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City & Guilds Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills Communication

Sample Paper 2

Source Documents for Section 1 Reading

These documents are for Section 1 Reading.
Please read the documents and then answer the 8 questions.

Use Document 1 to answer Questions 1 to 3.
Use Document 2 to answer Question 4.
Use both documents to answer Questions 5 to 8.

Do not write your answers in this booklet as this will not be marked.
All answers should be written in the space provided on the question paper.

Document 1 – magazine article. Use this document to answer questions 1 to 3.

Ring, Bang, Clatter – What a noisy office!

Daniel Kehoe

Noise in the office, including heating and ventilation systems, slamming doors or even people talking, is a common cause of stress and distraction. There are real costs in productivity loss. Perhaps the easiest thing to do is to minimise your reaction to it. Your emotional response can be even more distracting for you than the original sound.

Firstly, let's ask who are the people having problems. Is it just you or is it others as well? If you are the only person who is affected by loud telephone conversations in the background, you probably can't do much more than make a personal appeal to colleagues to keep a lid on it. Can the noise even be controlled or is it from an external source such as traffic? If noise is amplified by poor acoustics, often caused by hard floor surfaces, for instance, then simple steps can be taken to reduce the noise level.

It could be that everyone is aware of the noise level and has come to accept it as usual background noise. Do people tolerate the noise because they believe it can't be reduced in an open-plan office or are they just unaware that they are actually putting up with an unnecessary noise? Simple, easy to implement changes such as relocating printers which churn out documents all day can change noise levels dramatically.

Are more people affected by the noise but suffering silently? Some people don't speak up on issues because they don't have the courage to ask others to pipe down or don't wish to appear unable to cope. It can mean that good employees simply vote with their feet and find work elsewhere.

Is the issue noisy people having personal conversations? Maybe they are unaware just how much noise they are making and that it actually disturbs other people. Is the disruption coming from outside the office, such as loud sirens? Your colleagues may not mind closing the window if they know it is affecting you. Noisy environments do not support concentration and can often interrupt the flow of creative ideas. Inspiration rarely comes from a noisy situation but is more likely to come from a tranquil work space.

The solution will require the cooperation of everybody, so hold an office meeting and put ways to minimise noise on the agenda.

Document 2 – blog. Use this document to answer question 4.

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Blog

Why a Quiet Office is Bad News for Business

By Andrew G. Rosen

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FEBRUARY 2016

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It seems to me that everyone requires a different set of circumstances to concentrate. In addition, I believe every job calls for a different level of communication. But why is it that the only sound coming from many of today's offices is the hum of electronic equipment?

The demand for office silence is counter-productive. A noisy office has its problems, but any boss who encourages an atmosphere where you could hear a pin drop isn't helping the employees or the company.

A noisy office can:

1. Allow open communication
In my opinion, whispering can create a climate of solitude, secrecy and suspicion, even fuelling paranoia, but a noisier office means that you can chat without having to whisper. For more heated debates, a meeting room away from the main working area could provide a great compromise.

2. Make people less self-conscious
Quiet can be really useful if you have to read a very demanding document, or if one person is giving a presentation. If a room is generally too quiet, though, you may have an unintended audience eavesdropping on your conversation, which can change the way you communicate. It's sort of like reality TV stars - how can they really be themselves when there's a camera in their faces? Moreover, people overhearing the conversation would be distracted because any noise, even a simple chat, can slice through the silence. Workers might email people within speaking distance, rather than speak face-to-face, since you can't speak freely if everyone can hear. With a slightly noisier office, there is no need to worry about disturbing other people.

3. Spark creativity
A library-like work environment can kill spontaneity. People will exchange ideas and brainstorm the next big thing when talking is the rule rather than the exception.

People who need to concentrate to complete complicated tasks may need a little quiet time, so a simple way to address this could be the provision of a few quiet work stations which people could use when silence is needed.

4. Build team spirit
The buzz of background chatter is good for morale. In my experience, team spirit is often improved by people feeling free to communicate spontaneously and being relaxed enough to chat or let off steam. Quiet does have an important role in life, but the office is not a library.

Andrew G. Rosen *is the founder and editor of Jobacle.com, a career advice blog.*

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Source document 1 adapted from:
http://www.dkmanagementtools.com/_blog/Daniel_Kehoe/post/Managing_the_Office_Environment_-_Noisy_Colleagues/

Source document 2 adapted from:
http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/04/26/why-a-quiet-office-is-bad-news