

Conversation 4

H: Oh, hello Jim. How are things going?
G: Great. In fact, you can be the first to congratulate me.

H: Yes, you look very pleased with yourself. What's up?
G: I'm the new head of the eastern sales team.

H: Oh, really? What salary are you on now, then?
G: Sixty grand a year.

H: I can't believe it. Sixty thousand!
G: And they're giving me a new company car.

H: Oh really? Congratulations, then. The drinks are on you. See you later.
G: Yes. Bye.

17.3

A: In this week's *Business Today*, we talk to Karina Schmidt. Karina is the author of a report by the Industrial Society which looks at workplace relations, and how they've changed over the years. Karina, first of all, welcome to the programme.

B: Thank you, it's a pleasure to be here. In your report, you say that many companies nowadays have abandoned some useful institutions which allowed for social interaction.

B: Yes, these days there's less opportunity to gossip and socialise. For example, often the tea trolley has been scrapped, and having a chat in the tea break was an important part of the working day. The drink after work at the pub around the corner is another example.

A: And why do you think these things have disappeared?
B: I think it's all part of the revolution in human resources. Some of these traditions have become unfashionable. Talking about things not connected to work is now seen as bad and as about remaining chats from meetings rooms, so that the meetings are more efficient and finish quickly.

A: And are we more efficient now, then?
B: Well, that's a good question, but in any case, something has been lost from the workplace which is very important. And perhaps in the long term, with these drives for efficiency, companies are making false economies.

A: In what way?
B: The difference between a good job and a bad job are the human, emotional elements. In other words, happy employees are productive.

18 E-commerce

A: Are you saying that gossip should be encouraged?

B: Not exactly, it's obviously a question of balance. All gossip and chatting doesn't make for an efficient company, but neither does no gossip or chat. All I'm saying is that I think companies would do well to remember this when trying to improve efficiency and bring down costs.

A: Karina, I'm afraid that's all we've got time for. Thank you very much for talking to us. It's been very interesting.
B: Thank you for inviting me.

A: That's all for now from *Business Today*. So, until next week, goodbye.

18.1

Lee: There are nearly seven million teenagers in the UK. According to their parents, they wear too much make-up, treat the house like a hotel and run up huge phone bills. At the same time, for e-commerce teenagers are a dream because they're so comfortable with the Internet and positive about new technology. And without the financial responsibilities of adults, they generally have money to spend. The sites targeted at these teenagers offer them chat, competitions and e-mail access, as well as things to buy. Lucy, you're the marketing manager of one of these teen sites - Wicked Colours.

Lucy: How do you see the future of e-commerce in this market?
Lee: I think the main problem is age. Some sites try to target an age group that's too wide. As a result, they don't satisfy anyone. Some target from 11 to 18-year-olds. But an 11-year-old is nothing like an 18-year-old. We aim our site at younger teenagers. The site is designed for them. The average age would be 13 but we go as young as 11. It's this group that spends the most time at the computer. The 16 to 18-year-olds are interested in other things like going out to clubs. Would you agree, Nick?

Nick: Yes, and the other problem is that all 13-year-olds want to be 18-year-olds. If you look at the magazines aimed at young teenage girls, most of them have disappeared. The younger kids like to read adult magazines like *Martie* and *Teen*.

18.2

Nick: That's right, and that's why, in my opinion, the teenager market has no future. Apart from the fact that teenagers don't have credit cards, they use the Internet differently from adults. They see it mainly as a means of communication. They will spend hours chatting and sending e-mails - but not shopping. So, you can make some money from advertising, but not much from direct sales. I think Brian will back me up on that.

Brian: Actually, I don't agree, Nick. Lee is right, they don't want to ask their parents for money every time they want to buy something, but if you free them from that parental control, teenagers will buy online. So, what we do is give them their own magnetic swipe card called *Splash Plastic*. They can use their allowance to top the card up with cash at a number of stores around the country. Then when they're at home, they can use the card to buy online, but only in sites that *Splash Plastic* has authorised as suitable, and only products suitable for under 18-year-olds. In other words, they can't buy X-rated videos. That keeps the parents happy.

Lee: But even if these new payment methods work, isn't there a moral problem? Teenagers make irrational, emotional purchases. So, it is right to market to them so heavily in the first place? Lucy?

Lucy: Well, that's a good question, but rigidly or wrongly, the current generation of teenagers will have an important influence on the future of e-commerce. It's clear that they want to buy online, and if we don't take advantage of that, someone else will.

A: A high turnover is one thing, but making good profits is another.

C: Having a good idea is one thing, but putting it into practice is another.

D: High productivity is one thing, but improving staff motivation is another.