UNIT 1. NEGOTIATIONS

We met with representatives from the other company for over 4 hours yesterday. Jerry didn’t waste any time. He took the bull by the horns and gave them our list of concerns right away. Then he asked for a list of their concerns and put both lists on the white board, so he could be sure we were all on the same page. He told the group that we were going to have to think out of the box and suggest creative solutions. We talked for over an hour. Jerry likes to shoot from the hip, which makes some people uncomfortable because he’s very direct. Because we have such different corporate cultures, I didn’t think the two groups would ever see eye to eye on the goals. However, during the second hour, Jerry said he was willing to bend over backwards and work very hard to address their concerns. I think that impressed them. He talked about the advantages of the deal, and then he really laid it on the line and left the next move up to them. At one point, I thought the other company might back out and leave the table, but Jerry kept the discussion going. There was a lot of give and take; they finally met us halfway, and we cut the deal over dinner that night. I was surprised that our relationship as competitors didn’t get in the way. Jerry was able to convince them to look at those old conflicts as water under the bridge. He got them to focus on the future, and the result was clearly a win-win situation for both companies.

1. **Take the bull by the horns**: directly confront a problem or challenge.

   He decided to take the bull by the horns and talk to the president about the problem.

   She took the bull by the horns and asked her boss for a raise.

2. **Be on the same page**: have the same understanding about the situation or information.
I want to make sure we share the same expectations. We need to be on the same page before I give you the money to do the work.

I need to meet with Jim before the negotiations so we are on the same page when we meet with the other company.

3. **Think out of the box**: be creative or non-traditional; approach a situation or problem in a new way.

Nothing we’ve tried so far has worked. We need to ask Gordon for his ideas because he thinks out of the box.

Let’s brainstorm some ideas hers. Concentrate on some new and different solutions. We need to think out of the box.

4. **Shoot from the hip**: be very direct; express ideas without planning.

She likes to shoot from the hip, but honestly makes people angry sometimes.

You usually know what he is thinking because he shoots from the hip.

5. **See eye to eye**: to agree about or have the same perspective on [something]

I’d like her to be on my team. We see eye to eye most of the time.

We haven’t been able to agree. We don’t see eye to eye on this.

6. **Bend over backwards**: try very hard to please someone or to do something.

She bent over backwards to try and make him happy, but he was never satisfied.

I want you to bend over backwards for this customer. It’s a very important account.

7. **Lay it on the line**: be very direct or frank

I laid it on the line. I told him I didn’t love him anymore.

We’re tired of all the careful words. Just lay it on the line for us.

8. **Back out**: change or cancel an agreement or an arrangement
The investors **backed out** of the contract at the last minute, so we couldn’t go ahead with the building.

I don’t trust her. She often **backs out** at the last minute.

9. **Give and take**: cooperation or compromise

It took a lot of **give and take**, but I think we finally reached an agreement that satisfied everyone.

He was used to working alone. In his new job, he had to learn to participate in the **give and take**.

10. **Meet someone halfway**: compromise

If you can **meet me halfway**, I think we can reach an agreement.

They **met us halfway**, so that we could make a deal that worked for all of us.

11. **Cut the/a deal**: reach an agreement

They **cut the deal** over lunch.

We hope to **cut a deal** by Friday.

12. **Water under the bridge**: a part issue or problem that is no longer a concern

Don’t worry about that mistake. It’s **water under the bridge**.

Let’s not focus on an old disagreement. We need to move forward. Those problems are just **water under the bridge**.

13. **A win-win situation**: a situation where everyone involved benefits or wins.

The negotiations went well. We both got what we wanted most. It was a **win-win situation**.

I enjoy working with her. We both contribute something useful. It’s a **win-win situation**.

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UNIT 2. MEETING WORK DEADLINES

We have a lot on our plate. For example, we’ve gotten three new projects just this week, and I don’t know if we have the bandwidth to finish the work on time. There’s only one experienced engineer who really knows the ropes. We have two new employees who catch on quickly, but this is a very heavy schedule. We need to do a dry run with the prototype before we release the software to the customer. It’s critical that we have enough time to troubleshoot problems in this program and then get the bugs out before the release. The marketing department is already advertising this software as plug and play, so it has to be trouble free and very easy to install. We can probably finish the first job by next Friday, but I think the next one will be down to the wire because we only have three days after that to finish it. I gave Don a heads up and told him to be ready to put in some overtime for the next several days. We’ll need a few days off after it’s over so no one gets burned out.

1. **On one’s plate**: [something that is] waiting to be done.
   We have enough on our plate right now. We shouldn’t take on more projects right now.
   She has too much on her plate. She needs to assign some of the work to another person.

2. **Have the bandwidth**: have the ability or capacity to handle the work
   Tech support is too busy. They don’t have the bandwidth to handle the calls.
   The company is growing too fast. I’m not sure they have the bandwidth to manage the changes.

3. **Know the ropes**: be familiar with job processes, procedures, or people
   We asked the new employee to talk to José because he knows the ropes and can show him around the plant.
She knew the ropes, so she had to trouble getting the work done.

4. **Catch on**: quickly and easily learn or understand something

Let's put him in charge of the new process because he catches on quickly.

They promoted her after only three months because she had caught on so quickly.

5. **A dry run**: a rehearsal or practice session

We should test this prototype first. We need a dry run before we go into production.

I'd like to do a dry run with this speech before I present it to the whole company.

6. **Troubleshoot something**: identify the problems in a program or process

We hired her to troubleshoot the problems in the process. She'll identify them, and then the team will correct them.

We have to troubleshoot the problems before we find solutions.

7. **Get the bugs out**: fix any problems in software programs

We have to get the bugs out of this new program before the release date.

This new software engineer can get the bugs out faster than anyone on the team.

8. **Plug and play**: easy to install and easy to use

I'll be able to have this new program up and running in five minute. It's plug and play.

I like their products because they are so easy to use. Everything they made is plug and play.

9. **Down to the wire**: close to the deadline

We have to work overtime because we’re down to the wire on this project.

He doesn't plan his work well, so he always has to work down to the wire.

10. **Heads up**: a warning that a change or new procedure is coming
Our boss gave us a **heads up** about the change in the procedure.

I’d like a **heads up** on any design changes so I can make adjustments.

11. **Be burned out**: to feel very tired and not want to continue an activity

She **was burned out**. She had worked with children for many years and had lost her enthusiasm for the work.

She decided to take a vacation because she **was burned out** from working seven days a week.
CHAPTER 3. CHALLENGES/DIFFICULTIES

I’m feeling very frustrated. I have so much work to do, and I’m still waiting for tech support to upgrade my system to improve the processing speed. I feel like I’m doing the job of three people. I tried multi-tasking, but even when I talk on the phone and read and answer my e-mail at the same time, I can’t get everything done. I’m also having problems with my staff. I have one person who always makes waves and causes arguments with the rest of the staff. Whenever there’s a bottleneck and work builds up so that we fall behind schedule, she’s usually responsible. Our budget has been cut, so I have to find ways to save money; this means I have to cut corners on hiring, so I can’t bring on any new people. I just have to make do with the current team. I was talking with Joe, the other supervisor, during a break. He’s in the same boat. He says his job has become a pain in the neck. His boss is always in his face about something. We both feel like we’re between a rock and a hard place. My wife is going to have a baby, so I need to have a steady income. Joe is about 25 years older than I am. He was planning to retire next year, but he put all his eggs in one basket and invested in a high-tech stock that was supposed to make him a million dollars. Then the market went south and now he’s really up a creek. He doesn’t want to tell his wife about his bad investment, so now he has to keep working for a lot longer than he expected.

1. **Upgrade**: improve, update, or change for the better

   He needs to **upgrade** his job skills so he’ll be more employable.

   I **upgraded** my computer system so I could work better.

2. **Multi-tasking**: doing more than one thing at the same time.

   I can’t keep up with my work. I need to try **multi-tasking** so I can get everything done.
He got a ticket for **multi-tasking** while he was driving. He was talking on the car phone and looking up another phone number while he was at the wheel.

3. **Make waves**: to cause troubles or problems

I don’t want him on my team because he always **makes waves** and upsets the others.

She **made waves** wherever she went, so she didn’t usually stay long in one company.

4. **A bottleneck**: a person or place that stops or slows the easy flow of ideas or products

There’s a **bottleneck** in manufacturing at the third station on the assembly line. We need to make some changes in the process there.

That department is always a **bottleneck** for us when we try to get anything done quickly. They always delay the process.

5. **Cut corners**: save money or time by substituting inferior materials or not carrying out all the required steps.

The company **cut corners** on the new product by using a less expensive part in the design.

We have to find a way to **cut corners** on this project because we’ve already gone over our budget.

6. **Make do**: complete a task using only the available supplies or people

We don’t have enough yellow paper, so we’ll have to **make do** with white.

She ran out of butter, so she **made do** with oil for the recipes.

7. **Be in the same boat**: be in the same situation as someone else

They are both engineers who worked for start-up companies and then left to start their own companies. They are **in the same boat**.

Both women have just had their first babies. They are **in the same boat**.
8. **A pain in the neck**: a difficult problem or person

This project has had problems from the beginning. It’s a pain in the neck.

I left that job because it was a pain in the neck.

9. **Be in someone's face**: make someone uncomfortable, be confrontational

That salesman was really in my face. I didn't like him. He stood very close and was very persistent.

She’s a difficult person to work with because she is always in your face. She likes to argue.

10. **Be between a rock and a hard place**: be a difficult position, unable to escape.

She’s caught between a rock and a hard place. She needs to invest in research and development to be competitive, but she has to spend all the money just to keep the company going.

He’s between a rock and a hard place. If he does what his mother wants, his wife will be angry. If he does what his wife wants, his mother will be angry.

11. **Put all one's eggs in one basket**: put all one’s money or energy in one place

Don’t put all your eggs in one basket. It’s less risky to have more than one investment.

She put all her eggs in one basket, so when the price of gold dropped, she lost everything.

12. **The market goes south**: the value goes down/declines

We were doing well with our investments for retirement until the market went south. Now, we’re all worried.

That country was exporting coffee for a good price, but then the market went south, and their economy is really hurting now.

13. **Be up a creek (without a paddle)**: be in a difficult situation
If the programmer leaves without giving us any notice, we'll be up a creek without a paddle.

Our child-care provider quit yesterday, and we are really up a creek trying to work with our new twins.
UNIT 4. SALES AND MARKETING

Person A: Did you attend Sally's presentation?

Person B: No, I missed it, but I read her e-mail,

Person A: It was great. No one expected her to be so plugged in to the customers’ needs. She really blew them away. I think the new product release will jumpstart our sales this quarter. It’s a long shot, but I think we may reach the 5 million dollar mark.

Person B: The new program is very user-friendly, which should increase sales.

Person A: I agree. I think that the new management has a good game plan. First of all, they have an excellent team. The new vice president has hired really good salespeople who interface well with the customers. She knows that good customer relationships are critical to our success. She’s also spending a lot on this new marketing campaign. She wants to go for broke.

Person B: She certainly works hard. She put in about 90 hours last week. Even if she does strike out and the campaign fails, I think she’ll go down swinging. I love her positive attitude. I hope she hits a home run. If she does, we’ll all benefit when the stock goes up.

Person A: It’s possible. I think she is really dialed in to the customers. She seems to be able to anticipate the market, which helps her to stay ahead of the game.

Person B: I agree. This could add up to a win-win situation for all of us.

1. Be plugged in/be dialed in: be connected or be knowledgeable about in a situation.

If you want to know what’s really going on, ask Jim. He is really plugged in.
If you want to be **dialled in**, you have to communicate with lots of people.

2. **Blow someone away**: greatly impress someone; exceed expectations.

   He set impossible goals, and then he achieved them. It **blew his boss away**.

   She **blew them away** when she made her presentation. They had no idea she would be so effective.

3. **Jumpstart**: so something to get an activity or institution working better or faster.

   Let’s **jumpstart** this project. It is our first priority.

   The economy was lagging, so the government tried to **jumpstart** it by lowering the interest rates.

4. **A long shot**: a very difficult goal or a goal that one does not expect to achieve

   Getting into that university is a **long shot** for him because he doesn’t have great grades.

   Reaching our sales goals in this quarter is a **long shot** because of the economy.

5. **Be user-friendly**: be easy to use

   This program **is** very user-friendly. It seems very logical.

   When a program **is user-friendly**, I don’t need to read the manual.

6. **A game plan**: a strategy or an organized approach to achieve a goal

   To get this done, we’ll need a really good **game plan**.

   We need to come up with a **game plan** to meet our goals.

7. **Interface with someone/something**: communicate or interact with someone or something.

   Her new job requires her to **interface with the customers** every day.

   The network here no longer **interfaces** well with the one overseas.

8. **Go for broke**: attempt to reach a very high goal; gamble everything

   He risked everything on the new venture. He **went for broke**.

   If we **go for broke** on this one, and it doesn’t work, we’ll be back to square one.

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9. **Strike out**: fail or make a big mistake

   He **struck out** with the big account. They decided not to purchase the product.

   I don’t want to **strike out** on this project. I want it to be a success.

10. **Go down swinging**: keep trying until the end; never give it up

   He didn’t win the account, but he **went down swinging**. I like that guy.

   I’d rather **go down swinging** than not try at all.

11. **Hit a home run**: to be very successful

   That company really **hit a home run** with their new technology. Everyone is using it now.

   She has started three companies, and they’ve all been very successful. She always **hits home run**.

12. **Ahead of the game**: prepared for what’s coming; ahead of schedule

   Next month is the end of the quarter. I have to get my work finished early so I can get **ahead of the game**.

   Our new product should help our company **get ahead of the game**.

13. **Add up**: make sense; result in something

   It doesn’t **add up**. He’s losing money, but he’s still hiring new people.

   It all **adds up** to trouble. Changing the design and rushing the products to market will create more problems.
UNIT 5. COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

Person A: Our supervisor, Sally, called a meeting yesterday to talk about the communication problems in our group. She got the ball rolling by asking us to talk about the problems we were seeing. She asked us not to name names.

Person B: So did anybody step up to the plate?

Person A: Not at first. She had to encourage us. She said that we had to identify the problems before we could find the solutions because they go hand in hand. Maria spoke up first. She said she didn’t want to step on any one’s toes, but she thought the workload needed to be divided more evenly. Sally said that was a good start and that we were on the right track. We needed to get everything out in the open. She reminded us that no topic was out of bounds.

Person B: I though Maria brought the same problem up the last time, but Sally just gave her the runaround then. Sally said she would check with the vice president and get back to her, but she never did.

Person A: You’re right. I think Sally has been getting the same comment from other people, so she’s finally ready to listen. Jerry said he was feeling out of the loop because he doesn’t get included in the planning phases. Steven got angry about that. He said that if Jerry always says he’s too busy to come to the planning meetings, then how can he expect to be in the loop?

Person B: Wow, it sounds like Steven really screwed up when he lost his temper.

Person A: Yes, I agree. It was very unprofessional. Sally drew the line and reminded everyone that the purpose of this meeting was not to get personal and lay the blame but to try to improve the communication
channels. She told Steven to sit down and knock it off. She said we wanted to discuss his behavior later outside of the group. They agreed to take it off-line.

Person B: That's funny. I thought Sally was the one who usually got angry in the meetings.

Person A: You’re right. She doesn’t exactly walk the talk. I think she needs to set a better example.

1. **Get the ball rolling**: start something
   He asked the first question in the meeting to get the ball rolling.
   She got the ball rolling with the new team by asking the staff members to introduce themselves.

2. **Step up to the plate**: take responsibility
   We hope the power company will step up to the plate and explain the power outrage.
   If the mistake is his, I hope he will step up to the plate and take care of it.

3. **Go hand in hand**: be associated with; go together
   Quality and efficiency go hand in hand. One usually accompanies the other.
   This material goes hand in hand with the software to guide the user.

4. **Step on someone's toes**: get in someone’s way; interfere with someone’s job or responsibilities
   I don’t want to step on your toes, so let me know if this is OK.
   She was unpopular because she stepped on many toes.

5. **Be on the right track**: be going in the correct direction
   We don’t have the problem solved yet, but I think we are on the right track.
   If he says it’s a software problem, I think he is on the right track.
6. **Out of bounds**: not acceptable

   He was a problem student. His behavior was out of bounds, so he was sent to the principal’s office.

   That topic is out of bounds during the meeting. We will discuss it later off-line.

7. **Give someone the runaround**: not answer a question or request; send a person somewhere else for an answer

   She always gives me the runaround when I ask her out. Do you think she’s not interested?

   I could tell she didn’t want to answer the question. She just gave me the runaround.

8. **Be in the loop/be out of the loop**: be included in the communication/not be included in the communication

   Please send her copies of the e-mail about this so she is in the loop about this new project.

   I haven’t received any information on this project. I am out of the loop on this.

10. **Screw up**: make a big error or mistake

    She screwed up the order, and we had to start over again.

    I usually screw up when I’m really tired and I keep working anyway.

11. **Draw the line**: establish limits or boundaries

    We have to draw the line with this customer. They are demanding too much.

    Tell them we won’t make any more design changes.

    He drew the line with his teenage son and told him if he got another ticket, he couldn’t continue driving.

12. **Knock it off**: stop doing “something”

    He has an annoying habit of tapping his fingers on the table, so she asked him to knock it off.
The children were running around in the library, so the librarian asked them to **knock it off**.

13. **Take something off-line**: talk about something privately/keep confidential

Let’s **take this discussion off-line** to deal with the confidential items.

We need to **take this conversation off-line** because it’s about the new technology for our company, and that isn’t public knowledge yet.

14. **Walk the talk**: do what you say you’re going to do

If you want to be a good leader, you need to **walk the talk** so your employees will know you lead by example.

She always speaks about the importance of listening, but she doesn’t **walk the talk** because she doesn’t listen very well.
UNIT 6. THE NEW ACCOUNTANTS

Person A: Have you met Anna Wong, the new accountant?

Person B: Yes, I met her yesterday. She seems to be really on the ball. I think she’s a good choice.

Person A: I agree. The previous guy, Andy, was nice, but he liked to shoot the breeze. I don’t think got much done.

Person B: I think Andy pulled strings to get the job. His brother-in-law is the CFO.

Person A: I heard that he was fired for taking kickbacks from one of our customers. Is that true?

Person B: I don’t know for sure, but that’s what I heard. The new person, Anna seems very conservative. She goes by the book.

Person A: She’s also really on her toes. I asked her to help me with a cost estimate. She just eyeballed it and was able to give me a figure right then and there. When I went back to redo the figures, it all worked out.

Person B: I hope that sales for the new product will put us in the black.

Person A: Me, too. I know that it’s common for a start-up to be in the red in the beginning, but I’ll feel better when we reach our sales goals.

1. **Be on the ball:** be smart; be intelligent; be a good worker

   She’s really on the ball. She’s quick, efficient, and does good work.

   I’m really glad you hired him because he’s on the ball.

2. **Shoot the breeze:** make informal conversation

   I like to shoot the breeze with my friends. Sometimes we just sit and talk.

   We shot the breeze for a few minutes before we got down to business.

3. **Pull strings:** take advantage of connection to achieve a goal

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He **pulled strings** to get the job. His father-in-law talked to the company president about him.

She can **pull strings** whenever she wants something because her brother is the CEO of the company.

4. **Kickback**: money or favors given in exchange for influence.

That company was fined for giving a **kickback** to the politicians in exchange for contracts.

The U.S. government frowns on **kickbacks** for business.

5. **Go by the book**: closely follow procedures or rules

I want you to **go by the book** at first. You can get creative later, after you learn the process.

She’s very careful and methodical. She always **goes by the book**.

6. **On one’s toes**: prepared to quickly move or react

He always gives us last minute changes to keep us **on our toes**.

If you work in Silicon Valley, you have to stay **on your toes** because things are changing very quickly.

7. **Eyeball it**: estimate or guess based on a quick glance.

I don’t have a measuring tape, so I’ll just have to **eyeball it**.

I don’t have time to look at your proposal very carefully. Is it okay if I just **eyeball it**?

8. **In the red/ in the black**: in debt/ not in debt

That company is **in the red**. They may go bankrupt if they keep losing money.

One more successful business venture should put us back **in the black**.
UNIT 7. THE START-UP

Person A: Did you know that Krishna left for a job with that new Internet-based start-up?

Person B: Yes, I heard that. I guess he decided to just go for the gold. They gave him stock options.

Person A: I heard his wife also left her job to go to the same company. I guess they decided it was time to go for it. They've both become dot.commers.

Person B: I think they took the risk because last year, he was offered a job and stock in another start-up company, but he said no, and now the company has gone public. He felt he really missed the boat. He would have been a millionaire if he had taken that job.

Person A: Well, it’s a trade-off. I prefer a little more security. I’m not ready to risk it all and go for broke. Some of those Internet-based companies make me nervous. A lot of them won’t be around long. You know, some of them have a really high burn rate. They often go through millions of dollars a month in the start-up phase. I prefer working for a bricks-and-mortar business. I think it’s important to have a physical presence in the marketplace.

Person B: You may be right, but Krishna is a nice guy. I hope he lands on his feet and does really well.

Person A: Well, nobody twisted his arm. He took the chance, and he know what he’s doing. He could always come back here. He was careful not to burn his bridges. He gave two weeks notice, and everyone appreciated that.

Person B: His wife is a talented researcher. If this venture falls through, she should have a lot of other job opportunities. It's not like they come up only once
in a blue moon. There are lots of them around today for people with the
right skills.

1. **Go for the gold**: try for a difficult goal.
   
   Let’s *go for the gold*. I want to set high goals this year.
   
   She *went for the gold* when she put down her quarter goals.

2. **Go for it**: make an extra effort to meet a goal
   
   If we’re going to make this quarter’s quota, we’ll have to really *go for it*.
   
   I told him he would succeed if her really *went for it*.

   
   I don’t think I’m ready to go to a *dot.com* and work 12 hours a day.
   
   He left that big corporation and became a *dot.commer* because he hopes to make a million dollars when the business goes public.

4. **Miss the boat**: miss the opportunity
   
   He could have bought that stock last week at half the current price. He really *missed the boat*.
   
   She *missed the boat* when he said no to that deal. It turned out to be worth millions.

5. **A trade-off**: an exchange; the act of giving up one thing to get another
   
   If you cut back your hours to have more free time, you’ll make less money. It’s a *trade-off*.
   
   She gave up her dream car to buy a house. It was a *trade-off*.

6. **Burn rate**: the rate at which a new company spends money
   
   The 10 million dollars of venture capital should last about five months at this *burn rate*.
The burn rate is really high with new Internet companies because marketing costs are very high.

7. **Bricks and mortar**: a business with a physical building where goods are bought and sold, as opposed to an Internet-based business, which sells products over the World Wide Web.

We’re a bricks-and-mortar business. We still have a retail building where we sell our products.

Bricks-and-mortar businesses in our town are facing competition from Internet-based companies.

8. **Land on one’s feet**: recover from a problem or difficult challenge

His company outsourced his job, but he landed on his feet because he found a new position in another department.

She managed to land on her feet when she made a career change; in fact, her salary is still rising.

9. **Twist someone’s arm**: convince or persuade someone to do something

I didn’t want to go to the party, but she twisted my arm, so I went.

Lisa didn’t want to go to the dance alone, so she called a friend and twisted his arm. He finally agreed to go along.

10. **Burn one’s bridges**: do something that will hurt or destroy a relationship

I wasn’t negative about why I left the job. I didn’t want to burn my bridges. I might want to use my old boss as a reference.

He burned his bridges when he published that book about the politics at his old company.

11. **Fall through**: fail or not happen

Our plans for the evening fell through, and we ended up staying home.

I’m counting on getting that contract; I hope it doesn’t fall through.
12. **Once in a blue moon**: (Something that happens) rarely or very infrequently

We weren't prepared for such a big snowstorm because it only happens *once in a blue moon* around here.

He comes to visit *once in a blue moon*. I haven't seen him for years.