

BEN 27 – Microsoft Reboot

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of qualities do you appreciate in a manager, or leader?
2. Do you prefer Microsoft's products to Apple or Android?
3. Do you think Microsoft will be more or less successful with their new CEO?

Transcript

Microsoft has been busy since CEO Steve Ballmer announced his retirement last summer. **On top of** buying Nokia, introducing a new tablet **lineup**, and **tweaking** Windows 8, they searched **high and low** for a **viable** replacement for Ballmer. Even with the recently announced hiring of Satya Nadella as CEO, last year may have been Microsoft's **annus horribilis**, as Mashable explains:

For Microsoft, 2013 was a disaster. The company's **ambitious** Windows 8 operating system didn't **gain** much **traction**, its **foray** into tablets was a **non-starter** and it continued to **struggle** for phone sales. The **discontent prompted** Ballmer to announce he would retire within 12 months. Despite all this, Microsoft's stock was up about 38%.

Nadella has **overseen** the company's **server software** and **back-end technology** for corporate customers, as well as many consumer cloud products like Office 365, Xbox Live, and Skype. As Verge reports, he'll definitely **have his work cut out for him**:

Microsoft **named** its third CEO in its entire 38-year history today. After Gates and Ballmer, Nadella **faces the challenge** of running a company that has 16 different billion-dollar businesses and will soon have 130,000 employees **thanks to its acquisition** of Nokia. That's not just a huge challenge; it's also a **question of focus and strategy**.

The first **order of business** for the new boss will be to **implement** his "mobile and cloud first" philosophy. With the full **backing** of Gates, Microsoft will **push ahead with** the transformation for years to come, as the Guardian explains:

Satya is a proven leader with **hard-core** engineering skills, **business vision** and the ability to **bring people together**. His vision for how technology will be used and experienced around the world is exactly what Microsoft needs as the company enters its **next chapter** of expanded product innovation and growth.

With a new strategy and a new year, Microsoft will need **to step up their game** to get customers back from the **likes of** Apple and Google. But, as Technocrati points out, this won't be easy:

The Microsoft **product offering** in recent years has been **hit and miss**. While the Windows phone is popular (at least with the **hipsters**) it's still **struggling to compete** with the iPhone and Android in many markets. Bing loses billions of dollars a year and will never compete with Google. Microsoft was **late on the rise** in tablet popularity and technology, and while the Surface is a nice piece of hardware, customers were already **indebted** to the **aforementioned** brands.

With Nadella **taking the helm**, many believe Microsoft will likely push the development of its corporate and **cloud computing** products. As one analyst tells ComputerWorld, this is just part of a larger strategy intended to **renew** the laptop **race** once again:

"This will be an **enormous** job for Nadella. He has experience, but I wonder if he has the amount of experience to take over a **behemoth** like Microsoft. He's had success in areas where Microsoft has done a good job like Server and Tools, but no experience in areas of **major pain**, like consumer."

Gates will **stay on** as Nadella's **wingman**, taking over product development and putting his **philanthropic** work on **pause** part of the week. As Gates explains in a video statement, he's excited to be **hands-on** again:

Satya's asked me **to step up, substantially** increasing the time that I spend at the company. I'll have over a third of my time available to meet with product groups. It'll be fun to define this next **round** of products, working together."

In the near-term, we probably won't see many big changes from Microsoft. But as Mashable suggests, this could actually **play into their hands**:

2014 will be a **rebuilding** year for Microsoft on the consumer side. Expect steady, **incremental gains** and improving products rather than a **great leap forward**. The fact that Apple seems **content** with perfecting products rather than introducing **bold** new ones will help Microsoft **get its act together**. It's not the most exciting outlook for consumers, but it's the ideal environment for a slow and steady Microsoft **comeback**.

With changes this big, **Redmond** is surely looking for 2014 to be a key year as Nadella **encourages** his team to "believe in the impossible and remove the improbable". In an email to all employees on his first day as CEO, he wrote:

Many companies **aspire** to change the world. But very few have all the **elements** required: **talent, resources**, and **perseverance**. Microsoft has proven that it has all three in **abundance**.

Vocabulary

On top of: In addition to, as well as; "On top of next week's board meeting, we have a training session for all of the managers."

Lineup (Line): A list of products or services; "The new lineup of iPhones gives customers more options than in the past."

To tweak: To make a small adjustment to something; "The managers have tweaked the overtime pay policy, and now all of the staff are satisfied."

To search/look high and low: To try very hard to find something.

Viable: Possible, appropriate, feasible; "It kills me to say it, but the only viable solution is for us to cut 100 positions."

Annus horribilis: Latin – Horrible year.

Ambitious: Intended to satisfy high aspirations and therefore difficult to achieve; "The scope of the construction project is very ambitious."

To gain traction: To gain momentum or acceptance. "Their new office furniture is really gaining traction in the marketplace."

Foray: An attempt to become involved in a new activity or sphere, venture; "It was my first foray into app development."

Non-starter: A person, plan, or idea that has no chance of succeeding or being effective; "Their whole business model is a non-starter; I'm not sure what they are thinking."

To struggle: To have or face difficulties; "I struggle to see the point behind their advertisement; it seems like a waste of money to me."

Discontent: Dissatisfaction, unhappiness; "The discontent among all the staff was seriously affecting their production."

To prompt: To cause or bring about an action or feeling; "News of a merger prompted many investors to sell their stocks."

To oversee: To supervise (a person or work), especially in an official capacity; "Who is overseeing this project?"

Back-end technology: A computer program (such as server software) that remains in the background, or resides on a server located in a back room

To have one's work cut out for them: To have a lot of (difficult) work to do.

To name: To choose or select someone to be something, appoint; "He was named employee of the year by his colleagues."

To face a challenge: To confront a difficult task; "The new government faces the daunting challenge of completing the building on time."

Thanks to: Because of, due to; "Thanks to his experience in the service industry, our customer satisfaction surveys have been fantastic."

Acquisition: An act of purchase of one company by another; "The acquisition of Instagram by Facebook valued \$1 billion."

To be a question of: A difficulty or uncertainty; doubtful point; "We want to go ahead with the merger, it's just a question of money and logistics."

(First) order of business: Expression used in meetings/presentations regarding to an item on the agenda.

To implement: To put into place a process or policy; "Due to high costs, the program was never fully implemented."

To push ahead with: To proceed with or continue a course of action or policy; "He promised to push ahead with economic reform."

Backing: Support, approval, or endorsement; "Our entire company has the financial backing of our corporate headquarters."

Hard-core: Extreme, significant, or intense; "She's a hard-core analyst, and the staff really respect her because of it."

Business vision: The ability to clearly see the direction a business should go in order to be successful.

To bring people together: To cause and encourage teamwork and collaboration; "Company retreats are a good way to bring people together for team building activities."

Next chapter: A new period or phase of activity.

To step up one's game: To improve, to increase one's ability, or to do better.

The likes of: a similar kind, someone or something similar to; "The Blackberry Playbook failed because it was competing with the likes of the iPad and dozens of Android tablets."

Product offering: Different items (products), which are available (on offer).

Hit and miss: Mixed results of success and failures; "Their products are great, but the customer service is really hit and miss. You never know what's going to happen."

Hipster: A person who is unusually aware of and interested in new and unconventional things.

To struggle to compete: Have difficulty competing with; "Given the financial situation of our business, it's a struggle to compete with the bigger companies."

To be late on the rise: To increase your activity, production, or participation after the competition has already done so.

To be indebted: To be obligated, grateful, or appreciative; "I'm indebted to my former boss for giving me the opportunity to learn how to manage a team."

Aforementioned: Previously mentioned.

To take the helm: To take control, to take over, or to take the reins.

Cloud computing: The use of computer programs and storage that are on the Internet; "Cloud computing lets consumers, businesses and other organizations access computing resources from remote servers via the Internet."

To renew: To restart or recommence; "We've renewed our language training program with one of the top companies in the country."

Race: Competition, contest, or rivalry; "The Space Race was a 20th-century (1955–1972) competition between the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States for supremacy in spaceflight capability."

Enormous: Extremely significant or difficult; "It's an enormous responsibility to run such a large company. I hope to be able to do it one day."

Behemoth: something enormous, esp. a big and powerful organization; "Shoppers are now more loyal to their local stores than to faceless behemoths like Wal-Mart."

Major pain: A big problem or difficulty; "Working on these spreadsheets for the last 8 hours has been a major pain!"

To stay on: To continue or not leave; "Jules now says he plans to stay on as President and CEO of the business until the end of this year."

Wingman: Supporter or helper; "Dean is the best wingman a guy could ask for in these types of presentations; he has a solution for any problem you could face."

Philanthropic: Seeking to promote the welfare of others, esp. by donating money to good causes; "The animal shelter receives financial support from philanthropic bodies, as well as the government."

To put something on pause: To temporarily stop.

Hands-on: involving or requiring active participation rather than theory; "My internship with Google gave me a lot of hands-on experience with sales and marketing."

To step up: To take on, assume, or accept more responsibility; "My boss told me how important this project is, so I really need to step up and do everything perfectly."

Substantially: Considerably, significantly, or noticeably; "His management style is substantially different than our previous boss."

Round: A series of similar actions, events, or things; "We hope to get a higher company valuation during our next round of investment."

To play into one's hands: To do something that gives someone else an advantage over you, although this was not your intention; "If we allow our competition to affect our decisions then we're just playing into their hands."

Rebuilding: To build again.

Incremental gains: Small and slow improvement; "European countries saw incremental gains in their GDP through 2013."

Great leap forward: Significant improvement or increase.

Content: Satisfied or happy; "I will never be content in one role for the rest of my career. I always want to learn, grow, and improve."

Bold: Showing an ability to take risks, being confident and courageous. "His new business plan was a bold attempt to solve the crisis we've faced for the last 3 years."

To get one's act together: To become better organized; "The very fact management keeps talking about how they have to get their act together is a bad sign."

Comeback: A return to one's former success; "I wouldn't call it a comeback, James has been a strong performer for many years."

Redmond: The Windows headquarters or primary offices.

To encourage: To inspire or stimulate someone to do something, or to give them the courage to do something; "He encouraged himself to study hard so he could make it into Harvard Business School."

To aspire: To aim, hope, or want to do something; "I'm aspiring to learn Chinese for my job, but it's a lot more difficult than I imagined."

Element: Feature, characteristic, or attribute; "This plan has all of the elements of success."

Talent: A special skill or ability that allows someone to do something well; "Bob has a talent for data analysis that's as good as anyone in the province."

Resource: A supply of something (such as money) that someone has and can use when it is needed; "The great thing about our company is the amount of resources, both money and people, available for every project."

Perseverance: Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition; "Perseverance is required to perfect just about any skill."

Abundance: Excess or extra; "Stephen has an abundance of knowledge in this sector. I think he's the perfect candidate for project manager."

Language Review

A. Collocations

Match the words in each column to make collocations from today's lesson. (Look for collocations specific to this lesson, as more than one answer is possible for some.)

1. Product	a. Business	
2. Next	b. Traction	
3. Incremental	c. Up	
4. Hit and	d. Offering	
5. Business	e. Gain	
6. Struggle to	f. Low	
7. Gain	g. Vision	
8. High and	h. Miss	
9. Step	f. Compete	
10. First order of	g. Chapter	

B. Review Quiz

1. Which of the following is closest in meaning to "a boss/manager who allows his staff to work independently"?
 - a. Hands-on
 - b. Hands-off
 - c. Hard-core
 - d. Wingman
2. My co-workers gave me a lot of _____ when I applied for the management position.
 - a. Encouraging
 - b. Encouragements
 - c. Encouragement
 - d. Encouragingly
3. Renée is more than just a _____ engineer; she's also an _____ musician.
 - a. Talent/aspire
 - b. Talents/aspires
 - c. Talenting/aspiration
 - d. Talented/aspiring

4. Which of the following terms would describe a sales decrease of 0.2% for 3 consecutive quarters?
- Incremental loss
 - Substantial loss
 - Incremental gain
 - Substantial gain
5. Which of the following terms best refers to the last item on a meeting agenda?
- Next order of business
 - Final order of business
 - First order of business
 - Previous order of business
6. All of the cuts at our firm are _____ the staff to looking for other positions.
- Renewing
 - Struggling
 - Prompting
 - Nameing
7. Since the system crashed last week, everyone has had a difficult time staying _____ of their emails.
- On top of
 - Bold
 - Round
 - Back
8. Since he was appointment Team Leader, Stefano has been _____ collection activities for the entire bank.
- Oversee
 - Oversaw
 - Overseen
 - Overseeing
9. The _____ we're _____ is one of declining sales and rising costs.
- Challenge/Faced
 - Challenge/Facing
 - Challenging/Facing
 - Challenging/Faced
10. This isn't just a matter of _____ the system, it needs to be completely _____!
- Tweaking/Rebuilt
 - Tweaked/Rebuilding
 - Tweaks/Rebuilds
 - Tweaking/Rebuilding

Answers

A. Collocations

1. Product	a. Business	Product Offering
2. Next	b. Traction	Next Chapter
3. Incremental	c. Up	Incremental Gain
4. Hit and	d. Offering	Hit and Miss
5. Business	e. Gain	Business Vision
6. Struggle to	f. Low	Struggle to Compete
7. Gain	g. Vision	Gain Traction
8. High and	h. Miss	High and Low
9. Step	f. Compete	Step Up
10. First order of	g. Chapter	First order of Business

B. Review Quiz

1. B, 2. C, 3. D, 4. A, 5. B, 6. C, 7. A, 8. D, 9. B, 10. A

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice**:

Launch Quiz