Business idioms - Trends etc
with useful phrases for business meetings

Are the following expressions positive (e.g. a rise) or negative (e.g. a drop)?

- It won't make a huge profit but it should help us **keep our heads above water**.
- The market price of coffee has **rocketed** since the storms in Brazil.
- Credit for housing has **dried up** recently.
- **The sky's the limit** with the price of this stock.
- The level of the dollar is widely tipped to **bounce back** by the end of the year.
- Freeing up the money supply could ensure **a safe landing** for the Thai economy.
- Most analysts are predicting some **turbulence** in the weeks ahead due to uncertainty in consumer demand.
- The initial demand was low but we think it will really **take off** in the near future.
- Everyone predicted a steady year for technology stocks but instead they **plunged** as soon as the markets reopened after the New Year holidays.
- There has been **a flood** of new engineering graduates in the last two years.
- The viral marketing campaign in the weeks preceding the launch ensured that sales **got off to a flying start**.
- As the central bank brings down the base interest rate over the next quarter property prices should **soar**.
- Bonuses in the financial sector are **buoyant** this year, so tips in London bars and restaurants are also substantially up.
- Dividends in the biotechnology sector have **taken a nosedive**.

Check as a class, then divide the expressions above into three categories depending on what topic area they come from, e.g. what their literal meanings are related to.

--------------------------fold, cover or cut-------------------------

Use three of these categories to help with the task above:

War and combat   Sport   Flying   Water

Put expressions above into these sentences with their original meanings:

- He caught the ball when it ____ from the backboard and managed to get it into the basket at his second attempt.
- "We are expecting some _______________________________________ ahead, so please return to your seats and fasten your seatbelts"
- The cold water took his breath away when he __________________________ into the lake.
- Drifting slowly down to earth on a parachute was pretty exciting, but _______________ silently above the clouds in a glider plane was something else!
- Despite losing one engine and one wheel, the captain somehow managed to ensure ____.
- "Drinks will be served shortly after __________________________________"
- We didn't trust the villagers' raft when we saw it, but banana tree trunks are surprising ____.
- The ___________________________ victims were rescued by helicopter from the rooftop and sheltered in the local stadium until the river level returned to normal.

Match these business idioms to their original meanings in the list at the bottom of this page:

Business idioms from sport

- Consumer spending is **in the doldrums** and needs some stimulation from government to **give it a kick start**.
- It's **a long shot**, but how about seeing if the New York Times will write a story on our new product?
- That market is still a bit immature and I think we **jumped the gun** a bit by buying into it back in the 90's.
- I've given you must best offer and now **the ball is in your court.**

Business idioms about water

- Mitsubishi group are going to have to **bail out** their motoring division again.
- Even if Ford's new SUV is a success, the money it makes will be **just a drop in the ocean**.
- I was absolutely certain that I had found a winning idea, but my boss **threw cold water on** it.

Business idioms from war

- After being beaten to the market by our competitors twice in the last 6 months team leaders need to **rally the troops.**

Original meanings

1. The non-business meaning of this is getting water out of the bottom of a boat with a bucket in order to stop it sinking.
2. This originally means a part of the sea where there is no wind.
3. This is when all the soldiers are running away and the officers manage to get the together again for another attack.
4. This expression comes from trying to hit a target with an arrow from a great distance.
5. This idiom is derived from the old-fashioned way of starting up a motorbike.
6. This is based on the time when sprinters start running before they get the signal.
7. Like adding a tiny bit of water to a huge amount, this will not make much difference.
8. Taken from tennis, this means that play is on your side of the net and so it is time for you to hit.
9. This comes from a rather severe method you can use to calm down over-excited cats and dogs.

What do the sentences mean in a business context?

*Try to make similar explanations of the original and/ or business meanings of the following idioms are see if your partner can guess which one you are speaking about. If you have never heard the idioms before you can give clues with guessing phrases like "*From the sound of it, I guess…"

1. <u>I can understand why</u> you can't be more precise, <u>but</u> if you just give me **a ballpark figure** it would really help.
2. In my personal opinion, once we've **ironed out** the remaining problems the success of this product is guaranteed.
3. It seems like a good idea to me, but we'll have to let the **bean counters** have a closer look at the financial implications of the proposal before it is approved.
4. From my point of view, the so called **"captains of industry"** have got their reputations and positions more through family and **old school tie** connections than because of any special talent in running a business.
5. I've said it once and I'll say it again, **heads will roll** if we make a loss again this year.
6. I hear what you are saying about technology being the future, but I say that **a number cruncher** can never be a successful manager in a creative company.
7. I understand that you are busy, but you have to help me out with this. My **head is on the block**!
8. From what I can see, the fact that the average British family is **saddled with** huge amounts of debt is a bad sign for the future of the economy.
9. This is just my personal opinion, but I think there is nothing wrong with a wife being the one who **brings home the bacon.**
10. These iPod look-alikes are **selling like hotcakes ,** but I reckon people will soon be looking for something more original.
11. I concur that it needs some more investment, but I think we can all agree that there is no point just **throwing money at** the problem.
12. Sales work doesn't generally suit bookish people, so I'm sticking to my original position- which is that **cold calling** would be impossible for someone like him.
13. I am willing to concede that we **cut corners** on safety just a little, but I insist that it was the only way to get the product out on time and within the budget we were set.
14. You have a point. We could sit back and see if the recovery is sustainable, but I say- that there is money out there right now, so we should **strike while the iron is hot.**
15. I also think that the quarterly reports are a priority, but you have to understand that I'm **snowed under** with a lot of other work.
16. It might be a big deal by his standards, but they way I see it is- to us the money involved in this contract is just **chickenfeed**.
17. Rescuing a company that is in trouble must be very satisfying I'm sure, but **living from hand to mouth** is not my idea of fun.
18. I honest thought that he had all the right qualities to be a successful bank manager, but it turned out that he had **sticky fingers** and they had to hand him over to the police.
19. It is a bit of a risky investment, but I'm telling you- you will soon forgot the risk involved once you have **made a bundle.**
20. You have to **pay an arm and a leg** to employ a good manager with experience nowadays, so it seems to me that it is better to employ younger graduates and train them yourselves.

21. Most people see the head of accounting as a **penny pincher** but I would be more inclined to describe him as “sensible”.
22. I agree with you that investment is always important, but I must stress that until the market conditions improve we all have to **tighten our belts.**
23. This might be somewhat controversial, but I the way I see it **cooking the books** is a natural part of the accountancy profession and if I had my way anyone caught doing it wouldn’t get more than **a slap on the wrist.**
24. Speaking with my accountants’ hat on, the amount of money you could make with that machinery is irrelevant if you have to by a new one a year later and sell the old one **for a song.**
25. I understand that you trust the suppliers, but my motto is **“It’s a dog eat dog world”,** which is why I insist on having everything down on paper**.**
26. We all seem to be in agreement. Let’s go through the details one more time then, **to dot the i’s and cross the t’s.**
27. Prices of office space in the city centre have **gone through the roof** recently, but I still say that for a high profile company being in the suburbs would be a disaster.

Go through the sentences one more time and underline phrases that would be useful in business meetings to:

- give your opinion
- insist/ restate your opinion
- agree
- politely disagree

like the underlined words in sentence 1 above