

Chapter 9: Spinning Our Wheels

I am in such a bad mood today. I have been negotiating a merger between two social networking companies for two months. I thought that a deal was **imminent** this morning when we were able to **come to an agreement** on the last major **stumbling block**. However, just as I was about to update the parties, one of the companies decided that they wanted to renegotiate some terms of the deal. It came as a surprise, and I don't know what to say. I am going to try and see if we can save the deal. After months of **protracted negotiations**, several sessions spent **spinning our wheels**, and days on end spent **burning the midnight oil**, this was a **setback** that I really didn't want to deal with. I guess what I have to do now is contact the other company and **break the news** to them. I'll keep you posted as to **how things play out**.

Breakdown

A) **Imminent**: This means that something is going to happen very soon.

1) The announcement of the merger between the two companies was **imminent**. We are waiting to see how the global markets react to it.

2) Due to the scandal, we believe the release of the company's statement announcing the resignation of their CEO is **imminent**.

B) **Come To An Agreement**: When you come to an agreement, this means that an acceptable solution has been reached by all

sides involved. You can also use "reach an agreement." Both expressions can be used equally.

1) After months of negotiations we were finally able to **come to an agreement** on a five-year contract.

2) We need to **reach an agreement** by Monday so plan on working throughout the weekend.

C) **Stumbling Block:** A stumbling block is a difficulty that needs to be overcome so that progress can be made in a negotiation or discussion.

1) I think this deal will go smoothly. I don't expect there to be any major **stumbling blocks**, but you never know.

2) We have agreed on almost everything. The only **stumbling block** seems to be the royalty fee. We are asking for six percent, and they said that the maximum they could pay was five.

D) **Protracted Negotiations:** These are negotiations that go on for much longer than expected.

1) Why am I so unlucky? It seems that I am always involved in **protracted negotiations**. My colleagues seem to finish up in a few weeks.

2) I didn't expect to still be negotiating after two months. These **protracted negotiations** are becoming extremely frustrating. We are not even close to the finish line.

3) Look, I can't deal with these **protracted negotiations** anymore. I am going to ask them for a definitive answer during tomorrow's meeting.

E) Spinning One's Wheels: This means that there is not any progress being made when discussing or negotiating. You can also use "going around in circles."

1) I think that we should just stop wasting our time. After several months of **spinning our wheels** and wasting a lot of money, we haven't made any progress.

2) Look, their English just isn't good enough for these high level discussions, and we don't speak any Japanese. We have been **going around in circles** for over an hour without really understanding each other. I was told their English was good enough to communicate. I'm sorry to say that it isn't. Make sure we have an interpreter next time.

F) Burning The Midnight Oil: This means working very late into the night.

1) There are still so many things to finish that we need to **burn the midnight oil** to get them done in time.

2) I have been **burning the midnight oil** for the past two weeks because I need to finish this report.

G) Setback: A setback is something that happens, which stops or restricts your progress. It doesn't allow you to go forward.

1) The **setback** in the testing of our product caused a three-month delay and cost us an additional 100,000 dollars.

2) This is the fourth **setback** we have had in the past two months. What is the reason for this? Can anybody provide me with some answers?

H) **Break The News**: This expression is used when you have to tell somebody bad news. It is not used when giving good news.

1) I don't know how to **break the news** that we need to cut salaries.

2) I just **broke the news** to Leo. It is so difficult telling people that you need to let them go.

3) Were you able to **break the news** to Mike that his proposal was being rejected?

I) **See How Things Play Out**: We use this expression when we talk about the results of projects and discussions.

1) I know you might be nervous, but you just have to do your best, and wait and **see how things play out**.

2) We need to wait two months and **see how things play out** before we can judge if the project was a success or not.

3) Why do you want to make such an important decision now? You should wait to **see how things play out** before you decide to do something you might regret.

