

Advice for the modern boss

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Up to 90 minutes

Business topic: The modern boss

Business language focus: Language associated with managing a company.

Activities: In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article first published in a trusted news source and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about the article;
- use key language from the text in context;
- learn or revise some phrasal verbs;
- learn or revise some two-word expressions;
- answer questions and give personal opinions using the phrasal verbs and two-word expressions;
- discuss ideas from the article in greater depth;
- prepare and deliver a short presentation that picks up on the theme of the text.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student, possible internet access for exercise 7

Group size: All of the tasks can be completed in pairs or groups, so that as much communication as possible takes place in the class. This is also possible if you are delivering the lesson online. The lesson plan can also be used in a one-to-one teaching situation both face-to-face and online.

Teaching online: Ensure that all students (either in a group or in a one-to-one online teaching situation) are sent the worksheet well in advance of the lesson. This will give them time to print out the document if necessary. When the lesson starts, work through the various activities in the order presented but always ensure that you allow sufficient time for feedback and discussion after each activity.

Overview: This lesson is based on an authentic article from a trusted news source, republished here with its full, original text. The article discusses how the expectations of a boss have changed over time.

1. Warmer

The warmer focuses on some characteristics that are often held to be the qualities of a good boss. Students should read the list carefully and then decide which of the qualities is the most important and which is the least, ranking the qualities in order from 1 to 5. You could extend the activity by asking students to contribute further ideas of their own (e.g. someone whose behaviour sets a good example, someone who is always punctual, etc.).

2. Key words and expressions

Students search for words and expressions in the text and use them to complete the sentences or questions. When students are required to complete a question by inserting the key word, they should also answer the question using their own ideas. This could also be done as pair work, e.g. #6: 'What do you enjoy doing in your downtime?' 'I enjoy watching movies and playing computer games.' Note that the word in #2 is used here ironically and is potentially insulting. A good boss would talk about employees and never about 'underlings' as this word has a negative connotation. The term 'grunt work' in #7 is an informal expression that is used in American English.

Key:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>peers</i> | 7. <i>grunt work</i> |
| 2. <i>underlings</i> | 8. <i>disastrous</i> |
| 3. <i>motto</i> | 9. <i>fad</i> |
| 4. <i>fluent</i> | 10. <i>empowerment</i> |
| 5. <i>strategy</i> | 11. <i>incompetent</i> |
| 6. <i>downtime</i> | |

3. Understanding the article

Students work individually to read the article again and decide which statements are true and which are false according to the article. They should correct the three false statements using the information in the text. If you are working with a group, students can compare their answers with other group members before you check them with the whole class.

Key:

1. *False. 94 per cent of chief executives of FTSE 100 companies are men.*
2. *False. Doer-bosses rarely lack ego.*
3. *True.*
4. *False. Bosses should be prepared to be bored as they will be talking about the same strategies, not making new decisions.*
5. *True.*
6. *True.*

4. Business language – phrasal verbs

Students work individually to complete the sentences using the prepositions or adverbial particles. They then use the phrases to answer the questions. In a class situation, this can be done in pairs or small groups. Online, you could use breakout rooms so students can share their ideas. Check students fully understand the verb *run by* (to tell someone your ideas so that they can give their opinion), as in 'You'll have to run that idea by the boss first'.

Key:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. <i>out</i> | 4. <i>down</i> |
| 2. <i>across</i> | 5. <i>up</i> |
| 3. <i>by</i> | |

5. Business language – two-word expressions

Ask students to match the words in the two columns to make phrases from the text. Then ask them to use the two-word phrases to complete the sentences. As above, they could compare their answers in pairs or small groups.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>c</i> | 4. <i>b</i> |
| 2. <i>e</i> | 5. <i>d</i> |
| 3. <i>a</i> | |

- a. *chief executive*
- b. *transformative leader*
- c. *underlying problem*
- d. *strategic thinking*
- e. *career growth*

Further notes on vocabulary

There are a few expressions in the text that you could also help to clarify for the students. In paragraph 2, the expression 'to be in awe of' somebody means to feel great respect, admiration and sometimes fear for somebody. In paragraph 7, the expression 'to get stuck in' means to start working with energy and enthusiasm. In paragraph 14, the verb 'to crave' means to want something very much.

6. Discussion

In small groups, students discuss the statements which pick up on some of the ideas in the article. Hold a short whole-group feedback session and compare and contrast each group's answers and input. If you are delivering an online one-to-one lesson, give the learner plenty of time to consider their responses to each of the discussion questions, including reasons.

7. Wider business theme – presentation

This activity requires students to make a list of qualities a good manager should have (e.g. the ability to listen; the ability to develop a strategic plan) and then to deliver a short presentation outlining what they believe to be the most important qualities. If they require help, encourage them to use the internet for further ideas. When each student is speaking, make a note of any errors that you think will be of interest and/or useful to the group and focus on these at the end of the presentations.



One-to-one teaching

If you are working on a one-to-one basis, give the student plenty of time to prepare their presentation. Deal with any errors in the same way as noted for the group presentations above.