

# LESSON 9

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## 61 on the back burner

What do we mean when we say a project is on the back burner?

When we say ..., we mean we have stopped working on the project temporarily because there is other more important work that needs doing

Give me an example of "on the back burner", please. Organizing the summer conference isn't really a priority at the moment, so let's put that on the back burner for a while

## Business structures (1)

**sole trader                      register                      entity                      liable**

When we first start a business, we have to register it with the government. When we do this, we have to state how the business is structured. There are several different types of business structure, but one very simple way to operate is as a sole trader.

A sole trader is a self-employed person, such as a freelancer or shop owner, who runs their own business. The person and the business are not separate legal entities, so the sole trader is personally liable for all bills and debts. A sole trader can hire staff, but only the sole trader is responsible for the business.

Give me some examples of occupations where people often operate as sole traders. Some examples ... plumber, freelance journalist etc.

**on hold****hang up**

How long are you generally prepared to wait on hold during a phone call before deciding to hang up and try phoning again?

I'm generally prepared ...  
for about ... before deciding ...

**direct cost****indirect cost****total cost****packaging**

**Direct costs are any costs that relate directly to the production of a specific product, such the cost of raw materials, labour, packaging etc.**

**Indirect costs, on the other hand, refer to costs that do not relate directly to the production of a specific product, but are shared across the whole company. They include costs such as rent, heating costs and other overheads.**

**When the direct costs and indirect costs for a particular product are considered together, we use the term "total costs".**

When a manufacturing company is considering its costs for a specific product, what does the term "direct cost" refer to?

When ..., the term "direct cost" refers to any cost that relates directly to the production of a specific product, such the cost of raw materials, labour, packaging etc.

And what does the term "indirect cost" refer to?

The term "indirect cost" refers to costs that do not relate directly to the production of a specific product, but are shared across the whole company

63 Give me some examples of indirect costs, please.

Some examples ...  
overheads such as rent,  
heating, insurance costs etc.

When the direct and indirect costs for a particular product are considered together, which term do we use? When ..., we use the term "total costs"

**wholesale**

**resell**

**in bulk**

How does a wholesaler make money? A wholesaler makes money by purchasing goods in bulk from producers and then reselling them to retailers at a profit

**feedback**

**pop up**

Why is it important for bosses to give employees regular feedback on their performance? It's important for ... because positive feedback motivates people, and an employee is more likely to perform better if they're told which aspects of their work they need to improve

On a website, sometimes a window pops up asking us to take part in a survey: what's the normal purpose of such surveys?

The normal ... to obtain feedback regarding our opinion of the website, or to discover information about us for marketing purposes

64 **carry out**

In your opinion, should an employee carry out instructions even if they feel that what they're being asked to do is unethical?

Yes, in my opinion, ... ~ No, in my opinion, ...

## Describing change (1)

## figures

When we're describing how the value of something changes over time, we can use many different words. Imagine, for example, you're describing changes in sales figures for a product. Instead of saying that sales are "going up", you could say that sales are "rising", "increasing", "growing", or "climbing". Instead of saying that sales "went down", you could say that sales "fell", "dropped", or "declined".

Here are some verbs we can use to describe large, quick or severe changes:

**soar**

**rocket**

**plummet**

**plunge**

Has the population of the world soared (or rocketed) over the last five hundred years?

Yes, the population ...

How would you feel if property prices suddenly plummeted (or plunged) in your country?

If property prices ..., I'd feel ...

Why?

Of course, we can also use nouns to talk about changes. We can say "There will soon be an increase in interest rates" or "We expect to see a drop in revenue this year".

Was there a rise or a fall in the number of people out of work in your country last year?

There was a ... in the number of ...

65 **time frame**

**product development**

**quality control**

In the health care industry, is the time frame for product development generally long or short?

In ..., the time frame ... long

Why is this?

This is because new drugs and medical equipment have to meet very high standards of quality control, and be tested very carefully

## briefcase

If you accidentally left your briefcase or laptop on a train, would you expect to get it back?

Yes, if I ..., I'd ...  
~ No, if I ..., I wouldn't ...

## turnover

## plant

Tell me a common word we can use instead of "revenue" or "income" when talking about a business?

A common word ... "turnover"

If there's an upturn in output in a car plant, is it logical that turnover will increase as a result?

No, if there's ..., it isn't logical that ...

66 Why not?

Because there may not be any demand from consumers for the extra cars that are produced

What kind of things can cause a company to have a high staff turnover?

Low wages, poor working conditions, bad management etc. can cause ...

## liquidate

## liquidation

## accumulate

## pay off

## creditor

## debtor

**When a company accumulates large debts and cannot pay them off within an agreed time frame, it may have to go into liquidation. This means the company stops trading, and its assets are sold in order to pay off its debts to creditors.**

What happens if a company operates at a loss for a long time, accumulates large debts, and can't find any investors to help?

If a company ..., accumulates ..., and can't find any investors ..., it has to go into liquidation

## And what happens when a company's assets are liquidated?

When a company's assets are liquidated, they're sold in order to pay off its debts to creditors

## In the past, were business debtors in your country sent to prison?

Yes, ... ~ No, ...

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### **Exercise 4**

*From the four options given with each sentence, choose the one word that fits correctly in the gap.*

- 1 The CEO will definitely notice if you're absent ... any of these meetings. ( to / with / at / from )
- 2 Why don't we convert half our money ... local currency before we fly and change the rest when we're there? ( for / on / into / with )
- 3 Having a secretary means I now feel less stressed, which, in ..., has definitely improved my work. ( case / turn / all / theory )
- 4 If you have to spend all day sitting down at work, it's good to do physical exercise ... a regular basis. ( in / with / as / on )
- 5 Can't you just put the summer conference on the ... burner for a while and concentrate on more important things? ( rear / bottom / last / back )
- 6 As you're only an employee, you aren't liable ... any of the company's debts. ( for / with / from / to )
- 7 Let me put you ... hold for a moment while I check whether she's here or not. ( to / on / in / for )
- 8 These prices are excellent. If we've got enough storage space, we should definitely buy ... bulk. ( up / in / for / on )
- 9 When you give Sam ... on his performance today, remember to be gentle; it's his first ever job. ( feedback / opinion / comment / report )
- 10 If he can't ... out a simple instruction like that, he shouldn't be working here! ( move / bring / carry / take )