

Meldy Goes to the Office (by Mr Sproulle and Mrs Sproulle)

Mr Bloggworthy was pleased with himself. He parked his big car outside the office building and locked it. He walked round it checking the paint and the wheels before walking the very short distance to the front door of the building.

“Good morning, Ms Fishlake,” he said to the receptionist.

“Good morning, Mr Bloggworthy! So, it’s ‘Bring your daughter to work day’ again.”

Yes, it was. He was expecting an easy day. In the past the daughters of the staff had presented no problems. They had listened politely, made the right noises and then headed for the buffet lunch. A photographer from the local paper would take some pictures and Bloggworthy Market Research would once again look good in the eyes of the public.

He climbed the stairs to his top floor office. He could have taken the lift but he liked to get some exercise once in awhile. His office was on a corner and it had a wonderful view over the river to the cathedral and its cloisters.

He went next door into the boardroom and prepared it for the visitors. The large central table had been polished and the twelve comfortable chairs were evenly spaced around it. The interactive whiteboard was gleaming and his laptop stood ready.

Mrs Wagley parked her car outside the building and Meldy jumped out. She was really excited as she had never been to her mother’s office.

“Good morning, Ms Fishlake! This is Meldy,” explained Mrs Wagley.

“Hello, Mrs Wagley. Hello, Meldy!” said Ms Fishlake.

“Hello Ms Fishlake!” It’s bring your daughter to work day and we’re here to help Mr Bloggworthy!” said Meldy as she skipped off down the corridor.

She’s a sharp one, thought Ms Fishlake.

Mrs Wagley showed Meldy her desk and computer then took her to the boardroom. Other parents were also taking their daughters in the same direction so Meldy soon got to meet some of the other girls.

Meldy really liked the boardroom. She nipped over to the window and looked out. She could see a patio below with some bird feeders and some chairs for the staff, also the river and the cathedral beyond. She even saw a squirrel trying to get at some of the bird food but a cage-like structure meant it had to give up. She watched as it prowled around. Suddenly it unhooked the feeder which fell to the ground, scattering its contents. The squirrel triumphantly jumped down and gorged itself.

“Well done, Ms Squirrel!” she said to herself.

The boardroom was now full of girls and parents. Two mothers stayed behind while the other parents melted away to their workspaces. Mrs Wagley adjusted Meldy’s collar then left as well.

Mr Bloggworthy appeared from his neighbouring office like a celebrity striding on to a stage. He felt purposeful and in control as he surveyed the expectant upturned faces.

“Good morning, everyone. I’m Mr Bloggworthy.”

The audience chorused, “Good morning!” in return.

“If you have any questions, feel free to ask,” he said as he smiled at his audience.

He started by outlining the mission of Bloggworthy Market Research. “We act as a ‘go-between’. Businesses come to us because we are knowledgeable about conditions in the market place.”

A hand shot up.

“Yes?”

“What do you mean by a ‘market place’?” asked Rachel.

“Good question! A place where goods and services are bought and sold.”

Another hand shot up.

“Yes?”

“What’s a ‘service’?” asked Anna.

“Something you can’t hold in your hand - insurance, investment advice, etc.”
Bright girls, he thought.

“What we try to do, is anticipate - or guess - what people will want in the future. Before they even know they will want it!”

Another hand went up. “Why do that? Why not wait until they want it?” asked Meldy.

“They won’t know they’ll want it until they actually see it.”

“But if they don’t know what they want, do they really need it?” persisted Meldy.

“Henry Ford said if he had asked people what they wanted in 1900, they would said ‘a faster horse’! He realised people sometimes want things only when they see what is available to them.”

“Yes, but look at all the deaths on the roads caused by cars!” cried Meldy.

“But they’re much safer now!” said a slightly confused Mr Bloggworthy.

“My puppy, Tinkle, was hit by a car and we had to spend lots on vets’ bills!” said Daphne. A chorus of “Ahhhs!” accompanied this.

“The poor little thing!” cried Rachel.

“Was he badly hurt?” asked a very concerned Anna.

“He still walks with a limp,” said Daphne. “If we all had horses, he’d be much better off!” she continued. “And so would we!”

There were some giggles from the audience at this point.

“To continue, people want to get around faster today,” said Mr Bloggworthy. “Anyway, horses produce an awful lot of manure! We’d be swamped in it if we all had horses!”

“We could put it on the fields instead of the stuff they use now!” exclaimed Daphne.

“Think of all the flies! You wouldn’t want them, would you?” asked Mr Bloggworthy.

“Bats and birds could eat them! Lots of different types of bats and birds are endangered! They’ve got no food!” cried Meldy.

“We could eat them too! That’s the flies, not the bats and birds! Informed opinion suggests that insects are the superfood of the future!” cried Daphne. A chorus of ‘Yucks!’ accompanied this.

“That’s right!” said Anna. “My mother said that protein can be extracted and used in other foodstuffs. You would never know your delicious food had anything to do with flies!”

“That’s possible of course but people need cars. As I said, the pace of life is much too fast these days.” At this point Mr Bloggworthy thought he had closed off this avenue in the conversation. How wrong he was!

“Why can’t they go by train?” asked Meldy.

“How did you get here?” asked an increasingly frustrated Mr Bloggworthy.

“By car. I daren’t cycle. The cars go too fast. They don’t keep to the speed limits and they pass much too close!”

“If there weren’t any cars, we could all breath clean air!” exclaimed Anna.

“And we’d all be fitter and healthier with all that cycling!” commented Rachel.

“Anyway, we don’t work for car companies. At the moment we’re working with a major washing machine manufacture.”

“What are you doing about micro-fibres?” asked Daphne.

“Micro-fibres?”

“They come out when you wash clothes. They get in the water and our rivers. Fish eat them and we eat the fish!” replied Daphne.

“Good point! Yes - er - thank you, we’ll look into that. We need to take this on board, in fact we’ll leave no stone unturned in our quest for a solution!”

exclaimed Mr Bloggworthy. “Now back to Marketing. We also help our customers to identify demand. Could there a niche that they haven’t yet discovered?”

A hand went up.

“What’s a ‘niche’?”

“A small gap in the market. For example, patio heaters. People like to sit outside in the winter and keep warm.” If he’d been thinking on his feet, he would have chosen another example.

Meldy’s hand shot up.

“Why can’t they put coats on?” she suggested.

“They like to be comfortable when they’re relaxing.”

“Why can’t they go inside?” asked Ruth.

“It makes no sense to keep heating up air which continually rises into the atmosphere! Don’t they understand basic physics?” Daphne added.

“We built a conservatory so we could feel we were outside but keep warm inside,” offered Anna.

“Conservatories also waste energy. All that glass allows heat to escape,” said a self-satisfied Mr Bloggworthy.

“My mothers a scientist. She looked into it. She found that modern glass can be very energy efficient!” replied a very confident Anna.

“It’s better than heating up the open air, isn’t it?” asked Meldy.

“Is that your big car outside?” asked Daphne.

“Er - yes. Why?”

“Why not get an electric car? It’s the future you were talking about, isn’t it?” she suggested. “Anticipating people’s needs? Isn’t it called leading by example?”

Mr Bloggworthy started to look uncomfortable. He ran his finger between his collar and his neck, then loosened his tie. His eager audience waited for him to respond. Some were waiting to pounce like panthers on unsuspecting prey.

By now he was wishing he'd never let them ask questions. Perhaps they might have given him an easier ride.

Some of the other parents, much to his relief, came to claim their daughters.

"Thank you for an interesting talk, Mr Bloggworthy," offered Daphne.

As the animated audience left the room, Meldy looked over to the now discouraged head of Bloggworthy Market Research.

"You could work on a better squirrel feeder," she suggested. "I saw this poor squirrel outside the window and she was really hungry!" She paused for a moment. "You know, whenever I get something wrong, my favourite teacher tells me I must do more homework."

At this point Mrs Wagley appeared to claim her daughter.

"I hope she hasn't been any trouble Mr Bloggworthy?"

Mr Bloggworthy looked from mother to daughter and back again.

"Er no, er...."

"That's good! Well, goodbye!" said a relieved Mrs Wagley

Mr Bloggworthy sat quietly in his office for a while.

"That Wagley girl was right! I didn't do my homework! I should have encouraged them to talk instead of trying to control the situation! They are the future after all!"

He started to plan the next 'Take your children to work day'.