

English at Work

Episode 60: Stepping aside

Language related to getting the sack



Narrator: Hello again and welcome back to English at Work. Last time we heard the team from Tip Top Trading having a *smashing* time at the launch of its plastic aubergine. Tom threw one at Dave from the IT department, but it missed him and went through a window! It's time for Paul to hand out some harsh words.

(Door shuts)

Paul: That behaviour just isn't on.

Tom: Sorry Paul... but it was quite funny wasn't it?

Paul: No it wasn't.

Anna: Sorry Paul, Tom was just angry with Dave. I thought he liked me but we saw him with Julie from accounts.

Paul: Really? He seemed such a decent chap... anyway, don't do it again. OK? In the meantime, you're going to have to pay for that broken window.

Tom: What... hey? Bbbut...

(Phone rings)

Paul: Now, excuse me, I need to take this. *(Answers phone)* Hello, Paul Smith speaking. Ah, Mr Socrates... yes... ah, you've heard...

Tom: *(Whispering)* Crikey, come on we'd better go.

(Door shuts)

Denise: That was a good shot Tom! Looks like it's made an impact on Dave. Look, he's sent Anna some flowers.

Anna: Oh there's a note on it. It says "You can count on me" but no name.

Denise: That is a strange thing for him to write.

Anna: Hmm, it is and it's not his handwriting.

Tom: Maybe a secret admirer eh? I wonder who it could be?

(Door opens)

Denise: Are you OK Paul? You look as white as a sheet.

Paul: I'm not actually. Mr Socrates says he's having a *strategic review*.

Anna: A what?

Narrator: He means he's been looking at how the business is operating and how it should operate in the future.

Anna: That sounds serious.

Paul: And as part of his review, he says he wants to downsize and he's asked me to... step aside.

Anna: Why? What are you in the way of?

Narrator: No Anna. To step aside is a polite way of saying to leave your position in the company.

Anna: Oh. I don't understand Paul. Why?

Paul: He says the company needs new direction and more dynamic leadership.

Tom: Crumbs Paul, you can't get more dynamic than you! (*sniggers*).

Anna: Tom! But Paul, you've been a great boss.

Paul: Thanks Anna. I guess it's the economic climate, we're not making enough money so cutting staff is inevitable.

Tom: Yeah but you cut Denise's job.

Paul: Yes but we had to get her back because she was necessary for the smooth running of the department.

Denise: That's right.

Paul: But Mr Socrates says I'm 'surplus to requirement'.

Anna: Oh, that doesn't sound good... does it?

Narrator: If Paul's job is 'surplus to requirement', it means his input to the business is no longer needed. So it's not good news.

Paul: Anyway Anna, Mr Socrates wants to know if you got his special message?

Anna: Special message? The flowers!?

Denise: That's strange. Why is Mr Socrates sending you flowers?

Narrator: It is a bit strange. Anyway, Paul's news has come as a shock for everyone. Here are some of the phrases Mr Socrates used to break the bad news:

*I've been doing a strategic review of the company.
I need to downsize.
I need you to step aside.
The company needs a new direction and more dynamic leadership.
You are surplus to requirement.*

Anna: Right, I'm going to have to call Mr Socrates and find out why he's sent me flowers.

(Anna phones Mr Socrates)

Mr Socrates: Socrates... who wants me?

Anna: Erm... hello Mr Socrates... it's Anna here, in London.

Mr Socrates: Anna! My favourite girl. Please call me Brad. So glad you called.

Anna: I needed to speak to you about the flowers you sent me. I'm very flattered but I don't think...

Mr Socrates: The flowers?! Sorry honey, I haven't sent you any flowers but I have sent you an email – have you read it yet?

Anna: No. What did it say?

Mr Socrates: I was saying that as I'm giving Paul the chop, would you like a promotion?

Anna: A promotion?

Mr Socrates: Yes. You have been an outstanding member of the team so how would you like to be the new manager of Tip Top Trading's London office?

Narrator: What a fantastic opportunity and one that Anna surely can't refuse – or can she? And who did send Anna those flowers with a message saying "You can count on me"? Find out what her answer is in the next English at Work. Bye.

Listening Challenge:

Who do you think sent Anna the flowers?

Answer: A secret admirer/we don't know yet!