



Episode 9: What does disruption mean?

This is the worksheet for Episode 9 of the Smart Startup English Podcast.

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Warm-up questions

In this episode, we talked about a word that's very common in the startup world: **disruption**. What do you think it means? What kind of products do you consider disruptive?

Vocabulary 1

Match the words on the left (a-g) with the correct definition on the right (1-7).

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| a. to be adept at | 1. holding a position or an office |
| b. prohibitive prices | 2. large, established companies |
| c. to pose a threat | 3. to create a new word |
| d. incumbent | 4. unaffordable prices |
| e. big players | 5. to be very skilled at something |
| f. to coin a term | 6. to notice signs of future trouble |
| g. to see the writing on the wall | 7. to create a difficult or dangerous situation |

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Vocabulary 2

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the words from the list.

prohibitive players incumbent coin threat demand adept wall

1. The educational startup Coursera is very _____ at finding new ways to deliver online courses to as many people as possible.
2. A drunk Australian man was the first person to _____ the word “selfie”.
3. Living in Berlin is becoming more and more expensive. And not to mention the fact that the housing prices are becoming _____.
4. Kodak was one of the large companies that didn’t see the writing on the _____ . Because they couldn’t adapt fast enough, they couldn’t stay ahead of the competition.
5. A lot of analysts now believe that the rise of artificial intelligence poses a _____ to our privacy.
6. The big _____ in the energy sector should be held responsible for the damage done by fossil fuel emissions.
7. By offering an affordable transportation option, the Ford Model T shifted market _____ - what people wanted to buy at that particular point in time.
8. It’s hard to beat the _____ in the local elections because they have a wide network of contacts and supporters.

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Vocabulary 3

Choose the correct answer to fill in the blanks:

1. Our copywriter is very creative with language. She is always _____ new words to promote our products.

- A. billing
- B. cashing
- C. coining

2. Around 2007, Netflix saw the writing on the _____ - they saw that movie DVDs would be replaced by video streaming services.

- A. floor
- B. window
- C. wall

3. For a product to be considered disruptive, it needs to _____ a threat to the big players in the industry.

- A. pose
- B. poses
- C. possession

4. According _____ Clay Christensen, the Harvard professor who coined the term disruptive innovation, there are two types of disruptive products.

- A. with
- B. to
- C. -ly

5. Low-end disruption happens when a new product offers a cheaper or an easier alternative _____ an existing product

A. between

B. to

C. into

Speaking prompt

Can you think of an industry that needs a little bit of disruptive innovation? In your opinion, what industry could benefit from offering new services or new products?

Special offer for our newsletter subscribers! You can record yourself answering these questions (maximum 5 minutes), send us the recording via email, and receive feedback from our team of Business English trainers. Email us at info@smartstartupenglish.com to learn more about how feedback packages work.

Writing prompt

One of your managers asked you to give a short ten-minute presentation to your new team members about disruptive innovation. You've agreed to give the presentation, and now you have to describe in a brief email what you'll talk about. Write a short email (300 words maximum) summarizing what you know about disruptive innovation.

Do you want to get feedback on your email (maximum 300 words) directly from a Business English trainer? Email us at info@smartstartupenglish.com to learn more about what feedback packages we offer.

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Answer key

Vocabulary 1

- a - 5
- b - 4
- c - 7
- d - 1
- e - 2
- f - 3
- g - 6

Vocabulary 2

- 1 - adept
- 2 - coin
- 3 - prohibitive
- 4 - wall
- 5 - threat
- 6 - players
- 7 - demand
- 8 - incumbent

Vocabulary 3

- 1 - C
- 2 - C
- 3 - A
- 4 - B
- 5 - B