American Business Expressions:

Understanding Your Peers and Coworkers



ALL LANGUAGES AND CULTURES HAVE UNIQUE PHRASES TO EXPRESS EVERYDAY IDEAS. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS NO DIFFERENT – AND THE AMERICAN OFFICE ENVIRONMENT IS FULL OF FUN AND VALUABLE EXPRESSIONS.

Working or interning in any U.S. business (and even in the classroom), you will hear many expressions that will be confusing when translated directly into your home language. Here at Monmouth, our goal is to make sure that you are as prepared as possible for all aspects of interacting in the United States and in the American workplace. We have prepared a list of some of the most common American business sayings that you may hear – some even multiple times a day – to help you prepare for your experience.

Take a look at these 15 common American business expressions and their meanings. You may enjoy sharing these with your friends!

"All hands on deck": To gather everyone in one place, ready to work.

"Are we on the same page?": Asked to make sure that two people understand each other.

"Ballpark figure": An estimated number.

"Bring to the table": To add your skills and talents to a group.

"Champion": To be responsible for a task or project.

"Circle back": To return to a previous topic of discussion.

"COB": Close of Business – usually 5:00 p.m. each day.

"Don't reinvent the wheel": Use existing materials – don't try to create something new when you already have a solution that works well.

"Face time": In-person conversation time.

"Low hanging fruit": To find the simplest solutions to a question or problem.

"Phone tag": When two people call each other and leave voicemails, but fail to actually speak directly.

"Touch base": To have a conversation about a particular topic or project.

"Back to square one": To start over from the beginning.

"Keep your eye on the ball": To stay focused and avoid distractions.

"Off the cuff": To speak or think without prior preparation.

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