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|  | Business Listening, lesson 4 |
|  | **For these questions, complete the sentences with no more than three words in each gap.**  **You have 45 seconds to read the sentences. You will hear the recording twice.** |
|  | I’m Holly Marvin and I’d like to talk about a particular aspect of business psychology – working under pressure. Most of us know what it's like to feel pushed almost beyond our limits to deliver in a high-pressure situation. In fact, the outcomes that people do achieve when up against looming deadlines rarely lead anyone to say, ‘I work better like this.’ Recognised concepts and proven facts don’t always coincide. For example, making a superhuman effort to do something as rapidly as possible might be all very well for Olympic runners but that all turns out to be a myth in business. The evidence to back it up is very scarce.  Employees are expected to aim for a significant level of success in the workplace. There’s a huge reliance on establishing targets – and a marked tendency to assume these genuinely optimise performance, and are therefore a priority. However, I’d assert that they’re often meaningless to employees, while they concentrate on day-to-day tasks. Rethinking is necessary and different approaches need to be considered.  Someone who had a huge influence on industry a hundred years ago in the US was industrialist Henry Ford. Ford revolutionised the factory assembly line by maximising productivity while at the same time standardising the length of the working week. He made it shorter – down to forty hours. He understood that performance is not separate or disconnected from well-being – which you may not be surprised to hear went up. And this is the reason I draw your attention to Ford’s way of thinking.  However, in many of today’s companies, it’s performance targets that rule. A recent survey of US workers had some interesting findings. It seems that higher-level performance targets were attained through endurance, toughness, and sheer force of will. Nearly two thirds reported a problem with maintaining performance levels at times, and around one in twenty reported their feelings by using the phrase ‘a daily struggle’, which shouldn't be discounted.  If workers feel burnt out regularly, what does performance pressure achieve? With this bearing down on people, it could be that the potential for innovation is impacted. And this is highly undesirable. I look forward to in-depth studies to investigate further. I believe we can get great performance by supporting employees and taking a longer view rather than creating exhaustion, and aiming for quality at any cost. |