

Answers

A) Match the phrases to the definitions

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

to come up	to stall	to grind to a halt	to overcome
an obstacle	a setback	to stagnate	to hit a ceiling
to pull out	to go back to the drawing board	to inhibit/stifle	to fall through

- To slow down gradually and then stop completely: **to grind to a halt**
*"The construction project **ground to a halt** due to a lack of funding."*
- To stop making progress, potentially only temporarily: **to stall**
*"Trade talks between the two countries have **stalled** due to disagreements."*
- Something which takes you back in your progress: **a setback**
*"My career suffered a real **setback** when I didn't get my expected promotion."*
- To appear unexpectedly (a situation or a problem): **to come up**
*"Unfortunately, I must cancel the meeting later because something has **come up**."*
- To withdraw from something, to stop being involved in something: **to pull out of**
*"Some investors have **pull out** of the project, which is a complete disaster for us. We need to find new investment quickly."*
- To reach a height from which you cannot go any further: **to hit a ceiling**
*"The business has **hit a ceiling**. I don't see how we can really grow without significant investment."*
- To slow down the progress of something, or to prevent the progress of something:
To inhibit
*"Personally, I think that these excessive meetings are really **inhibiting** our progress."*
- Something that gets in the way: **an obstacle**

*"There are several **obstacles** which we need to overcome if we want to break into this new market. Budgeting issues, increased competition are 2 of the main **obstacles** that we need to overcome."*

9. To start something again because the first plan failed: **to go back to the drawing board**

*"Unfortunately, this system isn't working. I suggest that we should **go back to the drawing board**."*

10. To succeed in dealing with or getting past something: **to overcome**

*"I am very proud of my team for **overcoming** so many setbacks along the way."*

11. To stay the same without growing or making progress: **to stagnate**

*"I realised that my career was **stagnating** at my previous country, so I decided to make a change."*

12. To fail to happen (a plan, a deal, negotiations, an event): **to fall through**

*"Our plans **fell through** at the last minute, because not enough people were able to attend the event."*

B) Key Words in a New Context

The Troubled Expansion

[Scene: The executive team of a retail company are sitting in a meeting discussing the problems facing the company's plan to expand by opening more stores in shopping centres around the country.]

Moderator: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming to this meeting to discuss the problems we're facing with our plan to expand our retail stores. Let's start by discussing the **setbacks** that we've experienced so far.

Alan (CEO): As we all know, the Covid-19 pandemic caused our expansion plans to **stall/fall through**. Our plans to open 2 new stores in London and 1 in Liverpool in 2020 **fell through** due to covid, and we lost a lot of revenue as a result. My ambition is to see us open stores in these locations in the next year, but further problems have **come up**, and we need to find a solution

Deborah (CFO): Yes, we're facing serious financial problems. As Alan mentioned, covid 19 seriously dented our revenue, and we are now also dealing with supply chain problems, a decrease in customers due to difficult economic times, and soaring energy costs for running our stores. These are all huge **obstacles** standing in the way of expanding any further.

Alan (CEO): As a result, we've **hit a ceiling** in terms of what we can accomplish with our current resources. We need more investment if we are going to continue to expand.

Deborah (CFO): To be honest, I think we need to scrap our expansion plans completely and **go back to the drawing board**. We need a completely new strategy whereby we focus on a smaller number of stores in key locations. This could help us generate revenue more quickly and build momentum for future growth at a time when the economic situation is more stable. There are just too many potential problems at the moment which could be impossible to **overcome**.

Alan (CEO): I see your point, but the company has been **stagnating** for so long. We have been going nowhere and customers are starting to get bored of us. I believe that scaling back our expansion would mean less exposure, thereby **inhibiting** the development of the brand itself at a time of intense competition. I think we need to remain ambitious. We would be better off looking into alternative financing options. For example, we could look at leasing our new stores instead of buying the properties outright. This could help us reduce our upfront costs and free up capital for other areas of the business.

Moderator: These are both valid options. Let's meet again next week, and each of you come up with a potential roadmap. Alan, if you could draw up a plan for targeting new investment; and Deborah, how about you draw up a potential strategy for narrowing our focus to a few stores. We'll weigh up the pros and cons of each before coming to a decision.

C) Comprehension Questions

1. Deborah mentions that covid 19 seriously 'dented' the revenue of the company. Based on the context, what do you think she means by the verb 'dented'?
The verb 'to dent' means to have a negative effect on something, especially the level, the size or the amount of something. E.g. "My poor sales figures have really dented my confidence."
2. Deborah also mentions the fact that energy costs are 'soaring'. Based on the context, what do you think this verb means?
'To soar' here means to increase rapidly. E.g. "Profits are soaring".
In a literal meaning, 'to soar' means to fly or rise high in the air.
3. Why does Alan advocate for a more ambitious and risky strategy?
He advocates for this because he feels that scaling back the expansion would lead to a lack of exposure and would slow down the development of the brand as a whole. He believes that this in fact could be dangerous as the competition is currently very high.
4. At the end of the discussion, what does the moderator ask Alan and Deborah to do?
The moderator asks them to draw up their respective plans, so that they can be discussed in a future meeting. To 'draw up' a plan or document means to prepare and write a plan or document. E.g. "I will draw up a contract for a potential deal."