

Moving to a New Country 3: Bureaucracy

Warm up:

- When was the last time you had to deal with frustrating bureaucracy?
- Do you know of any organisations that are very difficult to deal with?
- Does your country have a lot of frustrating rules and regulations? How would you describe the bureaucracy in your country?
- Have you ever worked in a job that had a lot of rules and regulations? What was it like?
- Have you ever had to apply for a visa? What was the process like?



1. Michael Haybecker has been living in London for 6 months and received this email from the British Visa Authority. Read the email and answer the questions on the next page.

Subject: Issues with your working visa

Dear Mr Haybecker,

I am writing to you regarding your current British working visa which you received 6 months ago. We have reviewed your visa and unfortunately found some issues with it. Rest assured the visa is still valid for another 6 months, but if you wish to renew your visa at the end of the year you will need to provide us with some additional information and documents.

We see that at the moment you have travellers' insurance, but unfortunately that is not sufficient for a working visa. We recommend that you contact your insurance provider and change your plan from travellers' insurance to general insurance plan. Alternatively, you can check our website and find a list of companies who provide insurance that complies with our requirements.

Also, we have not received a formal letter of sponsorship from your current employer. In order to renew your visa, we require that letter (we have received one from the German branch of your company, but unfortunately, we also require one from the British branch.)

Additionally, we see that you have recently changed residence, but have not yet registered at your new address. All British visa holders are required to register their addresses within 2 months of moving. You can register your address by visiting your nearest immigration office at 64 Beaker rd, London W1F. Unfortunately, online registration is not available at this time due to technical issues.

I see that your current visa expires on the 22nd of August, so we require these documents by the 22nd of July at the latest. If you would like to make an appointment to provide us with these documents, please book a time that is convenient for you on our website.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reply to this email.

Kinds regards, Ellen Jones

- a) Could Michael's current visa be cancelled if he doesn't provide the requested documents? *No, it is valid til it runs out.*
- b) What is the problem with his current insurance, and how can he fix it? *It is traveller's insurance, and he needs general insurance. He needs to either upgrade his current insurance or get different insurance.*
- c) What do you think a letter of sponsorship is, and why does Michael need a second one? *It's a letter from an employer which is required for a working visa. Michael needs one from his home country and one from England.*
- d) Why does Michael need to register his address, and how can he do that? *Because all British visa holders need to register their address, he needs to go to an office.*
- e) When does Michael's visa run out, and what does he need to do before then? *22nd August, he needs to fix his insurance, register his address, get a letter of sponsorship.*



2. Read and discuss the four statements about experiences people have had dealing with bureaucracy. Each statement contains one idiom. Match the idiom to its meaning below.

Ralf: Well, I live in Germany, so my country is kind of famous for red tape, we have rules and regulations for pretty much everything, which drives me crazy sometimes. Last year I had to put my mother in a retirement home because she suffers from dementia, and the amount of paperwork I had to do was absolutely crazy. My application took more than 6 months to be approved. It just made a stressful situation even worse.

Alejandra: I'm Spanish, and I used to complain a lot about our bureaucracy until I moved to Portugal. In Spain you have to register your address any time you move, but I was able to do it online in about 10 minutes. In Portugal I've got to call an office and spend about an hour on the phone with them every time I move. In hindsight I guess Spanish bureaucracy really wasn't that bad.

Hunter: I'm from the USA, and I think if you're American the bureaucracy here really isn't that bad, but I've heard it's terrible if you're applying for a visa. I have a friend from Scotland who is trying to get his American citizenship, but they're making him jump through a lot of hoops. He has to get letters from all his employers, give them a police check from Scotland, provide them with a copy of his birth certificate, and he even has to pass a test about American culture and history.

Manuel: I'm an expat who lives in China, and so far it has been ok, except for the process of getting my license. When I applied for the license, they told me I needed a special letter signed by someone who works at the visa office. When I went to the visa office, they told me they couldn't sign the letter without me showing them my license first... so it's kind of a catch-22. I still don't have an official Chinese license.

1. Looking back. *In hindsight*
2. A situation from which there is no escape because of two conflicting rules. *Catch-22*
3. Excessive and frustrating bureaucracy. *Red Tape*
4. To go through a lot of things in order to receive something. *Jump through hoops*

Modal Verbs

A modal verb is a verb that is used with a main verb to express something about the main verb.

Eg. "*I can stay here until my visa runs out.*" *Can* is the modal verb and *stay* is the main verb.

Some basic modal verbs are "have to", "should" and "will." However, there are some more advanced modal verbs which can be useful in many situations, but especially when discussing rules and regulations.

"Have got to" is another way to say "have to"

Eg. "*I've got to ask my boss for a letter of sponsorship for my visa.*"

Verb to be + "able to" is another way of saying "can."

Eg. "*I'm able to apply for a license.*"

"Managed to" is a modal verb which emphasizes that something is not easy.

Eg. "*I managed to extend my visa.*"

Verb to be + "supposed to" means *should, but doesn't/didn't.*

Eg. "*I was supposed to pay rent last week*"



3. Complete the sentences using modal verbs from the box above. You may have to change the tense of the verb

a) I'm sorry, I *wasn't able to* hand in my application because the office was closed on Friday.

b) I'm really stressed because *I've got to* call my insurance company and I hate talking on the phone.

c) I *am supposed to* pay money into my pension every month, but I almost never do.

d) It wasn't easy, but I *managed to* change my major at university.

e) Because I live overseas, I *am supposed to* register to vote in my home country, but I still haven't done it after 10 years

f) *Are you able to* fill out the form, or do you need help?

g) Anytime you want to move, you *have got to* register your address with the government.



4. Write a statement about the bureaucracy in your country. What do they do well, what do they do badly, and what experiences have you had? Try to use some of the modal verbs from exercise 3.

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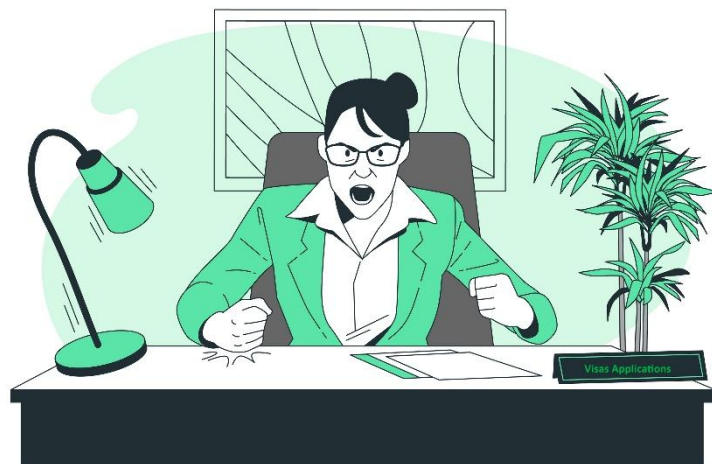
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5. Michael makes an appointment with Ellen Jones at the visa office. Listen to their conversation and answer the questions.

- a) What is the issue with Michael's letter of sponsorship from his employer, and what does he need to do to fix it? *The letter is not just a written letter, his boss needs to go to a site and fill out a form.*
- b) Why is Michael having trouble registering his address, and what is the “catch-22” he describes? *He can't register his address without a British bank account, and he can't get British bank account without a registered address*
- c) How does Ms Jones help him registering his address? *She gives him a special short term registration that will let him open a bank account.*
- d) Why do you think Michael is frustrated at the end of the conversation? *He feels like Ms Jones should have told him before about the issue with address registration.*
- e) By what date does Michael need to submit his papers? *July 18th*



Audio Transcript

Ellen: Hi Mr Haybecker?

Michael: Hi, you must be Ms Jones?

Ellen: That's right, nice to meet you. Were you able to get the documents we require?

Michael: Well, I have the proof of updated insurance here, I managed to get that pretty quickly.

Ellen: Ok, do you mind if I take a look?

Michael: Of course, here you are.

Ellen: Mmmm (shuffle papers) ok, that all seems to be fine. And what about your letter of sponsorship, did you manage to get one of those?

Michael: Sure, but.... Well I'm kinda confused about that, I attached a letter of sponsorship from my boss with my original application. But I've printed out a copy and have one here.

Ellen: Ok... (paper ruffles) mmm see this is just a letter from your boss saying that you work for the company in England. I'm afraid that's not gonna be enough

Michael: But... I thought that's what a letter of sponsorship is?

Ellen: I'm afraid not mr Haybecker. Your boss is supposed to go to a website and fill in a specific form for this. Just a letter saying "yes he works here" is not really good enough.

Michael: Ok... could you gimmie the name of that site.

Ellen: Sure, it's printed on this card. And you'd better ask him to do it soon, because this is pretty urgent.

Michael: Ok, I'm gonna ask him to do that tomorrow.

Ellen: Good. Now did you manage to get registered at your new address?

Michael: No I didn't, to be honest I dunno how I'm gonna do that?

Ellen: What do you mean? I think the instructions in the letter we sent were clear, did you go to the registration offices?

Michael: I did, but they said I've gotta open a British bank account in order to register my address.

Ellen: That's correct, but should be relatively easy to open an account at most major banks.

Michael: Well that's where I ran into a problem.... I went to 3 different banks, and they all told me that in order to open an account, I needed to have a registered address.

Ellen: So... oh ok, I see the problem.

Michael: Yeah it's kinda a catch -22

Ellen: I might be able to help you there. I'm gonna give you a special short term address registration. You should be able to use this at a bank to open an account.

Michael: Ok, thanks... I mean, it would've been nice to have this in the first place, before I went to the registration offices and the banks

Ellen: Well you didn't ask for it Mr Haybecker.

Michael: I didn't know I needed it! You could've saved me so much time... sigh. You know what, never mind. I'll get my new address registered as soon as possible.

Ellen: I'll need those papers by the 18th of July mr Haybecker.

Michael: The 18th? But in your letter it says I have till the 22nd?

Ellen: Mmm I'm afraid the matter is urgent, so we need the papers by the 18th.

Michael: Sigh. Ok, I'll do my best. Thanks for your help.

Ellen: Have a nice day Mr Haybecker.

Michael: You too.