TECHNOLOGY WORK BUDDIES

Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
17E9-6DEN-N8E

1 Warm-up

What technology/software do you use at work every day?

2 Key words

Match the words on the left to the definitions on the right.

1. overloaded	a. accept and appreciate something completely
2. oversee	b. completely overpowered by something, e.g. thoughts, feelings, work, pressure, etc.
3. counterintuitive	c. fundamental
4. overwhelmed	d. given too much to cope with
5. core	e. supervise, manage
6. tenuous	f. the opposite to what most people would expect
7. embrace	g. weak or vague

3 Read - watch - answer

You are going to watch the beginning of Nadija Yousif's talk on the connection between work and technology. Read the statements below and watch the first part of the video (00:00-02:00). Decide if the sentences are T (true) or F (false).

1. Technology at work should be treated as a highly efficient employee.
2. Most in-company technology projects are cancelled.
3. Managers don't expect technology to make employees happy.
4. Most front-line workers feel afraid and often frustrated about new software and tools.

4 Read - watch - answer

Read the questions below then watch the rest of the video and choose the best answer.

1. According to Brookings, _____ of all jobs nowadays require at least mid-level digital skills.

   a. 70% b. half c. 85%

2. What do Org charts include?

   a. boxes and lines representing people b. individual technology c. technological team members

3. Why do companies need charts?

   a. to make their work easier
   b. to explore how people and technology team members interact together
   c. to survey customer interactions

4. What does the speaker suggest as a team-building activity?

   a. a meeting with the boss b. a specialist course c. shared dinner

5. What improvement could the Bovingdons Catering Company make?

   a. workers could report to the main director
   b. other supervisors could be responsible for some technology
   c. the operations director should use more technology

6. After the experiment, how did Christopher and his HR team feel about using the systems in a new way?

   a. frustrated and not willing to change their ways
   b. quite neutral, nothing changed
   c. pretty happy about working with technology which would save a lot of time

5 Find the words

Find words/phrases in the transcript on Page 4-6 which mean ...

1. a worker who is very successful **(phrase, P1)**: _____
2. doing the most important or the hardest work **(phrase, P3)**: _____
3. making (him) unable to perform tasks due to lack of available resources **(idiom, P10)**: _____
4. suspended, put aside **(verb -ed, P11)**: _____
5. abilities and experience that make someone suitable for a particular job or activity **(plural noun, P12)**: _____
6. frightened or nervous because you are not confident in a situation **(adjective, P13)**: _____
7. for the excitement **(phrase, P16)**: _____

6 Advanced phrasal verbs

Match the phrasal verbs from the transcript with their meanings. Then fill in the sentences below with the correct tense form of each verb. Compare your answers with you partner.

1. kick (sb) out	a. to be as good as what was expected
2. rack up	b. to collect a large number or amount of something
3. back (sth) up	c. to force someone to leave a place
4. float around	d. to move without a specific purpose
5. live up to (sth)	e. to play with, not take seriously
6. toy with (sb/sth)	f. to slowly and carefully explain something to someone or show them how to do it
7. walk sb through sth	g. to support something with evidence

1. Last year, they _____ profits of more than £5 million.
2. The breathtaking scenery certainly _____ my expectations.
3. Kat is _____ the idea of going to Vegas and spending all her money on gambling!
4. His business plan was _____ in his company after he accidentally sent it to a colleague.
5. Sue has been _____ of her flat for not paying her rent.
6. If you have any problems using the new software, don't worry. I'll _____ you _____ it.
7. Harmer's thesis was _____ by thorough research.

7 Talking point

Discuss any of the questions below.

1. What technology do you use at your work or school that makes your life easier?
2. Are there any gadgets that you really want to get?
3. What are some examples of technology that have made the world worse?

Why you should treat the tech you use at work like a colleague

Transcript

1. So, imagine a company hires a new employee, best in the business, who's on a multimillion-dollar contract. Now imagine that whenever this employee went to go meet with her team members, the appointments were ignored or dismissed, and in the meetings that did happen, she was yelled at or **kicked out** after a few minutes. So after a while, she just went quietly back to her desk, sat there with none of her skills being put to use, of course, being ignored by most people, and of course, still getting paid millions of dollars. This hotshot employee who can't seem to catch a break is that company's technology.
2. This scenario is not an exaggeration. In my job as a technology advisor, I've seen so many companies make the well-meaning decisions to put huge investments into technology, only to have the benefits fail to **live up to** the expectation. In fact, in one study I read, 25 percent of technology projects are cancelled or deliver things that are never used. That's like billions of dollars just being wasted each year.
3. So why is this? Well, from what I've seen, the expectation from the top management is high but not unreasonable about the benefits from the technology. They expect people will use them, it will create time savings, and people will become genuinely better at their jobs. But the reality is that the people on the front line, who are supposed to be using these softwares and tools, they're sceptical or even afraid. We postpone the online trainings, we don't bother to learn the shortcuts, and we get frustrated at the number of tools we have to remember how to log into and use. Right? And that frustration, that guilt – it's **racking up**, the more that technology is inserting itself into our daily working lives, which is a lot.
4. Brookings says that 70 percent of jobs today in the US require at least mid-level digital skills. So basically, to work these days, you need to be able to work with technology. But from what I've seen, we are not approaching this with the right mindset.
5. So here's the idea that I've been **toying with**: What if we treated technology like a team member? I've been writing my own personal experiment about this. I've spoken to people from all different industries about how they can treat their core technologies like colleagues. I've met with people from the restaurant industry, medical professionals, teachers, bankers, people from many other sectors, and the first step with anybody that I would meet with was to draw out the structure of their teams in an organization chart.
6. Now, I'm a total geek when it comes to organization charts. Org charts are really cool because, if they are drawn well, you can quickly get a sense of what individual roles are and also how a team works well together. But if you look at a typical org chart, it only includes the boxes and lines that represent people. None of the technology team members are there. They're all invisible. So for each of the organizations that I met with for my experiment, I had to draw a new type of org chart, one that also included the technology. And when I did this, people I spoke to could actually visualize their technologies as coworkers, and they could ask things like: "Is this software reporting to the right person?" "Does this man and machine team work well together?" "Is that technology actually the team member that everybody's awkwardly avoiding?"
7. So I will **walk you through** an example of a small catering company to bring this experiment to life. This is the top layer of people who work at Bovingdons Catering Company. There's a sales director, who manages all of the customer interactions, and there's an operations director, who manages all the internal activities. And here [sic] are the people who report to the sales and operations directors. And finally, here's the view where we've overlaid the software and the hardware that's used by the Bovingdons staff. Using this amazing org chart, we can now explore how the human team members and the technology team members are interacting.
8. So the first thing that I'm going to look for is where there's a human and machine relationship that's extra critical. Usually, it's somebody using a technology on a day-to-day basis to do his or her job. At Bovingdons, the finance director with the accounting platform

would be one. Next, I would check on the status of their collaboration. Are they working well together? Getting along? In this case, it turned out to be a tenuous relationship.

9. So, what to do? Well, if the accounting platform were actually a person, the finance director would feel responsible for managing it and taking care of it. Well, in the same way, my first suggestion was to think about a team-building activity, maybe getting together on a specialist course. My second suggestion was to think about scheduling regular performance reviews for the accounting platform, where the finance director would literally give feedback to the company who sold it. Now, there will be several of these really important human and machine teams in every organization. So if you're in one, it's worth taking the time to think about ways to make those relationships truly collaborative.

10. Next, I'll look on the chart for any human role which might be overloaded by technology, let's say, interacting with four or more types of applications. At Bovingdons, the operations director was interacting with five technologies. Now, he told me that he'd always felt overwhelmed by his job, but it wasn't until our conversation that he thought it might be because of the technologies he was overseeing. And we were talking that, if the operations director had actually had a lot of people reporting to him, he probably would have done something about it, because it was stretching him too thin, like, move some of them to report to somebody else. So in the same way, we talked about moving some of the technologies to report to someone else, like the food inventory to go to the chef.

11. The last thing that I'll look for is any technology that seems to be on the org chart without a real home. Sometimes they're **floating around** without an owner. Sometimes they're reporting to so many different areas that you can't tell who's actually using it. Now, at Bovingdons, nobody appeared to be looking after the marketing software. It was like someone had hired it and then didn't give it a desk or any instructions on what to do. So clearly, it needed a job description, maybe someone to manage it. But in other companies, you might find that a technology has been side-lined for a reason, like it's time for it to leave or be retired. Now, retiring applications is something that all companies do. But maybe taking the mindset that those applications are actually coworkers could help them to decide when and how to retire those applications in the way that would be least destructive to the rest of the team.

12. I did this experiment with 15 different professionals, and each time it sparked an idea. Sometimes, a bit more. You remember that hotshot employee I was telling you about, that everybody was ignoring? That was a real story told to me by Christopher, a very energetic human resources manager at a big consumer goods company. Technology was a new HR platform, and it had been installed for 14 months at great expense, but nobody was using it. So we were talking about how, if this had really been such a hotshot employee with amazing credentials, you would go out of your way to get to know it, maybe invite them for coffee, get to know their background.

13. So in the spirit of experimentation, Christopher set up one-hour appointments, coffee optional, for his team members to have no agenda but to get to know their HR system. Some people, they clicked around menu item by menu item. Other people, they searched online for things that they weren't clear about. A couple of them got together, gossiped about the new software in town. And a few weeks later, Christopher called to tell me that people were using the system in new ways, and he thought it was going to save them weeks of effort in the future. And they also reported feeling less intimidated by the software. I found that pretty amazing, that taking this mindset helped Christopher's team and others that I spoke to these past few months actually feel happier about working with technology.

14. And I later found out this is **backed up** by research. Studies have shown that people who work in organizations that encourage them to talk about and learn about the technologies in the workplace have 20 percent lower stress levels than those in organizations that don't. I also found it really cool that when I started to do this experiment, I started with what was happening between a person and an individual technology, but then it ultimately led to ideas about how to manage tech across entire companies. Like, when I did this for my own job and extended it, I thought about how our data analysis tools should go on the equivalent of a job rotation

program, where different parts of the company could get to know it. And I also thought about suggesting to our recruiting team that some of the technologies we work with every day should come with us on our big recruiting events. If you were a university student, how cool would it be to not only get to know the people you might be working with, but also the technologies?

15. Now, all of this begs the question: What have we been missing by keeping the technologies that we work with day to day invisible, and what, beyond those billions of dollars in value, might we be leaving on the table? The good news is, you don't need to be an org chart geek like me to take this experiment forward. It will take a matter of minutes for most people to draw out a structure of who they work with, a little bit longer to add in the technologies to get a view of the entire team, and then you can have fun asking questions like, "Which are the technologies that I'll be taking out for coffee?"

16. Now, I didn't do this experiment for kicks or for the coffee. I did it because the critical skill in the 21st-century workplace is going to be to collaborate with the technologies that are becoming such a big and costly part of our daily working lives. And from what I was seeing, we are struggling to cope with that. So it might sound counterintuitive, but by embracing the idea that these machines are actually valuable colleagues, we as people will perform better and be happier. So let's all share a bit of humanity towards the technologies and the softwares and the algorithms and the robots who we work with, because we will all be the better for it.

Key

1. Warm-up

Encourage a short discussion.

2. Key words

1. d 2. e 3. f 4. b 5. c 6. g 7. a

3. Read - watch - answer

Students read through the questions first. Play the first two minutes of the talk and then pause the video.

1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T

4. Read - watch - answer

Students read through the questions first. Play the rest of the talk.

1. a 2. a 3. b 4. b 5. b 6. c

5. Find the words

Hand out the transcript of the the talk to the students.

1. a hotshot employee
2. on the front line
3. stretching (him) too thin
4. side-lined
5. credentials
6. intimidated
7. for kicks

6. Advanced phrasal verbs

Students work individually and check in pairs.

1. c 2. b 3. g 4. d 5. a 6. e 7. f

1. racked up
2. lived up to
3. toying with
4. floating around
5. kicked out
6. walk you through
7. backed up