BUSINESS NEWS LESSONS

Forever Young: when is it time to step down?

onestopenglish

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Business topics: Chief executives, age, generation gap, discrimination

Business language: Useful business vocabulary, phrases and expressions, pronunciation, report writing: bridging the age gap

Activities: Discussing retirement age, key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, report on bridging generation gaps at work

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

Overview: This article discusses how the average age of the chief executive is on the rise, age and retirement policy trends, and how competence should be the top criterion when recruiting leaders.

1. Warmer

a. Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Elicit the main ideas that arise from the discussion from the whole class.

2. Key words

a. Divide the class in two. Then, split these into pairs. Have one half of the class complete 1–6 and the other half 7–12. Then, regroup so that in each new pair or group, students have answers to all the questions. Elicit answers from the whole class.

Key:
1. *breach, breaching*
2. *bridge*
3. *demographic*
4. *succession*
5. *bottleneck*
6. *dominate*
7. *octogenarian, Octogenarians*
8. *tenure*
9. *pensionable*
10. *risk-averse*
11. *inept*
12. *oust*

3. Key words – pronunciation

a. Ask students to work in pairs to say the words aloud and identify the number of syllables and stressed syllables. This can be done by clapping. Students can also use a dictionary if needed.

Key:
1. ***can***-di-da-cy
2. *dis-cri-mi-**na**-tion*
3. *de-mo-**gra**-phic*
4. *in-ter-ge-ne-**ra**-tio-nal*
5. *pro-**por**-tio-nate*
6. ***pen***-sio-na-ble
7. *oc-to-ge-**na**-ri-an*
8. *con-ti-**nu**-i-ty*
9. ***com***-pe-tence

4. Understanding the article

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

Key:
1. *False. Janet Truncale became EY's chief executive.*
2. *False. The retirement age is usually 60.*
3. *False. They work to bridge the demographic divide. We don't know exactly how.*
4. *True*
5. *True*
6. *False. They're 55.6.*
7. *True*
8. *True*
9. *False. They become more risk averse.*
10. *True*

5. Business language – idiomatic language

a. Ask students to practise their scanning skills again to complete this activity and find the examples in the text to help them infer meaning. You could also set it up as a whole-class activity, so students compete against each other to complete the 'reading race'.

Key:

1.	*f*	*5.*	*g*
2.	*d*	*6.*	*a*
3.	*c*	*7.*	*e*
4.	*h*	*8.*	*b*

b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to come up with sentences. This can be done as a speaking or writing activity. The answers given below are simply suggestions. More than one answer is possible.

Key (possible answers):
1. *What she said about age in the last meeting was enough to start a bushfire.*
2. *She just handed in her lanyard; I heard she got another job.*
3. *Stop falling over yourself trying to please your boss.*
4. *They have different ideas and almost came to blows in our last meeting.*
5. *The price of metal is creeping upwards.*
6. *Charlize is living proof that age doesn't matter.*
7. *How can we level the playing field between men and women in the workplace?*
8. *Governments need to invest more in care homes to reduce bed-blocking.*

6. Discussion

a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions. Make note of good examples of vocabulary and language on the board and incorrect usage that needs to be corrected. Ask the class to identify which is which and help you with corrections.

7. Wider business theme – bridging the age gap

a. For this activity, you could group students to work with others of different ages if possible. Ask them to look at the chart and discuss the traits of each generation. Elicit comments from the whole class.

b. Have students discuss possible strategies for overcoming generation gaps at work and get them to elaborate on what they think the five strategies provided mean.

Key:
1. *get colleagues to see what they have in common, find similarities in goals/needs/values*
2. *get colleagues to improve communication by listening to each other, spending more time in a different environment, getting a coach*
3. *give older people opportunities*
4. *start a formal or informal mentoring programme, get older and younger colleagues to work together*
5. *first, discuss individual job roles, then get teams to share these to have transparency and understand each other's value*

c. Ask students to discuss the generation gaps in their organisation. If they are not currently working, have students choose a situation they are familiar with. Get them to discuss the key issues and solutions in their group.

d. Go over useful language with the class and elicit any other phrases that might be useful for report writing. Students can brainstorm in pairs, but ask them to complete the writing activity individually. When they are finished, get them to peer edit. You can ask them to focus on the structure and clarity of ideas and use new language from the lesson.

Intermediate