

Protecting valuable ideas

Level: Intermediate

Time: 90 minutes +

Summary: This lesson is about patents and how people and companies protect their ideas and innovations, especially when these are 'intellectual property' and not machines or other tangible inventions. In this lesson, students:

1. compare typical money-making ventures from the past and today;
2. study a text about the protection of intellectual property;
3. talk about some new e-commerce innovations;
4. discuss apps and websites that they use on a regular basis.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Group size: Any

5. trademarks
6. patent
7. granted
8. in force

9. filed
10. potential
11. summed up
12. run out

Understanding the article

Students decide whether the statements are true or false and rewrite any that are false.

Key:

1. F – It was Clive Humby who, in 2006, first said that 'Data is the new oil.'
2. F – Intellectual property cannot really be used to make money without copyright, trademarks and patents.
3. F – If you want to know more about patents in Europe, you don't need to travel at all: you can visit the EPO's Espacenet online database.
4. T
5. T
6. F – If you have an idea that you might need a business partner for, the EPO is a good place to find out where others are working on something that could complement your ideas and innovations.

E-commerce developments

In this two-part task, students first match the words to the meanings, then use them to complete the information about three new developments in e-commerce.

In the second part, students say which of the e-commerce developments most interests them and why. Ask which development (if any) they think is likely to be successful and make its developers rich.

Key:

Text 1

1. c; 2. d; 3. b; 4. a
1. disrupted; 2. scheduling; 3. martial arts;
4. gaining momentum

Text 2

1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. d
1. mindfulness; 2. gamified; 3. chant; 4. boardroom

Text 3

1. c; 2. d; 3. a; 4. b
1. Approving; 2. captures; 3. smuggle; 4. timely

Note: This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 5/2018.

Warmer

Students briefly discuss what types of businesses made people wealthy in years gone by. Examples: oil, railways, property, cars. They should then discuss how these compare to the types of businesses that make people rich these days. Examples: online retail sites such as Amazon, social media such as Facebook and Instagram, software such as Microsoft. The family in question is the Getty family, which made its money from oil but now deals in intellectual property such as Getty Images.

Key words

Students match the key words with the definitions and then find the words in the article before reading through the article to see how they are used in context.

Key:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. unrefined | 3. innovations |
| 2. intellectual property | 4. commerce |

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Discussion

Students first work by themselves and make a list of ten apps and websites that they use on a regular basis. Then, they should make notes of their answers, relating to the apps and websites they have listed, next to the questions. They then sit together in pairs or small groups and discuss their answers.

Finish by holding a short feedback session in which students share any interesting information they have learnt during the task.

Related topics on onestopenglish

The following Business Spotlight lesson plan is about important inventions that we probably now take for granted.

www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/the-web-of-ideas/554200.article

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1 Warmer

- What types of businesses made people a lot of money 50 to 100 years ago?
- What types of businesses are most likely to make people rich these days?
- Find an example of this near the beginning of the article describing two different kinds of businesses that made different generations of one family rich and successful.

2 Key words

Match the key words or phrases to the definitions below. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

filed	summed up	unrefined	granted
in force	intellectual property	commerce	patent
potential	run out	innovations	trademarks

- in its natural or original state _____
- something that someone has created or invented and that no one else is legally allowed to make, copy or sell (two words) _____
- new ideas or methods _____
- the activity of buying and selling goods and services _____
- names or designs belonging to a particular company, used on its products _____
- an official document that gives someone who has invented something the legal right to make or sell that invention for a particular period of time and prevents anyone else from doing so _____
- officially given to someone _____
- active and so it must be obeyed (two words) _____
- registered an official document, application or report with the appropriate authority _____
- possible or likely in the future _____
- made a statement to explain something in a few words only (two words) _____
- use all of something and not have any left (two words) _____

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by Eamonn Fitzgerald



What does oil have in common with digital technology? Both create wealth. While the availability of oil is limited, data leads to increasing amounts of new developments and ideas. This intellectual property needs to be protected.

and Espacenet makes it relatively easy to find out whether or not a patent has been granted and whether it is still in force.

Then there's PATSTAT, which helps people perform detailed online statistical analyses of patent data. This EPO service has become the standard in the field of patent intelligence and statistics.

Why are these resources so important? Because the patents that companies get today can tell us a lot about what's going to happen tomorrow. Apple, for example, has filed 54 patents to turn its iPhone into a medical device that can monitor biometric data such as blood pressure and body fat levels. Apple also hopes to develop algorithms to predict abnormal heart rates with the help of the iPhone. If you are thinking of starting a digital healthcare business, knowing which innovations the tech giants are working on could help you pick the medtech areas that are going to be hot in the coming years and, very importantly, identify potential partners.

When I left the EPO, I had a copy of a report it published in 2017: "Patents and the Fourth Industrial Revolution". There's a chapter titled "Technology Convergence" and it's all about this coming together of people, ideas and patents.

Piero Scaruffi, the Italian-American author of *A History of Silicon Valley*, summed up the data-oil-IP debate best when he wrote: "The difference between oil and data is that oil does not generate more oil (unfortunately)."

Despite the latest fracking innovations and promises from OPEC (the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) to pump ever more oil, the fact remains that oil is a limited resource. But data isn't and neither is IP. What the EPO shows us is that we will never run out of ideas or data.

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1 "Data is the new oil." Big data experts love to use that phrase these days but who said it first? According to Google, Clive Humby, a British mathematician, did. In 2006, he said: "Data is the new oil. It's valuable but if unrefined, it cannot really be used."

2 The Getty family made their money from oil but Mark Getty thinks he's discovered a better substitute. The cofounder of Getty Images, one of the world's largest photo agencies, believes IP is the new oil. IP? That's "intellectual property" and it includes the inventions, innovations, books, paintings, designs and images used in commerce.

3 "Intellectual property is the oil of the 21st century," said Mark Getty in 2000 but while IP is valuable, just like data is, IP cannot really be used to make money without copyright, trademarks and patents.

4 To see how valuable and well protected patents are, I took a trip to the offices of the European Patent Office (EPO) in Munich beside the River Isar. Visitors entering the building are first directed to the right-hand side, where they must produce a photo ID and fill out a form. After an official has entered the required information into the system, a badge is printed. Then one joins the queue on the left-hand side, where an airport-like security screening involving metal detectors takes place and, if everything is OK, the badged visitor can then proceed. If you don't want to go through all this but you'd still like to learn more about patents, the EPO's Espacenet database is available online for both beginners and experts, and is updated daily. It contains more than 100 million patent documents from around the world

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3 Understanding the article

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. It was Mark Getty who, in 2006, first said that 'Data is the new oil.'
2. Intellectual property can be used to make money without copyright, trademarks and patents.
3. If you want to know more about patents in Europe, you have to go to the European Patent Office (EPO) in Germany.
4. The EPO's PATSTAT service is where people can go to find out about patent statistics and to search for intelligence on other people's patents.
5. Large tech companies often file patents for innovations before they have actually developed them to ensure they have control over (and can make money from) the idea in the future.
6. If you have an idea that you might need a business partner for, OPEC is a good place to find out where others are working on something that could complement your ideas and innovations.

4 E-commerce developments

a. Match the words to their meanings. Then, use the words to complete the information about new developments in e-commerce.

Text 1

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. scheduling 2. gaining momentum 3. martial arts 4. disrupted 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. changed dramatically and negatively b. traditional Asian forms of fighting such as karate, judo or kung fu c. planning for something to happen at a particular time d. progressing and developing quickly and strongly
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PLATFORM FITNESS

After music (Spotify), film (Netflix) and fashion (Zalando), which industry will be _____ (1) next by e-commerce platforms? Fitness, perhaps. Virtuagym is an Amsterdam start-up that lets gyms and other fitness providers manage every aspect of their business on its platform, including _____ (2) and booking, membership management and invoicing. The start-up works with fitness spaces in more than 80 countries and is expanding into markets such as yoga, dance and mixed _____ (3). "Technology is _____ (4) in the health and fitness industry," Hugo Braam, CEO of Virtuagym, told the European website Tech.eu, which provides tech news and analysis.

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Text 2

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. boardroom | a. a word or phrase that people keep shouting or singing many times |
| 2. chant | b. a technique to improve mental well-being that involves focusing on the present moment while accepting any thoughts and feelings that occur |
| 3. mindfulness | c. the directors of a company or other organization |
| 4. gamified | d. containing playful elements |

HEIAHEIA

“Better life. Better performance.” Those four words are what you see when you visit the website of Hintsä, a Finnish start-up. But what do they mean? And what does it do? Worker well-being, especially in knowledge-intensive industries, is the aim. Hintsä does this with a range of services, from individual _____ (1) coaching to its HeiaHeia app, which “creates _____ (2) well-being challenges” for staff. HeiaHeia, by the way, takes its name from the Norwegian sporting _____ (3) “Heia! Heia!”, which is related to “Huh!”, Iceland’s wonderful football clapping chant. That chant alone would change workers’ lifestyles for the better, from the _____ (4) to the back office.

Text 3

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. timely | a. giving official agreement or permission to something |
| 2. captures | b. take someone secretly and illegally into or out of a country |
| 3. approving | c. happening at the most suitable time |
| 4. smuggle | d. expresses what something is really like in a way that people can clearly recognize |

PAPERS, PLEASE

In these days of economic migration for the masses and global mobility for the elites, *Papers, Please* is a perfect game. _____ (1) visas and stamping passports are not the most exciting jobs in the world and *Papers, Please* _____ (2) perfectly just how dehumanizing these bureaucratic roles can be. The graphics are Cold War chic and the game’s complexity keeps it interesting even after you stop the 100th attempt to _____ (3) someone across the border. Putting people through hell in the name of immigration control isn’t amusing but *Papers, Please* is _____ (4) and challenging.

- b. Say which of these e-commerce developments interests you the most and why. Would you be prepared to invest in any of these start-ups?**

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5 Discussion

- a. Make a list of ten apps and websites that you use on a regular basis.
- b. Read the questions, make notes, and then discuss your answers.

Which of the apps and websites on your list ...

- provide a service?
- save you time?
- are good for your physical health?
- are good for your mental well-being?
- are important for your work life?
- do you pay for?
- replace something you used to buy or pay money for?
- would you like to recommend to others?