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## ESL Podcast 588 – Hiring Business Consultants

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### GLOSSARY

**consultant** – a person whose job is to give advice on a particular topic, based on his or her knowledge and experience; a person hired to complete a job or a project for a company, but is not the company's employee

\* They hired a team of consultants to review the security of their website.

**expansion** – growth; an increase in the size, scope, or reach of something

\* Our business has seen a lot of expansion this past year, having opened more than 20 new stores.

**expertise** – specialized knowledge and experience related to a particular topic so that one knows more about something than most people do

\* Beatrice is a talented web designer with expertise in Flash.

**as needed** – according to one's needs; when and how one needs something; only when needed

\* Take this pain medication as needed, but not more than four doses every 24 hours.

**benefits** – things given to employees for their work in addition to money, such as health insurance, retirement savings, and more

\* Many people want to work for the State, because they can get great benefits.

**what's not to like** – a phrase used when one believes that a particular action or decision will have only positive results and there is no reason not to do that thing

\* One of the top schools in the country has offered you a full scholarship and a great job as a research assistant. What's not to like?

**no-brainer** – something that is very obviously good or bad and doesn't need to be thought about at all because one already knows what to do

\* For us, moving out of the city and onto a farm was a no-brainer.

**to call the shots** – to make the decisions; to be the decision-maker; to decide and control when and how something will be done

\* Once you become an adult, you can call the shots. Until then, you need to listen to your parents.

**to terminate** – to end something; to make something stop

\* The landlord terminated their lease because they missed two rent payments.



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**company loyalty** – the feeling of being part of a company and wanting to help that company succeed, not leaving to work for or do business with another company

\* The bank encourages company loyalty by treating its employees and customers very well.

**to leave (someone) in a lurch** – to abandon someone when he or she needs one's help; to stop helping someone at an important time, putting him or her in a difficult position

\* Drake quit his job just a few hours before he was supposed to give an investor presentation, leaving the company in a lurch.

**a thing of the past** – something that used to happen, but no longer exists; something that has disappeared with time

\* Writing letters is a thing of the past. Most people prefer email now.

**to take (something) one step at a time** – to do something gradually, slowly, and methodically; to do something in small, ordered pieces

\* Let's take this relationship one step at a time and date for a few months before we start talking about living together.

**to contract** – to sign a contract with someone, especially to receive professional services for a certain period of time

\* They contracted an architect to design a new guest bedroom for their home.

**to be able to live with (something)** – to believe that something is acceptable, although it isn't one's first choice; to be able to accept a compromise

\* That isn't the salary I was hoping for, but I can live with it as long as the company gives me enough vacation time.

**to drag (one's) feet** – to do something very slowly; to delay or procrastinate

\* Whenever the kids need to clean their room, they drag their feet and it ends up taking all afternoon.

**to tow (someone or something) along** – to pull someone or something in a particular direction

\* The children didn't want to go to church, but we towed them along with us.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why doesn't Erica want to hire consultants?
  - a) Because she thinks it will be too expensive.
  - b) Because she doesn't perceive any benefits.
  - c) Because she's afraid they might leave unexpectedly.
  
2. What does Erica mean when she says, "If I drag my feet, I know you'll tow me along"?
  - a) She knows Stefan won't let her proceed too slowly.
  - b) She knows Stefan will help her maintain a professional appearance.
  - c) She knows Stefan will do some of her work for her.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **to call the shots**

The phrase "to call the shots," in this podcast, means to decide and control when and how something will be done: "We tried it your way and it didn't work. From now on, let someone else call the shots." The phrase "a long shot" is used to describe something that is very unlikely to succeed: "Getting that job is a long shot, but she's going to apply for it anyway." The phrase "a shot in the dark" is used to describe a wild guess that isn't based on any knowledge or facts: "I had no idea what the answer was, so I took a shot in the dark." Finally, the phrase "to give (something) (one's) best shot" means to make a strong effort to do something, especially if it is very difficult: "He had never created a database before, but he agreed to give it his best shot."

#### **to contract**

In this podcast, the verb "to contract" means to sign a contract with someone, especially to receive professional services for a certain period of time: "The firm contracted an evaluation team to judge the success of its latest project." The phrase "to contract (something) out" means to sign an agreement so that someone outside of one's company begins providing a service: "Let's contract out our security services instead of hiring our own security guards." The verb "to contract" also means to become smaller or more compact: "Why does steel contract as it gets cold?" The verb "to contract" also means to get an illness, especially from another person who is sick: "Do children in childcare contract more colds than kids who stay at home with their parents?"



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### CULTURE NOTE

Companies can “benefit” (receive advantages) in many ways when they hire consultants, but they have to make sure they hire consultants in the right way. Too many companies make “mistakes” (errors) when hiring consultants and, as a result, the relationship “doesn’t work out” (isn’t successful).

Some companies make the mistake of not first considering whether someone “in-house” (someone who already works for the company) could do the work. Other companies don’t do enough research about the consultants before hiring them. As a result, the consultants might not have the right combination of knowledge and experience for “the job at hand” (the job that needs to be done).

Other companies contract the right consultants, but “fail to” (don’t) put the agreement in writing before the project begins. Still other companies fail to include important things in the contract, such as detailed descriptions of who will “cover” (pay for) different types of expenses, like travel expenses or phone expenses.

Companies need to make sure that the consultants are available when they are needed. Consultants often “juggle” (deal with multiple things) many projects at once, so if a project is “urgent” (needs attention immediately), the company needs to make sure that the consultant will make it a “top priority” (something that will be done first). Companies also need to define the “scope” (what something involves) of the project very clearly and make sure that staff members give the consultants the tools and information they will need to finish the work.

“Last but not least” (last in the list, but not least important), companies should ask their consultants to sign a “nondisclosure agreement,” or a legal agreement where the parties agree not to share “confidential” (private; secret) information with “third parties” (other individuals or organizations).

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – a



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 588: Hiring Business Consultants.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 588. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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This episode is a dialogue between Erica and Stefan. It is about a business that wants to hire people from outside of the company to come and give the company some advice or some help. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Erica: So your suggestion is to hire outside consultants to handle the extra work associated with the expansion.

Stefan: I think there are a lot of benefits: we get someone with the right expertise quickly, we can use him or her as needed, and we can save on employment taxes and benefits. What's not to like?

Erica: I'm just not sure that's the right move right now.

Stefan: To me, it's a no-brainer. We call the shots. If we don't like the consultant's work, then we can terminate our relationship at any time.

Erica: Yes, but that also means that the consultant won't feel any company loyalty and could quit working with us whenever he or she wanted to, leaving us in a lurch.

Stefan: That's true, but that's also true of any employee. Company loyalty is a thing of the past. I really think we should move ahead.



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Erica: Well, I think we should take it one step at a time. Start with contracting consultants for smaller projects and see how they do before we have them work on this big one.

Stefan: Okay, I can live with that, as long as we don't drag our feet in getting people started on the big project.

Erica: Don't worry. If I drag my feet, I know you'll tow me along.

[end of dialogue]

Erica begins by saying to Stefan, "So your suggestion is to hire outside consultants to handle the extra work associated with the expansion." "To hire" means to employ, to pay someone to work for you. A "consultant" is a person whose job it is to give advice, based on their knowledge and experience. It could also be a person that a company hires for a temporary period, say a few months, to do specific work, and afterwards the consultant goes away. The consultant, in those cases, is often not technically an employee of the company, but someone who is working for another business – a consulting firm or a consulting company, and that company gets paid by the company that hires them, and then the consulting company pays their employee, the consultant.

Stefan suggests hiring consultants to do some extra work "associated," or related to the expansion. "Expansion" means growth, increase in size. It's often used to talk about a business that is getting bigger, that is perhaps opening new stores and so forth. Stefan says, "I think there are a lot of benefits (that is, a lot of benefits to hiring consultants): we get someone with the right expertise quickly, we can use him or her as needed, and we can save on employment taxes and benefits. What's not to like?" "Expertise" is your special knowledge about one particular topic. Stefan wants to get someone with the "right expertise," meaning the expertise that we need. They can use that person "as needed," meaning when and how you need them, and only when you need them. He's also saying that the company can save on employment taxes and benefits. "Benefits" are things that a company gives an employee in addition to money. Health insurance, for example, vacation time, money for retirement; these are possible benefits.

Now in the U.S., if you are a company that has employees, the company has to pay special taxes to the government. However, if you hire someone to work temporarily in your company – and there are other rules you have to follow – you can consider this person not an employee of your company, but what we would



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call an “independent contractor,” someone who signs a contract with you for a specific job that they do. And as I say, there are other requirements, but that’s one of the advantages of hiring outside consultants.

Stefan says, “What’s not to like?” This is a phrase we use when we think that our particular idea or decision will only have positive results. There’s nothing negative that could happen: “What’s not to like?” For example, you may find that someone is going to go to Harvard and they receive a full scholarship, meaning Harvard will pay all of their expenses. You might say, “Well, what’s not to like? You go to a great school and you don’t have to pay anything.” Or a man may see a beautiful woman walking down the street and comment to his friend, “Wow, that’s a very attractive woman,” and the friend would say, “Well, yeah. What’s not to like?” I mean yes, there’s nothing negative to say.

Erica says, “I’m just not sure that’s the right move (that’s the right decision) right now,” to hire consultants. Stefan says, “To me (in my opinion), it’s a no-brainer.” A “no-brainer” (brainer) is something that is so obvious you don’t have to think about it; you don’t have to use your brain about it because everyone knows this is the right thing to do. Stefan thinks that that is what the decision to hire outside consultants is. He says, “We call the shots.” “To call the shots” (shots) means that you make the decision; you are the one who decides. “Who’s calling shots around here?” meaning who’s the boss, who’s the person in charge? Stefan says, “If we don’t like the consultant’s work, then we can terminate our relationship at any time.” “To terminate” means to end, to stop something; in this case, to end the contract you have with the consultant. You can also use this with an employee: “We’re going to terminate this employee,” we’re going to fire them. Or, “The employee has been terminated by the company.” This is not related to the movie The Terminator, where our now governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, was a star of. Nothing to do with that; you don’t actually kill them. “Terminate” could mean to kill someone as well. But that’s not what we’re talking about, at least at most companies – I’m not sure here about the Center for Educational Development!

Erica says, “Yes (we could terminate our relationship at any time), but that also means that the consultant won’t feel any company loyalty.” “Company loyalty” is a feeling that you are part of this family – this company, this group of people – and you want to help them be successful. “Loyalty,” in general, is a feeling of connectedness, that you are connected and want to help whatever group we’re talking about, whether it’s your company, your family, or even your country. Erica adds that this consultant could quit, or stop working with us whenever he or she wanted to, leaving us in a lurch. “To leave (someone) in a lurch” (lurch)



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means to abandon someone when he or she needs your help, to stop helping someone at an important time. You start helping them, and then you decide, “Eh, I’m tired. I’m going to go home,” and they have all this work to do or they need this help that you haven’t given them. You’re leaving them in a lurch.

Stefan says, “That’s true, but that’s also true of any employee. Company loyalty is a thing of the past.” To say something is “a thing of the past” means that it no longer exists; it was once true, but it is no longer true. For many people writing letters, or typing letters on a typewriter, is a thing of the past; they don’t do it anymore. Actually, I’ve been thinking of buying a typewriter – an old, manual typewriter just for fun. I kind of miss it in some ways.

Stefan thinks that company loyalty is a thing of the past. He says, “I think we should move ahead” – “I really think we should move ahead.” Erica says, “Well, I think we should take it one step at a time.” To take (something) one step at a time” means to do something slowly, gradually; a little bit at a time, not everything all at once, not everything right now. She suggests they start with contracting consultants for smaller projects and see how they do. “To contract” means to sign an official, legal agreement between two people; usually it’s a company hiring someone else, an independent contractor, to do work. So, “to contract” as a verb is when you pay money to someone else, and you typically will sign a document, a piece of paper that is a contract. There “contract” is both a verb and a noun; the piece of paper is the contract – the agreement is the contract. “Contract” actually has even more meanings, and those are in your Learning Guide.

Stefan says, “Okay, I can live with that.” When someone says they can “live with” something, they mean it’s acceptable; it’s not what I wanted, but it’s okay, that’s something I will be able to work with. Stefan says, however, that he can live with that as long as we don’t drag our feet in getting people started on the big project. “To drag (drag) your feet” means to do something very slowly, to delay, to purposely not do things as fast as you should do them.

Erica says, “Don’t worry. If I drag my feet, I know you’ll tow me along.” “To tow (tow) (someone or something) along” means to pull someone or something in a particular direction. The verb “to tow” is one we use, for example, when you have one car that isn’t working and another car that is working, and you connect a chain or a cable, and the car that is working pulls – we would say “tows” the other car. If you have your car and you have a big truck that you can put the car onto, that’s another way of towing the car. We call the trucks that do that “tow





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trucks.” Well here, “to tow (someone) along” means to move someone in a particular direction so that they don’t go too slowly.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Stefan: I think there are a lot of benefits: we get someone with the right expertise quickly, we can use him or her as needed, and we can save on employment taxes and benefits. What’s not to like?

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Erica: Don’t worry. If I drag my feet, I know you’ll tow me along.

[end of dialogue]

Who has the expertise to write scripts for us here at ESL Podcast? That’s a no-brainer; it’s Dr. Lucy Tse.



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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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