
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

English at Work

3: Meltdown



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

LANGUAGE FOCUS: How to introduce a conversation about the history of a situation. The reason we're in this situation in the first place is... Let me just fill you in with the background. Let's just remind ourselves how we got here in the first place. Let's look at the backstory.

Narrator

It's time for English at Work. Anna – the new manager of Tip Top Trading – has **got her work cut out**... I mean she's got a lot to do. Today she's holding an away day for everyone at the company - but unfortunately to save money the away day isn't away but at home in the office – and it's not a day either – just a morning. Anna's got to deliver some more bad news about saving money...

Tom

I dunno, things must be bad – look they've only given us cheap biscuits to have with our tea – not those delicious Danish pastries we used to have...

Denise

... hmm and look no Earl Green tea either...

Tom

...it's Earl Grey tea Denise... didn't you know that?

Narrator

[whispering] Anna are you OK? You're looking a bit nervous.

Anna

I am. I've got some bad news to deliver – we might have to lose a member of staff to save money.

Narrator

Oh that's hard – you need **to handle** this one carefully. Explain the situation and give them the back story.

Anna

What's the back story?

Narrator

The background to why the company is in the situation it's in. Start by saying... 'Let me just fill you in with the background.'

Anna

OK. Here goes. [To team] Could you all take your seats please...

[groans and grumbles as people sit down]

Right. I hope you enjoyed your tea and biscuits...

Tom

[whispering] *biscuit* more like.

Anna

... now for the second part of our away day we need to talk about staffing. Let me fill you in with the background... as you know we're working in tough economic conditions. Last year head office told us we'd have to improve sales by 10 per cent or face some serious **consequences** – and unfortunately we've only increased by seven per cent.

Denise

I knew it! I'm going to be **sacked** – they always get rid of the woman who looks after the stationary first.

Tom

Well, you're not far off retirement anyway.

Denise

[tuts] Cheeky!

Tom

So Anna – whose fault is it that we haven't met our **sales targets** – not me, obviously!

Narrator

Anna, you need to give them the reasons for not meeting the sales target. Say 'the reason we're in this situation in the first place is...' and tell them why.

Anna

If you think it'll work then I'll give a go.

Narrator

Go on Anna – you'll be great.

Anna

OK. Well Tom, you're right it's not all your fault – the reason we're in this situation in the first place is we had a problem on our production line and we didn't have enough plastic fruit to sell – then there was the small fire in the warehouse when lots of our stock melted...

Tom

Yeah – it was a meltdown!

Denise

Ooo it was – I remember that fireman who had to carry me out of the building. Anyway, Anna, you've told us the reasons we're in the situation but what are we going to do *now*?

Anna

Well, as I said we're three per cent short of meeting our sales target so I want you all to get into groups and have a **brainstorm** about a quick way to boost our sales so we can tell Head Office that we're going to meet that 10 per cent target after all. Off you go.

Narrator

Great work Anna – what a leader! Despite having to deliver bad news, Anna has managed to explain the history of a situation and make everyone understand using the following phrases...

Let's look at the backstory...

The reason we're in this situation in the first place is...

Let me just fill you in with the background....

Let's just remind ourselves how we got here in the first place...

Let's see how the team at Tip Top Trading are getting on...

Denise

Anna, Anna! I've got the answer...

Tom

Err... we've got the answer Anna.

Anna

Go on then...

Denise

According to this paperwork we make a weekly delivery to Mr Plum for... [looks at paperwork] ...10 perfectly plastic fruit baskets - but Tom hasn't **accounted for** receiving the money.

Anna

Oh really? So let's remind ourselves how we got here in the first place shall we? It was an accounting error by... Tom!

Tom

[making excuses] I've been too busy, what with the launch of the Awesome Apple and...
[realising nobody believes him] You're not going to sack me are you?