

Skill Builders: Listening – Bad Companies

Upper-Intermediate

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: You will listen to an article about bad policies in some companies. The article is about 4.5 minutes long. Listen only, and don't worry about understanding everything.

Step 2: Look at the questions. Read and understand them, then listen again. As you are listening, try to answer the questions in your head. Don't write the answers yet. Next, listen again and write the answers this time. Compare your answers with a partner.

Step 3: Read the article. Check in your dictionary any unknown words. Now listen again. Can you understand more?

Step 4: Listen! Listen! Listen! Listen to the article on the train or in your free time. Each time you listen, you will slowly improve!

QUESTIONS

Answer the questions to check your comprehension. If you don't know an answer, don't worry. Skip it, then try to answer it when after you listen again.

1. How do companies become more robust and versatile?
2. What happens to the workforce when companies miss opportunities to create good staff?
3. What happens to the companies when they don't create good staff?
4. According to the article, what are some reasons that individual bosses are bad?
5. What does the article say about decision making and input from the employees?
6. What happens when management treats employees like children?
7. What happens when management creates too many rules and policies?
8. What does the article say about pay, overtime, and other benefits?
9. What does the article say about providing discipline and meetings? When is this bad?
10. What does the article suggest if you answered "yes" to many of the questions?

the ARTICLE

Not just average businesses, but even the best ones too, make blunders when dealing with people. Many organizations make sincere attempts to better orient their policies and structures to their employees, thereby developing more robust and versatile companies which are able to weather problems foreseen and unforeseen in the future. Yet too many companies miss or mess up opportunities to create effective, positive, proactive staff. The result is a disaffected and negative workforce. Every department of the company is rife with people who do the minimum required for the job, fail to give qualitative thought to problems, and seem much happier collecting a paycheck than making a contribution. Momentum is sapped. The company stagnates. It looks inwards and backwards rather than to the future.

A lot can be attributed to bad supervisors. Some bosses simply lack the talent or the experience to produce success. Others fail to offer effective guidance in what amounts to a miserable attempt at a hands-off approach. Unfortunately, they also fail to provide guidelines, an outline of needs, or other information required for success. And bosses of the worst caliber purposely sabotage the efforts of their personnel.

Yet at far too many companies, it's not just an individual at the root of the problem. Management as a whole may adhere to policies that ruin their greatest asset, which is their staff. Does your company follow any of these nightmarish policies? Does your company:

- add another level of supervision to observe, cajole, and report on people who aren't meeting expectations, as if this were an effective means to get people to do their jobs?
- ask for ideas and other contributions, yet don't implement the suggestions? Then does management fail to follow up and let staff know whether the idea was considered at all?
- first make a decision, then ask underlings for input? Any input of course will be ignored.
- treat people like children, viewing all staff as untrustworthy because of a few mistakes or a handful of incompetent individuals? What follows are regulations, reports, training, and the general expectations that the staff will fail. Even worse, those that vocally disagree with the poor treatment are labeled as troublemakers and shuffled out the door.
- create policies and rules which box in employees? In so doing, management eliminates any opportunity for employee creativity, development, or recognition of individual needs and talents.
- fail to provide a clear message that addresses such anxieties over pay, benefits, overtime hours, staff changes, and so on?
- recognize problem employees and provide discipline, meetings, and feedback, yet wholly ignore effective employees? In fact, management doesn't even bother to provide praise and positive feedback to these effective employees.

If you answered "yes" to a majority of these questions, it may very well be time to dust off your resume and find better career prospects.



Skill Builders: Listening – Bad Companies

Upper-Intermediate

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (optional)

1. Which paragraph was the easiest to listen to? Which paragraph was the most difficult? Look at the vocabulary and sentence structure, then think why one paragraph was easy and another difficult.

2. Listen and write the sentences:

Not just average businesses, but... (paragraph 1)

Some bosses simply... (paragraph 2)

Management as a whole may... (paragraph 3)

3. How's your company? How about companies you've worked for in the past? Discuss whether your company now (or past places of employment) enact nightmarish policies.

ANSWERS

QUESTIONS
1. They make sincere attempts to better orient their policies and structures to their employees.
2. The result is a disaffected and negative workforce. Every department of the company is rife with people who do the minimum required for the job, fail to give qualitative thought to problems, and seem much happier collecting a paycheck than making a contribution.
3. Momentum is sapped and the company stagnates. It looks inwards and backwards, not to the future.
4. Some bosses simply lack the talent or the experience to produce success. Others fail to offer effective guidance in what amounts to a miserable attempt at a hands-off approach. And bosses of the worst caliber purposely sabotage the efforts of their personnel.
5. Companies first make a decision, then ask underlings for input. Any input will of course be ignored.
6. Companies create regulations, reports, training, and the general expectations that the staff will fail. Employees who vocally disagree with the poor treatment are labeled as troublemakers and shuffled out the door.
7. Management eliminates chances for employee creativity, development, or recognition of individual needs and talents.
8. Some companies fail to provide a clear message that addresses such anxieties over pay, benefits, overtime hours, staff changes, and so on
9. Companies recognize problem employees and provide discipline, meetings, and feedback, yet wholly ignore effective employees. In fact, management doesn't even bother to provide praise and positive feedback to these effective employees.
10. It may very well be time to dust off your resume and find better career prospects.
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - Listen and write the sentences.
...even the best ones too, make blunders when dealing with people.
...lack the talent or the experience to produce success.
...adhere to policies that ruin their greatest asset, which is their staff.