

Sound Dynamic When Talking About Progress and Improvement

Every individual and every company wants **to hone** their skills in some way until they reach a skill level that they are satisfied with. Honing your skills can also help you to **further** your career and gain that promotion you have been waiting for. We can also **hone** a process or strategy, making it better and better until it achieves the perfect results. In order to hone a strategy, we might need **to scrap** some aspects of the strategy that are not working. If you hone your skills or your strategies, it will help you to **raise the bar in terms of** your service, taking it to the next level.

To make progress in any project, it is important to encourage the development of many aspects of the team. You can **foster** creativity, innovation, a positive attitude or a culture of hard work in your team. You can also instil a strong mindset or way of thinking in your team over a period of time.

It is also important to make processes easier and smoother in order to make progress in a project. New technology can help **to facilitate** processes and make them faster, which can **move / drive your project forward** rapidly.

It is also important to determine **the driving force** or **the main driver** behind your progress. This could be a person who is influential in driving the project forward. It could also be your strong values and dedication to customer service. It could also simply be a strong desire to make profit or to expand the company. Identifying the main driving, force and then using it to your advantage can help to **bring your plans or your project to fruition**.



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 hone	to further	to scrap	to raise the bar
to foster	to instil	to facilitate	to drive something forward
The driving force behind		to bring something to fruition	

1. To raise the standards for the competition to follow: _____

"Over the next few years, we really aim to _____ in terms of our output."

2. To cancel a plan, idea, policy or law: _____

"We decided to _____ that idea in the end because it wasn't working."

3. The main thing or person which is causing something to make progress:

"She really was the _____ behind our success."

4. To help the progress or development of something (such as skills, knowledge, your career or a project): _____

"I would like to _____ my sales knowledge."

"I believe that this company would offer me the ideal environment to _____ my career."

5. To make a process easier: _____

"The new chat platform should _____ communication between team members."

6. To establish or 'install' an idea or attitude into someone's mind gradually:

"John has really _____ self-belief in a team which was previously so low on confidence."

7. To make something perfect gradually over a period of time: _____

"I am currently _____ my sales pitch."

"I wish to _____ my English skills."

8. To make a plan happen, to complete a plan successfully: _____

"We will need a lot of support if we are going to _____ this ambitious plan _____."

9. To make significant progress in a project or plan: _____

"This extra investment will really _____ the project _____."

10. Encourage the development of something: _____

"We are aiming to _____ a strong loyalty and work-ethic among our team."

B) Key Words in a New Context

Below you can find a paragraph. Can you fill in the gaps in the paragraph with the words from the box below? You may need to change the form of some of the verbs in order for them to fit into the sentence.

to foster	to raise the bar	to facilitate	to scrap	the driving force
to hone	to drive the project forward	to bring something to fruition		

Speeding Up The Project

Peter: So Stacey, could you tell us how the project is coming along so far?

Stacey: Yes certainly, well it's moving forward, but too slowly for my liking. We need to make some changes to ensure we meet our deadline.

Peter: What do you think seems to be the reason my progress is so slow?

Stacey: Well, as the deadline is so far away, it appears that there is no real sense of urgency in the team. I think that in order to _____, we need to set more aggressive targets and timelines. This will push us to work harder and be more efficient. We also need to _____ a culture of accountability among our team members, whereby if we don't meet these new mini-deadline then there will be consequences affecting bonuses etc.

Peter: That sounds like a good idea. Maybe we could meet next week and I could help you to put together a timeline with some more fixed milestones.

Stacey: That would be very helpful.

Peter: One thing I would also recommend is to _____ any unnecessary meetings within the team. In our other project team, we have managed to halve the number of meetings, and it has brought about much better progress. We have started to use the Slack communication software much more than before, which has really _____ much speedier communication without the need for endless meetings. As the project progresses, I think you will naturally _____ your communication strategy anyway. You will start to see which meetings are necessary and which are not.

Stacey: I agree, although for now I really want to set up a few meetings to offer the team more tutorials on the product which we are producing. I still feel as if the team are not quite sure about the impact that this product is going to have on the market. I want to _____ a real sense of pride in the product, and I want the team to understand that when this product is released, it is really going to _____ in terms of standards across the whole industry. If the team feel like they are part of something special, then I believe that this will be the _____ behind the project's success, and will really motivate the team to put in the extra effort.

Peter: That is such a crucial point. If the team are not invested in the product that they are working on, then they will never be motivated to push forward. In you feel that way about your team then I suggest setting up some tutorials immediately. It will certainly pay off further down the line.

Personally, I certainly believe in your team as I know many of them personally, and I am certain that you have struck the right balance of people to _____ such an ambitious plan _____.

C) Comprehension Questions

1. What are the 3 main solutions mentioned in the article with regards to speeding up the project?

2. According to Peter, which solution will solve itself more naturally during the course of the project, and which solutions will be solved more urgently?

3. Near the end of the discussion, Peter mentions that something will 'pay off further down the line'. Could you rephrase this in simpler English?

4. What 2 reasons does Peter give at the end for why he believes the project will be a success?

D) More Uses of Selected Key Words

To scrap

This is a great phrase to use in a meeting: *"Let's scrap that idea and move on."*

To instil

Instil is an excellent Business English phrase with many collocations:

To instil confidence / to instil strong values / to instil strong principles / to

instil discipline / to instil motivation / to instil a positive mindset / to instil a sense of trust / to instil a sense of responsibility / to instil strong beliefs

To foster

To foster is also an excellent Business English phrase with many collocations. It is similar to 'instil'. 'Instil' focuses mainly on ideas and attitudes, whereas 'foster' has a much broader meaning, focusing on ideas, attitudes, best practices or anything which could be positive:

to foster innovation / to foster creativity / to foster growth / to foster progress / to foster trust / to foster loyalty / to foster a strong team spirit / to foster sustainability / to foster collaboration / to foster motivation / to foster a positive atmosphere

To inhibit

We can use 'inhibit' with all of the same collocations as 'foster'. 'Inhibit' has the opposite meaning - discouraging the development of something:

"Our lack of budget is really inhibiting our progress."

To facilitate

'Facilitate' is an excellent business English verb, meaning to make a process easier. It is usually followed by a noun. Here are some nouns which go well with 'facilitate':

To facilitate change / to facilitate progress / to facilitate the implementation of / to facilitate the development of / to facilitate decision-making / to facilitate problem-solving / to facilitate communication / to facilitate access to / to facilitate learning

If you want to use the verb facilitate, but you can't find a nice noun to use with it from the list above, you can always use 'to facilitate the process of..':

"The new communication tool facilitates the process of delegating tasks."

"Our new system facilitates the process of entering data."

E) Idioms + 'regarding' or 'in terms of'

Many idioms can be included in the middle of the sentence comfortably followed by 'regarding' or 'in terms of'

To raise the bar in terms of..

"We believe that we have really raised the bar in terms of product quality."

"We are striving to raise the bar in terms of our production volume."

F) Glossary of words for sounding dynamic when talking about progress and improvement

to hone
to further
to scrap
to raise the bar
to foster

to instil
to facilitate
to drive something forward
the driving force behind
to bring something to fruition