NEWS LESSON

Try Introducing Yourself Without Mentioning Your Job



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What do people learn about you when you tell them your job?
2. Which part of your life would you mention first to someone new?
3. Would you enjoy a hobby more if nobody asked whether you were good at it?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**occupation**	☐	A	your position or level in society or at work
2	**redundancy**	☐	B	wanting to know or learn more about something
3	**passionate**	☐	C	having very strong feelings of interest or love for something
4	**status**	☐	D	the job that a person does
5	**involvement**	☐	E	taking part in something
6	**unpaid**	☐	F	losing your job because the company no longer needs you
7	**retirement**	☐	G	done without receiving money
8	**curious**	☐	H	the time of life after you stop working for good

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A job title can hide the parent, the carer and the volunteer. Pew found that 39% of American employees tie their sense of self closely to their work.

1 When two strangers meet, a familiar question often arrives within minutes: 'What do you do?' It sounds innocent, but the answer can shape how we judge each other. Someone might introduce themselves as a teacher or engineer rather than explaining what they are passionate about. Has employment become a convenient way to describe our entire identity? It is a question worth turning around: if you had to introduce yourself without mentioning your occupation, what would you say? For some people, the answer takes a moment to come.

2 For many adults, work provides more than a salary. It gives their week a structure, introduces them to colleagues and offers opportunities to develop skills. According to a Pew Research Center survey in 2023, 39% of American employees who were not self-employed described their job or career as extremely or very important to their sense of identity. Many others considered it somewhat important.

3 Strong professional pride can be positive. People who find meaning in their work may feel motivated to improve and contribute to society. But there is a risk in connecting self-worth too closely to a job title. Redundancy, retirement or a change of industry can suddenly make someone question who they are without that role.

4 There is also a social difference between careers. Some jobs receive public admiration, while other essential roles are rarely celebrated. If employment becomes the main measure of someone's value, we may start confusing a person's salary or status with their character. Even apparently harmless compliments can reinforce the problem. Telling someone they are 'so successful' because of their title may overlook whether they are happy, generous or making a difference outside the office.

5 Psychologists often encourage people to build up sources of meaning beyond paid employment. Friendships, community involvement, learning and creative interests can provide a sense of belonging even during difficult career changes. Of course, people working long hours may have little energy left for these activities.

6 There is another reason why professional labels can be misleading: they leave unpaid contributions almost invisible. A parent looking after children, a person caring for a relative or somebody supporting a local community may perform demanding, socially valuable work without a recognised occupation. If we use salaries and job titles as shortcuts for judging importance, those contributions risk being overlooked. The pressure can also vary according to circumstances.

7 Someone enjoying an established career may welcome questions about work, while a person recently made redundant may find them painful. We cannot completely avoid sensitive topics in conversation, but we can leave room for different answers. Asking what somebody has been interested in lately, or how they spend their time, may tell us something more personal and less dependent on employment status.

8 The goal is not to stop caring about work. It is to give other parts of life space to grow. Perhaps we need to become more curious about the person behind the professional label and remember that identity can change without disappearing.

Sources: Pew Research Center. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. People who work long hours may find it harder to build other sources of meaning. T F NG
2. The Pew survey included people who work for themselves. T F NG
3. Most people who lose their jobs find work in the same industry within a year. T F NG
4. Asking how someone spends their time may suit a person who has just been made redundant better than asking about their job. T F NG
5. The writer believes a person's identity stays exactly the same through career changes. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

admiration **circumstances** **contribute** **convenient** **motivated** **overlook** **reinforce** **salary**

1. When you are busy and tired, it is easy to _____ small details in a contract.
2. She accepted the job because the _____ was higher than at her old company.
3. Praise for staying late can _____ the idea that long hours are normal.
4. Decisions about work often depend on personal _____ , such as family needs and health.
5. Students who see their progress usually feel more _____ to keep studying.
6. Firefighters often receive public _____ for the risks they face.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the manager arrived, most of the employees _____ the office. (LEAVE)
2. Hundreds of jobs _____ when the factory closed last year. (LOSE)
3. If I had to introduce myself without a job title, I _____ about my hobbies. (TALK)
4. While she _____ for a new job, she studied part-time. (LOOK)
5. She was nervous because she _____ in public before. (SPEAK)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Choose the verb that goes naturally with the noun, not the one a word-for-word translation would give you.

earn	gain	make	pay	provide	take	work

1. Volunteers can _____ a real difference to their neighbourhood.
2. Strong friendships can _____ a sense of belonging.
3. A good manager will _____ attention to how employees are feeling.
4. Some people have to _____ long hours just to cover their bills.
5. Many parents _____ care of young children and still have no job title.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What is a better opening question than "What do you do?"?
2. Could loving a job make it harder to take a break from it?
3. What would you want to keep if your work changed completely?

9 Role-play: a promotion or a free evening?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the manager

You want to offer your employee a promotion. It means longer hours and no more free evenings. Explain why they are right for the job. Ask what worries them, and try to find a solution.

Student B · the employee

You'd like the promotion, but you volunteer three evenings a week and your work is not the whole of your life. Explain what matters to you and ask for changes.

Useful phrases

Thanks, I'm really pleased you asked.
I'd love the job, but I'm worried about the hours.
What matters most to me is my life outside work.
We're hoping you'll take it on.
Could we try fewer evenings for a trial period?
I'll think it over and let you know.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree, and who gave way more?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 D · 2 F · 3 C · 4 A · 5 E · 6 G · 7 H · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 overlook · 2 salary · 3 reinforce · 4 circumstances · 5 motivated · 6 admiration

6 Verb forms

1 had left · 2 were lost · 3 would talk · 4 was looking · 5 had never spoken

7 Language focus

1 make · 2 provide · 3 pay · 4 work · 5 take

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