

Workplace dilemma by Mandeep Locham

Age: Adults

Level: Intermediate

Objective: To practise using the imperative, phrasal verbs commonly used in business and question formation

Key skills: Reading, writing, speaking

Materials: One copy of each worksheet for each student; one pair of HR manager/Mike role cards cut out for each pair of students

Procedure

1. Put the students in pairs and ask them to discuss a problem that they have faced, or that a colleague has faced, in the workplace and how the situation was resolved. Encourage some pairs to share their discussion with the class.
2. Give out Worksheet 1 and ask the students to read the letter, which was sent to a business website. Ask the students to brainstorm advice to give Mike in their pairs. Ask each pair for their suggestions and write these on the board, making sure any collocations are correct, e.g. *arrange a meeting, make a list*.
3. Ask students, working individually, to write a paragraph of advice responding to the problem. Explain that this should be in the style of the comments section on online forums and not a letter or an email, so it can be informal and in the imperative. Point to the suggestions written on the board and encourage students to expand them. Monitor and correct as appropriate.
4. Give out Worksheet 2 and ask students to read the three responses to the letter. Get the pairs to discuss which suggestions in the texts they agree with. Encourage the pairs to share their opinions on the advice given with the class.
5. Next, get the students to circle all the phrasal verbs they can find in the three responses. Give them a minute or two to do this, then get students to call out the answers and write them on the board. Check understanding of each phrasal verb as a class and explain any that the students don't understand.

Key:

Response 1: set up, put forward, point out

Response 2: taken on, backed up, sort out, run ... through

Response 3: brought ... up, draw up, get on

6. Put the students into different pairs and explain that they are going to role-play a meeting between Mike and the HR manager. Distribute a Mike and HR manager role card to each pair. Give students ten minutes to consider the points written on their own card and prepare questions they need to ask in the role-play. Advise them that they should guess what they will be asked and prepare to use imperatives and phrasal verbs in their responses. Monitor and offer help, where necessary.

7. During the role-play activity, make a list of any incorrect language for use in an error correction session at the end of the class if there is time, or any excellent / creative language that can be highlighted on the board afterwards. Towards the end of the role-play, remove the phrasal verbs from the board.

8. Tell the students to turn over their worksheets and give out Worksheet 3. Ask them if they recognize the sentences (they are taken from the responses to Mike's letter). Then ask them to read the sentences carefully and add the correct prepositions to complete the phrasal verbs.

Key:

1. up; 2. forward; 3. out; 4. on; 5. up; 6. out; 7. through; 8. up; 9. up; 10. on

9. For homework, ask the students to redo the writing activity on Worksheet 1, incorporating any extra advice they thought relevant and using the phrasal verbs from the exercise on Worksheet 3. Hopefully, noticing the improvement between the first piece of writing and the second will be motivating!

Worksheet 1

The following letter was posted on an online business website.

Dear Business Advice Forum

I've been in my current position working as an Assistant Account Manager for an advertising company based in London for just over seven months. I'm originally from Australia and signed a six-month contract at the start of the year. I was asked to stay on after my contract ended but I'm starting to worry as HR have yet to produce a new contract for me to sign. I have phoned them many times but am always given an excuse. Also, two months ago, my direct boss left the company and since then I have been doing many of the tasks she used to do. I am enjoying the challenge and the extra responsibility although I am not being paid any extra. I saw an advertisement for the position in my local paper and was upset and confused that I was not asked first.

What do you think I should do?

Rgds

Mike

1. What do you think Mike should do?
2. Write an answer to respond to the problem.

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Worksheet 2

The following comments were posted under Mike's letter.

Response 1

Set up a meeting with whoever is in charge of recruitment and say that you would like to be put forward for the role. Also explain that you have been doing the job since your colleague left. Point out what you think you bring to the role. You also already know what the job entails, which saves them the time and expense of training someone else. You might also be cheaper than hiring externally.

Response 2

Make a series of notes outlining what you have taken on with clear examples of what you have done well, examples of when you've gone above and beyond your role, etc. This should be factual – 'I am really good at x' is no good; it needs to be backed up with examples. Then sort out a meeting with your line manager and HR rep and run them through this in a friendly way, selling yourself. Then ask if you could be considered for the role – it's your career, go for it!

Response 3

I don't think you should worry too much about your contract. You accepted a temporary contract and are from abroad – perhaps they just haven't brought it up with you because they think you're not interested in a long-term role with them? Draw up your reasons for wanting the job and the duties that you've been doing, and use them to have a conversation with either the HR manager or the Head of Accounts (whichever you get on better with). Make your interest clear. Especially try to think of any problems they might have with your visa status or long-term plans.

Role cards



HR manager

- You want to know what Mike's long-term plans are.
- You want to check his visa situation.
- You want to know if Mike is expecting a pay rise.
- You are concerned that Mike doesn't have enough experience for the role.

Mike

- You want to explain that you are doing well.
- You want to know why you weren't offered the job.
- You want to check that HR know you are doing extra work.
- You are worried that you don't have a contract at the moment.

Worksheet 3

Add prepositions to complete the phrasal verbs.

1. Set _____ a meeting with whoever is in charge of recruitment.
2. Say that you would like to be put _____ for the role.
3. Point _____ what you think you bring to the role.
4. Make a series of notes outlining what you have taken _____.
5. It needs to be backed _____ with examples.
6. Then sort _____ a meeting with your line manager.
7. Run them _____ this in a friendly way, selling yourself.
8. Perhaps they haven't brought it _____ with you because they think you're not interested in a long-term role.
9. Draw _____ your reasons for wanting the job.
10. Have a conversation with either the HR manager or the Head of Accounts (whichever you get _____ better with).