

## English idioms from the music world

In order to master business English it is not enough to learn technical and business terms, but it is also necessary to be familiar with some idiomatic expressions that are used in a business context.

Below you will find some frequently used idioms that come from the music world. Although the original meaning has not been lost completely, it has certainly become distorted over time.

A Match the idiomatic expressions with their definitions.

- |                                  |                                            |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. to ring a bell                | a. to interrupt or join a conversation     |
| 2. to chime in                   | b. to be sold at an unexpectedly low price |
| 3. to strike a false note        | c. to change one's opinion or attitude     |
| 4. to change one's tune          | d. to do something suitable or appropriate |
| 5. to call the tune              | e. to do something wrong or inappropriate  |
| 6. to go for a song              | f. to say the same thing again and again   |
| 7. to sound like a broken record | g. to change one's ideas                   |
| 8. to strike the right note      | h. to sound familiar                       |
| 9. to jazz something up          | i. to try to improve something             |
| 10. to sing a different tune     | j. to be in control of the situation       |

Key: 1h, 2a, 3e, 4g, 5j, 6b, 7f, 8d, 9i, 10c

B Complete the sentences with one of the following music idioms: *fine tuning*, *are marching to a different drummer*, *face the music*, *for a song*, *to pull out all the stops*, *is fiddling while Rome burns*, *play by ear*, *changed his tune*, *it's not over until the fat lady sings*, *ring a bell*.

- Keeping interest rate low on government debt is allowing us to not \_\_\_\_\_.
- Retailers will need \_\_\_\_\_ to make up for business lost because of summer roadworks.
- Even if the campaign was a success, let's wait for the real figures because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I haven't had time to prepare for the meeting so I'll have to \_\_\_\_\_.
- The mayor said any changes left to the budget at this point will just be some \_\_\_\_\_.
- James and George Brown? The names \_\_\_\_\_ but I don't remember them.
- Environmentalists claim that the government \_\_\_\_\_.
- They thought they were getting the armchair \_\_\_\_\_ but they found out it had a stain. That's why its price was 50% off.
- Shareholders of companies \_\_\_\_\_ than the concepts of sustainable development.
- After suggesting that he would retire once his contract expires, he suddenly \_\_\_\_\_.

Key: 1. *face the music*, 2. *to pull out all the stops*, 3. *it's not over until the fat lady sings*, 4. *play by ear*, 5. *fine tuning*, 6. *ring a bell*, 7. *is fiddling while Rome burns*, 8. *for a song*, 9. *are marching to a different drummer*, 10. *changed his tune*

C In the following exercise choose the music idiom which best completes each sentence.

- The news of her resignation was \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't like working with her.
  - calling the tune
  - ringing a bell
  - music to my ears

2. In this economy, an intern in need of permanent employment may as well \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. whistle for it
  - b. be out of tune
  - c. be fit as a fiddle
3. Internal communications can sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ to a company's external marketing activity.
  - a. blow the horn
  - b. play second fiddle
  - c. ring a bell
4. The seminar \_\_\_\_ presenting energy efficiency innovations alongside high profile case studies.
  - a. was in tune
  - b. hit the right note
  - c. went for a song
5. A lot of technical focus at the conference was on energy harvesting, but the business strategy was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. clear as a bell
  - b. fiddling while Rome was burning
  - c. hitting the right note

*Key: 1c, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a*