

## Talking About Work: The Office Atmosphere

What kind of **atmosphere** is in your office? I'm not talking about oxygen and nitrogen, I'm talking about the way you feel when you're at work. Do you **get along** with your **co-workers**? Do you have a good **boss**?

The office atmosphere is **influenced** by a lot of things, including how much stress you have at work and how your co-workers and boss **react** to the stress. People who leave their jobs almost always say the atmosphere at work is the biggest **factor** in their decision to leave.

How's the atmosphere at your job? How was the atmosphere at your last job? What factors could improve the atmosphere? How well do your co-workers and boss react to stress? How well do you react to stress?

### Vocabulary

**Atmosphere:** In science, atmosphere is another word for the air surrounding the earth. When you breath in, that's atmosphere you're breathing. When we talk about work, however, the atmosphere is the way you feel at work. If you look around, do you see smiles? People laughing? Then you probably have a positive atmosphere at work. But if everyone is always depressed, if you feel like a slave to your work, then the atmosphere is negative. The atmosphere at work—how everyone feels—is **influenced** by a lot of things, but don't forget: it's **influenced** you you, too!

**Get along:** When I was small, I played well with my brothers, but my sister and I seemed to always fight. My mother would yell at both of us and ask “why don't you two get along?” Get along is a verb phrase that means something less than to be friends. A person you get along with is a person you can work and cooperate with without fighting.

Obviously, it's important to get along with your brothers and sisters—my sister and I are best friends, now—but it's also important to get along with your **boss** and **co-workers**. After all, now that you work, you spend more time with your **co-workers** than with your family.

**Co-workers:** Do you work alone? Are there people who work with you? The people who work with you are your co-workers. Co-workers are the people you might share your office with, or share a **boss** with. Good co-workers can make a bad job better, but bad co-workers can make a good job terrible! **Getting along** with my co-workers is the most important thing to me in a job.

**Boss:** Is there someone at work who tells you what to do? Does the same person tell you when you're

doing a bad job? A good job? Maybe you *are* that person for other people. That person is the boss. Sometimes a boss is called a 'manager' or a 'supervisor.' A good boss can **influence** the work **atmosphere** more than anybody else at work.

**Influence:** When you buy a car, what do you look at? Is the color of the car as important as the size of the car? Is the size of the motor as important as the price of the car? The things that are important to you are the things that influence which car you buy.

The word influence means that one thing has an effect on another thing. Your **boss** influences how you feel about work. What you talk about in English influences what vocabulary you learn. Whether or not you drive to work influences how far from work you will live. And the **atmosphere** at work influences how much you enjoy working.

**React:** If a **co-worker** throws a ball at you, will you stop, form a plan, and deal with the situation? Or will you catch the ball without thinking? I think you will catch the ball. It's how most of us would react. Reacting is when what you do is **influenced** almost 100% by what happened before. Some people react to stress by becoming angry—hopefully not your **co-workers** or **boss**—and others react by working harder.

If you are driving and a child throws a ball into the street, how will you react? If you're at work and your **boss** gives you extra tasks to do, how do you react? When you're reading a text in English and find words you don't know, how do you react?

**Factor:** Remember when we talked about the word **influence**? We talked about buying a car, and the different things that **influenced** what car you would buy. The price of the car, the color, the size, the size of the motor. All of the things that **influence** what car you buy are factors in your decision.

A factor is something that **influences** something else. How much fun you have learning English is a factor in how much English you learn. How much fun you have at work is a factor in the office **atmosphere**. How well your **boss** and **co-workers** **get along** is a factor in the work **atmosphere**, too!