norway do it?

Norway is leading the EV revolution: in 2023, 82% of new private vehicles were electric; by January 2024, 92%. The goal: 100% zero-emission new sales by 2025.

- **Incentives ("Carrot"):** Lower taxes, free or cheap public parking, ferry tickets, access to bus/taxi lanes
- **Disincentives ("Stick"):** Heavy taxation on petrol and diesel vehicles

Investment in nationwide charging infrastructure and grid modernization made EV adoption practical, even in remote regions. Ironically, Norway's oil wealth helped enable the transition.

#### EV Charging Terms and Concepts

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Range anxiety</b>	Fear of running out of battery before destination
<b>Charge anxiety</b>	Worry about unavailable or faulty charging points
<b>Trickle charging</b>	Slow overnight charging via standard home plug
<b>Regen</b>	Regenerative braking that recovers energy
<b>Top-up charging</b>	Charging while shopping or running errands
<b>Smart charging</b>	Wi-Fi-connected, energy-monitored, optimized charging



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