

Back to basics

Level

Intermediate

Tasks

Discussing the term 'back to basics'

Scanning a paragraph for information relating this term to the company Marks and Spencers

Reading an article about Marks and Spencers

Matching words to form business collocations taken from the article

Choosing the best from a set of ideas for improving the business of a retail company

How to use the lesson

- 1 Ask students what they know or think about the British company Marks and Spencers and if they have one in their country. It is a well-known British retail store which has had many problems over the last few years, closing down shops in a number of locations. Hand out the worksheet and ask students to explain what they understand by the term 'back to basics'.
- 2 Ask students to scan paragraph two to find a paraphrase for the term 'back to basics'. Students explain how this phrase relates to Marks and Spencers.

Answers

'core values': a return to developing the product which gave the company its initial success. In the case of M&S this was women's clothing for the 35-55 age range.

- 3 Ask the students to read the whole article and summarise the problems that the company faces, as well as the reasons behind these problems.
- 4 Ask students to match the words on the left to the words on the right to form business collocations. Once they have finished, get the students to check their answers by looking back at the article.

Answers

- (a) – (4) *takeover bid*
 (b) – (3) *cost cutting*
 (c) – (5) *consumer expectations*
 (d) – (6) *highly competitive*
 (e) – (1) *market leader*
 (f) – (2) *profit margins*

- 5 Ask students to work in small groups. Get them to imagine that they are the directors of a large retail company whose sales figures are suffering. They should look at the various measures for improving the business and decide on three that they prefer. Students report back their choices to the class and justify them.

Related websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://www.marksandspencer.com/>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3886161.stm>