

Lesson 9: Dilemmas

Group size: any; also one-to-one
Level: pre-intermediate upwards
Lesson focus: deciding what to say and do when faced with dilemmas at work
Language focus: giving an opinion; being objective; avoiding giving an opinion
Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; one set of Business Top Trump cards and one set of dilemma cards per group of students (groups of six maximum)

Preparation

Cut the out dilemma cards. Remove the Top Trumps cards for the people named on the dilemma cards. These are:

Su Lin, Yuri, Doris, Norman, Joy, Vince, Andi, Philippe, Angela, Marco

Keep these near the dilemma cards and use the information on these Top Trump cards to further the discussions during the tasks.

1 Language boxes

Hand out the worksheets. Go through the language in the three language boxes with the students, discussing the phrases with them.

2 Language task

Put students in groups of no more than six. Hand out the dilemma cards, one set per group. Students should match the language from the cards with the definitions on the worksheet.

Key: 1. *secondment*; 2. *manipulating*; 3. *sought-after*; 4. *signed off sick*; 5. *sexual harassment*; 6. *confided in*; 7. *break-in*, 8. *valid*

3 Further activities

There are many ways to use the dilemma cards. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Place the dilemma cards face down on the table in a pile. In groups of two to six, students take it in turns to take the dilemma card from the top of the pile, read it out, check the Top Trumps employee card for further information and give their opinion (using the phrases from the language boxes).

2. Spread the dilemma cards on the table and have the students rank them. Which are the three most difficult to deal with? Which three are the easiest? How easy is it to agree on the ranking? What makes a dilemma easy or difficult to deal with? Do any of the dilemmas involve sackable offences?

3. Students role-play confronting the person named on the dilemma card. One student plays the Top Trumps employee named on the dilemma card; the other(s) play either themselves or can take on the role of any other Top Trumps employee.

4. Students read through the remaining Top Trumps cards and write further dilemmas involving other employees (two dilemma cards have been left blank for this purpose). Then, they can discuss these new dilemmas in the ways described above.

4 Discussion

Ask students to talk about work-related dilemmas they have heard about or been involved in. What were the consequences, if any? Open the discussion up to include dilemmas they have read about in newspapers or heard about in the news.

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1 Language boxes

Read through the following language carefully.

Language box 1 – giving an opinion

In my opinion, ...
Well, I think / believe that ...
If I were you / her / the boss, I would ...
That's simply not acceptable!
I don't see a problem.
I can understand why he did it but ...

Language box 2 – being diplomatic

Why don't we find out what ... has to say.
Maybe we should talk to ... first.
Perhaps it was just a momentary slip.
Perhaps it's just a one-off thing.
She's not usually like that.
I've never known him to do anything like that before.
Let's find out the facts before ...

Language box 3 – avoiding saying anything

It's not really my business.
I don't feel qualified to say anything.
I'd rather not get involved.
I don't know. What does ... say?

2 Language task

Match the words and expressions from the dilemma cards with their definitions.

break-in
sexual harassment

confided in
sought-after

manipulating
signed off sick

secondment
valid

- a period when you are sent by your employer to work for a different organization or a different part of your organization
- changing, correcting or moving information especially on a computer
- wanted by many people but not easy to get
- given a medical certificate saying that you are too ill to work
- the offensive or threatening behaviour of a person who regularly makes sexual comments or touches someone in a sexual way
- told someone a secret or discussed your private feelings with them
- an act of entering a building illegally using force, especially in order to steal things
- when a document is in order and in date and can be accepted by officials

Marco

While checking email accounts, he saw that a company employee had been selling stolen goods using his company PC and email address. Officially, Marco should not be looking at other employees' email accounts. He has asked you what he should do. How do you advise him?



Angela

You and Angela are both up for a promotion but only one of you can get it. The promotion will involve going on a six-month secondment to another city. You are certain that Angela is pregnant so would not be able to do this. Do you say anything about this to anyone?

Philippe

You think Philippe has been manipulating the time sheets – this means that he has been getting paid for overtime he hasn't done, as well as claiming false expenses. When you asked him about it, he offered to give your son a sought-after work-experience position if you keep quiet. What do you do?

Andi

For the past two weeks, you have been answering Andi's phone and emails and generally covering for him while he is signed off sick. Yesterday evening, there was a news report on TV from an international dog show. You are positive that you saw him sitting in the front row of spectators. Do you say anything?

Vince

You found one of the trainees crying. She told you Vince has been looking down her dress and grabbing her hand and trying to kiss it. You know she's applied for a job at another company and might be leaving soon. Do you report Vince for sexual harassment?

Joy

The other evening, when you were working late, the cleaner came but it wasn't Joy. The cleaner ran away when she saw you. Joy has now confided in you that it was her cousin who has escaped a bad situation at home and is in the country illegally. She has been helping Joy with the cleaning. Cleaning standards have fallen. Do you say anything to anyone?

Norman

For the third time this month, Norman has been asleep and hasn't opened the barrier to let you into the company car park. When you got out of your car to wake him up, there was a strong smell of alcohol. Your manager has commented on your lateness. You are a bit scared of Norman's temper. Do you say anything to anyone?



Yuri

There was a break-in at the weekend. Nothing was stolen but a window was broken and someone drove the fork-lift truck. The security cameras show that five youths broke in. One of them looks very much like Yuri's son. Do you tell anyone about your suspicions?

Su Lin

Su Lin's trainee has found out that Su Lin never actually finished her chemistry degree. She left university early to look after her family. She has so far relied on the fact that no one would check her Chinese degree. The trainee is worried that his own training may not be officially recognized as his tutor has to be a qualified chemist. What do you advise him to do?

Doris

Doris has found out that another employee was convicted of drink-driving and has probably not got a valid driving licence. The employee has just been given a new company car. Doris has not actually named the employee but she is strongly hinting at who it is. Do you say anything to anyone?

Name _____

Dilemma _____

Name _____

Dilemma _____
