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Race is on to find Russia's best workers

1st April, 2012

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

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THE ARTICLE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

Russian president-elect Vladimir Putin has announced a new competition to find the best workers in Russia. Mr Putin hopes his new initiative will motivate workers to do better and perhaps increase productivity. All categories in the contest are based on traditional industries. The AFP news agency quoted Putin as saying in a cabinet meeting: "Five nominations have been confirmed: best welder, best stone mason, best miner, best electrician and best heavy vehicle driver." The AFP said: "The idea of the government rewarding the best workers is reminiscent of the Soviet Union, when outstanding workers received cash bonuses and had their photographs displayed on special honours boards."

Government departments have already started the process of selecting the first-rate candidates in each field. The results will be announced in October. The winner in each category will receive 300,000 roubles (\$10,226), while the runner-up and third-placed worker will get 200,000 and 100,000 roubles. The contest is only open to blue-collar workers. There are currently no prizes for white-collar workers or those working in technology or the sciences. The AFP also said Mr Putin is reviving other Soviet-era practices, such as rewarding women for having more than one child. Mothers will soon receive a cash payment for each child they have. Those who give birth to many children are set to receive medals.

WARM-UPS

1. BEST WORKERS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about best workers. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

president-elect / competition / new initiative / traditional industries / reminiscent / government departments / candidates / winner / blue-collar workers / rewarding

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. BEST: Who would you vote for in these "Best" categories? Complete this table and share it with your partner(s). Change partners and share again.

Best...	Who?	Why?
worker		
country leader		
sports person		
business leader		
student		
teacher		

4. AWARDS: Students A **strongly** believe awards are highly motivating; Students B **strongly** believe they are not. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. REWARDS: Which is best? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- cash bonus
- medal
- photo in national newspaper
- time off work/school
- overseas vacation
- promotion
- party
- a pat on the back from the boss

6. COMPETITION: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'competition'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

1. TRUE / FALSE:

Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Vladimir Putin wants to find Russia's fastest runners. | T / F |
| b. Putin hopes his competition will make people do more work. | T / F |
| c. Computer scientists, artists and lawyers can all win one of the awards. | T / F |
| d. A news agency said the awards were similar to those given to Soviets. | T / F |
| e. Most of the candidates already selected work in the fields on farms. | T / F |
| f. The awards are for white-collar and blue-collar workers. | T / F |
| g. Women can get cash payments for having two or more children. | T / F |
| h. Women can also get medals for having a lot of children. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH:

Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. announced | a. area |
| 2. initiative | b. groups |
| 3. categories | c. bringing back |
| 4. reminiscent of | d. choosing |
| 5. outstanding | e. plan |
| 6. selecting | f. manual |
| 7. field | g. made it known |
| 8. blue-collar | h. customs |
| 9. reviving | i. similar to |
| 10. practices | j. excellent |

3. PHRASE MATCH:

(Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Russian president- | a. of the Soviet Union |
| 2. his new initiative will | b. collar workers |
| 3. based | c. bonuses |
| 4. reminiscent | d. third-placed worker |
| 5. cash | e. motivate workers |
| 6. started the process | f. era practices |
| 7. first-rate candidates | g. elect |
| 8. the runner-up and | h. in each field |
| 9. only open to blue- | i. of selecting |
| 10. reviving other Soviet- | j. on traditional industries |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Russian president-(1) _____ Vladimir Putin has announced a new competition to find the best workers in Russia. Mr Putin hopes his new (2) _____ will motivate workers to do better and perhaps increase productivity. All (3) _____ in the contest are based on traditional industries. The AFP news agency (4) _____ Putin as saying in a cabinet meeting: "Five nominations have been (5) _____: best welder, best stone mason, best miner, best electrician and best heavy vehicle driver." The AFP said: "The idea of the government (6) _____ the best workers is reminiscent of the Soviet Union, when (7) _____ workers received cash (8) _____ and had their photographs displayed on special honours boards."

confirmed
outstanding
categories
bonuses
elect
rewarding
initiative
quoted

Government departments have already started the (9) _____ of selecting the first-rate candidates in each (10) _____. The results will be announced in October. The winner in each category will receive 300,000 roubles (\$10,226), while the (11) _____-up and third-placed worker will get 200,000 and 100,000 roubles. The contest is only open to (12) _____ -collar workers. There are currently no prizes for white-collar workers or those (13) _____ in technology or the sciences. The AFP also said Mr Putin is (14) _____ other Soviet-era practices, such as rewarding women for having more than one child. Mothers will (15) _____ receive a cash payment for each child they have. Those who give birth to many children are (16) _____ to receive medals.

blue
set
field
reviving
process
working
soon
runner

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

_____ Vladimir Putin has announced a new competition to find the best workers in Russia. Mr Putin _____ will motivate workers to do better and perhaps increase productivity. All categories in the _____ traditional industries. The AFP news agency quoted Putin as saying in a cabinet meeting: "Five nominations have been confirmed: best welder, best stone mason, best miner, best electrician and _____ driver." The AFP said: "The idea of the government rewarding the best workers _____ the Soviet Union, when outstanding workers _____ and had their photographs displayed on special honours boards."

Government departments have already _____ selecting the first-rate candidates in each field. The results will be announced in October. The winner _____ will receive 300,000 roubles (\$10,226), while the runner-up and third-placed worker will get 200,000 and 100,000 roubles. The contest is _____ - collar workers. There _____ for white-collar workers or those working in technology or the sciences. The AFP also said Mr Putin is reviving other Soviet-era practices, _____ women for having more than one child. Mothers will soon receive a cash payment for each child they have. Those who give birth to many children _____ medals.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'Soviet' and 'Union'.

Soviet	Union

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• announced• motivate• based• heavy• idea• special	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• started• winner• runner• open• era• set
---	--

BEST WORKERS SURVEY

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

Write five GOOD questions about best workers in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

BEST WORKERS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'worker'?
- c) What do you think of Vladimir Putin's idea?
- d) Do you think 'best worker' awards motivate people to work harder?
- e) Would you study more if you could win a best student award?
- f) Why do you think Putin has only created the award for traditional blue-collar industries?
- g) What would the "best heavy vehicle driver" need to do to win an award?
- h) Do you think Putin is trying to recreate a Soviet Union atmosphere?
- i) Have you ever received an award for being the best at something?
- j) Would you like your photo displayed on a special honours board?

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BEST WORKERS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Are there (or should there be) initiatives like this in your country?
- c) What do you think of the "employee of the month" boards you see in restaurants and stores?
- d) What reward would best motivate you to work harder?
- e) Do you think the 300,000-rouble reward is enough?
- f) Do you think Putin should make awards for people in technology, the sciences, entrepreneurs and those in creative industries?
- g) What do you think of the idea of rewarding women for having more children?
- h) Is a medal sufficient motivation for having two or more children?
- i) Who do you think should be awarded a prize and why?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Russian president-elect Vladimir Putin?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120401-best_workers_award.html

Russian president-(1) _____ Vladimir Putin has announced a new competition to find the best workers in Russia. Mr Putin hopes his new (2) _____ will motivate workers to do better and perhaps increase productivity. All categories in the contest are based (3) _____ traditional industries. The AFP news agency quoted Putin (4) _____ saying in a cabinet meeting: "Five nominations have been confirmed: best welder, best stone mason, best miner, best electrician and best heavy vehicle driver." The AFP said: "The idea of the government rewarding the best workers is reminiscent (5) _____ the Soviet Union, when outstanding workers received cash bonuses and (6) _____ their photographs displayed on special honours boards."

Government departments have already started the process of selecting the first-(7) _____ candidates in each field. The results will be announced in October. The winner in each category will receive 300,000 roubles (\$10,226), (8) _____ the runner-(9) _____ and third-placed worker will get 200,000 and 100,000 roubles. The contest is only open to blue-collar workers. There are currently no prizes for (10) _____ -collar workers or those working in technology or the sciences. The AFP also said Mr Putin is (11) _____ other Soviet-era practices, such as rewarding women for having more than one child. Mothers will soon receive a cash payment for each child they have. Those who give birth to many children are (12) _____ to receive medals.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) elect | (b) election | (c) erect | (d) erected |
| 2. | (a) social | (b) contributing | (c) initiative | (d) rewarding |
| 3. | (a) up | (b) on | (c) to | (d) as |
| 4. | (a) is | (b) was | (c) be | (d) as |
| 5. | (a) by | (b) on | (c) of | (d) at |
| 6. | (a) had | (b) shot | (c) taken | (d) pictured |
| 7. | (a) rote | (b) route | (c) rite | (d) rate |
| 8. | (a) when | (b) while | (c) which | (d) wherever |
| 9. | (a) down | (b) in | (c) up | (d) on |
| 10. | (a) white | (b) black | (c) red | (d) pink |
| 11. | (a) revving | (b) reviving | (c) surviving | (d) conniving |
| 12. | (a) setting | (b) sated | (c) seated | (d) set |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about awards for the best workers. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. BEST WORKERS: Make a poster about the best workers in a company. Include the things they have to do to win. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. WINNER: Write a magazine article about the winner of a best worker award. Include imaginary interviews with him/her and his/her boss.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the winner of a best worker award. Ask him/her three questions about being the best worker. Give him/her three pieces of advice on how to win the same award next year. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. announced | a. made it known |
| 2. initiative | b. plan |
| 3. categories | c. groups |
| 4. reminiscent of | d. similar to |
| 5. outstanding | e. excellent |
| 6. selecting | f. choosing |
| 7. field | g. area |
| 8. blue-collar | h. manual |
| 9. reviving | i. bringing back |
| 10. practices | j. customs |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Russian president- | a. elect |
| 2. his new initiative will | b. motivate workers |
| 3. based | c. on traditional industries |
| 4. reminiscent | d. of the Soviet Union |
| 5. cash | e. bonuses |
| 6. started the process | f. of selecting |
| 7. first-rate candidates | g. in each field |
| 8. the runner-up and | h. third-placed worker |
| 9. only open to blue- | i. collar workers |
| 10. reviving other Soviet- | j. era practices |

GAP FILL:

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Russian president-(1) **elect** Vladimir Putin has announced a new competition to find the best workers in Russia. Mr Putin hopes his new (2) **initiative** will motivate workers to do better and perhaps increase productivity. All (3) **categories** in the contest are based on traditional industries. The AFP news agency (4) **quoted** Putin as saying in a cabinet meeting: "Five nominations have been (5) **confirmed**: best welder, best stone mason, best miner, best electrician and best heavy vehicle driver." The AFP said: "The idea of the government (6) **rewarding** the best workers is reminiscent of the Soviet Union, when (7) **outstanding** workers received cash (8) **bonuses** and had their photographs displayed on special honours boards."

Government departments have already started the (9) **process** of selecting the first-rate candidates in each (10) **field**. The results will be announced in October. The winner in each category will receive 300,000 roubles (\$10,226), while the (11) **runner**-up and third-placed worker will get 200,000 and 100,000 roubles. The contest is only open to (12) **blue-collar** workers. There are currently no prizes for white-collar workers or those (13) **working** in technology or the sciences. The AFP also said Mr Putin is (14) **reviving** other Soviet-era practices, such as rewarding women for having more than one child. Mothers will (15) **soon** receive a cash payment for each child they have. Those who give birth to many children are (16) **set** to receive medals.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - c 3 - b 4 - d 5 - c 6 - a 7 - d 8 - b 9 - c 10 - a 11 - b 12 - d