



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

GLOSSARY

to take credit for – to claim someone else's accomplishment or idea as one's own; to say that a good result is because of one's actions when it is not

* Sherman did all the housework, but his sister took credit for it and told their parents that she did the housework instead.

campaign – a course of action; a series of actions taken to meet a specific goal

* The company started a new campaign to improve sales for its newest product.

to pull (something) – to do something dishonest; to act without honor

* When her brother started acting unusually nice, Marilee thought that he must be trying to pull something.

to have the nerve – to have courage; to have the courage to do something unkind or dishonorable

* Louis did not want to believe that his son had the nerve to steal from his own father.

to top it off – to make a bad situation worse; to make something bad even worse

* Yuriko had too much work for one person to do, and to top it off, she got the flu and had to do everything while feeling ill.

to slack off – to be lazy; to not do the work that one is supposed to do

* Even though Tom had homework due the next day, he decided to slack off and play games instead.

to lift a finger – to make any effort; to do some work

* Mrs. Bratton needed to clean the entire house alone because her husband and children would not lift a finger to help.

to get away with it – to do something wrong without getting punished for it; to do something wrong without getting caught

* Elliot cheated on his test, but the teacher did not know, so he got away with it.

fair-minded – able to judge a conflict fairly, without showing favor to any side

* When her friends disagreed, Selma remained fair-minded and tried to help her friends resolve the conflict peacefully.

to step in – to interrupt; to take action to try to resolve a situation that one is not directly involved in

* Mr. Sumners needed to step in and stop his son and daughter from fighting.



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

to blow it off – to let it go; to ignore something

* Charise was supposed to go to a meeting yesterday, but she blew it off because she didn't think it was very important.

fall out – a consequence one does not expect; the unexpected result of something, usually when that result is negative

* Jason ended the argument between his siblings, but the fall out was that both siblings were now mad at him.

to fight (one's) own battles – to resolve conflicts without getting help

* Megan never fought her own battles and always dragged somebody else into her fights.

ticked off – angry; furious

* When someone scratched Myron's car and left without saying anything, Myron was ticked off.

to cool off – to calm down; to spend time calming down after an event or action that made one angry

* After the bad argument with her mother, Rosalinda needed to cool off.

to floor – to hit someone, knocking them down to the floor; a phrase sometimes used to say that one wants to hit someone hard enough to knock that person to the ground

* The bully hit Frank, so Frank hit the bully back and floored him.

That makes two of us. – I feel the same way.; I agree.

* When Kenesha said that she hated Mondays, her roommate said, "That makes two of us."



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

CULTURE NOTE

Expressions About Dogs

There are many expressions that mention dogs that may or may not have anything to do with dogs.

For example, if someone is working very, very hard, you may say that he or she is “working like a dog.” Are dogs known for working hard? It’s unclear, but this is a common expression.

Other expressions that mention dogs make a little more sense. If you want to leave things alone, to not bother someone or something because you are afraid of a bad result, you can say that you want to “let sleeping dogs lie.” If a dog is sleeping, you may not want to bother it because if it wakes up, it may “bark” (for a dog to speak) or “bite” (use its teeth). Here’s an example of how this expression is used:

A: “When will the boss give us a ‘raise’ (more money for working)? I’m going to ask her.”

B: “If I were you, I would let sleeping dogs lie. With this bad economy, we are just as likely to get a ‘pay cut’ (reduction) as a pay raise!”

Here’s another expression that makes some sense. If you want people to stop attacking or criticizing you, you can say, “Call off the dogs!” “To call off” means to stop or to cancel something. If one “presidential candidate” (someone who is officially trying to become the next president) criticizes the other for his/her past decisions, he/she might say, “Call off the dogs or we will start talking to the media about your family and your personal life.”



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 24 – Taking Credit.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 24. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

In this episode, we are going to discuss problems at the office. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Jeff: You're not going to believe what happened.

Lucy: Oh, is the big meeting over? What happened?

Jeff: Dan tried to take credit for our idea for the new campaign.

Lucy: You're kidding me! I thought he might try to pull something like this, but I didn't think he'd have the nerve to do that.

Jeff: Yeah, and to top it off, he said that he did it all by himself.

Lucy: He's unbelievable. What a jerk! He slacks off for the last two weeks and doesn't lift a finger to help on any part of the project.

Jeff: Well, he's not going to get away with it. I'm going to talk to the senior vice president. I think she'll listen.

Lucy: Are you sure? I think she's fair-minded, but maybe she thinks we should work it out with Dan ourselves. She might not want to step in.

Jeff: Well, can you think of another way to handle this?

Lucy: I wish I could. I don't want to just blow it off, but we have to think of the fallout. Maybe the senior VP will end up thinking we can't fight our own battles.

Jeff: Yeah, you're right. I'm just so ticked off right now I can't think.

Lucy: That's probably the problem. We both need to cool off so we can think straight. Let's get some coffee and see what we can come up with.



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

Jeff: That sounds good. But if I see Dan on the way out, I'm going to floor that guy.

Lucy: Yeah. That makes two of us.

[end of dialogue]

In this episode, Lucy and I talked about problems at the office after one of our coworkers – someone with whom we work – took credit for one of our ideas. “To take credit for an idea” means to say that it was you who came up with or thought of an idea, when really it was someone else's idea. We began by talking about how one of our coworkers, Dan, tried to take credit in a meeting for our idea for a new campaign.

In business, a “campaign” (campaign) is a plan for marketing or advertising a new product or service, a new thing that you are selling. You are going to put ads in the newspaper and on television and on the Internet, but you first must develop a campaign. We also use the term “campaign” when talking about politics. A politician who is running for office – that is, trying to get elected, trying to get people to vote for him or for her – runs a political campaign. So, “campaign” refers both to advertising a product or service and to advertising a candidate who wants to be elected to the government. Maybe there's some connection between the two. I don't know.

I told Lucy that “Dan tried to take credit for our idea for the new campaign,” and Lucy says, “I thought he might try to pull something like this.” “To pull something” here means to do something dishonest – to do something that is not right or that violates or breaks some rule. It's an informal expression that we would use probably among our family and friends. We use it when talking about people who are doing something wrong, usually for selfish reasons, for their own advantage – in order to get something for themselves. “I thought he might try to pull something like this,” Lucy said.

Lucy says she didn't think he'd have the nerve to do it. “To have the nerve” (nerve) means to have the courage or to have the strength to do something. It's usually used in a negative way. When someone “has the nerve” to do something, it often means that they are being very bold about doing something wrong. They are not afraid to do something wrong. For example, if you are standing in line and someone decides not to wait, but to walk right up to the front of the line – which



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

we call “to cut in line” – you could say, “He had the nerve to cut to the front of the line.”

We also have a more informal expression, “to have the guts” (guts), which is very similar to saying “to have the nerve.” Although “to have the guts” or “to have guts” can also be a positive thing. It can show that you are strong, that you have courage. I then tell Lucy, “Yeah, and to top it off, he said that he did it all by himself.” “To top it off” means there is even more to a story than what you already know or what you have already been told.

So, for example, I order a pizza to be delivered to my house, and the pizza delivery person – the person who brings the pizza – arrives one hour late. And you say, “Oh, I can't believe he was so late.” And I say, “Yes, and to top it off, it was the wrong pizza.” So, in this case we are using the expression “to top it off” to describe something bad that gets even worse. Dan, in our story, tried to take credit for our idea. And to top it off, he said that he did it all by himself.

Lucy calls Dan a “jerk” (jerk). “What a jerk,” she says. This is a very negative term, an insulting term. It's not a vulgar term. It's not what we would call a “dirty word,” but it is an insult. A “jerk” is someone who harms you, who does something wrong to you. There are a lot of expressions for that in every language, I'm sure. It's a negative term to describe someone who hurts you in some way. “What a jerk.” But because it's not a formal term, you wouldn't want to use it in a formal business setting unless you were talking to friends, as is the case here in our story with Lucy and me.

Lucy says that Dan “slacks off for the last two weeks and doesn't lift a finger to help on any part of the project.” “To slack (slack) off (off)” is a two-word phrasal verb that means not to work as hard as you should. “I'm feeling kind of lazy, so I think I'm going to slack off this week” means I'm not going to work very hard this week. That's what my boss says about me every week. A person who “slacks off” is called a “slacker” (slacker). “Don't be a slacker” means don't be lazy. Do your work.

Dan “doesn't lift a finger.” Someone who “doesn't lift a finger” is someone who is lazy, who doesn't help at all. For example, I was standing in line at the bank and a woman dropped her check. The person in front of her, however, didn't lift a finger to help her pick it up. He didn't do anything, in other words, to help her.

In the story I say, “Dan is not going to get away with it.” “To get away with” something means to do something wrong, to break a rule or to break a law, without anything bad happening to you. You could say, “I got away with cheating



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

on my exam.” Not me, of course. Or you could say, “I got away with not doing my homework.” You didn’t do your homework and you were not punished for it. You got away with it. Lucy describes our boss as “fair-minded.” “To be fair-minded” (fair-minded) is to be honest, to be fair, to listen to both sides of an argument.

Lucy says our boss might think “we should work it out with Dan ourselves.” “To work it out” means to resolve a dispute or to solve a problem. Our boss “might not want to step in.” “To step in” means to enter into an argument or a discussion. So, if there are two people fighting with each other and you “step in,” it means you get involved in the fight or the argument or the discussion, often to resolve the issue or to solve the problem. For example, a parent has two children who are fighting. So, she “steps in” and stops them from fighting.

I asked Lucy, “Can you think of another way to handle this?” “To handle” (handle) something is a very common expression in English. “To handle” means to take care of some problem or to resolve some issue. Lucy says, “I don’t want to just blow it off, but we have to think of the fallout.” “To blow something off” – and it requires both words, “blow” and “off” – means to ignore it, not to pay attention to it, not to do it. “Are you going to hand in your project today?” You say, “No, I’m feeling lazy. I’m going to blow it off.”

This phrasal verb can also be used in a situation – when you are going to take time off. “Let’s blow off work and go to the beach,” for example. You could also blow off an appointment. “I was supposed to go to the doctor today, but I decided to blow it off,” meaning I decided not to go. Lucy says, “We have to think of the fallout.” When we have a problem that is going to affect or influence other people, we sometimes use the expression “the fallout.” “Fallout” (fallout) literally means the radioactive particles after a nuclear explosion – the radiation that makes people sick and can kill them. That’s technically what “fallout” is.

But usually when we talk about the “fallout” from a situation, we mean the results or the consequences of some event. For example, after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans several years ago, part of the fallout was that many people criticized our government for not doing more. That would be considered part of the fallout – the results or the consequences of the main event.

Lucy worries that our bosses will think “we can’t fight our own battles.” A “battle” (battle) is a large fight, usually between two armies. We use the phrase, however, “to fight your own battle” to mean to take care of your own problems – on your own, without asking for anyone else’s help. I say, “I’m just so ticked off.” “To be ticked (ticked) off (off)” is an informal expression that means to be angry. “I’m really ticked off” means I’m really angry. I’m really mad at somebody.



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

Sometimes we just say “I’m ticked” without saying the word “off.” “I’m ticked” means the same as “I’m ticked off.” You could also say, “Don’t tick her off,” meaning don’t make her mad, referring to your wife.

Lucy says, “We both need to cool off so we can think straight.” “To cool off” is a two-word phrasal verb that means to calm down, to stop being so angry. “To think straight” means to think clearly, to think logically. When you can’t think straight, it usually means you are tired or angry or confused. I then say, “If I see Dan on the way out,” meaning if I see him as I am leaving the office, “I’m going to floor that guy.” “To floor” (floor) someone means to hit someone so hard that he falls onto the floor. Of course, I am not, in real life, a violent person. So, I wouldn’t actually floor Dan. But that’s what it literally means.

We also use the expression “to floor” when we’re very surprised by something. “He told me the news and it floored me” means that the news was so shocking, it made me fall down on the ground. Not literally, but the idea is that it was very shocking. But here when I say I want to floor Dan, I mean I actually want to hit Dan. Lucy says, “That makes two of us.” When two people agree on something or when two people do the same thing, we sometimes say, “That makes two of us.” For example, if I say “I’m feeling really tired,” and my friend says, “Yeah, that makes two of us,” that means “I feel tired too. I feel the same way you do.”

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

[start of dialogue]

Jeff: You’re not going to believe what happened.

Lucy: Oh, is the big meeting over? What happened?

Jeff: Dan tried to take credit for our idea for the new campaign.

Lucy: You’re kidding me! I thought he might try to pull something like this, but I didn’t think he’d have the nerve to do that.

Jeff: Yeah, and to top it off, he said that he did it all by himself.

Lucy: He’s unbelievable. What a jerk! He slacks off for the last two weeks and doesn’t lift a finger to help on any part of the project.

Jeff: Well, he’s not going to get away with it. I’m going to talk to the senior vice president. I think she’ll listen.



ESL Podcast 24 – Taking Credit

Lucy: Are you sure? I think she's fair-minded, but maybe she thinks we should work it out with Dan ourselves. She might not want to step in.

Jeff: Well, can you think of another way to handle this?

Lucy: I wish I could. I don't want to just blow it off, but we have to think of the fallout. Maybe the senior VP will end up thinking we can't fight our own battles.

Jeff: Yeah, you're right. I'm just so ticked off right now I can't think.

Lucy: That's probably the problem. We both need to cool off so we can think straight. Let's get some coffee and see what we can come up with.

Jeff: That sounds good. But if I see Dan on the way out, I'm going to floor that guy.

Lucy: Yeah. That makes two of us.

[end of dialogue]

Thanks to our fantastic scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, for all her hard work, and thanks to you for listening.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

English as a Second Language Podcast was written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. Copyright 2006 by the Center for Educational Development.