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Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

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4 March, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The stores Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com separated yesterday after a court decided Toysrus.com could become an independent online store. The two companies had been in a court battle since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was fighting an August 2000 agreement that gave Amazon sole rights to sell its toys and baby goods over the Internet. The court's decision cuts the link between the two companies. Toys 'R' Us senior vice-president said: "We...expect to provide seamless online access for our customers....[We] will enhance customer service by creating a more unified web and retail shopping experience."

Amazon executives are unhappy with the decision. The company thinks Toys 'R' Us is the one in the wrong. An Amazon spokesperson said that Toys 'R' Us failed to keep its part of the agreement by not stocking enough top-selling items. The court ruling will affect Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the process of reviewing various options...it's still too early to predict what the ultimate outcome [will] be." It is the second time in a year for Amazon to lose a trading partner after the clothing retailer Gap left in 2005.

WARM-UPS

1. ONLINE SHOPPING: In pairs / groups, talk about online shopping. When did you first do it? What do you think of it? Write down three things you would never, buy online and three things you would buy online. Share them with other students.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Stores / Toys 'R' Us / Amazon.com / court battles / toys / baby goods / customers / shopping / agreements / top-selling items / profits / partners / clothing retailers

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. PARTNERSHIPS: Tell each what you think of these partnerships. Think of three reasons why the partnerships might be successful and three reasons why they might fail.

- Amazon.com / Toys 'R' Us
- British Airways / BMW
- Microsoft / Apple iTunes
- McDonald's / KFC
- Chanel / Nike
- BBC / CNN
- Coca Cola / Heineken
- Citibank / Hilton Hotels
- Marlboro / Cartier
- Other

4. QUICK DEBATE: Students A believe online stores are much better than bricks 'n' mortar stores. Students B think real stores that you can walk around are best. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

5. SUCCESSFUL LINKS: With your partner(s), decide which of the following are important in making sure a business agreement is successful:

- Similar markets
- Similar customers
- Both partners have websites
- Unique product
- Flexible CEOs
- Strong legal teams
- Similar power in their markets
- Workforce share the same language
- Companies from the same continent
- Both companies well-established

6. AGREEMENTS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "agreements". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Two famous online companies have got back together again. | T / F |
| b. Amazon.com had sole rights to sell Toys 'R' Us products online. | T / F |
| c. A new company called Toysrus.com will start. | T / F |
| d. Toys 'R' Us now plans to build many more stores. | T / F |
| e. Amazon.com bosses are very happy with the present situation. | T / F |
| f. Amazon.com is in the process of reviewing various options. | T / F |
| g. Amazon was angry at Toys 'R' Us stocking too many top-selling items. | T / F |
| h. The clothing retailer Gap cut its links with Amazon in 2005. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| a. stores | smooth |
| b. separated | departed |
| c. sole | stick to |
| d. seamless | goods |
| e. enhance | parted |
| f. decision | guess |
| g. keep | improve |
| h. items | retailers |
| i. predict | exclusive |
| j. left | ruling |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. The stores Toys 'R' Us and | to predict |
| b. The two companies had been in | for our customers |
| c. gave Amazon sole rights | the decision |
| d. provide seamless online access | a court battle since May 2004 |
| e. creating a more unified web and | part of the agreement |
| f. Amazon executives are unhappy with | to sell its toys |
| g. Toys 'R' Us is the one | Amazon to lose a trading partner |
| h. Toys 'R' Us failed to keep its | in the wrong |
| i. it's still too early | retail shopping experience |
| j. the second time in a year for | Amazon.com separated yesterday |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The stores Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com _____ yesterday after a court _____ Toysrus.com could become an independent online store. The two companies had been in a court _____ since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was fighting an August 2000 agreement that gave Amazon sole _____ to sell its toys and baby goods over the Internet. The court's decision _____ the link between the two companies. Toys 'R' Us senior vice-president said: "We..._____ to provide seamless online access for our customers....[We] will _____ customer service by creating a more unified web and retail shopping _____."

Amazon executives are _____ with the decision. The company thinks Toys 'R' Us is the one in the _____. An Amazon spokesperson said that Toys 'R' Us _____ to keep its part of the agreement by not stocking enough top-selling items. The court _____ will affect Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the _____ of reviewing various options...it's still too early to _____ what the ultimate _____ [will] be." It is the second time in a year for Amazon to lose a trading _____ after the clothing retailer Gap left in 2005.

cuts
decided
experience
separated
rights
enhance
battle
expect

predict
ruling
wrong
partner
failed
outcome
unhappy
process

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The stores Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com _____ yesterday after a court decided Toysrus.com could become an independent online store. The two companies had been in a court _____ since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was fighting an August 2000 agreement that gave Amazon _____ rights to sell its toys and baby goods over the Internet. The court's decision cuts the _____ between the two companies. Toys 'R' Us senior vice-president said: "We...expect to provide _____ online access for our customers....[We] will enhance customer service by creating a more _____ web and retail shopping experience."

Amazon executives are unhappy with the _____. The company thinks Toys 'R' Us is the one in the _____. An Amazon spokesperson said that Toys 'R' Us failed to keep its part of the agreement by not _____ enough top-selling items. The court _____ will affect Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the _____ of reviewing various options...it's still too early to predict what the ultimate outcome [will] be." It is the second time in a year for Amazon to lose a trading partner after the clothing _____ Gap left in 2005.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'court' and 'rule'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "TOYS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about toys and online shopping.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| • yesterday | • decision |
| • battle | • wrong |
| • sole | • items |
| • cuts | • stock |
| • seamless | • options |
| • experience | • Gap |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com?
- c. Are you surprised Toys 'R' Us gave Amazon sole rights to sell its toys online?
- d. Is Amazon the world's greatest bookstore?
- e. Are there better toy stores than Toys 'R' Us around?
- f. What do you think of the names and logos of the two retailers?
- g. How much damage do you think the court decision will do to Amazon.com?
- h. What difficulties do "bricks 'n' clicks" stores have that "bricks 'n' mortar" stores do not?
- i. What do you think "seamless online access" is?
- j. Do you think the court has treated Amazon badly?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think Amazon.com is a good or bad company to be in business with?
- d. Why do you think Amazon.com has been number one for so long?
- e. What do you think the outcome of Amazon's reviewing will be?
- f. Besides falls in stock prices, how else do you think Amazon.com might suffer from losing its trading partners?
- g. Do you prefer bricks 'n' mortar stores or online stores?
- h. Would you rather work for Amazon or Toys 'R' Us?
- i. When was the last time you were unhappy with a situation?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about the history of Amazon.com and Toys 'R' Us. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. BRICKS OR CLICKS? Make a poster about the advantages and disadvantages of bricks 'n' mortar stores and online stores. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. What were the most interesting points you read about on other students' posters?

4. LETTER: You are the CEO of Amazon.com. Write a letter to the court judge who allowed Toys 'R' Us to leave your agreement. State your feelings on the decision and what you think should be done about it. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar feelings?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| a. stores | retailers |
| b. separated | parted |
| c. sole | exclusive |
| d. seamless | smooth |
| e. enhance | improve |
| f. decision | ruling |
| g. keep | stick to |
| h. items | goods |
| i. predict | guess |
| j. left | departed |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. The stores Toys 'R' Us and | Amazon.com separated yesterday |
| b. The two companies had been in | a court battle since May 2004 |
| c. gave Amazon sole rights | to sell its toys |
| d. provide seamless online access | for our customers |
| e. creating a more unified web and | retail shopping experience |
| f. Amazon executives are unhappy with | the decision |
| g. Toys 'R' Us is the one | in the wrong |
| h. Toys 'R' Us failed to keep its | part of the agreement |
| i. it's still too early | to predict |
| j. the second time in a year for | Amazon to lose a trading partner |

GAP FILL:

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The stores Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com **separated** yesterday after a court **decided** Toysrus.com could become an independent online store. The two companies had been in a court **battle** since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was fighting an August 2000 agreement that gave Amazon sole **rights** to sell its toys and baby goods over the Internet. The court's decision **cuts** the link between the two companies. Toys 'R' Us senior vice-president said: "We...**expect** to provide seamless online access for our customers....[We] will **enhance** customer service by creating a more unified web and retail shopping **experience**."

Amazon executives are **unhappy** with the decision. The company thinks Toys 'R' Us is the one in the **wrong**. An Amazon spokesperson said that Toys 'R' Us **failed** to keep its part of the agreement by not stocking enough top-selling items. The court **ruling** will affect Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the **process** of reviewing various options...it's still too early to **predict** what the ultimate **outcome** [will] be." It is the second time in a year for Amazon to lose a trading **partner** after the clothing retailer Gap left in 2005.