

Business vocabulary

Although business English is sometimes considered as rather “dry stuff” because of many technical words it contains, which are not always understood in everyday speech, one cannot deny that it is constantly expanding, evolving, changing and is enriched by linguistic borrowings from other disciplines. Such borrowings can at times be amusing metaphors, however one has to be very careful because they can also confuse people who are not familiar with their deeper meaning. Considering metaphors are not literal and you cannot find out what they mean by looking up individual words in a dictionary, make sure you are absolutely sure what they mean before you use them otherwise you might offend someone.

Let's first have a look at some frequent collocations in business English.

A. Choose the word that collocates with the verbs from 1 to 10.

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|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. to face | a. competition | b. a meeting | c. a factory |
| 2. to break into | a. a deal | b. a market | c. a customer |
| 3. to foot | a. a press statement | b. the bill | c. the detail |
| 4. to achieve | a. a decision | b. new heights | c. the options |
| 5. to impose | a. the options | b. an opportunity | c. a decision |
| 6. to issue | a. a good year | b. a press statement | c. an opportunity |
| 7. to consider | a. the options | b. the competitor | c. a good year ahead |
| 8. to set up | a. a room | b. a customer | c. a meeting |
| 9. to open | a. a market | b. a competitor | c. a new branch |
| 10. to make | a. competitors | b. a deal | c. a meeting room |

1. a, 2. b, 3. b, 4. b, 5. c, 6. b, 7. a, 8. c, 9. c, 10. b

After this warm-up exercise, below you will find examples of metaphors you might come across in business contexts.

B. Choose the correct word or phrase.

1. Because of your incompetence we lost that important client. You really _____, didn't you?
 - a. bottlenecked it
 - b. bottomed it
 - c. sent it back to the drawing board
 - d. blue it
 - e. blew it
2. Don't leave out any details. The supervisor wants a full _____ account of what happened at the conference.
 - a. blow-by-blow
 - b. black economy
 - c. white collar
 - d. bombed
 - e. bottom line
3. It is interesting that the same product sold really well in France. You might say it _____.
 - a. threw a bomb

- b. bottlenecked
- c. went like a bomb
- d. blew up
- e. went back to the drawing board

4. You'll have to start again on this one. It's time to go _____.

- a. blow-by-blow
- b. back to the drawing board
- c. black economy
- d. bombing
- e. to the bottom

5. Our production has not been able to keep pace with demand. We are doing our best to eliminate the _____.

- a. blow-by-blow
- b. bottlenecks
- c. bitter pill
- d. drawing board
- e. black economy

6. They hope next time things will be better. Losing the contract was _____ to swallow.

- a. bottom line
- b. blue collar
- c. a bitter pill
- d. a drawing board
- e. a surge

7. There are several reasons why this should have been a successful campaign. However, the _____ is that it was a big flop.

- a. bottom line
- b. drawing board
- c. bottleneck
- d. bitter pill
- e. surge

8. There is a _____ in interest in our products.

- a. bottom line
- b. blue collar
- c. bottleneck
- d. bitter pill
- e. surge

9. You'd be better off quitting your legal job and doing jobs for cash. The _____ is the only way to make money these days.

- a. blow-by-blow
- b. bitter pill
- c. bottlenecks
- d. black economy
- e. blue collar

10. He used to work on the factory floor, that is he really started out as a _____ worker.

- a. blue collar
- b. black economy
- c. bottom line
- d. drawing board
- e. blow-by-blow

1. e, 2. a, 3. c, 4. b, 5. b, 6. c, 7. a, 8. e, 9. d, 10. a