

Sales quotas exploit convenience store workers

6th April, 2017



Convenience stores provide many of us with a handy place to pop into 24 hours a day to buy things we have forgotten or didn't have time to get from other stores. They also provide part-time jobs for thousands of people. A new report from Japan suggests

that some convenience stores are not so convenient for their workers. The report, from Japan's national broadcaster NHK, says overbearing and unrealistic sales quotas are being imposed on many part-time workers. Labor rights experts are calling on store bosses to stop what they deem to be an exploitative practice. There are reports of workers having hundreds of dollars deducted from their salaries and having to buy unsold stock for failing to meet the quotas.

An expert on Japanese labor law Professor Mitsumo Uematsu said deducting a quota's worth of unsold products from salaries violated labor laws. He also questioned why so many part-timers felt compelled to buy unsold stock, which could be "seen as being forced to take on an economic burden because of pressure from stores". Professor Uematsu urged the headquarters of convenience store chains to tackle this problem so that part-timers are not exploited. One part-time worker said he was "drowning in quotas". Another said that workers can lose up to 20-30% of their monthly salary. The biggest losses come with quotas for unsold seasonal items like Valentines and Christmas goods and special sushi rolls.

Sources: TokyoReporter.com / fnn-mews.com / nhk.or.jp

Writing

Convenience store workers should never be given sales quotas. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

convenience / stores / 24 hours / part-time work / broadcaster / bosses / salaries / expert / laws / unsold products / economic / burden / headquarters / losses / sushi

True / False

- The article said convenience stores were dandy places to pop into. T / F
- The article has news about a report from Japan's national broadcaster. T / F
- A report said sales quotas given to part timers were unrealistic. T / F
- The report says workers have salaries deducted for not meeting quotas. T / F
- A labor law expert says deducting salaries for unsold quotas is legal. T / F
- The expert suggested workers were under pressure to buy unsold stock. T / F
- A part-timer described how he was drowning in sushi. T / F
- The biggest losses with quotas are for unsold daily newspapers. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. handy | a. breached |
| 2. overbearing | b. specialist |
| 3. imposed | c. fulfill |
| 4. practice | d. address |
| 5. meet | e. useful |
| 6. expert | f. coercion |
| 7. violated | g. method |
| 8. pressure | h. merchandise |
| 9. tackle | i. forced |
| 10. goods | j. bullying |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think about what you read?
- How convenient are convenience stores?
- Why don't convenience store workers sue their employers over quotas?
- What kind of company pressures staff to buy unsold stock?
- In what ways are part-time workers exploited?
- How might it feel to be 'drowning in quotas'?
- What do you think of workers having money deducted from their salary?
- What questions would you like to ask a convenience store boss?

Breaking News English - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. a handy place to pop | a. broadcaster |
| 2. Japan's national | b. burden |
| 3. unrealistic sales | c. to meet the quotas |
| 4. workers having hundreds of dollars deducted | d. on Japanese labor law |
| 5. having to buy unsold stock for failing | e. seasonal items |
| 6. An expert | f. from their salaries |
| 7. being forced to take on an economic | g. into |
| 8. because of pressure | h. "drowning in quotas" |
| 9. One part-time worker said he was | i. quotas |
| 10. quotas for unsold | j. from stores |

Discussion – Student B

- How important are convenience stores?
- What would life be like without convenience stores?
- What services do convenience stores provide in your country?
- What would it be like to work in a convenience store?
- What do you think of convenience store prices?
- Should part-time workers be given sales quotas?
- Is giving sales staff quotas an 'exploitative practice'?
- What advice do you have for convenience store part-time workers?

Spelling

- Japan's national cderaartosb NHK
- overbearing and sraitecnuil sales quotas
- being epdomis on many part-time workers
- Labor rights rxteeps
- an eoapilvitext practice
- hundreds of dollars udeddetc from their salaries
- aivotlde labor laws
- part timers felt dpellecmo to buy unsold stock
- forced to take on an economic unrdb
- because of usreepsr from stores
- rgnodniw in quotas
- unsold aenossila items

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. j	3. i	4. g	5. c
6. b	7. a	8. f	9. d	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Opening Hours

You think opening hours are the best thing about convenience stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least convenient of these (and why): extra services, location or the range of products.

Role B – Extra Services

You think extra services are the best thing about convenience stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least convenient of these (and why): opening hours, location or the range of products.

Role C – Location

You think location is the best thing about convenience stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least convenient of these (and why): extra services, opening hours or the range of products.

Role D – Range of Products

You think the range of products is the best thing about convenience stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least convenient of these (and why): extra services, location or opening hours.

Speaking – Convenience

Rank these with your partner. Put the most convenient things about convenience stores at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| • location | • opening hours |
| • fresh food | • range of products |
| • price | • extra services |
| • drinks | • essential items |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.