BACK TO WORK

1 Warm up

Do you prefer working in an office or at home? Why/why not?

2 Key words

Study the following sentences and match each underlined word or phrase to its correct definition below.

1. The boss' decision infuriated everyone. Nobody was happy about it.
2. It's not easy to juggle a career and a family.
3. The bosses installed a monitoring system in order not to lose track of what the staff are doing.
4. We had an impromptu meeting while we were chatting by the water cooler.
5. The company's decision seemed like a covert way of increasing productivity.
6. The decision was perplexing – nobody could understand it.

a. confusing, difficult to understand
b. deal with several things at the same time, satisfying all the requirements
c. fail to be fully aware or informed about
d. made (everyone) very angry
e. not openly displayed, secret
f. unplanned

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 Reading

You are going to read an article about working from home. Decide whether the statements are true or false and then check your answers by reading the text **and finally tick the corresponding box.**

1. The working-from-home ban was a collective decision by Yahoo! staff members. **T** **F**
2. According to a Yahoo! memo, working from home prevents collaboration. **T** **F**
3. Yahoo! and Google are very close rivals. **T** **F**
4. Yahoo! employs under 11,000 people. **T** **F**
5. Over 50% of British companies offer regular home-working. **T** **F**
6. According to the UK's Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, people work harder at home. **T** **F**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

THE INDEPENDENT

Yahoo! tells its staff to get back in the office

Boss of internet giant bans working from home - weeks after she built childcare facilities in her own office.

1. It could rank as one of the supreme ironies of the internet age. Silicon Valley pioneer Yahoo!, which helped bring the digital communication revolution to the masses, has banned its staff from working from home.
2. The rule has infuriated parents who were previously able to juggle childcare with their careers, and it was the decision of Marissa Mayer, corporate America's most celebrated working mother, who returned to the office just two weeks after giving birth to her first child.
3. A memo sent last week by the company's head of human resources told Yahoo! staff that they had until the summer to get back to the company HQ in Sunnyvale, California, or lose their job. This came after concern that workers were "hiding" from bosses who had lost track of who was supposed to be where and doing what.
4. "To become the absolute best place to work, communication and collaboration will be important, so we need to be working side by side," the memo stated. "That is why it is critical we are all present in our offices. Some of the best decisions and insights come from hallway and cafeteria discussions, meeting new people, and impromptu team meetings."
5. Chief executive Ms Mayer, 37, who once ranked her priorities as God, family and Yahoo!, is charged with turning round the company which has been eclipsed by rivals such as Google. She is said to have become frustrated at the sight of the half-full company car park emptying rapidly at 5pm each day — especially after building her own nursery next to her office to allow her to work longer hours.
6. But one anonymous member of staff said female employees would be hit hardest. "When a working mother is standing behind this, you know we are a long way from a culture that will honour the thankless sacrifices that women too often make," she wrote.
7. Some analysts have suggested the back-to-work order could be a covert way of reducing staff numbers and restoring a competitive work ethic at the company which employs 11,500 people in 20 countries. However, the move was described by Virgin tycoon Sir Richard Branson as "perplexing" and a "backward step".
8. "If you provide the right technology to keep in touch, maintain regular communication and get the right balance between remote and office working, people will be motivated to work responsibly, quickly and with high quality," Sir Richard said.
9. A recent study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that flexible employment was now common in British companies, with 54 per cent offering home-working on a regular basis.
10. Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD, said there was a powerful business case for allowing workers greater freedom.
11. "The evidence shows that where people are able to benefit from flexible working they are more likely to be engaged and work harder," he said. "They have lower levels of stress and are more likely to stay with their company".

Adapted from The Independent, 26 Feb 2013

LIVEWORKSHEETS

4 Checking understanding

Match each question below to its corresponding answer :

1. Why did Yahoo! ban working from home?
2. What was Ms Marissa Mayer frustrated about each day?
3. Why was one anonymous female staff member particularly unhappy about the ban?
4. According to some analysts, what could be the real purpose of the ban?
5. According to Richard Branson, how can people be motivated to work hard at home?
6. According to Ben Willmott, what are the benefits of working from home?

a. because it was the decision of a working mother
b. with the right technology and balance between remote and office working (= flexible working)
c. they were worried about the fact that workers could hide from bosses and that bosses might lose sight of their employees' work.
d. the sight of a half-full car park emptying rapidly
e. to reduce staff numbers and increase competitiveness
f. lower levels of stress, higher levels of engagement and hard work, greater loyalty to the company

5 Find the words

Find a word or phrase in the article which means...

1. very great (adjective, P1) _____
2. close together (phrase, P4) _____
3. overtaken, made less important (by a competitor) (verb -ed, P5) _____
4. competitors (plural noun, P5) _____
5. an area for the special use of young children (noun, P5) _____
6. (of a job or task) difficult or unpleasant and not really appreciated by others (adjective, P6) _____
7. a businessperson of great wealth and power (noun, P7) _____
8. deeply involved (in something) (adjective, P11) _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS