

Business English- Human Resource Vocabulary- Problems and Recommendations

Giving and responding to advice practice

Choose problems from below and take turns asking for the other person's advice, responding positively or negatively each time depending on what you think about their advice. Discuss that situation as long as you like, then switch roles and do the same.

Useful language for asking for advice

What do you think I should do?

What's the best solution?

What would you do (if you were in my place)?

What do you recommend?

Can you suggest anything?

What can I do about it (do you reckon)?

How can I solve this problem?

What's your advice?

Do you have any ideas?

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations

Strong suggestions

You'd better... (or...)

You really must...

You must.../ You have to...

If I were you, I would definitely...

I strongly recommend...

Weaker suggestions

You should probably...

Have you thought about...?

Have you considered...?

It's worth thinking about...

Weak suggestions

You could (possibly)...

It might be worth thinking about...

Useful language for responding to advice

Positive responses

That's a great idea. I'll do exactly what you said.

Good idea. I'll definitely do that. Thanks for your advice.

Weak and negative responses

That seems like a good idea. I'll give it a try.

That might work. I'll consider it.

Actually, ... already. Do you have any other ideas?

I'm not sure that would work (in this case) (because...) Can you suggest anything else?

Hmmm. Are you sure that's a good idea?

Ask about any words below that you don't understand such as the words in italics below, giving and responding to advice on the problems each time.

Discuss some real HR problems and solutions for companies you know about such as your own company.

- There is high *staff turnover*.
- There is a lot of *absenteeism*./ Staff take lots of *sick days*.
- Applicants seem to be *padding* their CVs (= *résumés*) .
- There have been complaints of *sexual discrimination* by managers.
- There seems to be a *glass ceiling* for women.
- Managers complain that their staff have *inefficient working practices*.
- *Entertainment expenses* are high and getting higher.
- There is lots of *office gossip*.
- *Headhunters* often contact our staff.
- There is a lack of *job applicants*.
- Applicants don't have *relevant experience*, *necessary skills* or the right *qualifications*.
- New recruits don't have the *necessary skills*.
- Many people *resign* before the end of their *trial period/ probationary period*.
- Most people leave soon after the end of their *maternity leave*.
- Fathers don't usually take the *paternity leave* to which they are entitled.
- Managers lack *management skills*.
- *Middle managers* suffer from high levels of *stress*.
- Low-level *clerical staff* are *demotivated*.
- People are doing too much *overtime*.
- *Top managers* are *overworked*.
- The company *pension scheme* is underfunded.
- Older staff are *resisting* the introduction of *performance-related pay*.
- Staff who've finished three *annual contracts* must be let go or given *permanent jobs*.
- Many directors have quit since the new *CEO took charge*.
- The company needs to be *downsized*.
- *Mid-career applicants* have *serious issues* such as *personality problems*.
- The company has a *bad reputation* with *potential recruits* such as final-year students.
- *Job satisfaction* is dropping.
- The *baby boomers* working in the company are all at or past *retirement age*.
- The (*trade/ labor*) *unions* are asking for a 7% increase in *basic wages*.
- The company is getting *bad publicity* because of postings on *social media* by staff.

- *Income tax (= payroll tax)* will rise next year, making *net wages* lower.
- The *permanent staff* don't like working with *temps*.
- One *section* don't *work well as a team*.
- *Senior staff* lack *time management* skills.
- There are *allegation of sexual harassment* against a *director*.
- *Experienced staff* are unhappy about having to do *retraining*.
- *Working hours* are going up
- We're *struggling* to find a *suitable candidate* for the *position* of *COO*.
- Staff *commuting times* are very long
- Most staff don't take all their *paid holiday*.
- We need staff to work *national holidays*, but no one wants to.
- Everyone wants to take their *summer vacations* at the same time
- The *Personnel Department* is *short-staffed*.
- No one will *volunteer* for *voluntary redundancies*.
- You need to improve *staff morale*.
- Pay rises will be disappear due to an increase in *national insurance (= social security)*.

Suggested solutions

(online) application form
bonus
career path
compulsory redundancies/ compulsory...
cut...
delegate/ delegation
demote
early retirement
(language) exam (results)
flexitime
free fruit/ free...
graphology
(panel/ second) interview
(internal) investigation
job ads
job sharing
last in, first out
limits on...
lounge/ time-out area/ shared spaces
Master's/ MBA
pay rise
performance management
perks (free coffee, etc)
personality tests
picking names out of a hat
(more) pleasant office
positive discrimination/ affirmative action
professional development
promote/ promotion
questionnaires
(...) quota
raise...
recognition (praise, prizes, etc)
recruitment agency
search people's social media accounts
shuttle bus
spending limits
subsidized...
team building (activities)
telecommuting/ working from home
(internal/ external/ online/ time management) training
(official) warning
work-life balance
workshop

Positive and negative HR vocabulary

Are the following words positive or negative? Write “+” or “-” next to each one.

- staff turnover
- absenteeism
- sick days
- padding
- discrimination
- glass ceiling
- efficient
- entertainment
- expenses
- lack
- quality
- relevant
- necessary
- the right...
- skills
- qualifications
- experience
- stress
- motivated
- overworked
- underfunded
- resisting
- dismissed
- permanent contracts
- quit
- be downsized
- issues
- personality problems
- bad reputation
- job satisfaction
- leave us short of...
- bad publicity
- tax will rise
- lower net wages
- teamwork
- allegation
- sexual harassment
- against
- happy
- struggling
- suitable
- short-staffed
- voluntary
- compulsory

- redundancies
- staff morale
- demote
- promote/ promotion
- sharing
- pleasant
- perks
- praise
- prize
- subsidized...
- team building
- (official) warning
- work-life balance
- delegation
- positive discrimination

The language of advice error correction

Without looking above, find and correct one mistake in each line below.

Useful language for asking for advice

What do you think should I do?

What's best solution?

What will you do (if you were in my place)?

What are you recommend?

Can you suggesting anything?

What can I do on it (do you reckon)?

How can I solution this problem?

What's your advices?

Do you have any idea?

Useful language for asking for advice

What do you think I should do?

What's the best solution?

What would you do (if you were in my place)?

What do you recommend?

Can you suggest anything?

What can I do about it (do you reckon)?

How can I solve this problem?

What's your advice?

Do you have any ideas?

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations**Strong suggestions**

You'd better... (or...)

You really must...

You must.../ You have to...

If I were you, I would definitely...

I strongly recommend...

Weaker suggestions

You should probably...

Have you thought about...?

Have you considered...?

It's worth thinking about...

Weak suggestions

You could (possibly)...

It might be worth thinking about...

Useful language for responding to advice**Positive responses**

That's a great idea. I'll do exactly what you said.

Good idea. I'll definitely do that. Thanks for your advice.

Weak and negative responses

That seems like a good idea. I'll give it a try.

That might work. I'll consider it.

Actually, ... already. Do you have any other ideas?

I'm not sure that would work (in this case) (because...) Can you suggest anything else?

Hmmm. Are you sure that's a good idea?

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations

Strong suggestions

You would better... (or...)

You very must...

If I am you, I would definitely...

I strong recommend...

Weaker suggestions

You should possibly...

Did you thought about...?

Have you consider...?

It's worth think about...

Weak suggestions

You can possibly...

It maybe be worth thinking about...

Useful language for responding to advice

Positive responses

That's great idea. I'll do exactly what you said.

Good idea. I'll definitely do that. Thanks for advice.

Weak and negative responses

That seems like a good idea. I'll do it a try.

That might works. I'll consider it.

Actually, ... already. Do you have any another ideas?

I'm not surely that would work (in this case) (because...) Can you suggest anything else?

Hmmm. Are you sure that's good idea?

Brainstorming stage

Without looking above, brainstorm suitable phrases into the gaps below. Phrases not above may also be suitable.

Useful language for asking for advice**Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations****Strong suggestions****Weaker suggestions****Weak suggestions****Useful language for responding to advice****Positive responses****Weak and negative responses**

Use the key words or mixed phrases (not both) below to help with the brainstorming task above.

Key words

There is one key word for each phrase above, but some can be used in more than one place.

Useful language for asking for advice

think
solution
would
recommend
suggest
can
solve
advice
ideas

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations**Strong suggestions**

better
really
have
were
strongly

Weaker suggestions

should
thought
considered
worth

Weak suggestions

possibly
might

Useful language for responding to advice**Positive responses**

great
definitely

Weak and negative responses

seems
consider
other
else
sure

Put the key words into the gaps in the mixed phrases on the next page.

Useful language for asking for advice

Can you _____ anything?
Do you have any _____?
How can I _____ this problem?
What _____ you do (if you were in my place)?
What _____ I do about it (do you reckon)?
What do you _____ I should do?
What do you _____?
What's the best _____?
What's your _____?

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations**Strong suggestions**

I _____ recommend...
If I _____ you, I would definitely...
You _____ must...
You must.../ You _____ to...
You'd _____ ... (or...)

Weaker suggestions

Have you _____ about...?
Have you _____ ...?
It's _____ thinking about...
You _____ probably...

Weak suggestions

It _____ be worth thinking about...
You could (_____)...

Useful language for responding to advice**Positive responses**

Good idea. I'll _____ do that. Thanks for your advice.
That's a _____ idea. I'll do exactly what you said.

Weak and negative responses

That _____ like a good idea. I'll give it a try.
That might work. I'll _____ it.
Actually, ... already. Do you have any _____ ideas?
I'm not sure that would work (in this case) (because...) Can you suggest anything _____?
Hmmm. Are you _____ that's a good idea?

Check your answers above.

Do the same giving advice activity as before, but this time flipping a coin to decide your response to your partner's advice:

- Heads = Positive reaction
- Tails = Negative reaction