



ESL Podcast 772 – Types of People at Work

GLOSSARY

to show (someone) around – to give someone an orientation; to teach someone where things are in an unfamiliar building or city

* When Ida moved into the apartment building, her neighbor offered to show her around the neighborhood.

the lay of the land – the organization or layout of something; where things are placed or found

* This is such a big campus! It's going to take us weeks to figure out the lay of the land.

perfectionist – someone who has very high standards and wants to do everything the right way, without making any mistakes

* Gladys is a perfectionist who does her work well, but very slowly because she wants to make it just right.

stickler – someone who follows the rules exactly and insists that other people do the same; someone who is very strict

* Damian is a stickler with his exercise routine. He runs 8 miles every weekday, and 12 miles on Saturdays.

slacker – someone who is lazy and does not do the work he or she is supposed to do, or does not do it well

* Adam is such a slacker. He just watches TV all day and refuses to work or help around the house.

troublemaker – a person who creates difficulties for other people; someone who creates problems

* Hans is a troublemaker in the classroom, so the teacher watches him carefully.

warning – advice about a dangerous or difficult situation that may happen in the future; caution

* The embassy issued a warning about the dangerous protests in the capital city.

to work under (someone) – to work under someone's supervision; to report to someone in a work environment; to be managed by someone

* It would be such an honor to work under Professor Maser, because she's a leading researcher in our field.



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slave driver – a person who demands that other people work very hard; someone with very high expectations for other people’s performance
* Shelby is a slave driver who never accepts excuses from her employees.

workaholic – someone who is addicted to work; someone who works very hard for many hours, usually on evenings and weekends when one is not expected to work
* Randolph is a workaholic, which is great for his career, but bad for his marriage.

don’t sweat it – don’t worry; a phrase used to tell someone that there is no need for concern or anxiety
* A: I’m so sorry I broke your cup!
B: Don’t sweat it. We were going to buy new cups anyway.

yes-man – a person who is very eager to please someone else and always agrees to what another person has proposed or requested
* The mayor has surrounded himself with yes-men who never question his decisions.

ambitious – very eager to succeed; with challenging goals for what one wants to accomplish in life
* Is it true that the most ambitious students study medicine, engineering, or law at this university?

ruthless – without showing pity; not caring about other people’s feelings; without compassion
* As CEO, William was ruthless and fired employees all the time without warning.

to get in (someone’s) way – to be an obstacle to what someone wants to accomplish; to interfere with someone’s plans
* Don’t let money get in your way education. If you don’t have enough cash to pay tuition, try to get a scholarship or a loan.

gossip – a person who spreads rumors; someone who shares secret, private information about other people, especially when that information may not be true
* Meghan says that Masayuki is getting a divorce, but she’s such a gossip that I don’t know whether I should believe her.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who would be the best employee?
 - a) A slacker.
 - b) A workaholic.
 - c) A gossip.

 2. Why does Ursula tell Raul, “Don’t sweat it”?
 - a) Because she doesn’t want him to worry.
 - b) Because she doesn’t want him to laugh.
 - c) Because she doesn’t want him to tell others what she is saying.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

lay of the land

In this podcast, the phrase “lay of the land” means the organization or layout of something, where things are placed or found: “From the top of the chapel, we were able to see the entire city and get a feel for the lay of the land.” The phrase “to live off the land” means to grow or hunt one’s food instead of buying it from stores or other people: “They plan to buy a farm and learn to live off the land, far from the city.” Finally, the phrase “in the land of the living” means to be alive or awake: “It’s 11:30 already. Do you think she’ll ever wake up and join the land of the living?”

to get in (someone’s) way

The phrase “to get in (someone’s) way,” in this podcast, means to be an obstacle to what someone wants to accomplish, or to interfere with someone’s plans: “The dictator vowed to punish anyone who got in his way.” The phrase “to be in (somebody’s) way” means to be standing where someone wants to go: “I can’t back up because there’s another car in my way.” The phrase “out of (one’s) way” describes a place that is not on one’s route, or not where one was planning to go: “I agreed to pick up Carla and give her a ride, since her house isn’t out of my way.” The phrase “on its way” means in transit or in progress and describes something that is moving or happening: “Our records show that your shipment is on its way and should arrive in three to four business days.”



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CULTURE NOTE

The Office

Some popular American television shows are “adaptations” (slightly changed versions) of British TV shows. One of these is The Office, which is a comedy “series” (a show with related stories about the same characters each week) that has been “running” (shown on TV) since 2005 and has produced more than 160 30-minute episodes.

The Office “follows” (tells the story of) office workers in a “fictional” (made-up; not real) paper company in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The show is “shot” (recorded) with a single camera to make it “appear” (seem) more like a “documentary” (a movie that shows something in real life, without using actors). Unlike many comedy series, it does not have a “laugh track” (recorded sounds of people laughing when characters say or do something funny, designed to make the show seem funnier to viewers).

The show is about what happens to the company and daily work in the office, and also about the personal relationships among the employees. There are romantic relationships and pregnancies, but also fears about “corporate buyouts” (when one company purchases another and many people lose their job), “fraud” (lying and stealing), and “transfers” (being sent to work in another office) and “promotions” (being put in a better job with increased pay and more responsibilities).

The show has a very large “cast” (the group of actors hired for a particular show or movie). It has won many awards and high “critical acclaim” (favorable reviews). The Office has won four Emmy Awards, including “Outstanding” (excellent) Comedy Series.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 772: Types of People at Work.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 772. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there, become a member, and download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English faster than ever.

This episode is a dialogue between Raul and Ursula about the kind of people you may work with. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Raul: Thanks for showing me around on my first day.

Ursula: It's no problem. I want to give you the lay of the land and tell you about the people you'll be working with. For instance, that's Julie over there. She's really nice, but she's also a perfectionist. If you ever work with her, remember that she's a stickler about everything.

Raul: Okay, I'll remember that.

Ursula: And Phil over there? He's a slacker and a troublemaker. Stay away from him, far, far away.

Raul: Thanks for the warning.

Ursula: And that's Luis. You'll be working under him. He's a slave driver and a workaholic, and he expects everybody else to be one, too.

Raul: That doesn't sound good.

Ursula: Don't sweat it. Standing next to Luis is Gil. He's a yes-man and very, very ambitious, almost ruthless. Don't get in Gil's way.

Raul: Okay, I won't. Thanks for showing me around. By the way, who's the office gossip?



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Ursula: Oh, we don't have one of those around here.

[end of dialogue]

Raul begins by saying, "Thanks for showing me around on my first day." "To show (someone) around" means to give someone a tour or what we might call an "orientation," showing them or teaching them where things are. We often would say that to someone who is new to an office: "Let me show you around," let me introduce you to the people who work here, let me tell you where things are in the office, and so forth. You could also show someone around who is visiting you from another country or another place.

Raul thanks Ursula for showing him around on his first day – his first day at work. Ursula says, "It's no problem. I want to give you the lay of the land." The expression "the lay (lay) of the land" here means how things are organized, where things are found. It might be used in a very general way to tell someone how something is organized. It could be a report or a book; it could be the people in an organization. In this case, it's the people in the office. Ursula says she wants to give Raul the lay of the land and tell him about the people he'll be working with. "For instance (for example), that's Julie over there," she says, "She's really nice, but she's also a perfectionist." "To be perfect" means to have nothing wrong. A "perfectionist" wants everything to be without an error – without a mistake; everything has to be perfect. Someone who always wants to be perfect is a perfectionist; that can be a good thing, that can sometimes be a bad thing. Ursula says, "If you ever work with Julie, remember that she's a stickler about everything." "To be a stickler" (stickler) means to follow the rules exactly, and insist – make sure – that everyone else follows the rules exactly. It can also be another word to describe a perfectionist. Someone might say, "I'm a stickler for details." That is, I want every little thing to be correct. You can be a stickler for something: something that you are very strict about, something that you want to make sure is absolutely perfect.

Raul says, "Okay, I'll remember that (Julie is a stickler about everything)." Ursula says, "And Phil over there? He's a slacker and a troublemaker." "To be a slacker" (slacker) is to be lazy, someone who doesn't work very hard, someone who doesn't do their job or do what they're supposed to do at their job. You don't want to be working with a slacker, someone who never does what they're supposed to do. "My nephew is a slacker. He never works very hard; he doesn't get very much done." I just won't tell you which nephew of my 20 nephews I'm talking about, but you know who you are, nephew! Ursula also says that Phil is a troublemaker. A "troublemaker" (all one word) is a person who creates problems,



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who makes trouble, who creates difficulties for other people. Sometimes we talk about a student in school being a troublemaker, causing problems in class or getting into trouble outside of school. But you could also be a troublemaker in an organization or a business, where you are always perhaps complaining or causing problems. Ursula says that Raul should stay away from Phil, far, far away, meaning don't have anything to do with him. Raul says, "Thanks for the warning." A "warning" is advice about something that is dangerous or difficult that might happen in the future. If someone says, "Be careful walking on the ground there, it's very icy, you could slip and fall," that's a warning, that's telling you something bad could happen in the future if you're not careful.

Ursula continues, "And that's Luis. You'll be working under him." "To work under (someone)" means that someone will be your boss, that person under whom you are working. "I work under John," that means John is my boss; John is the person who is my manager, who tells me what I'm supposed to do. Ursula calls Luis a "slave driver." A "slave" is a person who is owned by someone else – who is the property of someone else. Slavery, of course, is illegal in almost every country, if not every country. When slavery was legal, the people who were in charge of the slaves – who made the slaves work hard – were called the "slave drivers," and that's where this expression comes from. It's someone who makes you work very hard, even if you're not technically or legally a slave. Ursula says that Luis is a workaholic. A "workaholic" (workaholic) is someone who works constantly; we might say that he is addicted to work, someone who works very, very hard all day, even at night. Someone perhaps who loves to work a lot, that's usually the idea. When someone says, "I'm a workaholic," that means that they like to do it. They're addicted to it, just like we have the expression "alcoholic," that's where "workaholic" comes from; that's where we created that word from.

Well, Ursula says that Luis is not only a workaholic, "he expects everyone else to be one, too." Everyone else must also work as hard as he does. Raul says, "That doesn't sound good." Remember, Luis is going to be Raul's boss. Ursula says, "Don't sweat it." The expression "don't sweat (sweat) it" means don't worry about it, don't get too concerned. I'm not sure why; I would be concerned! Then Ursula says, "Standing next to Luis is Gil. Gil is a yes-man (yes-man)." Ursula says that Gil is a yes-man. A "yes-man" is someone who is always agreeing with his boss or the supervisor, someone who wants to make his or her boss happy so they always say, "Oh, yes, that's right. Oh, yes, I agree with you." They never say no to anything their bosses tell them. Ursula says that Gil is very "ambitious." He wants to succeed; he wants to move up in the company; he wants to get a better job, be more successful. Ursula calls Gil "almost ruthless." "To be ruthless" (ruthless) is to not care about anyone else's feelings, to not care



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who you hurt; you're going to get what you want and it's not important to you if you hurt other people.

Ursula says to Raul, "Don't get in Gil's way." "To get in (someone's) way" (way) means to interfere with someone, to prevent someone from doing something they want to do. Raul says, "Okay, I won't (I won't get in Gil's way)." He says, "Thanks for showing me around. By the way" – we use "by the way" as a way of saying oh, one more thing, or I forgot to tell you or forgot to ask you – "By the way, who's the office gossip?" A "gossip" (gossip) is a person who tells other people secrets, who gives private information about someone else to another person. Usually these are negative things about someone else. "To gossip" can be a verb; it means to talk in this way, to talk about other people's problems: "Did you hear that John didn't come home last night and that his wife is really angry at him?" Well, that would be gossip, telling bad things, usually, about other people. Generally speaking, that's a bad idea. Ursula answers by saying, "Oh, we don't have one of those around here." Of course, Ursula is the office gossip; she's the one who's telling Raul all these negative things about his coworkers.

Now let's listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Raul: Okay, I'll remember that.

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Ursula: Oh, we don't have one of those around here.

[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter is no slacker; that's because we have the perfectionist Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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