ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Speak Business English Like an American Lesson 27 Idioms and Expressions Test

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1	D	2	A	3	A	4	C	5	A	6	D	7	B	8	B				

Explanations

1. **(Please note: The following questions are part of a cloze test. They are interrelated, meaning that the information provided in each question is connected to the others.)**

Fill in the blanks using the following idioms.
Liz is in a difficult position. Her boss has told her to _____ since the company is in financial trouble.
✓ **D) reduce headcount**
To **reduce headcount** means to cut the number of employees in a company. The clue is **the company is in financial trouble**, so the boss wants fewer people on the payroll.

2. Liz only has three employees: Brian, Rachel, and Pam. Brian and Rachel are doing great work, so she can't afford to _____.
✓ **A) let them go**
To **let someone go** is a polite way to say to fire someone or end their job. Brian and Rachel are doing great work, so Liz can't afford to lose them. Not **reduce headcount**: the gap needs an action done to **them**, and Liz has already been told she must reduce headcount.

3. Pam isn't doing so well. In fact, over the past year, her _____.
✓ **A) work has really slipped**
If your **work has really slipped**, its quality has gone down. The clue is **Pam isn't doing so well**. Example: **His work has really slipped since he started his second job.**

4. It's true that Pam helped _____ and has been a very loyal employee over the past 10 years.
✓ **C) build the company from the ground up**
To **build something from the ground up** means to create it from the very beginning. Pam has been with the company for 10 years and helped it grow from nothing. That is why firing her is hard for Liz.

5. Unfortunately, she's no longer _____.
✓ **A) at the top of her game**
At the top of your game means performing at your very best. **No longer** shows that Pam used to be excellent but isn't anymore. Not **work has really slipped**: it doesn't fit after **she's no longer**.

6. Liz thinks Pam has simply worked too hard and is now _____.
✓ **D) burned out**
Burned out means very tired and unable to work well because of too much work or stress. The clue is **has simply worked too hard**. Example: **After months of overtime, he was completely burned out.**

7. Liz likes Pam and would prefer not to fire her. But _____.
✓ **B) her hands are tied**
If **your hands are tied**, you have no choice because someone or something stops you from acting freely. Liz doesn't want to fire Pam, but her boss has ordered her to reduce headcount. The word **But** shows this contrast.

8. Liz hopes there will be _____ after she tells Pam the bad news.
✓ **B) no hard feelings**
No hard feelings means no anger or bad feelings between people after something unpleasant. Liz hopes Pam won't be angry with her after she hears she is losing her job. Example: **I'm sorry I had to say no. No hard feelings?**

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