
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Business jargon



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Neil ...

Catherine

And I'm Catherine. And our topic today is business jargon – that's words and phrases you hear mostly in the world of business. So Neil, are you ready for some **blue-sky thinking**?

Rob

Blue-sky thinking – that's an expression often heard in the workplace. It means **being creative** – coming up with new, original ideas.

Catherine

Exactly, and in this programme we've got lots more business phrases for you. We'll explain what they mean and when to use them.

Neil

But first, listen to Sophie, talking to her marketing team.

Catherine

And here's a question to think about while you listen: What does Sophie ask Joe to do?

INSERT

Good: it seems we're all **reading from the same page**. We need to reach the **upscale** customers. So, can we **think out of the box** and come up with something quite different? We have to **push the envelope** if we want to succeed in the market. Now, if we take **the helicopter view**, we can see that we've **effected** lower costs. We've targeted **low-hanging fruit** and got rid of several distributors. **Going forward** now, Joe, can you **action** advertising? Is everyone clear now?

Catherine

Lots of business jargon there. We usually don't use so many at one time, do we Neil?

Neil

No, it can sound a bit much if you use all of them. Though these are things you probably will hear in a business context.

Catherine

Most definitely. So back to our question. We asked you: What does Sophie asked Joe to do?

Neil

And the answer is: She asks him to **action** advertising.

Catherine

That's right. She wants him to deal with advertising. Sophie used the noun **action** as a verb – more on that later. But first let's look at some jargon she used to talk about having new ideas. Here's a clip.

INSERT CLIP 1

So, can we **think out of the box** and come up with something quite different? We have to **push the envelope** if we want to succeed in the market.

Catherine

So Sophie wants her team to come up with a new and exciting idea. And she uses the expression **think out of the box**, which means **be creative; don't feel limited to the same old ideas**.

Neil

And she tells them to **push the envelope**, which means **go further than before; do things that might be new or risky**.

Catherine

Yes, that's similar to that expression we had earlier – **blue-sky thinking**, which means **being creative – coming up with new and original ideas, even if they are not very practical or realistic**. So Neil, are you a **blue-sky thinker**?

Neil

Oh, yes, of course, I'm incredibly creative, you know.

Catherine

I do. Yes, that's true.

Neil

Sophie also said everyone was **reading from the same page**. Now this expression means they all **had similar ideas and agreed with each other**. Here's another clip.

INSERT CLIP 2

Now if we **take the helicopter view**, we can see that we've **effected** lower costs. We've targeted **low-hanging fruit** and got rid of several distributors.

Neil

Some interesting phrases there, and you can guess their meaning if you actually picture what the words mean. For example, **take the helicopter view**.

Catherine

Exactly. Now, picture yourself up in the sky in a helicopter and you're looking down at the ground – and you can see a lot more from up there than you can see when you're down on the ground. So this expression means: **looking at the whole situation and not just one or two details**.

Neil

Sophie also said that they'd lowered costs by targeting **low-hanging fruit**. **Low-hanging fruit** means **the easiest, or most obvious, things**. In reality, on a fruit tree, the fruit that hangs low down is easier to pick, so there's a link between this idea and the idiomatic meaning of the phrase in a business situation.

Catherine

Good. Now, Sophie used two nouns as verbs: **effect** and **action**. She said: **We've effected lower costs**. And **to effect** means **to achieve something**. She also asked Joe to **action** advertising, this means she wants him to deal with the advertising. And nouns used as verbs like this sound very strong. They give the speaker's ideas greater force.

Neil

Sophie used the word **upscale** to describe customers. **Upscale** describes people with money or things that are high quality.

Catherine

I often think that we could do with some **upscale** coffee in our office.

Neil

That's a good idea.

IDENT

6 Minute Vocabulary from the BBC.

Catherine

And it's time for a quiz. Number one: If I want you to be creative and original, would I tell you to a) **push the envelope** or b) target **low-hanging fruit**?

Neil

And the answer is a) **push the envelope**.

Catherine

Well done if you got that right. Number two: If I want you to look at the wider picture and not concentrate on detail, would I tell you to a) **think out of the box** or b) **take the helicopter view**?

Neil

And it's b) **take the helicopter view**.

Catherine

Good. And finally, if I want you to do something, would I ask you to: a) **action** it or b) **effect** it.

Neil

And the answer is a) **action**.

Catherine

Well done if you got those right. And before we go, here's a top tip for learning vocabulary: when you learn new words, make a picture in your head of the meaning. And when you hear or see the word again, you can think of the picture.

Neil

There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away

blue-sky thinking: having ideas which are very original, even if they are not practical or realistic

Our blue-sky thinking gave us some totally new ideas

push the envelope: to go even further than others and do things that might be new or even risky

We're not just a normal airline. We're going to push the envelope and offer balloon flights.

think out of the box: to be creative and not limit your thinking

Jayne's so good at thinking of solutions to problems. She manages to think out of the box.

read from the same page: think about or understand a situation in the same way as other people

Pat wants the Middle East to be our target market, but I think we should aim for the Far East. I don't think we're reading from the same page.

take the helicopter view: look at the general view of a situation and not the details

Taking the helicopter view, we can see that the company has steadily expanded over the last few years, but this month's sales figures are rather low.

action (verb): deal with

I had 100 emails in my inbox this morning. I've actioned 80 of them so far.

effect (verb): bring about a change or influence

The company effected many changes in the pay and conditions of their employees last year.

low-hanging fruit: the easiest targets

To cut energy consumption, we need to reduce worldwide air traffic, rather than making petrol and car tax more expensive – these are just the low-hanging fruit.