



ESL Podcast 628 – Introducing a New Product

GLOSSARY

to give (someone) the heads up – to let someone know what will happen ahead of time; to give someone information before most other people have it; to let someone know something early

* The CFO gave us the heads up that there might be pay cuts next quarter.

to roll out – for a company to introduce and begin selling a new product or service

* Our restaurant is rolling out a new menu for the summer.

state-of-the-art – very modern and advanced, using the newest and best technology

* The hospital has a state-of-the-art cancer center.

never-before-seen – new, never existing before; unlike anything else available now or in the past

* This special anniversary DVD includes never-before-seen scenes that were edited out of the movie.

in development – being worked on but not yet finished

* The new medication has been in development for years, but so far no pharmaceutical companies have received approval to market it.

to keep (something) under wraps – to keep something a secret; to not share information about something

* The politicians are trying to keep the story under wraps, but I doubt they can do it for very long.

to leak – to share secret information with the media or with the public when one knows that one is not supposed to do so

* The government will punish anyone who leaks national secrets to other countries.

rumor – something that may or may not be true, but that is said to many people and becomes well-known

* We heard a rumor that you won't be teaching here next year. Is that true?

to put a clamp on (something) – to stop something from happening, usually by using significant force, strength, or power

* How can we put a clamp on this lawsuit?



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to come out – to be released; to be introduced; to be made available to the public

* When does the company expect to come out with a new version of its software program?

to get a jump on (someone) – to do something before someone else can do it; to do something faster or sooner than another person can do it

* Geremie got a jump on his classmates by taking courses during the summer break, and now he'll be able to graduate earlier than the rest of his class.

to steal (someone's) thunder – to receive praise or approval that normally would have been for someone else; to do something that takes attention away from what another person has done

* I can't believe your sister stole your thunder by announcing that she was pregnant on the day of your wedding. She should have waited, so that everyone's attention could be on you that day!

to scramble – to do something very quickly; to use all of one's available resources to get something done sooner than one would normally be able to

* It will be difficult to finish the report by Thursday, but if we scramble, I think we can do it.

ahead of schedule – before something is due; before the deadline

* If the company finishes building the bridge ahead of schedule, it will receive a bonus payment.

to make a splash – to do something that attracts a lot of attention and is noticed by many people

* The young designer really made a splash with his unusual clothing at the fashion show.

hype – buzz; things that are said about a product to make people more interested in it and want to buy it, often before it is available

* Do you believe all the hype about how this fruit can help you lose weight?

justified – with a logical, acceptable reason or explanation; something that can be explained rationally and made to seem fair or right

* If someone is starving, can stealing food be justified?



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to beg – to plead; to ask someone to do or give something in an urgent way
* The drunk man at the bar begged for Katherine’s phone number, but she wouldn’t give it to him.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What can a company do to keep something under wraps?
 - a) Give the heads up.
 - b) Leak the information.
 - c) Put a clamp on rumors.
2. What does Augie mean by saying that they “had to scramble to get the phones ready ahead of schedule”?
 - a) They had to go over their budget.
 - b) They had to decrease the product’s quality.
 - c) They had to work really hard.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to roll out

The phrase “to roll out,” in this podcast, means for a company to introduce and begin selling a new product or service: “When did you roll out the new website?” The phrase “to roll out of bed” means to get out of bed and stand up: “Clarke’s alarm clock went off at 6:45, but he didn’t roll out of bed until almost 7:20.” The phrase “to roll out the red carpet” means to prepare for an important visitor or guest, making everything as nice as possible: “Shane really rolled out the red carpet when his boss and her husband came to his house for dinner.” Finally, the phrase “to roll (something) out” means to make something flat and thin by pushing something else down against it and rolling it in different directions: “To make pizza, first you need to roll out the dough and then put it on a pan.”

to scramble

In this podcast, the verb “to scramble” means to do something very quickly, or to use all of one’s available resources to get something done sooner than one would normally be able to: “Ira scrambled to clean the house before his wife came home from work.” When cooking, the verb “to scramble” means to cook eggs by stirring them constantly in a hot pan: “Do you add milk or water when you scramble eggs?” The verb “to scramble” also means to move quickly over an uneven surface: “The hikers scrambled over the rocky terrain.” Finally, the



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informal phrase “to scramble (someone’s) brains” means to make it difficult for someone to think clearly: “That young woman has scrambled your brains! Ever since you started dating her, you’ve been unable to concentrate on your work.”

CULTURE NOTE

Companies often want to “test” (see how well something works) their new products before they “release” (make available) them to the “general public” (all people; ordinary people). That way, they can identify and correct problems less expensively and with little or no impact on their “brand image” (the opinions that people have about a company or product). This is especially true for technology companies.

Many technology companies offer “beta versions” of their products. A beta version is software that isn’t completely finished or tested, but people agree to use it anyway, reporting any “bugs” (errors in a computer program) to the manufacturer so that they can be fixed. Eventually the beta version is “modified” (changed) and improved until it can be sold to the general public.

Other companies offer their products by invitation so that they can “limit” (put restrictions on) who has access to it. Gmail is a good example of this. When Google “launched” (started; introduced) its email program, it was done by invitation. Only people who received invitations could open a Gmail account. In this way, Google could “monitor” (observe) how a small number of people were using Gmail and make changes as needed before there were too many accounts.

Finally, some companies offer their software as “freeware” (software programs that can be used without paying a fee). Companies allow people to use and try their software, and at the same time, the company continues making improvements. When the company feels it has enough people interested in the software and/or has a version that it believes people will buy, the company may then make the final version available for sale.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – c



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 628: Introducing a New Product.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 628. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English – and your looks – even faster.

This episode is called “Introducing a New Product.” It’s a dialogue between Augie and Lillian. Let’s get started.

[start of dialogue]

Augie: Today’s the day. I’m giving you the heads up. Our company is rolling out its new line of cell phones.

Lillian: I can see you’re excited about it. What’s so special about the new products?

Augie: This line of phones has state-of-the-art technology and never-before-seen features. It’s been in development for over a year and it’s been really hard keeping it under wraps.

Lillian: I thought information was leaked weeks ago.

Augie: Those were just rumors, and the company put a clamp on those pretty quickly.

Lillian: Wasn’t the new line supposed to come out next month?

Augie: That was the original plan, but since McQ Corp. is coming out with its own line of phones soon, we wanted to get a jump on them.

Lillian: And steal their thunder.



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Augie: Yes, and steal their thunder. We had to scramble to get the phones ready ahead of schedule, but I think it was worth it. They're really going to make a splash.

Lillian: I hope so. I hope all of this hype has been justified.

Augie: Oh, it will be. I'll know soon enough.

Lillian: How?

Augie: You'll be begging me to get you one.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Augie saying, "Today's the day. I'm giving you the heads up. Our company is rolling out its new line of cell phones." To give (someone) the heads up" means to let someone know something is going to happen in the future, to give someone information before other people may have it; you're letting them know early about something. "My friend in the accounting department gave me a heads up about how the company was doing this year." He gave me some information before other people got it. In this case, Augie is giving Lillian the heads up about the fact that their company is rolling out its new line of cell phones. "To roll (roll) out" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning when a company introduces and begins selling a new product or service. We use this verb, "to roll out," meaning to launch, to begin a new product, start selling something different. "Line" here, as in "new line of cell phones," just means a new group or a new set of cell phones. "Roll" has several meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Lillian says, "I can see you're excited about it. What's so special about the new products?" Augie says, "This line of phones has state-of-the-art technology and never-before-seen features." "State-of-the-art," with hyphens in between each word, means very modern, very advanced, the newest and the best technology – state-of-the-art technology. We use state-of-the-art typically to talk about machines or computers, something mechanical. "Never-before-seen," also with hyphens in between the words – never-before-seen – means that no one has ever seen or experienced something like this; it's completely new, it never existed before in the past.

Augie thinks their cell phones have never-before-seen features. He says, "It's been in development for over a year (for more than a year) and it's been really



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hard keeping it under wraps.” When something is “in development” we mean that it is being worked on by a company but it isn’t finished yet. We use this expression a lot here in Los Angeles in talking about movies and films, and when I say “we,” I mean people who work in films and movies – not me. When they say “in development,” they’re referring to something that is not yet produced, often not even yet filmed, but something that they are working on. In fact, there’s even an expression “a development deal” (deal), or a development agreement. When one of the big media companies decides to do something about a particular series or idea, they make an agreement with a person and they develop the idea – they work on it.

Augie says that it’s been really hard to keep this new cell phone under wraps. “To keep (something) under wraps” (wraps) means to keep something secret, not to share information about it to other people. Lillian says, “I thought information was leaked weeks ago.” The verb “to leak” (leak) in this case means to share secret information with the newspaper or with the general public or on the Internet about your company or about your organization. Typically, it’s secret information that you are not supposed to tell anyone else. There are leaks all the time of information from the government. Somebody tells the media – tells the newspapers about some secret, that’s called a leak.

Augie says, “Those were just rumors.” A “rumor” is something that is unofficial, and may or may not be true but many people are talking about it. There are rumors that Brad Pitt is considering making a movie about my life. Actually, I’m starting that rumor. If you could tell other people, then we would have a rumor; people would be talking about it. It’s not necessarily true, however. I’ll let you guess whether it is true or not! Augie says, “the company put a clamp on those pretty quickly.” “To put a clamp (clamp) on (something)” means to stop something from happening or to stop it from continuing to happen, typically by doing something drastic – that is, with a lot of force, power, or strength. Well, the company put a clamp on those rumors pretty, or very, quickly.

Lillian says, “Wasn’t the new line supposed to come out next month?” The phrasal verb “to come out,” in this case only, means to be released, to be introduced to something, to be made available to the public. So a company that has a new thing it is selling will say the new phone, for example, is coming out in July, meaning that’s when you can buy it – in July.

Augie says, “That was the original plan, but since McQ Corp. is coming out with its own line of phones soon, we wanted to get a jump on them.” “To get a jump on (someone)” means to do something before someone else does it before you,



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to do something faster or sooner than another person, often when you are competing with that other person. You may decide to get a jump on your schooling by taking classes in the summer, when everyone else will start in the fall. You're doing it before everyone else. Lillian says, "And steal their thunder." So, Augie is saying that their company is releasing their phone now, before the McQ Corp. releases their new phone. The reason, Lillian says, is to steal their thunder. "Thunder" is normally the sound that is made when there is a big storm and there is what is called lightning, which are very powerful electrical charges that appear sometimes in a big storm. In this case, however, "to steal (someone's) thunder" means to take attention away from someone else, or to get the praise of other people before the other person can. It's normally something you don't want to do, unless you don't want to be nice to someone. In this case, the company wants to make sure that its new product gets publicity before McQ Corp.'s new phone.

Augie says, "Yes, and steal their thunder. We had to scramble to get the phones ready ahead of schedule, but I think it was worth it." "To scramble" here means to do something very quickly, to do it faster than you would normally do it. "Scramble," however, has a couple of different meanings in English, and those are in the Learning Guide. They were scrambling to get the phones ready "ahead of schedule," meaning before the deadline, before the day that it was supposed to be done. If your schedule says you're finishing the product or the project next Tuesday, and you decide you want to finish it on this Friday, you are finishing it ahead of schedule, before the original plan.

Augie says the new phones are really going to make a splash (splash). "To make a splash" means to do something that attracts a lot of attention, that many people look at or notice. Lillian says, "I hope so. I hope all of this hype has been justified." "Hype" (hype) is things that are said about a product that make people more interested in wanting to buy it, often before it is even available. You could talk about the hype over a new movie: people are talking about it; people are saying how good it is. Hype is always a positive thing – at least positive things being said about this new thing that is not yet available. However, it's also sometimes used to mean that people are exaggerating – are saying things that are better about it than it really is.

Lillian says she hopes the hype has been justified, meaning something that you can support, something for which there's evidence, something that shows that it really is what it says it is. Augie says, "Oh, it will be. I'll know soon enough," meaning very quickly, soon. Lillian says, "How?" Augie says, "You'll be begging



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me to get one.” “To beg” (beg) means to plead, to ask someone to do something in a very urgent way. “Please help me.” You’re begging for help.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The hype around our scriptwriter is definitely justified. That's because it's Dr. Lucy Tse, who has never-before-seen – or heard – dialogues for you each week.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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