

## The Office (BBC, UK), Being the Boss

### Introduction

Sort the following actions into the two columns based on your opinion of what makes a good/bad boss.

Good Boss	Bad Boss

motivating people · being patient with your employees · socialising with your employees outside of work · doing your own menial tasks (stapling etc.) · appearing arrogant · being a friend first and a boss second · injecting comedy into the workplace · working hard and playing hard · playing practical jokes on your employees · concentrating on increasing profit · letting people go based on poor performance · offering your employees training opportunities · treating your employees every so often · conducting staff appraisals · creating a chilled out vibe

### Videos

Now watch the videos of the BBC comedy series *The Office* and identify which of the things above the boss, David Brent, does.



Ricky Gervais as David Brent.

Now watch the videos individually and answer the following comprehension questions:

#### "Big Keith's Appraisal"

1. Why isn't "accounts" a good answer to the first question?
2. What has Keith written as his main weakness?
3. What does "Q&A" mean in the section Keith hasn't filled in?
4. Why does David Brent start to get frustrated with Keith?

What is your opinion about David Brent's managerial skills in this situation?

### "David Brent's Prank Backfires"

1. Whose fault is it that there is a work hard/play hard attitude in the office?
2. What does David mean when he says some people "get away with murder" at work?
3. Why does David claim that Dawn has "made his life easier"?
4. What does David claim Dawn has stolen?
5. Why doesn't David have to give Dawn severance pay?
6. Why doesn't David's joke work?
7. What does David claim is his proudest moment?

Do you think David was right to play jokes on people at work? Has anyone ever played a practical joke in your workplace? Do you agree with David that "investment in people" is the most important part of business?

### "Most Awkward Interview Ever"

1. Why are the bosses panicking and what's David's solution?
2. What is the metaphor that David gives for not having to do his own stapling?
3. Why does David get the magazine out of his desk?
4. What did Karen do on her "year-out"?
5. Will Karen be celebrating getting the job?
6. What do you think the question, "what's your tippie?" means?
7. The title of the video contains the word "awkward", what is awkward about the interview?

Do you think David's approach to recruitment will lead to him employing the best people for the job? What trouble might he have in future if he continues this sort of behaviour?

### Grammar - Giving Orders and Advice

You are going to imagine that you are giving David Brent professional advice on how to be an effective manager. First look at the different forms of giving advice below and, working with your teacher, decide if the tone is strong/authoritative or weak/just a suggestion.

"You <i>must</i> do your own filing." "You <i>mustn't</i> employ people just because you like them."	strong / weak
"You <i>should</i> do your own filing." "You <i>shouldn't</i> employ people just because you like them."	strong / weak
"You <i>could</i> do your own filing." Do not use <i>could</i> in the negative for advice!	strong / weak
" <i>How about</i> doing your own filing?" " <i>How about not</i> employing people just because you like them?"	strong / weak
" <i>What about</i> doing your own filing?" " <i>What about not</i> employing people just because you like them?"	strong / weak
" <i>Why don't you</i> do your own filing?" Do not try to negate this one!	strong / weak

"If I were you I'd do my own filing."  
"If I were you I wouldn't employ people just because I like them."

strong / weak

Now look at the following problems and give David Brent some business advice about his managerial style. Remember to use some of the forms above and to explain any advice you give. First prepare notes on what you want to say using the table below:

Scenario	Advice
 <p>You have a demotivated employee who isn't interested in his work. You conduct staff appraisals to try and show him he is a valuable employee but he shows no interest.</p>	
 <p>You have a new employee and it is your responsibility to show him the business and give him an idea of the type of things that go on in the office.</p>	
 <p>People above you have ordered you to lay off staff in order to cut spending. You were thinking of employing a new secretary.</p>	
 <p>You are conducting interviews for a new member of staff.</p>	