

What I've learned: Tony Hawk

Level: Intermediate upwards

Timing: Approximately 90 minutes but can be made longer or shorter depending on the length of time allowed for discussion tasks

Material needed: One copy of the worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 2/2011. The article is about Tony Hawk, an American, who turned his successful career as a professional skateboarder into a multi-million dollar business.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language and to develop and practise skills that could be useful in business situations, especially those in which the students have to deal with or talk about aspects of unusual career steps, doing what you are skilled at and believe in, and product endorsement.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies, as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (to do in class or as homework).

Warmer

Find out what the students consider to be serious career paths by asking them to rate the jobs given as secure or insecure. Encourage them to add further ideas of their own.

Find the information

Quickly looking for the answers to these questions will make sure that students notice and understand all the main points of the article.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *He's a professional skateboarder.*
2. *He turned his skateboarding success into a global business by using his name to market and endorse products.*

3. *He excelled at his sport and has been extraordinarily lucky through being in the right place at the right time.*
4. *When he was 16 he was making more money than his high-school teachers.*
5. *to never become complacent about your success; remember that good luck can quickly turn bad*
6. *Twitter and tweeting (sending messages on Twitter)*
7. *Decide what it is you love to do and become good at it. Don't listen to other people's advice to do something else. Once you've become very good at it, innovate so that you stand out from others who are also good at the same thing.*
8. *He believes in mentoring them, spending time with them and listening to them.*
9. *It helps youths in poor communities create skateparks.*
10. *Athletes for Hope, with Andre Agassi and Muhammad Ali (among others).*

Expressions

This task will encourage students to notice chunks of language rather than just individual words.

Key:

1. *cosmic absurdities*
2. *not to lose sight of something*
3. *write someone off*
4. *make good money*
5. *turn pro*
6. *get cocky about something*
7. *stick with something*
8. *run with it*
9. *achieve proficiency*
10. *set you apart*

Extension: If the students all speak the same language, ask them to agree on the best translations for the expressions.

Teaching and learning strategy: Multi-word expressions

The teaching methodology, the Lexical Approach suggests that learning formulaic language, be it idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations or multi-word expressions (also known as chunks) such as those in task 3, will help the learner to not only retain the language but also to recall it more easily when needed. This technique is especially useful for spontaneous speaking as it gives the impression of fluency.

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Personal qualities

In the article, Tony Hawk talks about the personal qualities and attributes he has, as well as those he thinks others should have (or should work on). He relates these to his success and how others feel about their success. As he doesn't always explicitly name the qualities and sometimes just talks around them, encourage the students to read 'between the lines' to help them complete this task. Point out that it is more important from a language learning point of view to be able to decide what he is talking about and discuss what he says and means with other students rather than just come up with five or so correct answers.

Key:

- *talent and skill (I excelled at my sport)*
- *humility*
- *staying power and determination (stick with what I know / run with it)*
- *being innovative; pioneering*
- *being able to help and encourage people (become a mentor)*
- *not forgetting where you came from / staying grounded (don't forget your roots)*
- *being a philanthropist (his work with the foundation and charity)*

Discussion

This task builds upon the previous discussions the students will have had to hold to complete some of the previous tasks. It aims to repeat and personalize the language and ideas generated in tasks 1 and 4. Although at first glance the questions might seem similar, the first is abstract whereas the second taps into the students' own emotions and personal feelings.

Web-related tasks

If you do not have internet access in your class, or have run out of time, you can ask the students to do these tasks as homework and to report back during the next lesson.

Key:

- *Tony Hawk featured (as a yellow cartoon character) in an episode of The Simpsons.*
- *Pro Skater 2 and Tony Hawk's American Wasteland are PC and console games.*
- *Other products endorsed by Tony Hawk include: skateboards, bicycles, toys, shoes ...*

Vocabulary record

Here students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business tasks: Chance and opportunity:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-tasks/chance-and-opportunity/>

Business tasks: Experience:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-tasks/experience/155482.article>

Business Spotlight: What I've learned: 50 Cent

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/what-ive-learned-50-cent/550005.article>

What I've learned: Tony Hawk

1 Warmer

Which of these jobs and professions do you consider to be 'serious' (e.g. provide a secure income, a career and a future), and which not? Write them into the appropriate column of the table and add more ideas of your own.

- banker nurse actor hairdresser
 architect ice-skater gardener

serious / secure	not serious / insecure

2 Find the information

Quickly scan the article to find the answers to the questions.

1. What is Tony Hawk's profession?
2. How has he managed to make 'millions'?
3. What two reasons does he give to explain why he is so successful?
4. Against what (or whom) did he measure his early success?
5. What advice would he like to give to business people who disapprove of him traveling first class with his skateboard?
6. What form of social networking does he mention?
7. What advice does he have for young people?
8. What is his attitude towards up-and-coming young professional skateboarders?
9. What does the Tony Hawk Foundation do?
10. Which charity is he involved in, and with whom?

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What I've learned

by Tony Hawk

Recognize where your talent lies, work hard on it and, when you reach the top of your profession, don't forget your roots, is the advice given by American skateboard star Tony Hawk in his book *How Did I Get Here?*

1 **I've made millions riding a skateboard.** It's one of those cosmic absurdities, and I try hard not to lose sight of it.

2 **For many years, few adults took my career seriously.** Even now, businessmen on planes frown when they see me carry a skateboard into first class. At the same time, there will always be a certain segment of skaters who write me off as a sellout. ... When I'm torn between business deals, I always seem to pick the one that offers the best chance for my friends and me to skate.

3 **I became famous, and make good money,** not just because I excelled at my sport, but also because I've been extraordinarily lucky. Several times in my professional life I've just [been] in the right place at the right time. I ... turned pro just as [skateboarding] started to benefit from the mid-1980s' boom. I ended up on the most famous skate team of the era, Powell Peralta's Bones Brigade, and, by the time I was 16, I was making more money than my high-school teachers.

4 **Well, how did I get here?** There's a lesson in that question, and it's the first one I would like to share with those first-class businessmen if any of them were to ever look past my skateboard and ask for advice: never get cocky about your professional success, because the good luck that got you there can turn bad fast.

5 **[I've learned] to stick with what I know** and to pay close attention to the letters and emails and everyday comments I get from fans. ... If someone is willing to pay money for a product that has my name on it and then takes the time to communicate with me about it, I'd be an idiot not to listen.

6 **Perhaps my favourite tool right now is Twitter** ... One day in early 2009, I was driving home with an extra skateboard in my car and decided to try a Twitter experiment. I ... tweeted that I'd just hidden a skateboard, pinpointing its location. ... People were re-tweeting my message to others in the area and anyone

they thought might be nearby. Within 20 minutes, I got a response from a girl who found it ... and my number of Twitter followers spiked to more than 250,000.

7 **To any kids who are hoping to learn** how they, too, might someday [fly] first class, here are a few other bits of advice:

8 **Once you find your passion, run with it.** Ignore what peers or career counsellors say. Whatever you pick, as long as you truly love it, ... get really good at it. That means spending a lot of time at it.

9 **Once you've achieved proficiency, ... innovate.** That's what will set you apart – when you become a pioneer among pioneers.

10 **Become a mentor.** ... Encourage people who will inevitably rise to replace you. The higher you move up, ... the more you have to ... spend time in the street. And don't preach. Instead, find the kids who are doing what you did at that age, and have the humility to let them tell you what's going on.

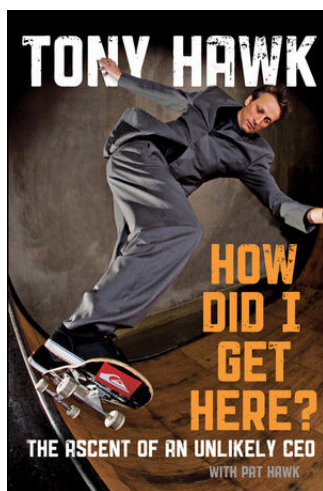
11 **If you get some extra money in your pocket, give back.**

12 **Never stop asking.**

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TONY HAWK, born in 1968 in the US, is a professional skateboarder who turned his success at skateboarding into a global business, using his name to market and endorse products. His Tony Hawk Foundation helps youths in poor communities to create skateparks. And in 2007, together with athletes such as Muhammad Ali and Andre Agassi, he started the charity Athletes for Hope. The statements above are from his book *How Did I Get Here?*

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3 Expressions

Find multi-word expressions in the article that mean the following:

1. strange or bizarre things that happen in our universe (2 words)
2. not to forget something (6 words)
3. dismiss someone as being insignificant and likely to fail (3 words)
4. earn more than is necessary to live on (3 words)
5. become professional at something (2 words)
6. become confident in a way that annoys others (4 words)
7. stay or keep on doing something and decide not to do something else instead (3 words)
8. keep doing something and see where it takes you (3 words)
9. gain a high level of ability or skill in something (2 words)
10. make you look different; make people notice you (3 words)

4 Personal qualities

- What personal qualities or attributes does Tony Hawk mention in the article?
- What other qualities do you think someone would need to become a successful sportsperson / artist / actor / dancer / ...?

5 Discussion

- A young person you know wants to become a dancer / actor / artist / footballer (you choose). What helpful advice can you give him / her?
- Your son (brother / grandson / ...) tells you he plans to become a professional mountain climber. Your daughter (sister / granddaughter / ...) wants to make a living taking photographs. How do you feel / react?

6 Web-related tasks

- What has Tony Hawk got to do with the US TV series, *The Simpsons*? Write *Tony Hawk vs Homer Simpson* into a search engine to find out.
- What are *Pro Skater 2* and *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*?
- What other products has Tony Hawk endorsed?
- Go to www.tonyhawk.com to see photos, watch videos and read interviews with Tony Hawk. There are many more videos on YouTube, e.g. *Tony Hawk 900*.
- Read an interview with Tony Hawk in which he talks about branding, social media and succeeding in small business: <http://blog.intuit.com/trends/tony-hawk-on-branding-social-media-and-succeeding-in-small-business/>

