

The best way to say goodbye

Level: Pre-intermediate upwards

Timing: Approx. 90 minutes

Material needed: One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 4/2013. The article is about starting at a company and, more importantly, what bosses should do when someone leaves their company.

The tasks in the worksheets check the students' understanding of the article and the language used and also practice what to say and do when a co-worker confronts them with news of a personal nature.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

Lead-in

These questions are meant to introduce the topic of what happens when we welcome new co-workers and say goodbye to existing ones. They will also encourage the students to discuss why and under what circumstances people might leave a job. Students are asked to remember what happened on their first day at work – if they need any help, ask them whether they were formally introduced or attended an induction day – and to discuss what happens in their place of work when someone leaves or on special occasions, e.g. at Christmas or when someone gets a promotion.

Key words

Put the students in pairs and give them a letter, A or B. Student As should find the key words that match the definitions 1-8 and Student Bs should do the same with definitions 9-16. When they have finished, they should share their answers with each other. Stronger students could discuss what the key words could be before looking for them in the article.

Key:

1. ritual; 2. pep talk; 3. political correctness; 4. snog; 5. neglected; 6. toast; 7. send-off; 8. moving; 9. revenge; 10. cathartic; 11. relief; 12. platitude; 13. retrench; 14. bad atmosphere; 15. policy; 16. funeral

Understanding the article

The students should answer the questions using the information in the article. **Note:** The questions are *not* in the order that the information appears in the article.

Key:

1. because in some workplaces, the head of the company makes a speech about the co-worker who is leaving and gives a public presentation and toast (para 4); 2. because a bad send-off can leave a bad atmosphere in the office (para 8); 3. because of cost-cutting, political correctness and (in the case of large firms) fear of journalists and lawyers (para 3); 4. that companies are increasingly dropping the rituals of working together (para 1), more companies are getting rid of Christmas and summer parties (para 4), the ritual of parting with staff is sadly neglected (para 5); the ritual of saying goodbye is essential to a firm's health (para 8); 5. that a good send-off, like a well-planned funeral, can help the leaver's co-workers deal with their loss (para 9); 6. embarrassment (para 4 and para 5), crying, bitterness (revenge)

Verbs A

This is a simple matching task in which students pair the verbs on the left (1-7) with the correct words and phrases on the right (a-g) to form expressions used when talking about why people leave their jobs. Some of these expressions will be needed in Task 7.

Key:

1. b/c; 2. f; 3. a; 4. g; 5. b/c; 6. e; 7. d

Verbs B

Ask students to practise collocations by writing verbs that naturally and commonly appear before these four ways of talking about informal gatherings.

Key (suggestions):

organize; plan; hold; arrange; have; cancel; postpone; attend; go to

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Situational language

Put students in pairs and ask them to decide how to respond appropriately to each piece of news delivered by a co-worker.

Key (suggestions):

1. *Congratulations.*; 2. *We'll miss you. Lucky you. Do you have any plans?*; 3. *Congratulations. When's the baby due?*; 4. *Congratulations. Good luck in the new position.*; 5. *Oh dear, that's terrible news. I'm sorry to hear that.*

Teaching and learning strategy: Responding appropriately

Giving news is relatively easy; responding appropriately to it, however, is not. Practising what to say when someone tells them some personal news will enable students to feel confident about what to say when news is suddenly sprung on them.

All the news in Task 6, with the exception of point 5, is positive. With the students' agreement you could additionally discuss what to say when they are given some really bad news, e.g. when they are informed that someone has died or is terminally ill. In a multi-cultural class, it would be interesting to find out what is culturally appropriate in the students' countries in each situation.

It might also be useful to talk about what is usually written in cards or emails in response to personal news. Students could carry out their own research into this by reading what is written on e-cards which are widely and freely available on the internet.

Planning a 'leaving do'

Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to complete the instructions in part *a* so that the task feels relevant to them. They should first choose one of the options in italics and then complete each gap. When they have decided what the situation is and how they want to 'celebrate' it, they should complete part *b* and write an email to their other co-workers informing them of the occasion and inviting them to attend / contribute, or whatever is appropriate in the situation.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics, go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: Should you socialize with your co-workers?

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/should-you-socialize-with-your-co-workers/552158.article>

Business Spotlight: End and beginning

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/end-and-beginning/>

You may also find topical and relevant *Guardian* news lessons here on onestopenglish:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/>

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1 Lead-in

Discuss the questions below with a partner.

- What happened on your first day at work in the job you're doing now?
- Why might people leave their job / workplace?
- Are there any occasions when people at your workplace have a party or celebrate together?

2 Key words

Read the definitions and find the words in the article. You will need to change the form of some words to how they appear in the article. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

Student A

- something that you do regularly and always in the same way _____ (para 1)
- a few words in which someone encourages you to do something well or better or to work hard _____ (para 2, two words)
- socially and culturally appropriate language or behaviour _____ (para 3, two words)
- an informal word for a kiss _____ (para 3)
- forgotten about or ignored _____ (para 4)
- to say someone's name when having a drink, in order to express admiration or good wishes to that person _____ (para 4)
- a leaving party or occasion _____ (para 5)
- emotional _____ (para 5)

Student B

- something that you do or say to hurt or punish someone because they have hurt you _____ (para 5)
- allowing you to express strong feelings that have been affecting you so that they do not upset you any longer _____ (para 5)
- a relaxed happy feeling that you get because something bad has not happened or a bad situation has ended _____ (para 6)
- something that has been said so often that it is no longer interesting _____ (para 6)
- dissolve, get rid of or permanently move _____ (para 7)
- the mood or feeling that exists in a place and affects the people who are there _____ (para 8, two words)
- a plan or action agreed on by a group _____ (para 8)
- a ceremony that takes place after someone dies _____ (para 9)

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The best way to say goodbye

by Adrian Furnham

1 All cultures and religions have rites and rituals. They symbolize our journey through life, helping us to understand the importance of the steps we're taking and to manage the powerful emotions linked with them. But while many firms understand the need for a corporate culture, they've increasingly dropped the all-important rituals of working together.

2 Few have ceremonies for new staff, except perhaps when large numbers of people arrive at the same time. They might receive a pep talk from a boss they may never see again and be made to watch a company video. But for most people, the first day involves little more than being taken to their desk and shown where the toilet, photocopier and canteen are.

3 Even the once legendary summer and Christmas parties are fast disappearing from company rituals. Cost-cutting, political correctness and, in the case of large firms, the fear of journalists and lawyers, have meant that these events no longer involve alcohol, the chance for a quick snog with a colleague or even dressing up.

“Rituals symbolize our journey through life, helping us to understand the importance of the steps we take”

4 There is an even more important ritual that is sadly neglected – although it can result in far greater consequences for all concerned. This is the ritual of parting with staff. In some companies, this ritual is very embarrassing. The head of the company or section gives a short speech, a present bought with money collected by colleagues is handed over, everyone is given a glass of cheap champagne and the leaver is toasted by all.

5 Some send-offs are truly moving, with people crying and the person leaving unable to speak. Less often, a leaver may use the event for revenge. This can be cathartic for some, but to others, deeply embarrassing.

6 But what if the leaver was deeply disliked or a disaster for the firm? Can managers and staff hide their relief



Image: Stockbyte

that this person is going? This is certainly more of a challenge to senior managers, although many have a standard set of platitudes for such occasions.

7 And what if the person leaving has been fired or made redundant or, even, a whole section has been retrenched? In some organizations, there would be no send-off at all, and the person's only sign of leaving would be an empty desk.

8 The ritual of saying goodbye is essential to a firm's health. A bad send-off can leave a bad atmosphere in the office. So HR should have policies to deal with all these situations.

9 Just as a well-planned funeral can help all those concerned to deal with their loss, so it is with saying goodbye to a staff member. A good send-off celebrates the qualities of the person leaving and reminds those remaining that those qualities are valuable.

ADRIAN FURNHAM is a psychology professor at University College, London, a management expert and the author of more than 60 books. His latest is *The Engaging Manager: The Joy of Management and Being Managed* (Palgrave Macmillan).

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3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions using the information in the article.

1. Why does the author think leaving a company might be an embarrassing occasion?
2. Why does he think saying goodbye to staff is important?
3. According to the author, why do some companies choose not to hold parties?
4. What does he say about rituals in companies?
5. What comparison does he make between leaving a company and a funeral?
6. What emotions does he mention in the article?

4 Verbs A

Match the verbs in the left-hand column to the correct words and phrases in the right-hand column to form expressions related to leaving a job.

- | | |
|------------|-------------------|
| 1. get | a. a baby |
| 2. be made | b. promoted |
| 3. have | c. fired |
| 4. go on | d. a new job |
| 5. get | e. departments |
| 6. move | f. redundant |
| 7. start | g. paternal leave |

5 Verbs B

Which verbs can you put before the words in the box that all mean 'an informal gathering at work'? Write them on the lines below.

a party
a leaving do
a get-together
a send-off

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6 Useful situational language

Your co-worker tells you some news. What could you reply in each of these situations?

1.

I've been promoted.

2.

I'm retiring at the end of the week.

3.

I'm pregnant.

4.

I'm moving to the sales department next month.

5.

I'm being made redundant.

7 Planning a 'leaving do'

a. Complete the instructions by choosing one of the options in italics or by filling in each gap. Do this in a way that makes the situation relevant to your company.

A popular *male / female* co-worker is leaving work due to *retirement / pregnancy / a new job / moving away*. They are _____ years old and have been working with you for _____ years. You have been given the task of organizing a _____ for them. You have a budget of _____.

b. Plan how you want to 'send-off' this co-worker and write an email informing your other co-workers of the 'leaving do'.

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Vocabulary record: The best way to say goodbye

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
collected			
	ritual		
		moving	
			correctly

Vocabulary record