

**20** Dialogues Included

# Let's Talk BUSINESS

**20** Hot Business Issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

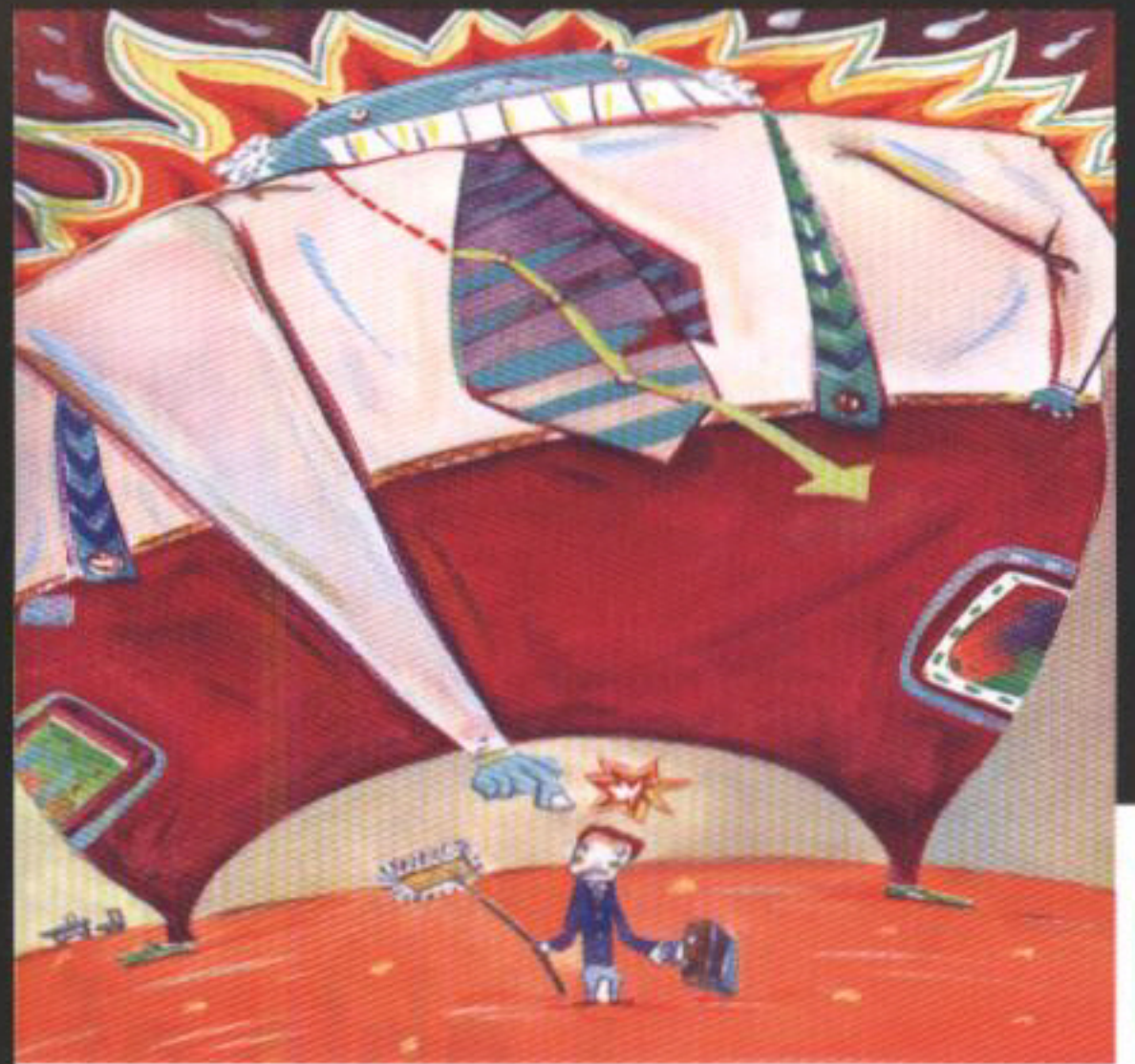
**OVER 75** Interesting Business Questions for Analysis

**OVER 250** Useful Words & Expressions for In-depth Study



Written by Steve A. Kuiack &  
Copy-Edited By Shannon Kuiack





## ISSUE -1

### TOPIC PREVIEW:

In Korea, do female employees still serve green tea to their male managers? Are there many Korean women in powerful positions? Do companies force employees to stop working because of their age?

### DIALOGUE:

**Lynda :** I was shocked when an older co-worker told me to get him coffee.

**Allan :** Yes, but he is part of a different generation and before it was common for this to happen.

**Lynda :** Really? Well, that is unfair for those men to treat women so badly.

**Allan :** I agree with you. However, women are not the only people who are not treated equally at work.

**Lynda :** What do you mean? I thought other workers here were satisfied with their situation.

**Allan :** Yes, but other companies force older employees to quit so younger people can work instead.





# Workplace Discrimination

During World War II, many men from different countries were required to leave their regular jobs and go fight. At this time, many factories and offices counted on women. Women were to fill-in for these men in order to maintain **output levels** for the employers. Maybe this can be considered the beginning of the **women's liberation movement** as women had a new feeling of power — they were able to do the work and they became economically independent.

Since that time women have tried to achieve equal status to men in many different parts of life, especially at the workplace. Although there are many success stories, such as Carla Fiorina being the head honcho of Hewlett-Packard or Margaret Thatcher being the Prime Minister (PM) of England, a lot of women still complain about a **glass-ceiling<sup>(1)</sup>**. Yes, higher rates of women work than in past decades. However, some say that the level of their positions still remain quite low. The men are the ones who receive the promotions and higher pay at the executive level.

In addition, in some cultures once a woman gets married she sometimes feels as if the other staff members are giving her the **cold shoulder**. They want to influence her to leave the company. This is because once she gets married she might put her husband and family before her work, which would make her less productive. Or, it could be a way for companies to avoid paying for **maternity leave** if she became pregnant after marriage.

Another issue at work involves "**reverse discrimination.**" Some people complain that job positions or promotions are not always based on who is the best qualified **candidate**. Rather, it is decided by the person's gender or **ethnic** background. It might create more equal opportunity for **minorities** and increase the image of the company, but it leaves some individuals out in the cold.





## VOCABULARY:

- output levels** \*Quantity of final items produced  
○ The company's output level fell when the workers had a strike.
- women's liberation movement** \*Movement seeking equal rights for women  
○ The women's liberation movement has helped improve work conditions for women.
- glass-ceiling** \*Invisible barrier blocking a person's promotion to management because of the person's gender and race.  
○ The glass-ceiling influenced the woman to start her own business.
- maternity leave** \*Paid time a woman takes off of work for the birth of a baby  
○ Next month she will take three months off for maternity leave.
- reverse discrimination** \*Discrimination (unfair treatment) of members of a majority group  
○ Bob complained about reverse discrimination when a woman got the job and he did not.
- candidate** \*Person trying to be chosen for a position  
○ She is the best candidate for the job.
- ethnic** \*People's background, like race or religion  
○ The company has employees from many ethnic backgrounds.
- minorities** \*A small part of the population that is different (eg. due to their race)  
○ Thirty percent of our staff consists of minorities.

## EXPRESSIONS:

- counted on** \*Depended on, relied on, expected  
○ The manager counted on her staff to prepare material for the meeting.
- fill-in** \*Substitute  
○ She had to fill-in for her ill colleague at the meeting.
- head honcho** \*Boss, especially in a high position  
○ The head honcho is disappointed with last month's sales amount.
- cold shoulder** \*Style of not being nice and friendly intentionally  
○ I gave my boss the cold shoulder because he did not promote me.
- out in the cold** \*Left out, not being part of benefits given to others  
○ He felt out in the cold because all his friends had jobs except him.





### ● DISCUSSION POINTS:

- ① Do you think that men and women are treated equally at work?
  - For example, do men and women receive the same amount of pay at your place of employment?
- ② Do you think that men and women want full or selective equality?
  - For instance, do women just want equality in management positions, or do they also want equality in other jobs like as a soldier or construction worker?
- ③ Is there a public relations advantage or disadvantage to having ethnic minorities represent the companies in various positions?
- ④ Is it true that some job positions are better suited for men (miners, firefighters), while others are better for women (nurses, teachers)?

### ● LET'S REVIEW: ● ● ● ●

Western countries are multi-cultural with immigrants from around the world. Some immigrants complain they experience workplace discrimination. Some Seoul National University graduates believe their education entitles them to an excellent job in Canada or America. If they don't receive one, then they complain it is discrimination. Is that true? Possibly. However, these Koreans are competing with fluent English speakers from Ivy League schools and maybe these other graduates are better qualified.



## ISSUE -2



### TOPIC PREVIEW:

Does your boss drive a luxury sedan while you have a basic compact? Do Western employees in Korea make more money than Korean workers? Do you think that your boss pays you a fair salary?

### DIALOGUE:

**Chris :** I am sick of being in an office all day while my boss enjoys going out for lunch and dinner with our clients.

**Patrick :** Well Chris, I do not want to tell you this, but there are many ways that our boss' life is better than ours.

**Chris :** Yes, I know. He has a company car and does not have to work late at night.

**Patrick :** Moreover, his salary is extremely high and he also does not have to pay for his membership at the fitness club.

**Chris :** But regular staff like ourselves must work more hours so we should get more money.

**Patrick :** I agree, but the executives say that they have more stress because their decisions are more difficult and important.





## Salary Gap

Life is not always fair. Whether a person is making a comparison of numerous countries or many individuals, there is always a **gap** between the **haves and have-nots**. This also occurs with the salary of those people working in the corporate world. Company executives have received a large amount of money, but the general workers have not.

Compared to the regular staff, executives are rewarded with a lot of different perks — possibly a company car, more holidays or **stock options**. In addition, the average big shots in America received forty times that of a regular worker in 1980. It was about eighty-five times in 1990, and roughly four hundred times in 2002<sup>(2)</sup>. While their pay has increased **tenfold**, the other workers have received minor raises which might just be above the **inflation rate**.

With income being **lopsided** so much, many workers are complaining that this situation is just too unfair. Yes, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) might be stressed out. After all, they are the ones who must make the really important decisions under pressure so they **deserve** to be paid well. However, a company's success is based on the hard work of the lower-level staff. Without these employees working all day and possibly overtime (OT), would the companies be profitable enough to afford to pay the high salary of the executives?

Many workers might be feeling as if they are getting a raw deal. This could have really negative effects for the company. For instance, the employees might be **bitter** toward the executives and this could result in a loss of ambition to work hard. To keep as many people as pleased as possible, some changes are needed. This means that fair work will be rewarded with fair pay and at that time the income gap will be cut back.





## VOCABULARY:

- gap** \*Big difference  
⊙ There should not be a wage gap between men and women.
- haves and have-nots** \*Countries or people who have and do not have wealth  
⊙ In parts of Africa, whether or not a house has electricity separates the haves and have-nots.
- stock options** \*Options given to employees to purchase the company's stock  
⊙ The company offered stock options in my contract.
- tenfold** \*Ten times, multiplied by ten  
⊙ The company's profit fell tenfold during the weak economy.
- inflation rate** \*Percentage increase in prices  
⊙ The inflation rate increased from 2% to 4% last year.
- lopsided** \*Not equal by a large amount  
⊙ Sales were lopsided and mostly done by our female staff.
- deserve** \*Are worthy of (something)  
⊙ We deserve a pay increase for our great work.
- bitter** \*Unhappy, angry, resentful  
⊙ Are you bitter that you did not get the promotion?

## EXPRESSIONS:

- perks** \*Gains or advantages that are extra to salary (eg. a company car)  
⊙ A perk at this company is being able to buy its products at a discount.
- big shots** \*Important people with high positions and lots of power  
⊙ All the big shots arrived for the annual meeting.
- be stressed out** \*Have too many worries, feel too much pressure  
⊙ I am stressed out because my boss always expects me to sell more.
- raw deal** \*Bad deal or agreement  
⊙ She lost money because she accepted a raw deal.
- cut back** \*Reduced, decreased  
⊙ We must cut back on spending to stay profitable.





### ● DISCUSSION POINTS:

- ① What other perks exist that executives enjoy at different companies?
  - For example, are they able to have a golf membership or a company credit card?
- ② Why is there a gap between the executives' pay and the other employees' pay?
  - For instance, is it because the executive is the owner and makes the rules? Or, is it because of supply and demand where there is less supply of qualified CEOs which results in higher pay?
- ③ Should someone who has completed their required military service in Korea receive more money than other workers who have not?
- ④ Do you think it is proper that labor workers sometimes make the same amount or even a higher salary than office staff?

### ● LET'S REVIEW: ● ● ● ●

Western countries usually have a salary gap depending if someone graduates from high school, college or university. Generally, a higher education equals a higher income. Is this fair? Some people who do not have enough money for higher education feel it is unfair. This is because they do not have the same opportunity for their Masters or Ph.D. However, university graduates feel it is fair. They believe that they are being paid more for their large amount of time and money spent for a higher education.





# ISSUE -3

## TOPIC PREVIEW:

Have you participated in Korea's "strike season" between April and June? Are unions causing Korea's labor costs to rise too high to compete with other Asian countries? Is blocking traffic in downtown Seoul an effective way for workers to protest?

## DIALOGUE:

- Robbie :** We negotiated with our employer, but we did not agree to a new contract.
- Colleen :** What are some of the changes you want to make for the next contract?
- Robbie :** As usual, our workers' union wants to receive more pay, but also work less hours per week.
- Colleen :** Well, of course, that sounds perfect. However, what will you do if both sides can not agree to a new contract?
- Robbie :** Hopefully we can reach an agreement, if not then we will go on strike.
- Colleen :** On strike? What does that mean?
- Robbie :** It means that we will stop working and start protesting until the company and the workers agree to make a new contract so both sides are happy.