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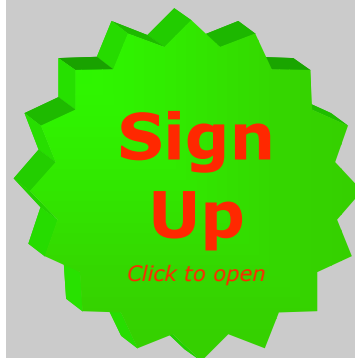


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BEP 27 – Meetings: Expressing Opinions

In this Business English Pod episode, we'll be looking at ways to give and ask for opinions. We'll be looking both at more formal (or careful) language as well as at more informal (or direct) language.

Giving and asking for opinions is a very important part of meetings and discussions of all types.

First let's listen to a more formal situation. We'll be listening to part of a meeting at DigiSoft, a multinational software company. Sheila, a vice president, is talking Walt, George and Bruce, three software engineers, about the deadline for the new software release. Release here means launch: That is, bring the product onto the market

Vocabulary

launch – to release a product onto the market

bugs – problems with computer software

rub it in – to remind someone on purpose of something that is uncomfortable or painful

overtime – work extra hours

burning the midnight oil – or to work late into the night

deficiencies - weaknesses

essential – very important

Listening Comprehension Questions:

1. When does Walt think they can start testing the software?
2. Does Bruce agree with Walt on the proposed release date?
3. What problem does George mention might delay the release?
4. Name the 2 football teams George mentions?
5. Was Walt happy with the result of the football game?

Language Review Questions

Rearrange the jumbled sentences to make phrases you can use to ask or state an opinion:

1. what's that reaction to your Bruce
2. Simon comments any
3. the impression I have that
4. as I am concerned as far
5. my view of point from

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BEP 27 - Dialog

Dialog 1: Formal/careful

Sheila: So, let's move on to the topic of release date. Gentlemen, when do you think we will be able to launch this product? Walt?

Walt: Well, I tend to feel that... we should probably be able to start testing the product in April. That means that if all goes well, we can have a first release in May or June.

Sheila: I see. Thank you Walt. What's your reaction to that Bruce?

Bruce: May or June...Well, from my point of view...that sounds about right.

George: Excuse me, may I come in here? I wonder if I could say something?

Sheila: Go ahead, George. What would you like to add?

George: Well, it seems to me that May is much, much too early. Actually, we are still have some pretty major problems with bugs in the update engine, and I just don't see how we will be able to...

Dialog 2 – Informal

Ok, now let's listen to George, Bruce and Walt walk into the break room right after the meeting. Sheila, their boss, is not here; this is a more informal situation.

Bruce: Hey guys, did you see the Chelsea/Liverpool game last night? What did you think, Walt? Quite a game, huh? Chelsea looked pretty good!

Walt: You always have to rub it in, don't you Bruce. You know I'm a Liverpool fan.

Bruce: How about you, George?

George: Actually, that was one of the greatest games I've ever seen. But the way you guys keep telling the boss we can finish the product by May, none of us are going to have time to watch any more football games. We're all going to be working overtime every night, burning the midnight oil!

Debrief:

So now you've heard both formal or informal. Let's look at the formal conversation. How does Sheila ask for her employees' opinions?

Sheila is in charge. She is the boss and the chairperson of the meeting. One way for her to ask for an employee's opinion is simply to say his name with a rising intonation or tone.

Sheila: ... Gentlemen, when do you think we will be able to launch this product? Walt?

Sheila also uses some other ways to ask for her employees' opinions. All these ways are relatively formal. They signal that this is a formal meeting. She says

Sheila: I see. Thank you Walt. What's your reaction to that Bruce?

And

Sheila: Go ahead, George. What would you like to add?

Together with these speakers, try some other formal phrases for asking for an opinion:

- How do you feel about that, Cecilia?
- Could you please share your thoughts on that, Sam?
- What's your view on this, Richard?
- Tony, what's your feelings on this?

Now, let's look at the language Walt, Bruce and George use to express their opinions in a formal situation. Walt says...

Walt: Well, I tend to feel that we should be able to start testing the product in April...

This language—"I tend to feel that"—shows a careful, formal tone. Walt uses this tone because he is talking to his boss, and perhaps because he is not sure whether or not the others will agree with him.

Let's keep listening.

Sheila: I see. Thank you Walt. What's your reaction to that Bruce?

Bruce: May or June...Well, from my point of view...that sounds about right.

Bruce likewise uses more formal, careful language—"Well, from my point of view." This makes him sound more polite, since he is talking to his boss. In addition, it gives him time to think. Giving yourself time to think is another reason to use these phrases.

How about George? How did he offer his opinion?

George: ... I wonder if I could say something?

Sheila: Go ahead, George. What would you like to add?

George: Well, it seems to me that May is much, much too early.

Think about the ways that George uses to express his opinion—"I wonder if I could say something," and "Well, it seems to me that...." These ways expression are also quite careful. George has a good reason to be careful, doesn't he? He disagrees with his colleagues.

Now lets practice some further formal (or careful) phrases for expressing your opinion:

- I have the impression that...he didn't really want to come.
- Don't you think that that's a little early?
- I tend to feel it's a bit too early to start?

Next, Let's turn to the more informal discussion between Walt, Bruce and George. Remember, they are in the break room right after the meeting. Bruce asks George and Walt

Bruce: Hey guys, did you see the Chelsea/Liverpool game last night? What did you think, Walt? Quite a game, huh? Chelsea looked pretty good!

This is an informal, relaxed discussion among colleagues. You can tell it's informal because Bruce uses the informal word "guys" to address George and Walt. Also, he says "What do you think?" This is an informal way to ask for an opinion. Walt says:

Walt: You always have to rub it in, don't you Bruce. You know I'm a Liverpool fan.

"To rub something in" is an idiom. It means to remind someone on purpose of something that is uncomfortable or painful. Here, it is done as a joke. It sounds like Walt is a Liverpool fan and he is unhappy because Chelsea won the game.

Let's keep listening.

Bruce: How about you, George?

George: Actually, that was one of the greatest games I've ever seen.

"How about you?" is another direct way to ask for an opinion.

Next, notice how George starts his sentence with "actually." "Actually" is a direct or informal way to state an opinion. It shows us that George has something new or surprising to say. With George, practice more direct ways to state an opinion:

- The point is...we're doing very well in this market.
- The way I see it, we're heading for trouble.
- Obviously, there's only one choice
- Basically, I think we have two options.

Finally, let's listen to the end of the dialogue again.

Bruce: How about you, George?

George: Actually, that was one of the greatest games I've ever seen. But the way you guys keep telling the boss we can finish the product by May, none of us are going to have time to watch any more football games.

George means that if Bruce and Walt keep telling the boss that they can meet the May deadline, everyone is going to have to work very hard; in fact, they are going to have to work so hard that they won't have time to watch any football games. Listen to some more examples of this sentence pattern:

The way you are always looking at her, she's going to think you have fallen in love with her. This means, "Because you are looking at her very often, she will think that you have fallen in love with her."

The way we are working, we're never going to finish the project in time.

This means, "If we keep working this slowly, we will not be able to finish the project on time."

One last time, let's listen to the final part of the dialogue again.

George:... We're all going to be working overtime every night, burning the midnight oil!

"To burn the midnight oil" is an idiom. It means to work hard, or to work late into the night, until past midnight. Because it is dark, you have to burn a candle or a light, thus you have to burn the midnight oil.

That just about concludes today's show. Today, we've looked at different ways to give and ask for opinions—both formal (or careful) and informal (or direct).

At www.businessenglishpod.com, we hope that you will keep burning the midnight oil, working hard on improving your English. That's all until next time, when we will be looking at ways of agreeing and disagreeing in meetings and discussions.

Please send comments and suggestions to: BusinessEnglishPod@mac.com

Useful Language

Formal/Careful ways to ask for an opinion:

- What's your reaction to that Bruce?
- How do you feel about that, Cecilia?
- Could you please share your thoughts on that, Sam?
- What's your view on this, Richard?
- Tony, what's your feelings on this?
- What's your opinion on ...?
- Any comments Simon?
- Elizabeth? (person's name said with rising intonation)

Formal/Careful phrases for expressing your opinion:

- I have the impression that...he didn't really want to come.
- Don't you think that that's a little early?
- I tend to feel it's a bit too early to start?
- In my opinion,
- As far as I am concerned,
- As I see it,
- It strikes me that
- From my point of view,
- My impression is that
- It would seem to me that...

Informal/Direct ways to state an opinion:

- Actually, I thought it was great.
- The point is...we're doing very well in this market.
- The way I see it, we're heading for trouble.
- Obviously, there's only one choice
- Basically, I think we have two options.
- Personally, I think this is a complete waste of time.

Answers

Listening Comprehension:

1. April
2. Yes
3. Bugs in update engine
4. Liverpool & Chelsea
5. No

Language review:

1. What's your reaction to that Bruce?
2. Any comments Simon
3. My impression is that
4. As far as I am concerned
5. From my point of view