27 Commonly Asked Questions by Introduction to Business Instructors about NeuroOptimized Learning™

Business in Action, 11th Edition | Courtland L. Bovée and John V. Thill | Pearson | Publication January 2027

Questions introduction to business instructors ask before adopting a text built on the framework.

1. What exactly is NeuroOptimized Learning, and how is it different from the chunking, visuals, and end-of-chapter review that good textbooks have always used?

NeuroOptimized Learning™ is an instructional framework built on a simple premise: students learn more effectively when a textbook is designed to work with the brain rather than against it. Good textbooks have long used chunking, visuals, and review. What distinguishes this framework is that those techniques are no longer occasional concessions layered onto narrative prose. They are applied systematically and intentionally, in every chapter, at two levels: a feature layer (neurolearning prompts, infographics, exhibits, quick-reference tables, structured lists) and a text layer (chapters rewritten to simplify, shorten, and clarify).

The difference is architectural rather than cosmetic. Each design decision traces back to a specific finding about how the brain encodes, consolidates, and retrieves knowledge. The framework is organized into six interdependent pillars covering active engagement, visual and emotional connection, multi-sensory learning, cognitive load management, learning analytics, and sleep and study optimization.

2. Is this a genuinely research-based framework or a marketing label? What specific studies and researchers underlie it?

The framework rests on well-established, independently published research rather than proprietary claims. Cognitive load management draws on John Sweller's cognitive load theory and later work by Paas and Renkl. Dual-channel processing draws on Allan Paivio's dual coding theory and Richard Mayer's multimedia learning research. Retrieval practice and spacing draw on Roediger and Karpicke's test-enhanced learning studies, Kornell and Bjork's spacing research, and neural pattern reinstatement findings from Cai and colleagues.

Metacognition draws on Llorens and colleagues and the Education Endowment Foundation's evidence syntheses. Emotional salience draws on Immordino-Yang and Damasio. Sleep-dependent consolidation draws on Matthew Walker and on Born and Wilhelm.

To be precise about the relationship: these researchers did not evaluate or endorse the book. Their published findings inform the design, and the framework implements them. The preface documents the sources in its section titled The Science Behind NeuroOptimized Learning, so instructors can check them.

3. Has NeuroOptimized Learning been tested in actual classrooms, and is there any data showing it improves retention, performance, or grades?

Not yet, and we won't claim otherwise. NeuroOptimized Learning is a newly developed framework, and no longitudinal study has measured its outcomes in live classrooms. What we can say with confidence is that the principles it applies, such as retrieval practice, spacing, dual coding, cognitive load reduction, and metacognitive prompting, each have decades of independent evidence behind them. The framework's contribution is applying those proven principles consistently across an entire text rather than sporadically.

We would rather earn trust by being candid about this than by overstating results. Instructors who want evidence can look at the underlying research base, examine the chapters themselves, and, as adoption grows, watch for classroom data that we and Pearson expect to gather over time.

4. Who is Dr. Kimberly DiMezza, and what role did a physician play in designing a business textbook?

Kimberly DiMezza, MD, collaborated with us on the framework's development. Her contribution was a physician's lens on how the brain encodes, prioritizes, and retains information. We are experts in business practice and business education, not in neuroscience, and the framework needed someone who could vet the translation of research findings on memory, attention, cognitive load, and sleep into practical instructional design.

That collaboration shaped decisions that most textbooks never consider, such as the sleep and study optimization pillar and the brain-break and mindfulness cues in the digital components. It also disciplined the language: the framework describes what the research supports, not what sounds impressive.

5. Will I have to redesign my syllabus, assignments, or lectures to take advantage of it, or does it work with the course I already teach?

It works with the course you already teach. The framework is built into the structure of the text itself, so the benefits are realized when students read and work through the chapters. The preface states this directly: for instructors, the benefits require no additional steps or changes to course design. The chapter sequence, learning objectives, cases, and activities remain a conventional, complete introduction to business course.

If you want to go further, the neurolearning prompts make excellent discussion starters, short writing assignments, in-class debates, or online discussion posts, and the Instructor's Manual includes teaching notes. That is optional enrichment, not a requirement.

6. What are the six pillars, and which of them live in the printed book versus MyLab or other digital components?

The six pillars are: (1) Active Learning and Engagement, (2) Visual Learning and Emotional Connection, (3) Multi-Sensory Learning, (4) Cognitive Load Management and Information Structuring, (5) Learning Analytics and Personalization, and (6) Sleep and Study Optimization Coaching. They are not sequential stages; they function as an integrated system in which each reinforces the others.

Pillars 1, 2, and 4 live primarily in the book itself: the neurolearning prompts, infographics, exhibits, tables, Behind the Scenes company cases, and the rewritten, restructured text. Pillars 3 and 5 depend on MyLab: interactive and adaptive components, mobile-friendly resources, personalized learning paths, low-stakes assessments with immediate feedback, and the instructor dashboard. Pillar 6 appears in student-facing study resources. The core of the framework is fully present in the printed text; the digital components extend it.

7. What are neurolearning prompts, how many are there, and are they something students actually use or something they skip over?

Neurolearning prompts are short, purpose-built interventions placed at key points in every chapter. Each is designed to trigger a specific cognitive process: activating an existing mental model before new material, opening a curiosity gap before a section, connecting a concept just learned to other knowledge, inviting students to take and defend a position, or linking a concept to career stakes. They are not generic discussion questions. Business in Action, 11th Edition contains 185 of them.

Whether students engage with them depends partly on how the course frames them. Because they are brief, personal, and often ask about the student's own life, such as the best team they were ever part of, their own banking experience, or a purchase decision they made, they are considerably harder to skip than a paragraph of exposition. Instructors who assign a few as low-stakes responses tend to see the strongest engagement.

8. How do the prompt types map to my learning objectives and AACSB standards?

There are five prompt types, each tied to a distinct cognitive mechanism. Make the Connection is a schema activator that prompts retrieval of an existing mental model that new information can attach to. Management Mystery is a curiosity generator, placed before its section, that poses a business puzzle without the solution so students read actively in search of the answer. Think About It is a concept connector that asks students to build a logical bridge between a concept just learned and other information. Defend Your Point of View asks students to form and justify an opinion, and invites debate in class or with peers. Remember This for Your Job Interviews links an academic concept directly to career success.

The prompts target the same outcomes the test bank is keyed to: written and oral communication, ethical understanding and reasoning, analytical thinking, diverse and multicultural work environments, reflective thinking, application of knowledge, interpersonal relations and teamwork, and integration of real-world business experience. Management Mystery and Defend Your Point of View support analytical and ethical reasoning; Think About It supports reflective thinking; Make the Connection supports application of knowledge; Remember This for Your Job Interviews supports real-world integration. The prompts appear within chapters organized by learning objective, so mapping a prompt to an objective is straightforward.

9. Are the prompts tied to gradable assignments, discussion questions, or test bank items, or are they purely for student reflection?

By design, the prompts work first as reflection embedded in the reading, because that is where the retrieval and schema-activation effects occur. But they are easy to convert to graded work. Defend Your Point of View prompts translate naturally into short analytical writing or in-class debate. Management Mystery prompts make strong openers for case discussion. Think About It and Make the Connection prompts make strong discussion-board questions.

The Instructor's Manual provides chapter outlines, teaching notes, suggested classroom exercises, and answers to the Test Your Knowledge, Expand Your Knowledge, and Practice Your Skills questions. The test bank contains 1,600 items keyed by learning objective, difficulty, and modality (conceptual, application, critical thinking, synthesis). The application and critical-thinking items assess the same skills the prompts practice.

10. If chapters were cut substantially to reduce cognitive load, what content was removed, and is any of the rigor or coverage I rely on gone?

The reductions came from eliminating redundancy, converting dense paragraphs into structured lists and tables, and trimming the encyclopedia of business terms that competes with essential learning. The guiding editorial principle was to focus each chapter on the decisions managers, entrepreneurs, and employees actually need to make. Chapter 2 is the clearest example: it was cut by 5,500 words, roughly 25 percent, by focusing economics and banking on the concepts most relevant to business decisions, treating banks as strategic business partners rather than describing institutional mechanics, and explaining Federal Reserve actions by their practical business impact. Content that served that goal stayed; content that merely added volume was cut or condensed.

The result is the same scope as a complete introduction to business course with clearer, faster explanations. Instructors who examine a revised chapter beside its tenth-edition predecessor will find the concepts, models, and skills intact and easier for students to locate and retain.

11. Is this just a thinner, magazine-style textbook dressed up in neuroscience language?

No. The magazine-format experiments of recent years traded depth for novelty. NeuroOptimized Learning trades volume for relevance, which is a fundamentally different move. Rigor is preserved; padding is removed. The

framework is documented against named research, and every structural choice can be traced to a cognitive principle.

The neuroscience language is not decoration. It reflects the standard each piece of content was measured against: does it serve the decisions students will need to make in business, and is it presented in a way working memory can handle? A book can be shorter and more demanding at the same time.

12. Does the framework still serve strong students, or is it designed mainly for underprepared readers?

It serves both. Reducing extraneous cognitive load helps every learner, including strong ones, because it frees working memory for the effortful thinking that builds understanding. Advanced students benefit most from the prompts that demand judgment: defending a position on whether companies should charge different customers different prices based on data about their buying behavior, explaining why eliminating a layer of middle management increased confusion and conflict instead of speeding decisions, or deciding whether the fraud triangle explains a small questionable choice they once rationalized.

The Think About It prompts also challenge confident students to examine assumptions they may never have questioned. Research on metacognitive instruction shows strong benefits across student populations, not only for those who struggle.

13. How does NeuroOptimized Learning help students who don't read the assigned chapters at all?

No framework can force a student to open the book, but this one lowers the barriers that cause students to give up once they do. Shorter chapters, clearer subheadings, structured visuals, and content that scans well on a mobile screen reduce the sense of dread that dense prose produces. Management Mystery prompts placed before a section give students a reason to read it, and Make the Connection prompts that ask about the student's own experience as a consumer, employee, or entrepreneur create points of entry that feel relevant rather than abstract.

MyLab adds another lever: low-stakes assessments with immediate feedback and bite-sized mini-lessons give students reasons to engage in small increments, and the instructor dashboard shows you early which students are not engaging, so you can intervene before the midterm.

14. How does it handle AI? Does it teach students to think with AI tools, or does it risk letting AI replace the judgment I'm trying to develop?

AI is treated as a recurring business capability and management challenge rather than an isolated chapter, and the emphasis throughout is on judgment. A Thriving in the Digital Enterprise section in every chapter shows how AI is changing that business function, from analytics, product development, and marketing to finance, operations, and workforce management. Chapter 1 explains what AI is and isn't, why businesses are adopting it, and what employers expect of graduates. Later chapters cover AI governance, AI-enhanced decision-making, working with AI teammates, and the risks and biases AI can introduce into business systems.

Prompts routinely ask students to weigh an AI-enabled option against a human-judgment alternative and defend their choice. The BIA11 AI Learning Suite™ makes this explicit: students work through AI-powered business scenarios, compare AI-generated analysis with their own reasoning, and see exactly where human judgment matters.

15. What is the BIA11 AI Learning Suite™, and can I use the textbook without it?

The BIA11 AI Learning Suite™ extends the textbook's focus on business decision-making with a hands-on, interactive learning environment powered by AI. It immerses students in realistic business scenarios that require analysis, judgment, and strategic thinking across entrepreneurship, management, marketing, operations, and finance. Students experiment with pricing decisions, explore market-entry strategies, evaluate organizational challenges, identify risks and biases in business systems, and see how changing one variable ripples through an entire business model.

You can absolutely use the textbook without it. The framework's core lives in the printed chapters. The Suite is a free adopter resource that extends the practice component for instructors who want it.

16. Does the framework work in online, hybrid, and asynchronous sections, or does it assume a face-to-face classroom?

Because the framework is built into the reading experience, it works wherever the reading happens. Prompts, visuals, and structured content function identically for a student reading alone at midnight and one reading before a lecture. In fact, asynchronous students may benefit most, since the prompts supply the active engagement that a live discussion would otherwise provide.

MyLab's mobile-friendly resources, adaptive components, and immediate-feedback assessments are designed for online and hybrid delivery, and the prompts convert readily into discussion-board assignments.

17. How does the learning analytics and personalization pillar work in practice, and what will the MyLab dashboard actually show me about struggling students?

The MyLab instructor dashboard delivers real-time data on student engagement, performance patterns, and learning trajectories. In practice, that means you can see which students are completing work, where scores cluster and diverge, and which concepts a section is struggling with, early enough to adjust instruction or reach out to individuals.

The intent is to let instructors act on evidence rather than intuition, and the same data supports departmental continuous-improvement processes and accreditation reporting. For the specific reports and views available in your institution's MyLab configuration, your Pearson representative can walk through a live demonstration.

18. Is student data collected through the analytics features, and how is privacy handled?

MyLab is a Pearson platform, and student data collected through it is governed by Pearson's privacy policies and by the FERPA obligations that apply to your institution's agreement with Pearson. The framework adds no data collection beyond what MyLab already provides.

For specifics on data retention, access, and institutional agreements, ask your Pearson representative for the current privacy documentation.

19. The sleep and study coaching pillar sounds unusual for a business textbook. Where does it appear, and is it appropriate for a college course?

It is unusual, and deliberately so. Sleep-dependent memory consolidation is one of the most powerful and most overlooked determinants of long-term retention. Walker's research shows sleep transferring newly encoded information from the hippocampus to the neocortex, and Born and Wilhelm show different sleep stages consolidating different kinds of memory. A student who studies effectively but sleeps poorly loses much of what they worked for.

The coaching appears in student-facing study resources rather than in the chapter content, so it never displaces course material. It offers evidence-based guidance on study timing, spacing, and cognitive recovery. Given that students are adults managing their own schedules, brief, practical, research-backed advice on how to study is entirely appropriate and is something most of them have never received.

20. Will the retrieval practice and spaced repetition elements duplicate or conflict with the quizzing and review I already do?

They complement it. The prompts embedded in the reading are distributed retrieval events that occur while students are still in the text, before your quiz. Your own quizzing then serves as a second, spaced retrieval opportunity, which is exactly the pattern the spacing research recommends. More retrieval at intervals is better, not redundant.

If you already run a robust quizzing program, you may simply choose not to assign the MyLab low-stakes assessments, or use them as ungraded practice. Nothing in the framework requires you to change your assessment plan.

21. Are the infographics, exhibits, and visuals fully accessible for students using screen readers and other assistive technology?

The instructor PowerPoints, which include all graphs, tables, and exhibits from the text, meet accessibility standards: keyboard and screen reader access, alternative text for images, and high contrast between foreground and background. Pearson's digital platforms are built to accessibility standards as well.

For the accessibility conformance documentation covering the eText and MyLab components specifically, request the current VPAT or accessibility statement from your Pearson representative so you can share it with your disability services office.

22. What training, orientation, or teaching notes will I receive so I can explain the approach to students and use the prompts effectively?

The preface is the orientation: it explains the framework, the five prompt types with examples from the chapters, and the research behind each principle, in language you can share with students. The Instructor's Manual provides chapter summaries and outlines, teaching notes, suggested classroom exercises, and answers to the end-of-chapter questions and activities.

Beyond the supplements, adopters have access to sponsored instructor communities on LinkedIn and Facebook with nearly 4,000 members, the Bovée and Thill blog, and the YouTube channel. Links are provided at blog.businesscommunicationnetwork.com/resources.

23. Can I see a sample chapter, or an old-versus-new comparison, to judge the difference for myself before committing?

Yes. Your Pearson representative can provide review copies and sample chapters, and comparing a revised chapter with its tenth-edition counterpart is the fastest way to see the text-layer changes. Chapter 2, on economics and banking, is the clearest demonstration of the decision-focused rewrite. Chapter 4, on ethics and corporate responsibility, and Chapter 7, on management in AI-augmented organizations, show the prompts, the new exhibits, and the shorter explanations side by side.

We encourage this. The framework was designed to be visible on the page, and it holds up even better under close inspection.

24. Since the framework is new, how will the authors and Pearson gather evidence on its effectiveness, and will adopters see updates or results over time?

The honest answer is that outcome evidence will accumulate as the edition is used. The framework's launch coincides with the January 2027 publication, and adoption data, MyLab analytics, and instructor feedback will be the first sources. We have a three-decade record of revising each edition based on adopter input, and that continues here.

Instructors who want to contribute to that evidence base, whether through classroom observations or formal studies, are welcome to reach out through the instructor communities or their Pearson representative.

25. If my department or dean asks why we switched, what one-page, evidence-based explanation can I give them?

The core of it fits in a paragraph. *Business in Action, 11th Edition* is built on NeuroOptimized Learning, an instructional framework that applies independently established findings from cognitive psychology and learning science (cognitive load theory, dual coding, retrieval practice, spacing, metacognition, and sleep-dependent consolidation) systematically throughout every chapter. It presents business as a web of interconnected decisions rather than an encyclopedia of terms, integrates AI into every business function, requires no course redesign, retains full coverage of the introduction to business curriculum, aligns with AACSB standards, and provides real-time learning analytics that support continuous-improvement and accreditation processes.

For the one-page version, pair that paragraph with the six pillars and the named research behind each, the five prompt types with one example, and the supplements list. The preface section titled The Science Behind NeuroOptimized Learning contains everything needed to assemble it, and your Pearson representative can supply a formatted overview.

26. Is this really a new category of textbook, or a better version of what already exists?

Start with what is not new. None of the underlying science belongs to us. Cognitive load theory, dual coding, retrieval practice, spacing, metacognition, and sleep-dependent consolidation have been published, replicated, and available to every author in this field for decades. We invented none of it, and we do not claim to have been the first to notice it.

What is new is the architecture. Every introduction to business text applies some learning science to its feature layer, meaning the boxes, the visuals, the end-of-chapter review. This one was built so that the same research governs the text layer as well. The prose itself was rewritten, resequenced, and cut against a retention standard rather than a coverage standard, and all six pillars operate together in every chapter rather than appearing occasionally where they happened to fit. That is a different object, not a better version of the same one.

You do not have to take that on faith, because it is a checkable claim. Open any text you are considering and look for three things. First, a chapter made substantially shorter on purpose, because the research says the excess was costing retention, rather than shortened to save pages. Second, prompts placed by cognitive function, meaning a schema activator before new material, a curiosity gap before a section, and a metacognitive check after it, rather than discussion questions gathered at the end. Third, any guidance at all to students on sleep timing, spacing, and cognitive recovery, which is among the most powerful determinants of what they will retain and which textbooks in this field have historically ignored entirely.

The reason this amounts to a category rather than a feature set is that it cannot be adopted piecemeal. A competitor can add prompts in a single revision cycle, because prompts are a feature. Rewriting every chapter against a retention standard, accepting the reductions that follow, and defending those reductions to a market that has rewarded bulk for decades is a different order of commitment. A text that adds the features without

making that structural change is still competing on coverage, which is to say it is a better version of the older category rather than a member of this one.

The deepest change is in what counts as quality. In the category we came from, more coverage is better, and the heaviest book looks like the safest adoption. In this one, coverage that does not serve a decision is not neutral. It is a cost, because it competes for working memory with the coverage that does. Those two standards cannot both govern the same book, which is what makes them different categories rather than different quality levels within one.

Two limits, stated plainly. We are not claiming that no one has ever applied learning science to a textbook, because many have, and well. And we are not claiming proven outcomes, because no longitudinal study has yet measured this framework in live classrooms; see question 3. The category claim describes the standard this book was held to and the architecture that standard produced, both of which you can verify by opening it. It does not describe results we have not yet measured.

27. I'm already using an earlier edition or another text. What does switching actually cost me in time?

Less than most instructors expect, and the work is front-loaded into one planning session rather than spread across the term. The chapter sequence follows the conventional structure of the course, so a syllabus built on almost any current text maps onto this one with minimal reordering. Learning objectives are numbered and labeled, which makes it straightforward to line up your existing assignments against the new chapters.

The supplements carry most of the load. The test bank is keyed by learning objective, so you can rebuild a quiz by objective rather than by hunting for individual items. The Instructor's Manual provides chapter summaries and outlines you can scan in place of rereading. The PowerPoints already contain every exhibit in the text, so slide decks do not have to be rebuilt from scratch, and MyLab course content is preassembled rather than assigned item by item.

Three things do need your attention, and each has a short answer. Page and exhibit references in your own handouts will change, which one pass through your materials resolves. Chapters that were shortened deserve a second look if you assign specific sections rather than whole chapters, and the chapter-by-chapter summary in the preface shows exactly what changed in each. And if you use a learning management system cartridge, request the current one rather than carrying the old one forward, which takes one email.

NeuroOptimized Learning™ is a trademark of John V. Thill and Courtland L. Bovée. The researchers named in these answers inform the design of the text; they did not review or endorse it.