

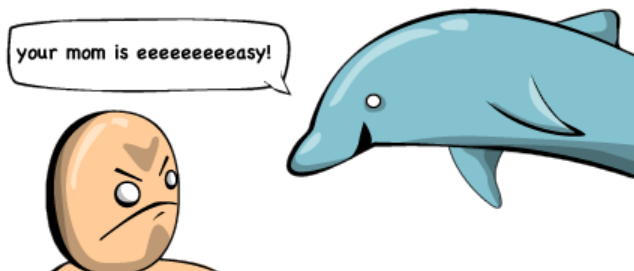
The true meaning of common idioms

by Jason Cohen on March 15, 2010

Struggling to understand American business vernacular?
Here's a convenient reference.

Idioms are used by all creatures, not just humanoids, as I learned from [The Oatmeal](#):

When a dolphin makes those cute whistles and clicking sounds, they're actually vulgar insults.



Non-native speakers of English tell me that the basic rules of grammar aren't too hard to learn, but the idioms are murder.

(Ok, not literally "murder," that's just an expression.... never mind.)

So to help all of us understand better understand American business vernacular or, as our UK brethren like to say, the American bastardization of the rich, beautiful language you so unashamedly defiled, I've prepared the following chart.

"Just kidding!"

—No I'm not.

"To be perfectly honest with you, ..."

—Everything I said before this moment was bullshit.

"The deal is in the bag."

—I'm lighting a votive candle and sacrificing a goat. It couldn't hurt.

"In the fullness of time."

—Maybe later, but probably never.

"It is and it isn't."

—It isn't.

"Our company allows businesses to integrate, assemble and optimize available IT assets to drive business process productivity, delivering an innovative, enterprise-class business integration platform that incorporates proven integration technology with next generation capabilities into one interoperable set of tools that deliver a unique combination of efficiency, agility and control, combining industry leadership with a zealous commitment to customers to deliver tangible business value."

—I have no idea what we do. Please give me money.

"It goes without saying that ..."

—I'm about to say it.

"May be hazardous to your health."

—Is unquestionably hazardous to your health.

"It's not over 'till it's over."

—It's over.

"It's so hard finding good help."

—I am a pompous ass.

"Less is more."

—This is a steaming pile of excrement. Less of a negative is a positive.

"We're a leading provider of ..."

—I can't think of anything else to say, and the lawyers tell me I can't say "the" leading provider.

“Well bless your sweet little heart!”

—*You’re stupid.*

“It’s not personal, it’s just business.”

—*I hate you. Personally.*

“It’s not you, it’s me.”

—*...but you’re not helping.*

“Congratulations again on being pregnant, what a wonderful journey you’re about to embark on!”

—*I don’t have kids.*

“Life starts at 40!”

—*I am at least 39 years old.*

“We need to move the needle.”

—*I have no idea how to fix this.*

“That’s a great question.”

—*I have no clue how to answer that.*

“It is what it is.”

—*We screwed up and have no idea how to fix it.*

—*‘Hope’ is our strategy.*

“Duly noted.”

—*Stop trying to convince me; I’ve already decided “no.”*

“We are cash flow positive.”

—*We’re not profitable, but the Ponzi scheme is working at the moment.*

“Yes and no.”

—*No.*

“Yes, but...”

—*No.*

“Maybe, and...”

—*No.*

“Let’s put a pin in that. We can circle back off-line.”

—*We will never speak of this again.*

“Let’s take a step back.”

—*Everybody shut up and listen to me.*

“Let’s not reinvent the wheel.”

—*Copy what someone else did.*

“We’ll agree to disagree.”

—*You are 100% wrong.*

“I hear what you’re saying.”

—*You are 100% wrong.*

A few dozen were published in 2010; thanks to the following folks for contributing more during 2024: [Alexander Flenner](#), [Alex Steshenko](#), [Dr. Cher Han Lau](#), [Christine McKee](#), [Hashim Warren](#), [Mark Shust](#), [Rich Robinson](#)

Printed from: *A Smart Bear*

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