



Episode 3: Tips to pivot your startup

This is the worksheet for Episode 3 of the Smart Startup English Podcast.

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Warm-up questions

Have you heard of Airbnb? Why do you think the name of this startup has the word “air” in it? We already know that BnB stands for “bed and breakfast”, but why is the word “air” in the company's name?

Vocabulary 1

Match the words on the left (a-f) with the correct definition on the right (1-6).

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| a. to be keen on | 1. to try different things in order to get better results |
| b. to pivot | 2. to accept something you can't change |
| c. to gain traction | 3. to give up something unprofitable |
| d. to iterate | 4. to be interested in something |
| e. to cut your losses | 5. to become more popular |
| f. to come to terms with something | 6. to change direction in your business |

Vocabulary 2

Complete the sentences (1-9) with the correct form of the words from the list below. You have to use one of the words twice.

keen pivot traction outcome cut iteration dwindling terms

1. Frank realized that he had to _____ his losses and close the business soon because he was running out of money very fast.
2. His company had to go through a couple of _____ before they finally settled on a product that had a good market fit.
3. Their _____ bank account made them realize that they have to change their business model. The company was spending more money than it was making.
4. Sarah was really _____ on the idea of helping her colleagues implement this new collaboration tool.
5. It was a very tense meeting, and the CEO did not like the _____ of it.
6. I use the Slack app every day at the office, but I didn't realize that its first _____ was as a chat tool inside a video game.
7. There really is no turning back! I've come to _____ with the fact that I need to look for a different job if I want to have a better salary.
8. Everyone thought Jamie's idea was crazy when she first proposed it. But one year later, her idea was really gaining _____ in the educational startup world.
9. When your original idea isn't making you any money, you should consider changing directions and pursuing other business models. In a business scenario, this is called a _____.

Vocabulary 3

Choose the correct answer to fill in the gaps in the sentences below:

1. I know that BnB stands _____ bed and breakfast, but I still can't figure out why Airbnb chose this name for the company.

- A. for
- B. at
- C. in

2. Not a lot of conference goers were keen _____ sleeping on an air mattress on somebody else's floor.

- A. in
- B. on
- C. at

3. When your business idea is not making money, advisors will tell you to cut your _____. That means stop wasting more resources (such as money and time) on an unprofitable idea.

- A. losses
- B. loses
- C. lost

4. Iteration is a process _____ which you're making small incremental changes to a product in order to reach an improved outcome.

- A. on
- B. between
- C. through

5. The founders of Slack had to come to terms _____ the fact that their initial idea for a video game wasn't very profitable.

- A. to
- B. at
- C. with

Speaking prompt

In this episode, we've learned the expression "to come to terms with something." This means accepting something that you can't change. Is there anything that you've come to terms with lately? Can you explain more about what it is, and what made you come to terms with it?

Special offer! You can record yourself answering this question (maximum 5 minutes), send us the recording via email, and receive feedback from our team of Business English trainers. Email us at info@smartstartupenglish.com to learn more about how feedback packages work.

Writing prompt

You're one of the co-founders of a SaaS startup that hasn't been doing very well lately. Your product is not gaining traction, and your bank account is dwindling. You think that your business should pivot, and try to come up with a new service to sell. But you have to convince your two other co-founders that a business pivot is a good idea. Write an email to your co-founders expressing your concerns and suggesting a business pivot.

Do you want to get feedback on your email (maximum 300 words) directly from a Business English trainer? Email us at info@smartstartupenglish.com to learn more about how feedback packages work.

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Answer key

Vocabulary 1

a - 4	d - 1
b - 6	e - 3
c - 5	f - 2

Vocabulary 2

1 - cut	4 - keen	7 - terms
2 - iteration	5 - outcome	8 - traction
3 - dwindling	6 - iterations	9 - pivot

Vocabulary 3

1 - A	4 - C
2 - B	5 - C
3 - A	