



KINDNESS IN THE WORKPLACE



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Expemo code:
1F7P-G1L6-514

1

Warm up

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. When was the last time someone said something positive to you about your work? What was it about?
2. When was the last time you said something positive to someone about their work? What did you say?
3. How important do you think it is to say kind things to others at work? Why?

2

Finding vocabulary

Find vocabulary in the article on page two which has the same meaning as the following definitions.

1. _____ → able to change according to the needs of a particular situation (adj., para. A)
2. _____ → an act of communication with someone (n, para. B)
3. _____ → a spoken or written communication that says how good someone is at something (n, para. B)
4. _____ → being of less importance or smaller than other things (adj., para B)
5. _____ → connect two or more things together in a way that is very strong (v, para. B)
6. _____ → an act of giving gifts, help or time to someone to support them (n, para. C)
7. _____ → in a way that does not waste time, money or energy (adv., para. C)



3 Reading for gist

Match the titles to paragraphs A-C. There are more titles than paragraphs.

1. Positive companies profit
2. The power of remote work
3. The missing element
4. Kindness and mental health
5. How to be kind
6. The individual need for kindness

The power of the positive

The power of the positive

A. _____

The shift in the way we work has been easy to see since the pandemic. There has been a rise around the world of people working remotely, whether it's full-time or part-time. The work day for many people will involve periods of working on their own from their room, kitchen or home office, mixed with online meetings. It's likely that they will also be thinking about picking up their children from school, making meals, and doing various other chores. While there's little doubt that there are a lot of advantages to this flexible way of working, it does mean that we lose something which the traditional Monday to Friday office jobs did provide us with: the chance to be kind to each other.

B. _____

Being with the same people in the same building all day, there were many opportunities for those smaller interactions. Whether it was waiting for the kettle to boil, or sharing the photocopier, or even just walking out of a meeting together, there was a chance to ask about someone's life, or say how well someone looked, or compliment them on a presentation that they did really well. Despite being minor communications, they are really important to us as human beings. Studies have shown that they make us feel valued and lead to reducing the risk of us becoming overtired, increase our feeling of well-being, and make us work more effectively. Saying something nice about someone makes you think about them. In turn, this makes you feel more connected to them. It is that connection that helps us to feel bonded to those people around us and much happier as individuals.

C. _____

Yet it isn't just individuals that feel the positive effects of a compliment. A study of over 3,500 businesses employing over 50,000 staff showed that a culture of generosity helped the company too. Companies where kind acts were much more common saw workers stay with the company for longer periods of time, work harder and more efficiently. All of this made the company produce more and save money when compared to other businesses where employees were less likely to connect with their colleagues. So everybody wins when positive things are said. So the next time you're waiting for an online meeting to start and other people are sitting there quietly, try saying something nice about someone. You might just make someone's day!

Sources: hbr.org, hrmorning.com



4

Reading comprehension

Read the following statements and decide if they are the same as the opinions given in the article. If it is the same, write Given (G). If the opinion is not there, write Not Given (NG).

1. Mixing our private and professional lives is more common now than it used to be. _____
2. It's harder to concentrate at home than in the office. _____
3. Making hot drinks together allowed for informal interactions which are actually very meaningful. _____
4. We used to waste more time in offices than we do working remotely. _____
5. People used to dress better in offices than they do at home now. _____
6. Small, positive interactions in the workday make us work better. _____
7. Your relationships at work can become more important than your family relationships. _____
8. Studies have shown that companies benefit financially from encouraging a positive work environment. _____





5

Focus on vocabulary**Part A: Match the vocabulary to the definitions.**

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>juggle</u> (v) | a. give or be a good example of something |
| 2. <u>caring</u> (adj.) | b. making you feel socially uncomfortable |
| 3. <u>exemplify</u> (v) | c. the state of being in charge of and directing other people |
| 4. <u>status</u> (n) | d. being kind, helpful and having an interest in how other people feel |
| 5. <u>leadership</u> (n) | e. the social or professional position of someone compared to others |
| 6. <u>awkward</u> (adj.) | f. a list of topics or situations to be discussed during a meeting |
| 7. <u>agenda</u> (n) | g. an amount of money that is to be used for a specific purpose |
| 8. <u>fund</u> (n) | h. do two or more tasks simultaneously |

Part B: Now complete the following sentences with a word connected to the Part A word in brackets.

1. Samantha, when we go to the conference, can I leave the new employees in your _____ please? If you can show them around and give them an idea of what to do, that would be wonderful! (caring)
2. The company manual includes some useful _____ of our various selling and marketing techniques. (exemplify)
3. While she had made some mistakes as a CEO, it didn't really affect her _____ within the company and she was highly-respected. (status)
4. They haven't found someone to replace the head of the department when he leaves yet, so we are likely to be _____ for a few months. (leadership)
5. The Head of Sales made a sex joke at dinner which was just wrong and not funny. Everyone just laughed _____ and someone quickly changed the subject. (awkward)
6. I know we're all surprised, but I think selling our company to the Americans was actually his hidden _____ all along. (agenda)
7. They are talking about _____ the Department for Business to invest more money in public services. (fund)



6 Listening for details

Listen to the interview about the importance of kindness in the workplace. Tick the questions that you hear.



- Are there any other approaches companies can take to increase recognition and bring employees together?
- What do you think it is that makes people unkind to each other?
- How do you encourage connections when everyone is so physically far apart?
- Do you think people have become less kind to each other during the digital age?
- What advice would you give to employees who feel that their manager isn't kind?
- As a business leader, what can you do to promote a culture of kindness in your company?

7 Listening comprehension

Listen to the interview and decide if the following opinions are Given (G) or Not Given (NG).

- It's important to lead by example. _____
- Leaders should only focus on the most obvious kind of behaviour. _____
- People only really seek recognition from people they know personally. _____
- Leaders should find a way to reward all members of their team. _____
- It's important to build time for positive feedback into a meeting. _____
- Giving positive feedback will come easily to most people. _____
- Try to set aside part of your budget for buying gifts for particularly kind employees. _____
- If people are given gifts for their work, try to make them personal and meaningful. _____

8 Talking point

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- What do you think of the culture in your workplace? Does it encourage employees to be kind to each other? How/Why not?
- What do you think could be done to improve the culture in your workplace in this regard?
- What is the relationship of senior management with the rest of the employees like at your workplace?
- Do you think all employees in your workplace feel recognised and valued? Why/ Why not?



9

Extended activity/Homework

Write an email to a colleague that you currently work with or worked with in the past that you particularly thought was kind and helpful at work.

Consider the following questions:

- When did you first notice that they were kind and helpful?
- What did they do to make you notice them?
- What effect on you or other people do you think their actions had?
- Why do you think they are like this?
- What difference do you think they make to the workplace?

You should:

- Write at least 150 words
- Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation.





Transcripts

6. Listening for details

- M:** Welcome back. Now, we've been talking today about the importance of kindness in the workplace, but it's not always easy to encourage that. Here with us today is Kelly Klein who has done a lot of work with companies around the country on creating a caring culture. Kelly, thanks for joining us!
- F:** My pleasure!
- M:** So, tell us, Kelly, as a business leader, what can you do to promote a culture of kindness in your company?
- F:** Well, as with anything that you want people to do, you need to exemplify that behaviour yourself. In any environment, people are likely to copy the behaviour of those with a higher status. So make a point of openly giving praise to your team, or your staff. Notice what they do, even the small things like opening a door for someone else, or carrying something for someone else. While it can be difficult in larger organisations, do try and learn everyone's name. Research has shown that if someone looks straight through you, even if you don't know them, it has a negative effect on them. People want to be seen. As a leader, even if you just smile and say Hi, it will make a big difference to how they feel and they are less likely to feel that they don't matter. Good leadership needs to make everyone feel important and recognised.
- M:** Now obviously, there's been a big increase in remote working and online meetings in recent times. How do you encourage connections when everyone is so physically far apart?
- F:** Whoever is leading the meeting can set aside a few minutes for people to say if they saw good work, or helpful behaviour. It doesn't have to take long. What you'll find is that if someone praises someone for a positive act, others will come forward and do the same. It may feel a little awkward when you first begin, but if you naturally make it a part of the agenda, it will become much more normal. It's even more important for those kind words to be said when everyone is so physically separate.
- M:** That's a nice idea. I like it. Are there any other approaches companies can take to increase recognition and bring employees together?



- F:** One of my favourite methods is to create a fund. Then if someone has done something really good, colleagues can decide to award that person some money from the fund. It could be in the form of actual money, or a gift card, or a box of chocolates. It almost doesn't really matter what it is, it's the act of giving that person something which matters. And that's both for the giver and the receiver. You do need someone in charge to make sure that the same people aren't always chosen and that everyone has an equal chance of receiving a gift. But it encourages positive behaviour and enthusiasm for the job. Plus it gets people to think about others.
- M:** All really good ideas. Kelly, thank you. Now after the break, we're going to take some calls so we can hear about your stories of kindness in the workplace (fade)...



Key

1. Warm up

5 mins.

This opens the class by asking students to think about compliments and when they have received and given them: both ideas that are discussed in the lesson. The effect of kindness is also discussed and students' ideas here could be written down and revisited later in the lesson.

2. Finding vocabulary

5 mins.

This highlights some of the higher-level vocabulary which will aid students' comprehension.

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. flexible | 2. interaction | 3. compliment |
| 4. minor | 5. bond | 6. generosity |
| 7. efficiently | | |

3. Reading for gist

5 mins.

You may want to set a time limit on this task to encourage skim reading rather than reading in detail.

- A. The missing element
- B. The individual need for kindness
- C. Positive companies profit

Sources: <https://hbr.org/2021/05/dont-underestimate-the-power-of-kindness-at-work>

<https://www.hrmorning.com/articles/kindness/>

4. Reading comprehension

10 mins.

Ask the students to read the article more carefully and decide if the statement is the same as the opinions present in the article.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Given | 2. Not Given |
| 3. Given | 4. Not Given |
| 5. Not Given | 6. Given |
| 7. Not Given | 8. Given |

5. Focus on vocabulary

Part A

5 mins.

Ensure students can correctly pronounce the target language. Ask students to complete the task unaided in the first instance, but allow them to use a reference later if needed.



- | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. → h. | 2. → d. | 3. → a. | 4. → e. |
| 5. → c. | 6. → b. | 7. → f. | 8. → g. |

Part B

5 mins.

The focus of this task is to expand students' vocabulary by asking them to consider parts of speech connected to the target vocabulary. They are likely to need a reference to complete this task.

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. care (n) | 2. exemplification (n) | 3. stature (n) |
| 4. leaderless (adj.) | 5. awkwardly (adv.) | 6. agenda (n) |
| 7. defunding (v) | | |

6. Listening for details

5 mins.

This allows students to hear the audio for the first time and identify the general ideas discussed.

- Are there any other approaches companies can take to increase recognition and bring employees together?
- How do you encourage connections when everyone is so physically far apart?
- As a business leader, what can you do to promote a culture of kindness in your company?

7. Listening comprehension

10 mins.

Ask students to complete this task as best they can after the first listening and then allow them to listen again to check their answers.

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Given | 2. Not Given | 3. Not Given | 4. Not Given |
| 5. Given | 6. Not Given | 7. Given | 8. Not Given |

8. Talking point

10 mins.

Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Circulate and help as needed.

9. Extended activity/Homework

20 mins+.

This is an opportunity for students to think about colleagues past or present that they particularly enjoyed working with. You should make it clear that they do not have to send the email, but the point is to consider others and their acts of kindness and express gratitude for the way they behave. Ask them to plan, write and edit their emails. Be sure to give them feedback on their work.