

4

Keeping projects on track

AIMS

- A To practise monitoring progress and troubleshooting
- B To develop effective problem-solving
- C To improve the effectiveness of risk management
- D To consider different approaches to goal-setting

A Discussion and listening



Think about it 1 In your experience, what kinds of problem can delay a project? Add to this list and discuss which are the most challenging issues.

- Difficulties collecting research data
- Unrealistic deadlines
- People leaving the project team
- Inadequate budgets
- Technology problems
- Unexpected market developments

2 In your experience, what works and what does not work when trying to deal with these problems?

Listen to this 3 27-29 Listen to three international project leaders talking about their experiences of keeping projects on track. Note down the problems which each of them sees as most significant.

speaker	problems
1 Satoki	
2 Daniel	
3 Anna	

4 Read this e-mail from a team member to his leader about a delay to their project. As project leader, how would you feel if you received this e-mail?

Dear Sandy
 I'm afraid that we will be unable to complete the software upgrade next week on time. We have run into some problems which we didn't expect. However, I'm sure we will be able to get everything done by the end of the month – so no more than an eight-day delay.
 If you would like a call to discuss this, do let me know and we can schedule something.
 Regards, Pavel

5 30-32 Listen to the project leaders from Exercise 3 discussing their reactions to the e-mail in Exercise 4. In which ways do they think the same as / differently to you? After listening to their opinions about the e-mail, which project leader do you most agree with, and why?

Focus on language 6 Choose the correct option to complete each of these comments about the progress of projects.

- a Things have gone really well. We should be able to finish everything *on / in* time.
- b We haven't finished all the tasks *yet / still* in Phase 1. We need another week.
- c The project leader is very happy with the speed of our work. We're already around two weeks *before / ahead of* schedule.
- d We're waiting for the IT department to install the new software. *Already / In the meantime*, we'll start to train users.
- e Things have gone a little too slowly. We need to speed up if we're going to finish *until / by* our deadline of the end of this month.
- f We're under pressure, so we need to move to the next phase of the project *meanwhile / shortly*.
- g *As of today / Current*, we have spent approximately \$2m on the project.

7 a Complete the sentences below describing changes to a project schedule using the verbs from the box.

amend	bring forward	ditch	integrate	postpone
replace	reprioritise	revisit	swap	tighten up

- a We have fallen behind schedule, so we need to the deadline to the end of May. If you agree, I will the project schedule and send a new version to all team members.
 - b We need to look again at quality levels, which I think are too low. We really have to here.
 - c There are too many tasks at the moment, and it's causing stress for everyone. I suggest we and those which are least important.
 - d Peter and Luis are not in the right roles for this project. I suggest we them around, as they are better suited to doing each other's tasks.
 - e Can we budgets at the next project meeting, as I'm worried we are going to overspend.
 - f Would it be possible to the product testing from next month to this?
 - g Martine has just told me she will be leaving the company, so we will need to her at the end of this month.
 - h The company is going to announce a new growth strategy for next year. Can we this message somehow into the project communication package?
- b With a partner, use the verbs from the box to describe your own working schedule and changes to plans at work. Try to use each of the verbs at least once.

Let's talk 8 Work in pairs. You are team members of an international construction project. The project leader needs to phone the sponsor to update on some problems in the project and agree a new schedule.

Student A (project leader): Turn to page 90.

Student B (project sponsor): Turn to page 95.

Prepare and then role-play the telephone conversation. You should agree and both note down changes to your project schedules as you speak. After the call, compare your schedules and see if you have the same information and timelines on your schedules.