

Teacher's notes: Level 1 (Intermediate)

Worksheet A

A. Pre-reading

The text touches on the points covered in headings 1 and 3, but the main focus is on the difference between short- and long-term training.

This activity tests global comprehension. Encourage learners, especially stronger ones, to skim-read the text quickly.

Key:

2

B. Comprehension

Get students to check answers in pairs, then review with the whole class. During the whole-class checking stage, refer to the text and get them to identify which specific sentences helped them to decide on their answers.

Key:

1. F. *'it is typical to get new workers to work alongside more experienced ones'* [paragraph 1, lines 6-7]
2. T. *'The expense is kept down'* [paragraph 2, lines 3-4]
3. T. *'the costs of losing good workers through "poaching" (rival companies stealing employees) is minimised.'* [paragraph 2, lines 4-5]
4. F. *'this means that the training is not wide-ranging, but is simply meant to address obvious performance gaps'* [paragraph 2, lines 7-9]
5. F. *'Such companies are well placed to consider more ambitious training strategies'* [paragraph 3, lines 5-7] *but the text doesn't say that they all do it.*
6. T. *It's 'typically off-the-job'* [paragraph 4, line 3]

C. Vocabulary

For stronger students: See if they can remember any of the words before they look back at the text again. (You could give them the initial letter and/or the total number of letters to help them.)

Also, if you have time, expand on some of the vocabulary covered in this exercise, for example:

- by eliciting and teaching different forms of the same word (e.g. aspirations, to aspire to, aspirational; restricted, to place/set restrictions on, restrictive);

- by getting students to write example sentences using the words in context;
- by focusing on pronunciation features, such as syllable stress.

Key:

1. complement; 2. substitute; 3. trial and error;
4. nature; 5. aspirations; 6. well placed; 7. restricted;
8. enhance; 9. open up

D. Discussion

Get learners to discuss these points in pairs or small groups; then review their conclusions with the whole class. The topic would work as an essay topic, as well as a class discussion.

Encourage learners to come up with specific examples.

E. Webquest

If you are working with job-experienced learners, encourage them to find examples of training needed from their own particular field of work. If you are working with pre-experience learners, you might need to suggest the areas of training yourself.

For example, get them to enter: 'IT training', 'time management training', or 'motivational training' into a search engine and look at the websites of individual training organizations offering online training. What claims are made for the training? Do they seem realistic? How do costs compare?

In the final (presentation) phase, encourage them to give spoken presentations accompanied by relevant screen grabs, although written presentations are also useful.

Worksheet B

A. Pre-listening

Monitor students while they are discussing their ideas and review answers with the whole class. Then get students to listen to the conversation and decide what motivates Tom.

B. Comprehension 1

This activity checks learners' ability to get a general sense of the topics discussed during the conversation. Get learners to read through the activity before they listen to the conversation and

encourage them to note answers while they are listening.

Key:

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

C. Comprehension 2

This activity practises listening for detail. Get students to read the statements before playing the listening.

Key:

1. F; 2. T; 3. T; 4. T; 5. T; 6. T

D. Vocabulary

Get students to read through the extract without writing anything. Then get them to look at the words in the box and complete the extract. If necessary, play the relevant part of the listening again for students to check their answers. Alternatively, get them to check their answers by looking at the transcript.

Key:

1. *attitude*; 2. *depending*; 3. *according*; 4. *stage*;
5. *about*; 6. *preferences*; 7. *so on*; 8. *tend*;
9. *stability*; 10. *so*; 11. *focus*; 12. *provide*;
13. *motivates*; 14. *commitments*

E. Discussion

Get learners to discuss the question in pairs or small groups; then review their suggestions with the whole class. The question would work as an essay topic, as well as a class discussion.

Worksheet A: Level 1 (Intermediate)

A Pre-reading

Read the text. Which of these is the correct heading?

- a. WHY COMPANIES SHOULD INVEST MORE IN TRAINING
- b. SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM TRAINING: SOME KEY DIFFERENCES
- c. THE VALUE OF TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES

Training should be seen as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, careful recruitment. Having said this, all companies have a lot to gain from encouraging informal learning on the job. Besides encouraging individuals to try new things and thus learn by trial-and-error, it is typical to get new workers to work alongside more experienced ones. This approach is sometimes informally referred to as a 'buddy' system. Alternatively, the direct line manager may play the important role of job coach. This may be complemented by some formal on- and/or off-the-job training in technical skills where the expense can be justified by the fact that these skills are needed for acceptable job performance. A lot of training in the use of new computer software is of this nature.

Informal learning and short-term training are probably the most common approaches among small firms in English-speaking countries. The expense is kept down and the costs of losing good workers through 'poaching' (rival companies stealing employees) is minimized. The overall approach is often described as a 'deficit model' (this means that the training is not wide-ranging, but is simply meant to address obvious performance gaps). It is wrong, however, to criticize small firms for this kind of practical attitude to training investment. They are acting in an economically rational manner and the problem of under-investing in employee development is caused by wider national and industry institutions over which they have no control.

The opportunity to use education and training more powerfully really exists where companies have invested more thoroughly in recruitment, and so have built a workforce with greater long-term potential (and consequently greater aspirations). Such companies are well placed to consider more ambitious training strategies which involve moving beyond immediate demands in jobs to longer-term employee development. The key principle here is that, in the context of a higher level of investment in work and employment practices, employee development should not be restricted to a 'deficit model'. Instead, it should aim to build employee potential and the company's ability to change and grow in the long term.

Unlike short-term training, long-term development plans involve a balanced mixture of formal training and education (typically off-the-job) and informal coaching and team-building (typically on-the-job). Formal learning can be important to enhance the individual's understanding of relevant facts and their ability to do abstract problem solving. There are stages in careers when a mix of abstract, theory-based learning and more difficult assignments help to extend individual abilities and open up more satisfying work.

Adapted from *Strategy and Human Resource Management* by Peter Boxall and John Purcell, pp. 198-199 © Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

B Comprehension

Do these statements match the information in the text? Mark each statement true (T) or false (F).

- 1. In a 'buddy system', new employees learn from each other's experience.
- 2. Small companies generally prefer short-term training because it's cheaper.
- 3. According to the writers, highly trained employees are more likely to be 'stolen' by rival companies.
- 4. A 'deficit model' of training aims to fill all the gaps in an employee's current performance.
- 5. The authors believe that all big companies have longer-term, ambitious training programmes.
- 6. Formal training and education normally don't take place at the workplace.

Worksheet A: Level 1 (Intermediate)

C Vocabulary 1

Find words and expressions in the text with the same meaning (the first one is done for you).

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. a positive addition to something | a <u>complement</u> to something |
| 2. a replacement for something | a _____ for something |
| 3. to learn by trying out different things | to learn by _____ and _____ |
| 4. something of this kind | something of this _____ |
| 5. positive hopes and ambitions for the future | _____ |
| 6. to be in a good position to do something to be | _____ _____ to do something |
| 7. to be limited to something | to be _____ to something |
| 8. to improve the quality of something | to _____ something |
| 9. to create the possibility of doing something | to _____ _____ |

D Discussion

Discuss one or both of the following.

1. What kinds of training are best done (a) on-the-job and (b) away from the workplace? Why?
2. Think of two or three different jobs. What kinds of training do you think are (a) essential; (b) desirable; (c) possibly useful but not really necessary; (d) inappropriate? Explain your reasons.

E Webquest

Find examples on the Internet of online training programmes aimed at company employees. How are they marketed? How effective do you think they are?

Report back on your findings to your teacher or to the class.

Worksheet B: Level 1 (Intermediate)

A Pre-listening

What do you think motivates employees more: money and security, or having an interesting, challenging job? Discuss your ideas in pairs or small groups. Then, listen to the conversation. What motivates Tom?

B Comprehension 1

Listen to the conversation again. Match the categories (1-6) with the definitions (a-f) given during the conversation.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. 'under-utilized' employees | a. People who need job security because of financial commitments. |
| 2. 'matched' employees | b. People whose qualifications and skills are appropriate for the job they are doing. |
| 3. 'under-qualified' employees | c. People who return to wanting more job satisfaction. |
| 4. employees under 30 | d. People who are overqualified for the job they are doing. |
| 5. employees aged 30 to 50 | e. People who change jobs and employers quite a lot. |
| 6. employees aged over 50 | f. People whose qualifications and skills are too low for the job they are doing. |

C Comprehension 2

Listen to the conversation and decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F).

1. Tom used to find his job challenging, but now he doesn't.
2. Tom thinks it's obvious that under-utilized employees will be generally dissatisfied with their job.
3. Tom suggests that under-qualified employees are the happiest because they have successfully hidden their lack of ability from their managers.
4. Laura thinks that because Tom no longer has any major financial commitments, he is no longer interested in how much he can earn.
5. Laura suggests that people with financial commitments are not at all interested in finding a motivating job.
6. Tom doesn't think that people's attitude to change can always be explained by what is happening in their life.

Worksheet B: Level 1 (Intermediate)

D Vocabulary

Complete the conversation with words from the box. Try doing this before you listen again. Then listen and/or look at the transcript to check your answers.

about according attitude commitments depending
focus motivates preferences provide so
so on stability stage tend

Laura: No, I'm not saying you're old. It's just that people often change their _____ [1] to work _____ [2] on how old they are, or perhaps _____ [3] to what _____ [4] of life they're at. I mean, until you're about thirty, you're still really finding out _____ [5] your _____ [6] at work: the kind of things you like doing and don't like doing, what you're good at and bad at, and _____ [7]. So you _____ [8] to change jobs and employers more than you do later in life.

Tom: OK, so are you saying that after thirty, you stop being ambitious?

Laura: No, not at all. But it is true that, for a lot of people over thirty, _____ [9] becomes more important. And _____ [10] a lot of people _____ [11] on the need for work to _____ [12] them with a regular income, and less on finding something that really _____ [13] them. And that's especially true if you have children or financial _____ [14].

E Discussion

At the end, Tom asks Laura how companies can keep 'under-utilized' employees motivated when they aren't in a position to give them an immediate promotion. What suggestions would you make?

Listening transcript: Level 1 (Intermediate)

Laura, a new employee of a company, is talking to Tom, who has been working at the same company for a long time. They are talking about how job satisfaction can change at different times in life.

Laura: What's the matter, Tom? You look unhappy.

Tom: You know, I've been doing the same job for four years now and I'm getting really bored. To be honest, even when I started doing this job, I soon realized it was too easy for me: it wasn't really stretching me. And now I'm feeling more and more aware that my current job isn't using all the skills I have.

Laura: It's interesting you say that. I read an article last week which mentioned some research into the relationship between job skills and job satisfaction.

Tom: What did it say?

Laura: Well, the research was based on the idea of three different categories of employees. First, there are people like you who have more talent and ability than their current job requires. The survey calls people in this category 'under-utilized'.

Tom: Yes, that's me!

Laura: Then there are people whose personal skills broadly match the skills needed for the job they are doing. The survey calls these people 'matched'. Anyway the research shows that the matched employees felt generally happy with their job, whereas the under-utilized employees were generally dissatisfied.

Tom: Well, that isn't a big surprise, is it?

Laura: No you're right, but wait. The survey identified a third group. That group consisted of people whose skills were low – so low that their skills didn't match the requirements of their job. The survey labelled these people as 'under-qualified'. And guess what?

Tom: What?

Laura: It was this last group, the under-qualified, who had the highest levels of job satisfaction of all the three categories.

Tom: That's really funny. The people who are least able to do their job are actually the happiest employees. I suppose it isn't surprising. Perhaps the under-qualified employees are just happy because their managers haven't found out yet how bad they are!

Laura: Maybe you're right. It's funny, but it's a bit scary, too. Anyway, maybe you're feeling restless because of your age.

Tom: Thanks very much!

Laura: No, I'm not saying you're old. It's just that people often change their attitude to work depending on how old they are, or perhaps according to what stage of life they're at. I mean, until you're about 30, you're still really finding out about your preferences at work: the kind of things you like doing and don't like doing, what you're good at and bad at, and so on. So you tend to change jobs and employers more than you do later in life.

Tom: OK, so are you saying that after 30, you stop being ambitious?

Listening transcript: Level 1 (Intermediate)

- Laura:** No, not at all. But it is true that, for a lot of people over 30, stability becomes more important. And so a lot of people focus on the need for work to provide them with a regular income, and less on finding something that really motivates them. And that's especially true if you have children or financial commitments.
- Tom:** Yes, I can see that.
- Laura:** And the opposite is also true. People who don't have those financial commitments often have a different attitude. And often people actually have fewer commitments when they get older, say at around 50. For example, your children have finished university now, haven't they?
- Tom:** Yes, they have.
- Laura:** And you've paid off your mortgage, haven't you?
- Tom:** Well, yes I have.
- Laura:** So while I'm sure you still want to earn a good income, money isn't the be all and end all for you. You want to feel fulfilled as well, and that's starting to feel more important for you. Am I right?
- Tom:** Yes, I agree with all that. But I'm not sure it depends entirely on how old you are or on your financial commitments.
- Laura:** What do you mean?
- Tom:** Well, if I look back at my career, I can see a sort of pattern. Every three or four years, I start to feel restless – in need of a change. Even if the job is going quite well, I just get bored. Do you know what I mean?
- Laura:** Yes, I do. And that feeling is very common – it happens to me, too. But I suppose it isn't always easy for companies to deal with this. I mean, everybody's life cycles and attitudes are different. And it isn't always possible for employers to give somebody a new job as soon as they feel they are ready for one.
- Tom:** So what's the answer, then? How can a company keep an employee motivated when it can't offer them a promotion or a new job straight away?
- Laura:** Hmm. That isn't easy to answer. I think that ... [fade]