

Lesson 09: Starting a Business

Amy has just started a new company, and she's sharing the news with her friend Beth.

First, listen to their conversation and answer these comprehension questions:

- 1. Amy's new company is a...**
 - a. boutique hotel
 - b. translation agency
 - c. travel agency
- 2. Beth works...**
 - a. at a factory
 - b. in a café
 - c. in a school
- 3. Beth is hesitant to start a business because...**
 - a. her husband won't like the idea
 - b. she has no experience
 - c. there aren't many customers in the area
- 4. Beth's skills are in the area of...**
 - a. cooking
 - b. interior design
 - c. music
- 5. Beth's dad helped her...**
 - a. buy a house
 - b. get her current job
 - c. pay for university
- 6. The solution Amy suggests is...**
 - a. asking Amy's mother for money
 - b. getting a loan at the bank
 - c. starting a different, less expensive business
- 7. How does Beth react to this idea?**
 - a. she's excited and wants to start immediately
 - b. she's reluctant, but later agrees
 - c. she shoots it down (rejects it)

Conversation Text

Amy: Here it is – my office. This is **a dream come true!**

Beth: Wow, your very own company. I can't believe it.

Amy: 'Around the World Travel Agency' is now open for business!

Beth: You've wanted to be a travel agent ever since we were little – and now look at you! I'm so happy for you.

Amy: Hey... if I can do it, you can, too. Have you talked to Dave about your idea? I know you're **sick of** working at the factory.

Beth: No, I haven't... I'm **dragging my feet** because **I'm almost positive** he won't like the idea of me starting a **catering** business. You know... **money is tight**.

Amy: Aw, but Beth, you're a great cook. I mean, *I* would spend thousands just for a single plate of your spaghetti!

Beth: **If only** I had a hundred **eager** customers like you! But starting a business is risky, and it could **go**

Vocabulary

a dream come true = something you really wanted to happen – which happened

sick of = tired of, annoyed with, wanting to stop

dragging my feet = being reluctant, delaying

I'm almost positive = I'm almost certain

catering = professional preparation of food for parties and events

money is tight = we have little money; we have no extra money to spend

if only = I wish this was the case, but it isn't

eager = excited, enthusiastic

go under = fail and lose all its money

under at any time... there are no guarantees. Dave would never **go for it**.

Amy: Okay, so forget asking Dave.

Beth: Well, I can't **swing it** on my factory salary. We're barely **staying afloat** as it is, and I'd need money for supplies, a kitchen, a delivery truck...

Amy: Why not ask your dad? He's pretty **well off**.

Beth: Oh, no, **that's out of the question**. He **pulled a lot of strings** to get me the job I have now, in the factory accounting department. If I tell him I want to quit just to cook food all day... **he'll bite my head off**.

Amy: All right, I see your point there. There has to be a way, though. I feel bad having my dream come true knowing that you're **slaving away** at a job you hate.

Beth: I'm okay, really. I don't mind **crunching numbers** all day.

Amy: But you would rather be crunching walnuts into a delicious dish. I know you.

Beth: Sure. But it's just a **pipe dream**. I'd need to win the lottery to make it happen. Listen, my lunch break is almost over, so...

Amy: Not so fast. Just let me think...

Vocabulary

go for it = in this context, it means "accept it"

can't swing it = can't manage to do it

staying afloat = surviving with the amount of money we have

well off = rich

that's out of the question = that's not an option / possibility

pulled a lot of strings = used influence to get something done

he'll bite my head off = he'll speak to me very angrily

slaving away = working hard, as if a slave

crunching numbers = doing calculations

pipe dream = an idea that could never happen because it's impossible

Beth: Better hurry – I have five minutes.

Amy: I got it! We'll go down to the bank and apply for a business loan.

Beth: I'll need someone to **co-sign** it, though.

Amy: I'll get my mother to co-sign for you. She loves you like a daughter – and she would be thrilled to help. Plus, she'd probably hire you to cater her Garden club **luncheons**.

Beth: Oh, no, I couldn't ask your mom to co-sign on a loan for me.

Amy: You don't have to – I'll talk to her **on your behalf**. Listen, **we're not getting any younger**. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life **pushing papers**?

Beth: Well, **when you put it that way**... all right. **I'm game**. But now I really gotta go back to work – give me a call later tonight when I get home from the factory.

Amy: Just think – you'll be **putting in your two-week notice before you know it!**

Vocabulary

co-sign = sign the contract together

luncheons = formal lunches or early-afternoon parties where lunch is served

on your behalf = for your benefit, with your interest in mind

we're not getting any younger = an expression to say "we're getting older; time is passing"

pushing papers = doing administrative work

when you put it that way = when you say it like that

I'm game = I'm willing / ready

putting in your two-week notice = informing your employer that you will quit your job

before you know it = very soon in the future

Vocabulary Quiz

Choose the best word to complete each sentence. Two words are not used.

before you know it	I'm game	out of the question	swing it
dragging his feet	I'm positive	pushing papers	well off
eager	on behalf of	sick of	went under

1. After the giant shopping center was built, a number of smaller local shops _____ because they couldn't compete.
2. I'm not sure if we can go to the play; my daughter has a soccer game that afternoon... but if we leave the game a couple minutes early, we might be able to _____.
3. John and Karen have been dating for eight years, but for some reason he's _____ when it comes to proposing.
4. Lots of time and money has already been invested into this project, so starting over is _____.
5. My five-year-old son is _____ to start school - he's been talking about it non-stop for weeks!
6. The CEO can't attend the conference, but one of the directors will go _____ the company.
7. Time always flies in the summer! Seems like it started just yesterday, and then it's over _____.
8. Want to take a whitewater rafting trip? _____ if you are. We can split the cost.
9. We've had pizza every night this week! I'm _____ pizza; let's get something different.
10. Where are my gloves? _____ I brought them; they have to be around here somewhere.

Speaking Task

If you were to start a business, what kind of business would you start? Explain what you would choose, and why – and talk about some of the possible challenges as well as potential rewards.

Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish or e-mail your MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback!

Answers

Comprehension Questions:

1. c
2. a
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. b
7. b

Vocabulary Quiz:

1. went under
2. swing it
3. dragging his feet
4. out of the question
5. eager
6. on behalf of
7. before you know it
8. I'm game
9. sick of
10. I'm positive