

# Case studies: Teacher's notes

## CASE STUDY 1: INTERNET ACCESS

This case study is based on the issue of whether or not company employees should have free access to the Internet at work. Students begin by looking at the results of a survey on Internet access at work and discuss which of the groups in the survey they would be in. They then read an article about nine council workers who were sacked for spending up to two hours a day on eBay™, the popular auction site, when they should have been working. This leads on to a simulated meeting in which students assume different roles within a company and discuss their views on Internet use in order to decide on a company policy. Finally, they listen to a company director talking about her company's email and Internet policy and see if they reached the same conclusions in their discussion.

### Warm-up

Write the words *Internet access* on the board and brainstorm the possible advantages and disadvantages for both employers and employees of granting free Internet access to people when they are at work.

**1** Focus attention on the results of the survey and give students a moment or two to take them in. Then ask them to discuss the questions in groups and be prepared to report back to the class on their discussions. You might like to use the results to get students to produce their own bar chart to show their answers to the question about having and using Internet access at work.

**2** Draw students' attention to the headline of the article and ask them to predict what the article is about. Find out if they know of any similar cases where workers have been sacked or punished for spending time on the Internet when they should have been working. Go through the questions with the class and then ask them to read the article and find the answers. Answer any questions they may have about the content of the article or any new vocabulary. Elicit students' reactions to the text and find out if they have more sympathy with the sacked workers or their employer.


### ANSWERS

- He wanted to investigate the amount of time council staff spent on the Internet.
- They were visiting shopping, entertainment and BBC/Sky-related websites (websites run by television companies).
- He appeared to have some sympathy with the workers who were tempted to access these sites and he felt it was the council's responsibility to prevent workers from being able to access sites unconnected with their work during working hours.
- He thinks they should make changes to their IT system and install firewalls to prevent staff from accessing these sites at any time other than their lunch breaks.

**3** Put students into groups of four and give them time to read the roles and decide who will be A, B, C and D. Remind them of the sort of language we use to express opinions and react to them. For example: *I think that ...; In my opinion, ...; I agree; I don't agree, Yes, but ...; Isn't it the case that ...?*, etc. It would be helpful to put this up on the board so that students can refer to it while they are holding their meeting. Students may need to prepare what they are going to say as homework. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing down whole sentences which they then simply read out. It might help them run the meeting more efficiently if they decide who will chair it and choose someone to take notes. The chair can then make sure everyone contributes and can lead and structure the discussion. As they have their meeting, go round giving help and encouragement. Encourage them to formulate a clear policy. Get each group to present their policy to the rest of the class.

1:1

Ask your student to decide whether he/she wants to argue for free Internet access or against it. You can then take the opposing point of view. You can both use arguments from other roles if you wish.

**4**  **CS1** Go through the instructions with students and allow them time to read the six sentences so that they know what information to listen for. Play the recording and ask them to complete the sentences. You may need to pause the recording (at the three paragraph breaks) and/or play it more than once to allow students to do this.

### ANSWERS

- sign
- emails
- breaks
- Internal
- download
- boyfriend

 **CS1**

We introduced our policy in the late nineties at the time when every employee was given access to the Internet as well as email. Now, every new member of staff is asked to sign the policy at induction, and they are then given a copy of their own to keep.

The policy is two pages long, and it forms part of our employee handbook. It covers things like personal use and emails between colleagues, as well as downloads. It is very clear about what will happen if the rules are not followed. We feel it is important to spell the rules out clearly from the beginning. That way everyone knows what is expected of them.

Basically, we do allow employees to use the Internet for personal use, and to send and receive personal emails, but only during breaks. We try and make sure that people are very careful about the things that they download – we have to make sure our IT system is protected against viruses. Also, we don't allow employees to send internal emails that are not related to work. This is to prevent people sending round external emails and disrupting others when they are supposed to be working. We have only had to enforce the policy once. This was when we realized that a key employee was in the habit of spending whole days emailing her boyfriend. We took action, and the result was that she became more focused on her job. Also, the rest of the employees could see that we take the policy seriously, and will enforce it if necessary, even against key members of staff.

- 5 Have a quick feedback session to find out which group thinks their policy most closely matches Emily Pearce's.

## CASE STUDY 2: CRISTAL MALVERN

This case study is based on the topic of how a company can overcome a disastrous fire and still remain in business. The company concerned produces bottled water and is located next to the spring that is the source of its product. When a fire completely destroys the factory and offices of the company, the management has to decide what to do.

### Warm-up

Ask students if they know of any company that has had to face a disaster such as a major fire, flood, deliberate tampering with a product by someone with a grudge against the company, or anything else which has put its future in jeopardy. Get them to say what the company did and how successful the strategy was.

- 1 Put students into groups to discuss the questions. Encourage them to report back to the class.

1:1


Discuss the questions with your student and be prepared to contribute information about your own use of bottled water.

- 2 Go through the instructions with students first, so that they know what information to look for. Then give them time to read the article and decide on their answers.

### ANSWERS

The factory and offices of a mineral water company were completely destroyed in a fire.

The bottling plant was situated next to the spring from where the water came. It would not be possible to move to another location, because the plant has to be at the source of the water.

- 3  **CS2** Make sure students understand that they will hear three people on the recording: the interviewer, Ron White and Peter Jones. Go through the questions with the class first so that they know what information to listen out for.

### ANSWERS

- a It will be some kind of plan to reduce costs by laying off some of the workforce.  
b Because the plant really has to be at the source of the water. Moving the plant elsewhere and transporting the water to the plant would be too expensive.  
c The union is very upset by what has happened because its members' livelihoods are at risk. It feels the company has a responsibility to act quickly to keep people employed while a new plant is built.  
d He says it would be totally unacceptable for the company to close, as there will be an insurance payout and the brand is a good one.

### CS2

- A: Mr Jones, this is obviously a tremendous blow to Cristal Malvern. Is there anything you can tell us about the future of the company?  
B: It's a bit early to say, but obviously the fact that the whole plant has been destroyed is a total disaster. We are still waiting to see if anything can be salvaged, but it doesn't look like we will be able to start production for a very long time.  
A: What about the workforce?  
B: That's our major concern at the moment. As I say, we haven't made any decisions yet, but I'm afraid some sort of adjustment plan will be necessary. We will of course do what we can to protect as many jobs as possible.  
A: Are you worried about the future of the brand?  
B: Of course. Unfortunately, because of the nature of our product, we can't just move to another location, because this is where the water comes from. We will have to look at our options.  
A: Thank you, Mr Jones. I also have with me Ron White, who represents the main union active at the plant. Mr White, how are people feeling?  
C: We are all shattered by what has happened. The livelihood of dozens of people has gone up in flames. It's not just the people who work in the plant, but also the local community. I don't know what's going to happen. I think the company has a responsibility to do what it can to keep people employed while a new plant is built.  
A: There is a rumour the company may have to close.  
C: That would be totally unacceptable. After all, we all know that there will be an insurance payout. Cristal Malvern is a company with years of tradition behind it. Our water has some exceptional qualities, and it would not make any business sense at all for the brand to disappear. We are all prepared to co-operate, but the company must take the initiative and it must do it quickly.  
A: Thank you, Mr White. And good luck. Now back to the studio ...

**4** Put students into groups of four and ask each member of a group to choose a different role. Allow plenty of time for them to read their roles and decide what to say in the meeting. Ask each group to decide who will lead the meeting. As students hold their meetings, go round offering help where necessary. Encourage them to come to a definite conclusion about what the company should do. Get each group to report back to the class on its decision and the reasons for it.

**1:1**

Ask your student to choose one of the roles, and choose one for yourself which is opposed to that of your student. Have a discussion between the two of you. You can both use arguments from other complementary roles if you wish.

**5** Students read a newspaper account of a similar incident which actually happened in Spain in 2003. Keep them in the same groups as for 4 and ask them to read the article together and discuss the questions. Have a class feedback session and find out how much consensus there is.


## CASE STUDY 3: STAFF APPRAISAL

This case study discusses the issue of staff appraisal and whether it is a useful procedure or a complete waste of time which is potentially demotivating for employees. Students begin by discussing the appraisal system used within their own companies and listen to a company director describing the scheme used in her company. They then read entries from blogs which present the problems that appraisal schemes can create. The main exercise in this case study is a simulated meeting in which students take the roles of four people in an engineering company which is experiencing problems with its staff appraisal scheme. The case study ends with an article which offers a radical alternative to traditional forms of staff appraisal.

### Warm-up

Check that everyone knows the meaning of the word *appraisal*. Ask students if they think staff appraisals are more commonly used to praise good work or to criticize poor performance.

**1** Put students into groups to discuss the questions and encourage them to report back to the class in a feedback session.

**2**  **CS3** Give students time to read the words before you play the recording so that they know which words to listen out for.

### ANSWERS

1 chat	8 form
2 formal	9 expectations
3 goals	10 feedback
4 issues	11 report
5 objectives	12 timescales
6 measure	13 motivation
7 scale	14 anonymous

### CS3

- A: Anglesey Sea Zoo is Wales' largest marine aquarium, attracting over 75,000 visitors per year. Director and partner Alison Lea-Wilson describes how the company introduced an appraisal system that has proved to be a key motivator for its 25 staff.
- B: When we started our appraisals a few years ago, they were more of an informal chat. As we grew, we decided to introduce twice-yearly formal appraisals. We wanted to ensure that employees' work matched the goals of the business. We also wanted to provide a chance to recognize good performance and deal with any issues. We based the performance objectives on each employee's job description. We talked to staff so that the objectives could be agreed in advance and they knew what to expect. That was very important, because the majority of our performance objectives aren't things which are easy to measure – like sales, for example – so we use a scoring system. Each objective is rated on a scale of one to four, and both managers and employees fill in the form. Comparing the two sets of ratings can be very useful for identifying differences in expectations and perceptions.

The process is formal. We invite staff to their appraisals in writing, and they get a copy of the appraisal form to fill in before the interview. The completed form is then discussed during the appraisal itself. There is an emphasis on constructive feedback, but as well as talking about performance, we discuss what kind of training might help employees achieve their goals. After the appraisal, team leaders write a report of the discussion and put action points and timescales against each item before giving a copy to the employee.

We have found that a system where staff can express their views and have issues and problems addressed is definitely good for motivation. It's also good to have a formal way of telling people when they've done a good job. We know this, because we conduct anonymous staff surveys to assess the effectiveness of our appraisals.



**3** Ask the whole class the first question, then put them into pairs to produce a summary of what the speaker said. Get several pairs to read their summaries to the class.

**ANSWER**

Yes, it is successful.

**4** Give students time to read the blogs and the list of problems. When you have checked answers, ask them for their own opinions.

**ANSWERS**

- a Extract B
- b Extract A
- c Extract C
- d Extract C
- e Extract A

**5** Go through the instructions and the roles with the class and then ask them to get into groups and take one role each. Ask them to decide who will lead the meeting and to appoint someone to take notes. Allow preparation time for them to decide how their character would express his or her views at the meeting. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing scripts. When they are having their meetings, go round offering help and encouragement. Tell them to try to come to a decision on what to do. In a class feedback session, ask the note-taker from each group to report back on their meeting and the decision they came to.

**1:1**

Ask your student to prepare arguments for one of the roles and to let you know which one he/she has chosen. You can then prepare arguments for an opposing role and have a two-person meeting.

**6** Give students time to read the article and then have a class discussion on whether or not they think 360-degree feedback sounds like a good idea.

## CASE STUDY 4: COMPANY STRUCTURE

This case study is based on the issue of company organization and which model works best. Students begin by reading information about different types of company structure and consider the advantages and disadvantages of each of these. They also identify what model their own company follows. This leads on to a simulated meeting in which students assume the roles of consultants discussing the best way to organize a transport and logistics company which needs to re-think its structure. They compare their decisions with those taken by an actual company in Spain.

### Warm-up

Ask your students to say why getting a company's structure right might be similar to a circus acrobatic act. For example, both are a complicated balancing act – get one element wrong, and it could spell disaster. In both company structure and an acrobatic team, every part of the team or every department must pull its weight or the whole structure will topple. In a company, as in an acrobatic team, members have to work together at the same time as fulfilling their own individual roles.

**1** Give students plenty of time to read the information about the different types of company structure. Answer any questions they may have about new vocabulary. Ask them if they can think of any examples of companies which are structured in the four ways mentioned in the text. Put students into pairs or small groups to discuss the questions. Encourage them to finish their discussion before they compare their ideas with those on page 3.

**2** Put students into groups of four and give them time to read the background information and the roles and decide who will be A, B, C and D. If the number of students does not divide equally by four, have one bigger group of five/six/seven, with the extra students doubling up on roles (ideally stronger students working with weaker students). Remind them of the sort of language we use to express opinions and react to them. For example: *I think that ...*, *In my opinion, ...*, *I agree, I don't agree, Yes, but ...*, *Isn't it the case that ...*, etc. It would be helpful to put this up on the board so that students can refer to it while they are holding their meeting. Students may need to prepare what they are going to say as homework. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing down whole sentences which they then simply read out. It might help them run the meeting more efficiently if each group decides who will chair it and chooses someone to take notes. The chair can then make sure everyone contributes and can lead and structure the discussion. As students have their meetings, go round giving help and encouragement. Encourage them to come to a clear final decision. Get each group to present its decision to the rest of the class.

**3** Keep students in the same groups and ask them to read the text on page 3. The solution that the Spanish company found includes details from the opinions of consultants B, C and D, so students should find some similarities between the structure of this company and the structure they decided on for William Tucker Ltd.

**1:1**

Ask your student to choose one of the roles from the four given. Choose one for yourself which is different from that chosen by your student so that you can have a discussion and try to persuade each other to adopt your viewpoint.

## CASE STUDY 5: LINUX

The issue in this case study is the Linux computer operating system, which many companies see as an attractive alternative to Microsoft®. There are, however, concerns that have to be discussed and addressed before a company is likely to make the switch to Linux. Students look at the issues involved and then have a simulated meeting to discuss whether a company trading in medical supplies should change its operating system to Linux.

### Warm-up

Find out if students have heard of Linux and if anyone can explain what it is. Also find out their attitudes to Microsoft. Does it worry them that one company seems to have a stranglehold on the market? Have they heard of open-source software (for which you do not have to pay), and do they use any of it on their computers?

- 1 Put students into groups to discuss the questions and ask them to report back to the class.
- 2 Give students plenty of time to read the article, and answer any questions they may have about new vocabulary. Have a class discussion on the questions.

### ANSWERS

Some companies are changing to Linux because it is cheaper than Microsoft and can be adapted to meet their needs. Many of them are annoyed by Microsoft's pricing and licensing policies, and many would prefer to use their money to support a local industry rather than a US monopoly.

The main IT issue is whether the software is totally reliable, as a loss of productivity caused by a technology problem is potentially disastrous.

- 3 Ask students to read the article again and underline the phrases.

### ANSWERS

- a Linux will take 20% of the market for desktop computers in large institutions
- b investigate the viability of Linux
- c the risks are high
- d time budget
- e run on
- f dictate terms to them
- g budgets
- h monopoly

- 4 Put students into groups of four and give them time to read the roles and decide who will be A, B, C and D. Remind them of the sort of language we use to express opinions and react to them. For example: *I think that ...*, *In my opinion, ...*, *I agree, I don't agree, Yes, but ...*, *Isn't it the case that ...*, etc. It would be helpful to put this up on the board, so that students can refer to it while they are holding their meeting. Students may need to prepare what they are going to say as homework. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing down whole sentences which they then simply read out. It might help them run the meeting more efficiently if they decide who will chair it and choose someone to take notes. The chair can then make sure everyone contributes and can lead and structure the discussion. As they have their meeting, go round giving help and encouragement. Encourage them to make a definite decision. Get each group to present their decision to the rest of the class.

1:1

Try to combine some of the roles so that your student takes on all the arguments for one point of view, and you take on all the arguments for the opposing view. Then have a discussion about what you should do.

- 5 Ask students to read the article and have a class discussion on whether they think the company made the right decision.