



Dealing with Problems

Business > Advanced 7



Exercise 1 – Reading

Read the dialogue aloud with your tutor and check your understanding.

Ms. Jackson, the director of Digital Photography, has called a meeting to discuss a problem that the company is facing.

Ms. Jackson: Hello, everyone. I called this meeting to discuss a problem that has recently emerged. After checking the statistics for our new branch offices, we have discovered that we have a sales coverage problem to deal with. Our options are quite limited, but we need to decide on a course of action. So, I'd like everyone's attention. Our sales manager, Mr. Thomas, will explain the situation.

Manager: So, as you all know, three months ago we opened two new branch offices, one in New York and another one in Chicago. However, it seems that we have made a mistake evaluating our potential clients. It turns out that our office in New York is not able to serve all of their customers. However, Chicago has more than enough resources to handle all of their customers. We need to do something about this. So, what are our options?

Bob: I believe our best option would be to transfer some workers from Chicago to New York. That would solve the problems in both offices. An alternative would be to lay off some workers in Chicago, and start hiring more people in New York.



Manager: We'd like to avoid layoffs if we can. So, I guess the only thing we can do at this point is ask workers to relocate. I'm just not sure that many would be willing to do so. A lot of them have families here...

Laura: Then maybe we shouldn't target people with families unless they want to relocate. We could start by giving people the option to transfer to New York and see how that goes. On the upside, it is New York, after all, and many people dream about living there. Besides, the salary at the New York branch is higher. So, there might be a few volunteers.

Manager: That might work. Any other ideas? How about we vote on this idea and if it gets a majority, we forward it to management? It will then be discussed thoroughly in tomorrow's meeting.

The sales manager counts the votes.

Manager: As we clearly see, the majority is for the proposal; therefore, I will forward it to management. Thank you all for engaging in this discussion.



Check your understanding:

1. What problem is the company facing?
2. What kind of solution was proposed?
3. How did they reach a decision in the end?



Exercise 2 – Learning

Useful Expressions

- We need to do something about this.
- Our options are limited.
- What are our options?
- How can we go about this?
- Another option/an alternative would be...
- The best option would be...
- We have no alternative, but to...
- The only thing we can do at this point is...
- On the upside,...



Exercise 3 – Role Play

Take turns with your tutor and act out the scene described below.

Scene: The deadline for an important project that your team is working on is approaching. There is still a lot of work to be done and you realize that with the current tempo, you won't be able to meet the deadline. Present the problem to other team leaders and ask for ideas. Your teacher will act as one of the attendees.



Exercise 4 – Discussion

Discuss the following questions with your tutor.

1. Do you often get a chance to discuss the problems that your company is facing?
2. What do you think is the best way to reach a decision in a group discussion? Why?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of voting in order to reach a decision?