

Reading Part 4a

Read the text and the questions. Choose the correct answer for each question.

Being a flight attendant - Harry Jones talks about his job

Look at Cloud 9's careers page and you'll see that flight attendants can expect 4am wake-up calls, long hours, delays, flight cancellations and weekends and holidays spent working. But the advantages are getting to see the world and not taking your work home with you.

I've worked for the airline Cloud 9 for the past 20 years, and year after year it's given 4.5 out of 5 stars for being a wonderful place to work. But let me tell you, being an attendant is far more than serving drinks and meals. We have to be professional at all times and we're trained to deal with all sorts of unexpected situations.

In the past, Cloud 9 used to advertise for attendants. Now they don't need to. They receive approximately 60,000 applications annually, but only 1% are invited to interview. Those who are invited need to come in business attire. We flight attendants take pride in our uniform so it's important to look the part.

I help recruit new employees, so I know a thing or two about the interview process. At Cloud 9 we make sure that those we hire fit well within our organization. We use a variety of techniques, including video interviews, question and answer sessions, and one-to-one meetings. It's a tough process, but we make sure there's some fun, and frequent breaks.

As a flight attendant, it's important to be patient and above all, to pay careful attention to what the passengers are telling you. Our customers are as different as the places we fly to, and their wants and needs can be equally different. Flying can be exhausting at times, so I do whatever I can to make the customer's journey a pleasure and it helps that I can speak Spanish and a little French. Customers always appreciate that.

1. What does Harry say about Cloud 9, the airline company he works for?
 - a) People report that it is a great employer.
 - b) It has the hardest training programme.
 - c) He always wanted to work for the company.
2. Harry advises people applying to be a Cloud 9 attendant
 - a) to study the company's history.
 - b) to send their application in quickly.
 - c) to make sure they are smartly dressed.
3. What does Harry say about the interview process?
 - a) The interviews can take a long time.
 - b) The company has a range of interview methods.
 - c) The candidates often find it surprisingly enjoyable.
4. What quality does Harry think is important for flight attendants?
 - a) being able to speak several languages
 - b) being willing to listen to customers
 - c) being prepared to work long hours
5. In this article Harry
 - a) describes a flight attendant's typical day.
 - b) encourages people to apply to be flight attendants.
 - c) shows that being a flight attendant is more challenging than it first seems.

Reading Part 4b

Read the text and the questions. Choose the correct answer for each question.

Have you ever considered taking a career break?

Often, people see a career break as an unrealistic goal, or the first step to leaving a job. However, it can be done, and a well-planned career break will help you return to your day job full of enthusiasm. Bob Sandler, Head of Content for an education company, says "I first raised the idea of a career break with my line manager several months before I ultimately went. She welcomed it, as she realised I was completely burnt out. So I took six months off and spent the majority of the time in the Brazilian capital studying Portuguese, before travelling around the country."

For Bob, the most difficult aspect was getting his superiors on board. "A lot of negotiation was required, as they were only prepared to authorise three months. But, with my line manager's backing, I got my argument across." Bob's advice is to do as he did: know exactly what you want to get out of your break, anticipate its impact on the rest of the business, and have measures in place to minimise that.

Bob recalls how his team took the news. "It was a department I'd built up from scratch in the preceding 18 months, and I felt like I was abandoning them. They took it well – they were hugely excited for me. I was also able to calm their fears by creating a reorganised responsibilities chart so they could see how the department would work in my absence."

As for his time away, Bob says that it's best to travel with few expectations: "The main thing I would say is that Brazil, for all its attractions from a tourist's perspective, is somewhat less sugary sweet when you live and study there – in terms of infrastructure, finding your way around, getting things done and trying to integrate."

Despite this, Bob found his break to be beneficial in a number of ways. "I could better understand our target audience of international students, as I'd gained valuable first-hand insight in that respect and was full of ideas for new markets and revenue streams. The break also helped to broaden my horizons and understand a hugely complex country."

1. Why was Bob Sandler's boss keen to support his request for a career break?
 - a) She had suggested it to him in the first place.
 - b) She feared he might resign if she didn't.
 - c) She knew he was exhausted.
2. Bob managed to persuade the senior management
 - a) by offering ways to reduce any negative effects on the company.
 - b) by asking his line manager to argue his case.
 - c) by agreeing to shorten his career break.
3. What was Bob's attitude towards his staff?
 - a) He was confident they could take on more responsibility.
 - b) He worried that they would be split up in his absence.
 - c) He suffered feelings of guilt about leaving them.
4. What does Bob say about his time in Brazil?
 - a) He failed to make the most of it.
 - b) It presented him with daily challenges.
 - c) It wasn't long enough to see everything.
5. What is the main point the writer is making about career breaks?
 - a) Business is starting to become more open to them.
 - b) They are suitable for a variety of companies.
 - c) They can bring firms commercial gains.

Reading Part 4c

Read the text and the questions. Choose the correct answer for each question.

The Family Connection

There are many examples of relatives working together, whether in a small family business or as colleagues in a big firm, and having a family connection is definitely one way to get a first step on the career ladder. GoGet Recruitment commissioned a study recently, and interestingly, one of their findings suggests that UK workers tend not to want to work somewhere where a family member is also employed. When the 5,795 workers surveyed in the study were asked if they would recommend a family member for a job within the company they work for, two thirds said they wouldn't. But on delving a bit deeper, GoGet found that the phenomenon of related colleagues is widespread: 42% have worked at one time or another with a family member. So, what's the true picture?

Why are British workers seemingly so unwilling to give their relatives a step up? Perhaps Rachael Alsop's experience can shed some light on this. Rachael told me she was nervous the first time she booked her makeup artist mother to do some work for her advertising agency. "I was worried that it would look like nepotism and appear unprofessional," explains co-founder and managing partner Rachael. "Mum and I were so concerned that just before we got to the photo shoot, I kicked my mum out of the car so that we arrived separately!" Fortunately, Rachael and her mother have gone on to work on several more projects together.

In GoGet's study, 31% of respondents believe that those working with relatives may progress faster within a company. However, a similar proportion (30%) hold the opposite opinion. Indeed, the majority of respondents rejected the assertion that those working for family members earn more and don't have to work as hard. So, it's possible that while the respondents might worry that they would be frowned upon if they were employed by, or chose to employ relatives, they generally don't see any harm in it in principle.

Of the respondents who've worked in family businesses, the overwhelming majority reported that they felt they were treated just like anyone else. One such respondent was James Parkhouse. He works for his father's holiday business. James told me, "I'm very much one of the team, but my siblings, aunts and uncles have perhaps given me a bit more respect for stepping in and helping to grow the business." It hasn't all been plain sailing but James says it's definitely been worth it.

Mark Trafford, Marketing Director at GoGet comments, "While there are difficulties in working with family, most of the challenges are imagined rather than real, and many people find it a rewarding experience."

1. In the first paragraph, the writer points out that GoGet's study
 - a) failed to do any meaningful follow-up.
 - b) uncovered some conflicting messages.
 - c) may not have been responded to honestly.
2. When talking about employing her mother, Rachael Alsop says
 - a) it was a rather naive thing to do.
 - b) her business partners were not aware of her decision.
 - c) she and her mother downplayed their connection.
3. In the third paragraph, the writer suggests that the study's respondents
 - a) may not judge themselves and others equally.
 - b) believe that employing family members is favouritism.
 - c) want unfair hiring practices to be removed.
4. According to James Parkhouse, joining the family business
 - a) was something that was largely expected of him.
 - b) improved his standing within the family at large.
 - c) occurred when the company got into financial trouble.
5. Which is the most suitable sub-title for this article?
 - a) How can family-run businesses in the UK become more cost effective?
 - b) Are UK workers missing out by not wanting to work with family members?
 - c) Do British businesses understand the benefits of treating staff like family?