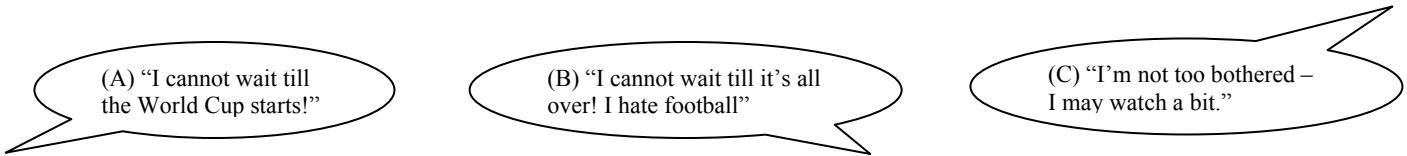


World Cup fever

Next month's football World Cup draws closer ... Will employees stay at home to watch matches on TV?

1 Which speaker is most like you? Explain your answer to a partner.



2 Guess the correct figures in the survey. Then check your answers by scanning paragraph 2 of the article.

Survey: absenteeism
Question: Have you ever called in sick to watch a sporting event, or to recover from watching one?
Answer: 3 % / 13% / 23 % of men said yes – 4 % / 14% / 24% of women said yes
Question: Will you take a day off sick during the World Cup?
Answer: One in 3 / 5 / 7 said yes

Respondents:
Over 2,000
Research by:
Croner

Winners and losers

The World Cup kicks off on 9 June, with the final a month later, on 9 July. Will employees who cannot watch football at work stay at home in order to watch important matches? That is the problem facing many businesses. Such absenteeism during the tournament could result in British employers losing £100 million a day, according to one survey. How can employers minimise the effect on business? Buying a giant plasma TV screen and letting people watch the games at work is, perhaps, one solution!

Absenteeism is expected to rise dramatically during the tournament – one in seven people questioned in a recent survey say they will take an unauthorised day off to watch a match. The survey found that 13% of male workers and 4% of female workers have pretended to be ill in order to stay at home to watch sport. Yet, research shows that sporting events can actually increase morale! A happy workforce is important for the success of any company.

The World Cup itself generates a huge amount of business, with extra consumer spending on TVs and shirts, and an increase in advertising revenues. *Adidas* are making replica kits for teams including France, Argentina and Germany, and have already announced a huge increase in profits – up 37% during the first three months of 2006. *Nike* sponsors the holders, Brazil.

Demand for tickets is high. Even though tickets are personalized with the buyer's name, a lively black market is developing on the Internet. Demand in Japan, for instance, is huge, with tickets offered by travel agencies selling for over 30 times the official price. With all the corporate hospitality packages around, one wonders if real fans will get a chance to watch the games live. World Cup fever may prove profitable for some companies; on the other hand, it may prove a nightmare for many employers. With all eyes on the host nation this month, there will be winners and losers, both on and off the pitch.

3 Read the whole article. Summarise the key points.

4 Find synonyms for the words in box 1 and antonyms for the words in box 2. The missing words are all in the article.

(1)	creates	very big	competition
	starts	income	football field

(2)	seller	low	losses
	maximise	supply	decrease

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report your ideas to the class.

- Is your company set to benefit from the World Cup in any way?
- Can you watch the World Cup at work? If not, what possibilities can you suggest to watch games?
- How big a problem do you think 'absenteeism' is? How can it be reduced?