

The Office Conflict

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by Andy Boon

Book 8

Pocket Reader Series

SAMPLE

Halico
CREATIVE EDUCATION

Pocket Readers Overview

The 10-book business reader series tells the story of your first year working in the product marketing department of *ABC Convenience Stores*. The series looks at skills and strategies for being successful in interviews, the first week on the job, giving presentations, taking part in meetings, writing emails, entertaining business clients, going overseas on business, dealing with office conflict, launching new products, and mentoring new staff.

The Office Conflict

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SAMPLE

1. The Beginning

The story begins with you. In April, you started work in the product marketing department of *ABC Convenience Stores*. You had a good first week on the job (*See Book 2*). You did a successful business presentation (*See Book 3*). You chaired a successful business meeting (*See Book 4*). You attended a training workshop. You learned how to write better business emails (*See Book 5*). You looked after and entertained two important overseas speakers from the U.S. (*See Book 6*). You also went on your first business trip overseas, attended an important conference, and met Mary Benson from the *ABC U.K. team* (*See Book 7*).

It is Monday morning. You are sitting at your desk working. You are very busy. You have a lot of work to do. Suddenly, Mr. Ogawa's telephone starts ringing next to you. You get up and answer it. "Good morning, *ABC Convenience Stores*. Product marketing department. How can I help you?"

"Hi. Can I speak to Mr. Ogawa?" the voice on the other end of the telephone asks.

"Mr. Ogawa?" you say. "Just hold on a moment!" You look around. You see Mr. Ogawa is in a meeting with Ms. Tanaka, the supervisor.

"I'm sorry," you say. "He's busy right

now. Can I take a message?”

“No, that’s okay,” the voice replies.
“I’ll call back later. Bye.”

Before you can ask the person’s name, they put the phone down. You continue with your work. An hour later, Mr. Ogawa returns to his desk. He looks sad. He sits there with his head down looking at the desk.

“Excuse me! Mr. Ogawa. You had a phone call about an hour ago,” you say.

He looks up. “Huh?”

“You had a phone call. The person didn’t leave a message. She said she’d

call you back,” you explain.

Suddenly, Mr. Ogawa shouts, “Don’t answer my phone. Do you hear me? Don’t answer my phone!”

Everybody stops working and looks at him. He looks very angry. After a second or two, everybody goes back to their work.

“I’m sorry,” you say.

Mr. Ogawa does not answer. He ignores you. He gets up and walks out of the office.

2. Conflict with Mr. Ogawa

2.1 Giving his Work to You

It is now Monday afternoon. Mr. Ogawa returns to his desk. He still looks angry. You ignore him. You continue with your work. You have to send Ms. Igarashi a long report by the end of the day. She is in charge of partner marketing. She wants a report of the **third quarter** sales of *Underground Sandwiches* in each of the 8,000 ABC convenience stores around the country. You are very, very busy. It gets to 6:30 p.m. You finish the report. You email it to Ms. Igarashi as she has already gone home. You are so happy. You start to think about what you will eat for dinner. You shut down your com-

puter. You put some things in your bag. Then, you look around the office. Most people have gone home. There are only a few people still at their desks. You get your coat and put it on. "See you tomorrow!" You say to the *ABC* staff still in the office. You start to walk to the door...

Suddenly, Mr. Ogawa appears from the **smoking room**. "Where are you going?" he asks.

"Err... Home!" you reply.

"But, you haven't finished," Mr. Ogawa says. He brings you back to his desk and passes you lots of paperwork. There are thousands of reports from stores around the country. "All

of this information needs to be put on the computer.”

“Tonight?” you ask.

“Yes, tonight,” Mr. Ogawa says. “Do it!”

Mr. Ogawa returns to the smoking room. You take your coat off. You switch your computer on. You start work. But, then you look at the paperwork. Each report is about the sales and marketing of coffee products in ABC stores.

“This is Mr. Ogawa’s job,” you think to yourself. “He is **responsible for** this area. I am responsible for sandwiches and other food products, but not coffee!” You feel

angry. First, Mr. Ogawa shouts at you in front of everyone in the office. Now, he is giving you his work to do. You think about complaining to Mr. Ogawa. “But, he has been at *ABC Convenience Stores* much longer than me,” you think to yourself. “He is also senior to me. And, recently, he gets angry very easily. I’ll just do it. It’s easier than complaining. And, I don’t want him to shout at me again.”

You start the paperwork. You work very hard. It gets to 11:30 p.m. You have about 40 minutes of work to do before you finish. But, your last train home is at midnight. You decide to finish the rest of the paperwork in the morning. On your

way out of the office, you ask the security guard, “Have you seen Mr. Ogawa?”

“Oh! He left the office hours ago.” The security guard says. “I think he left about 7:00 p.m.”

You are angry. “Why did I stay late and do his work and he went home?” you think to yourself.

You get home. It is too late to eat anything. You take a bath and go to bed. You are still very angry with Mr. Ogawa.

2.2 Stealing your Ideas

You get to work in the morning. You start Mr. Ogawa's paperwork again. He arrives late for work. He walks over to your desk.

"Did you finish the paperwork?" he asks you.

"Yes, I did," you reply. You hand the paperwork back to him.

He does not even thank you. He takes the paperwork and returns back to his desk. You feel angry with Mr. Ogawa again, but you continue with your work.

Later that morning, Ms. Tanaka asks

to talk to you in the meeting room. “Yesterday, I spoke to Mr. Ogawa about many things,” Ms. Tanaka says. “He gave me this great idea for the *Underground Sandwiches* partnership deal. I’d like you to follow it up with Sally Harrison and John Turnbull.”

“What idea?” you ask.

“Well, winter is coming soon, as you know,” Ms. Tanaka explains. “Yesterday, Mr. Ogawa suggested we start selling hot soup in our stores. *Underground Sandwiches* has a range of very popular soup. We could sell them at our *ABC* stores. I think this would be very successful. I’ve spoken to Ms. Igarashi and she agrees.”

4. Language Focus and Tasks

4.1 Vocabulary #1

Read the following sentences. What do you think the words in **bold** mean?

1. Mr. Ogawa does not answer. He **ignores** you.

2. There are several ways you can deal with office **conflict**.

4.2 Vocabulary #2

Read the definitions to the words in Task 4.1. Did you guess the meanings of the words correctly?

Ignore:	(Verb) To pay no attention, to not answer, to not listen to somebody.
Conflict:	(Noun) A big disagreement with somebody. A fight.
Third quarter:	(Noun) A company divides its business year into four quarters. The third quarter includes the months of July, August, and September.
Smoking room:	(Noun) A room at a company where employees can smoke cigarettes.
Responsible for:	(Adjective) At a company, an employee is responsible for something. It is their job to deal with, look after, or do something.

4.3 Useful Language

1. Telephoning

- Good morning, *ABC Convenience Stores*. Product marketing department. How can I help you?
- Can I speak to?
- Just hold on a moment.
- I'm sorry. He's busy right now. Can I take a message?

2. Asking somebody to reflect on their actions

- What did you do?
- Would you do that again?
- How do / did you feel about?
- What could you do differently?
- What would you do differently?

4.4 Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think the conflict started between Mr. Ogawa and the new employee?
2. What did Mr. Ogawa do to make the new employee and Ms. Tanaka angry?
3. Do you think the new employee dealt with the office conflict well? Why or why not?
4. What do you think the new employee learned by attending the office conflict workshop with Julie Morris?
5. Talk to a friend. What mistakes could you make when dealing with an office conflict with a colleague?
6. Talk to a friend. What other things could you do to deal with office conflicts successfully?

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