

Lesson 35:

Creative Work Environments

Warm-Up:

Describe your office or workplace (if currently unemployed, describe your last place of employment). If you were the boss, what would you change about the office?



Activity 1 – Pre-Learn Vocabulary

unorthodox (adj.) = unusual and different, not traditional or typical

*Ex) That school is a bit **unorthodox**; they don't give grades or any type of standardized tests at all.*

cubicle (n.) = a small, square compartment for work or study:



décor (n.) = decoration, particularly of a room or space

*Ex) The beach house had **décor** with an ocean theme, featuring paintings of seashells and tropical fish.*

abound (v.) = to be great in number or amount

*Ex) Scandals **abound** when the government is full of corrupt politicians.*

leeway (n.) = freedom of action or thought within limits

*Ex) The teacher said we have to write at least a ten-page paper, but she gave us some **leeway** on the topic.*

jog (v.) = run slowly

*Ex) I like to **jog** through the park in the morning.*

in-house (adj.) = inside a company or organization (in contrast to contracting a third party from outside the group)

*Ex) Our company doesn't have an **in-house** graphic designer, so we'll need to hire someone to create the poster.*

subsidized (adj.) = having the price reduced because someone else (usually a company, organization, or government) is paying part of the fee

*Ex) My company offers **subsidized** professional training for employees – we can take the classes at half-price.*

cutting-edge (adj.) = extremely modern, leading the trends (often used for technology)

*Ex) Our simulations use **cutting-edge** virtual reality technology.*

picky (adj.) = selective, specific about demands when making a choice (often in an annoying way)

*Ex) My son is a **picky** eater; he won't eat anything with vegetables in it.*

infamous (adj.) = famous (often for something negative)

*Ex) The police finally captured the **infamous** gang leader who had been responsible for at least a hundred crimes.*

Activity 2 – Listen for General Ideas

Speaker: Frank – American



1. The company described in this audio is...
Google / Facebook / Yahoo.
2. Put the topics of the listening in order from 1 to 5:
 - benefits for employees
 - design of the office
 - hiring process
 - policy about time
 - ways to relax

Activity 3 – Listen for Specific Details

1. The Google headquarters allows _____ at the office.
 - a. parties
 - b. pets
 - c. sleeping
2. Employees can...
 - a. choose who exactly they want to work with
 - b. decide their own salaries
 - c. customize their work stations
3. Google offers its employees...
 - a. free alcohol
 - b. free clothes
 - c. free food
4. Which Google program is so popular that there is a waiting list?
 - a. day care for kids
 - b. company sports league
 - c. on-site medical care
5. Google also offers its employees the service of...
 - a. exercise instructors
 - b. massage therapists
 - c. psychologists and counselors
6. How much time can Google engineers spend on projects of personal interest?
 - a. 20%
 - b. 33%
 - c. 50%
7. How many of Google's new products/services have resulted from this program?
 - a. about a tenth
 - b. almost half
 - c. around three-quarters
8. Google's hiring process is famous for...
 - a. asking tricky interview questions
 - b. having to be interviewed by various people
 - c. testing candidates' work with a one-week trial

Activity 4 – Listen for Specific Words

What's the best way to [Click here to enter text](#) your employees? Most companies use the standard method of offering promotions and threatening dismissal. But Google has taken an unorthodox approach to this challenge by [Click here to enter text](#) the boundaries of what can be considered a “workplace” further than ever before.

Inside the company's headquarters, which is known as the Googleplex, the layout itself is far from [Click here to enter text](#). Instead of cubicles and conservative décor, Google's office feels a little like a grown-up playground. Bright colors abound, there are secret rooms with innovative [Click here to enter text](#) around every corner, and pets can accompany their masters to work. Employees are encouraged to express themselves by writing on the [Click here to enter text](#), and are also given plenty of leeway in designing their own work stations – they can even have a treadmill [Click here to enter text](#) so they can walk or jog while working.

The benefits for Google employees are unmatched – from cafés and vending machines offering free gourmet food to [Click here to enter text](#) hours and casual dress. (One of Google's principles is that “you can be serious without a [Click here to enter text](#).”) The company not only offers a healthcare plan, but also includes on-site medical staff to attend to employees. Free [Click here to enter text](#), laundry, and dry cleaning are all part of the package – and children of Google employees can be enrolled in the in-house day care program, which has become so popular that the waiting list now numbers in the [Click here to enter text](#).

If the work gets stressful at times, Google employees can enjoy a subsidized massage service from a licensed therapist. Or they can take a [Click here to enter text](#) in one of the recreation areas, with pool tables, ping-pong, foosball, and even a swimming pool. In stark contrast to many other cutting-edge [Click here to enter text](#) in their field, there is the idea that the weekend is strictly family time, and as

much as possible of the Google dynasty [Click here to enter text.](#) down on Saturdays and Sundays.

One of Google's most controversial programs is called "[Click here to enter text.](#) Time Off," in which engineers are allowed to spend up to 20% of their hours on projects that interest them. Although some criticize this policy as a [Click here to enter text.](#) of tech talent, the results speak for themselves: almost half of Google's new products and services have originated in these [Click here to enter text.](#) endeavors. Having company-sanctioned time for innovation also [Click here to enter text.](#) employees and increases their work output.

Working at Google sounds like a [Click here to enter text.](#) come true – but first you have to get through the hiring process. With such [Click here to enter text.](#) perks, the company can afford to be picky when it comes to recruitment. This has led to their infamous interview questions, such as "How many ping-pong balls can you fit in a school [Click here to enter text.](#)?" Rather than searching for the most accurate answer, Google is likely filtering out people who won't be a good fit with their company [Click here to enter text.](#) They are seeking not only brilliant minds, but also creative types who resonate with their [Click here to enter text.](#) that "work should be challenging and the challenge should be fun."

Complete Transcript

What's the best way to **motivate** your employees? Most companies use the standard method of offering promotions and threatening dismissal. But Google has taken an unorthodox approach to this challenge by **pushing** the boundaries of what can be considered a "workplace" further than ever before.

Inside the company's headquarters, which is known as the Googleplex, the layout itself is far from **conventional**. Instead of cubicles and conservative décor, Google's office feels a little like a grown-up playground. Bright colors abound, there are secret rooms with innovative **themes** around every corner, and pets can accompany their masters to work. Employees are encouraged to express themselves by writing on the **walls**, and are also given plenty of leeway in designing their own work stations – they can even have a treadmill **attached** so they can walk or jog while working.

The benefits for Google employees are unmatched – from cafés and vending machines offering free gourmet food to **flexible** hours and casual dress. (One of Google's principles is that "you can be serious without a **suit**.") The company not only offers a healthcare plan, but also includes on-site medical staff to attend to employees. Free **haircuts**, laundry, and dry cleaning are all part of the package – and children of Google employees can be enrolled in the in-house day care program, which has become so popular that the waiting list now numbers in the **hundreds**.

If the work gets stressful at times, Google employees can enjoy a subsidized massage service from a licensed therapist. Or they can take a **break** in one of the recreation areas, with pool tables, ping-pong, foosball, and even a swimming pool. In stark contrast to many other cutting-edge **companies** in their field, there is the idea that the weekend is strictly family time, and as much as possible of the Google dynasty **shuts** down on Saturdays and Sundays.

One of Google's most controversial programs is called "**Innovation** Time Off," in which engineers are allowed to spend up to 20% of their hours on projects that interest them. Although some criticize this policy as a **waste** of tech talent, the results speak for themselves: almost half of Google's new products and services have originated in these **independent** endeavors. Having company-sanctioned time for innovation also **energizes** employees and increases their work output.

Working at Google sounds like a **dream** come true – but first you have to get through the hiring process. With such **incredible** perks, the company can afford to be picky when it comes to recruitment. This has led to their infamous interview questions, such as "How many ping-pong balls can you fit in a school **bus**?" Rather than searching for the most accurate answer, Google is likely filtering out people who won't be a good fit with their company **culture**. They are seeking not only brilliant minds, but also creative types who resonate with their **philosophy** that "work should be challenging and the challenge should be fun."

Extra Vocabulary

"cafés and **vending machines** offering free **gourmet** food"

"Vending machines" are machines that usually sell snacks and drinks, you put in some money and select the item you want. "Gourmet" food is especially nice or fancy food.

"Free haircuts, laundry, and **dry cleaning**"

"Dry cleaning" is a method of cleaning clothes and certain fabrics, which uses chemicals but no water.

"**pool tables, ping-pong, foosball**"

These are three games that are played on tables. "Pool" is also called "billiards," "ping-pong" is also called "table tennis," and "foosball" can also be called "table soccer."



"the results **speak for themselves**"

This expression means that the benefits of the results are obvious; no extra evidence is needed.

"Having company-**sanctioned** time for innovation also energizes employees and increases their work **output**."

If something is "sanctioned" by the company, it means it is officially approved, supported, and permitted. A person's work "output" is the amount of work they produce.

"creative types who **resonate with** their philosophy"

If an idea "resonates with" someone, it means the person likes and feels a positive connection to the idea.

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Activity 2 Answers

1. Google
2. The correct order is:
 - design of the office
 - benefits for employees
 - ways to relax
 - policy about time
 - hiring process

Activity 3 Answers

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

Image sources: [BeaconHillPG](#), [Niteowlneils](#), [Luke Rathbone](#)