

# BUSINESS IDIOMS AND CORPORATE TERMS

- get the ball rolling

- to make something start happening
- *We need to **get the ball rolling** to prepare our presentation for next week's meeting.*

- start/get off on the right foot

- to start a relationship in a positive way
- Everyone hopes to get off on the right foot when they start a new job.*

- bring something to the table

- to contribute something of value (to a company)
- She brings a great deal of experience to the table.*

- from the ground up



- to do something from the start/very beginning
- *Our boss built this company **from the ground up.***

- get down to business

- to start focusing on a specific task (after introductions/small talk)
- *We only have a limited time to discuss this today, so let's get down to business.*

- think outside the box

- to think creatively and develop new and original ideas
- To be successful in our industry, we need staff who **think outside the box.***

- by the book

- to do things according to the rules or the law
- *Our accountant does everything by the book so there are no problems in the future.*

- rock the boat



- to do something which changes a stable routine and may cause problems
- I told the new manager not to rock the boat before she gets to know her team.*

- on the ball

- to be competent, alert and quick to understand new things
- *Your team are really on the ball and getting great results.*

- throw in the towel

- to quit or give up something
- *One of the applicants competing for the new position has just **thrown in the towel**.*

- on the same page

- to be in agreement or thinking in a similar way
- *We made a proposal to expand globally and the CEO is **on the same page.***

- word of mouth



- to communicate or tell people about something verbally (not in writing)
- **Word of mouth** is more reliable than **word-of-mouth** adverts (or **word-of-mouth** recommendations).

- behind the scenes

- describes things that happen which the public don't know about or see directly
- *We gave a successful presentation and I need to thank all those **behind the scenes.***

- hit the nail on the head

- to be exactly right when you describe something (e.g. the reason for a problem)
- You've *hit the nail on the head* regarding what has caused our drop in sales.

- raise the bar

- to increase standards or improve quality in something
- Mobile phone manufacturers raise the bar every year with their new products.*

- back to square one



- describes when you need to start a project again from the beginning
- *Every aspect of our proposal was rejected by the CEO, so we are **back to square one**.*

- (straight) from the horse's mouth

- to obtain information directly from the original or a reliable source
- I heard straight from the horse's mouth that the CEO is going to retire this year.*

- keep you on your toes

- to describe something that makes you remain alert, energetic and ready
- Management make regular checks to **keep** everyone **on their toes**.*

- read between the lines

- to find a hidden meaning in something said or written (e.g. feelings/intentions)
- **Reading between the lines**, I don't think my colleague actually wanted to resign.

- give the thumbs up



- to show support and give approval
- *I got the thumbs up from my boss about working from home every Friday.*

*1. How will you resolve this conflict?*

- *Consider Sarah, a team leader at a company where communication from management is inconsistent and policies are ambiguous. Her team frequently receives vague instructions, leaving Sarah unsure about how to address common scenarios, such as handling client complaints or navigating internal team issues.*
- *For instance, Sarah's team was recently instructed to “prioritize client satisfaction” but without specific guidelines on escalation processes or conflict resolution methods. As a result, her team is left guessing, leading to mistakes, frustration, and a sense of being unsupported. Team morale dips and productivity suffers as workplace conflicts arise from miscommunication and unclear expectations.*

- back to the drawing board

- to start something again because the previous attempt was unsuccessful
- The client rejected our first proposal, so we have gone back to the drawing board.*

- give someone a pat on the back

- to praise someone for an achievement
- *Our line manager gave us all a pat on the back for finishing the project early.*

- twist someone's arm



- to encourage/pressure someone to do something that they don't want to
- Can you **twist her arm** to work overtime today?*

- keep one's eye on the ball

- to give your complete attention to something
- I need to keep my eye on the ball because this industry is so competitive.*

- do something/go behind someone's back

- to talk about someone or take action without their knowledge
- My team went behind my back and complained to the boss before speaking with me.*

- put all one's eggs in one basket

- to commit all your resources to a single idea or plan of action
- I take some investment risks every year, but I never put all my eggs in one basket.*

- cut one's losses



- to stop an activity that is unsuccessful to avoid losing more money
- *We've decided to **cut our losses** and close the restaurant.*

- hands are tied

- not able to act in a particular way because of external reasons
- *My boss said that she cannot give me a promotion because her **hands are tied**.*

- off the top of your head

- to speak about some something without thinking in detail or checking facts
- ***Off the top of my head, I can't give an exact number of complaints we've received.***

*2. How will you resolve this conflict?*

- *Imagine a scenario involving two marketing specialists, Mark and Emily, who work closely on content strategy for a product launch. Mark is a planner. He likes to map out every stage of a campaign well in advance, setting deadlines and sticking rigidly to them.*
- *Emily, on the other hand, thrives on flexibility. She believes creativity flows best when she has the freedom to adapt ideas as she goes while also valuing work-life balance. Initially, both respect each other's expertise, but soon their different styles lead to personality clashes.*

- *Mark feels frustrated when Emily misses early-stage deadlines to refine ideas, as he sees this as a lack of commitment. Emily, however, feels pressured by Mark's structured timelines, which she believes stifle her creativity and disrupt her work-life balance.*
- *Their team meetings become tense, and eventually, their differences spill over into larger team discussions. Other team members notice the growing friction, and the workplace conflict starts to affect the team's morale and focus.*



- call it a day

- to stop doing something (to leave work or do something else)
- I think we have spent enough time discussing this project. Let's call it a day.*

- see eye to eye

- to agree with another person
- He doesn't always **see eye to eye** with his colleague about the future priorities.*

- work against the clock

- to aim to finish something before a specific time
- We're always working against the clock to meet urgent deadlines.*

- go the extra mile

- to make more effort to achieve something that is expected
- Companies benefit from staff who go the extra mile.*



- learn the ropes

- to learn how to do specific tasks or activities in a company
- *We all have to **learn the ropes** when we start a new job.*

- pull the plug

- to stop a task or activity from continuing
- The directors have decided to **pull the plug** on the project to expand in Asia.*

- all in the same boat

- to be in the same difficult or unpleasant situation
- *We're all in the same boat because our company is closing and we need new jobs.*

*3. How will you resolve this conflict?*

- *Consider Alex, a team member who has been with the company for several years as a software developer. Recently, a new manager joined the team and adopted a leadership style that included making offhand comments about “young professionals” being more adaptable to change than older employees.*
- *Although the comments were not directed specifically at Alex, he felt targeted and increasingly alienated due to his age. Over time, these comments escalated, with the manager subtly implying that the older team member might struggle to keep up with the evolving demands of the industry.*



- *Alex felt undervalued and isolated, and his motivation declined. Fearful of being labeled as “overly sensitive,” he hesitated to report the issue, but the ongoing discrimination affected his work performance and well-being.*

- hot off the press

- describes something that has just been released or printed
- *Our new brochure is hot off the press with all the latest products and special offers.*

- the buck stops here

- emphasizes who is ultimately responsible for something
- *My team is responsible for meeting the deadline. **The buck stops here** with us.*

- the ball is in your court

- emphasizes who is responsible for making the next decision
- *I've submitted our proposals to the CEO and now **the ball is in his court.***

- go down to the wire



- describes something that is not decided or certain until the very last minute
- *Discussions went down to the wire, but we finally reached an agreement.*

- up in the air

- describes when something is still undecided and plans are not yet finalized
- *Everything is still up in the air about our company relocating to another office.*

- ahead of the pack

- describes someone who performs better than others in their team
- *We've got five interns at the moment, but he is way **ahead of the pack**.*

- hold the fort

- to be responsible for something when someone else is unavailable
- I need to hold the fort while the managing director is on maternity leave.*

- get your foot in the door



- to take the first step with the aim to progress further in the future
- She took an entry-level job to get her foot in the door and got promoted after 1 year.*

- go belly up

- describes a company that fails or goes bankrupt
- *Several of our competitors went belly up during the last recession.*

- give someone the green light

- to authorize or allow someone to do something
- The directors have finally given us the green light to increase spending.*

- cut corners

- to do a task to a lower standard to save time or money
- *Companies should never cut corners with regards to health and safety.*

- strike while the iron is hot



- to take action without delay when there is an opportunity to do something
- *I'm confident that this client will sign the contract if we **strike while the iron is hot.***

- get something off the ground

- to successfully get something started
- We need to find an investor who can help us get this project off the ground.*

- in (out of) the loop

- to be in (or outside of) a group of people that share information
- *Our manager forgets to keep us in the loop about changes to the sales targets.*

- <https://www.englishradar.com/english-vocabulary/business-idioms/>