

# 9

# Resources

## Starting point

- 1 Think of examples of natural resources and company resources.
- 2 What kinds of things put pressure on these resources?

## Working with words | Corporate Social Responsibility

- 1 Read about Michelin's 'Green Gold' project. Which of your examples of resources from *Starting point* are mentioned?

## Starting a CSR project: Green Gold

Michelin, one of the oldest tyre manufacturers in the world, has a number of projects around the world connected to its **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme**. As Michelin is involved in what is considered an environmentally damaging industry, Michelin has developed an approach called 'Performance and Responsibility'. This concept allows the company to demonstrate that it is actively taking measures to reduce the industry's negative impact on the environment.

A small rubber project in north-eastern Brazil set up by Michelin has become a flagship for the French tyre giant's Corporate Social Responsibility programme. With five rubber trees needed to produce one truck tyre, Michelin is an obvious target for those who claim that big business has a **track record** in using up **natural resources** too intensively. Although the company can't change the number of trees needed in the manufacturing process, it has initiated a successful project to offset the effects of its activities. The Ouro Verde ('Green Gold') project in Bahia state is a 'marvellous human adventure', the late Edouard Michelin said at its inauguration. Having owned a 9,000 hectare site there for 20 years, the French firm looked at closing the loss-making plantation and laying off the workers. Instead, it took advantage of the local **knowledge base** and passed ownership to twelve local Michelin managers, who set up a cooperative with the backing of loans underwritten by the parent company. This was a **critical success factor**: instead of

laying off workers, 200 have been hired over the past two years.

Michelin has a positive track record in terms of **corporate accountability** and working with local communities. Lionel Barré, the plantation director at Michelin, says that the initiative stands as 'an example of **sustainable development** in a poor region'. The last two years have seen a burst of activity: the cooperative has planted cocoa next to the rubber trees to diversify its output; recycled some of its revenue into providing facilities for its employees; and has replanted parts of the depleted Atlantic rainforest in eastern Brazil, which contains 171 of Brazil's 202 **endangered species**.



- 2 Work with a partner and discuss these questions.

- 1 How could both Michelin and the local community benefit from this project?
- 2 What disadvantages could there be for Michelin or the local community?

- 3** Replace the words in *italics* in 1–8 with a phrase in **bold** in the text in **1**. Then work with a partner and ask and answer the questions.
- 1 What examples of *things in the environment that can be used for materials or energy* can you think of?
  - 2 Do you know of any *groups of animals which are dying out*?
  - 3 Why is having a *wide range of skills and expertise* important to companies?
  - 4 What is the main *measure of achievement* in a project you are working on?
  - 5 What does *having to justify actions to stakeholders, customers and societies* mean for how companies behave?
  - 6 What does your company do in terms of *using materials and energy efficiently without harming the environment*?
  - 7 What is your company's *performance over a number of years on green issues*?
  - 8 Does your company have a *project which contributes to the welfare of a community or the environment*?
- 4** ▶ **9.1** Listen to three people talking about CSR and answer questions 1–3.
- 1 What's the first person's argument *against* CSR projects?
  - 2 What's the second person's argument *for* CSR projects?
  - 3 What's required of a CSR partner with the third person's company and why?
- 5** Work with a partner. Complete sentences 1–9 with phrases from the list.
- short-term profit   drain on resources   return on investment   bottom line  
assets   market value   quantifiable data   cost-benefit analysis   long-term viability*
- 1 To find out if the project's worth doing we need a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2 This project is costing us far too much; it's a real \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 3 We'll have to do some forward projections to check the project's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 4 Before I commit a lot of money to the project I need to be sure of a good \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 5 We need to be sure that our projected figures are based on \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 6 Our highly-skilled workforce is one of our key \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 7 Rather than future stability, the company's strategy is all about \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 8 Our reputation as a responsible employer has enhanced the company's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 9 The shareholders were disappointed because the drop in sales had an impact on our \_\_\_\_\_.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 9** on page 118.

- 6** Work with a partner. Using vocabulary from **3** and **5**, discuss the pros and cons of investing in projects 1–4 for:
- current employees
  - customers
  - shareholders

### Projects

- 1 Invest in extensive IT and skills-based training programmes for all members of staff, and include residential team-building weekends for managers.
- 2 Offer work to asylum seekers in the local area: train them and provide them with free language lessons to enable them to work effectively.
- 3 Invest in a project to protect the environment – encourage staff to leave their cars at home and install solar panels on the roof of office buildings.
- 4 Relocate the customer services department to a developing country. Pay the staff in that country a higher salary in comparison with other companies.

- 7** Would your company invest in any of the projects in **6**? Why/Why not?



### Context

Floralope is located in Hungary and manufactures seed packets for companies in neighbouring countries. Floralope is part-owned by a Dutch company, so any major decisions have to be discussed with them. Recently, Floralope has found it hard to keep up with its competitors, due to outdated systems and a more demanding customer base. Investing in a new IT system would help keep existing customers and could enable expansion. The question is whether this is a wise investment and if long-term expansion is the right strategy. Zoltan and Judit from the Hungarian company, and Margit from the Dutch parent company, meet to discuss the situation.

## Business communication | Discussing options



- 1 Read the *Context*. How might the company's current resources affect the decision to expand and invest in a new IT system?
- 2 ▶ 9.2–9.5 Listen to four extracts from the meeting. Check your ideas in 1 and answer questions 1–4.
  - 1 What type of company resources were discussed?
  - 2 Which resources are problematic?
  - 3 Who takes a positive lead in the meeting? How do you know?
  - 4 Who seems quite negative throughout? How do you know?
- 3 ▶ 9.2–9.5 Listen again and complete expressions a–l.
  - a So, looking at the situation from \_\_\_\_\_, if the IT system is updated, you'll be more efficient in terms of your customer admin ...
  - b We need to develop \_\_\_\_\_ to move the business forward.
  - c Well, we have \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d OK, that's all very positive, but I think we need to look at \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e I think \_\_\_\_\_ here.
  - f \_\_\_\_\_ you took on some younger people?
  - g And we're in a great location, so I think we're in \_\_\_\_\_ to find new staff.
  - h Basically we \_\_\_\_\_ for a long-term plan like this – \_\_\_\_\_ provide training for everyone, which will be a substantial investment, \_\_\_\_\_ accept that it's totally unfeasible.
  - i We have to bear in mind \_\_\_\_\_ of a commitment like this.
  - j So \_\_\_\_\_ that long-term we have the human resources for the strategy.
  - k Are there any other \_\_\_\_\_?
  - l Right, so \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 Look at sentences 1–6 from the meeting and the underlined expressions. Answer the questions a–c.
  - 1 Yes, but we do have some employees who've worked on SAP-type systems in previous jobs.
  - 2 I mean, there's no point in investing in a system upgrade if we don't have the space, personnel or finances to carry it through.
  - 3 Provided we check out the feasibility of these options thoroughly, I'm convinced we can find a system upgrade that will work for us.
  - 4 I'm not sure that would work.
  - 5 Realistically, would we be able to finance this strategy?
  - 6 Assuming we decided to commit to the full amount, we could also look at ways to save money in other areas.
  - a Which sentences focus on positive results?
  - b Which sentences focus on negative results?
  - c In which sentences are the main points dependent on a condition/situation?

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 9** on page 118.

## Key expressions

### Setting the context / discussing strategy

Looking at the situation from a long-term perspective ...

We need to develop a clear strategy to ...

I think we need to look at the bigger picture.

We have to bear in mind the long-term viability ...

### Stating / discussing options

We have a number of options.

I think our options are quite clear here.

How would it work if you/we ...?

Basically we don't have much choice ...

We can either ... or we ...

We're in a really strong position to ...

### Discussing feasibility / evaluating options

There's no point in ...-ing, if we don't/can't ...

Provided we ..., I'm convinced we can ...

I'm not sure that would work.

Realistically, would we be able to finance this strategy?

Assuming we decided to ..., we could also ...

### Reaching decisions

So, the general consensus is that ...

Are there any other points to consider?

Right. So we're decided.

- 5** Margit discussed the strategy proposed by Floralope with a senior manager at the Dutch parent company. Some ideas were rejected and alternative suggestions were made. Work in groups of four. **Students A and B**, look at the information below. **Students C and D**, turn to page 139.

### Students A and B

You support these alternative suggestions from the Dutch parent company.

- 1 Replacing some of the older staff with more IT-literate staff.
- 2 Raising capital by selling off some unused property and getting a bank loan.
- 3 Delaying the decision for six months until more information has been gathered by:
  - reviewing return on investment for a new IT system
  - analysing the company in comparison to the competition
  - conducting a customer satisfaction survey

Discuss the advantages of these new suggestions. Think about how the company's performance or reputation will be affected.

Follow the agenda below and hold a meeting to discuss the alternative suggestions. Try to reach a decision.

## Agenda

### Impact of new IT system

- 1 Human resources – training and staff issues?
- 2 Financial resources – how will the IT system and training be funded?
- 3 Timescale – when will the new system be introduced?

- 6** Work with a partner. Discuss projects 1–6 in relation to your company and answer questions a–c. During the discussion try to use as many expressions from the *Key expressions* as you can.

- 1 new computer system
  - 2 new building / relocating
  - 3 new product/service
  - 4 refurbished offices
  - 5 increase in staff numbers
  - 6 merger/restructuring
- a Which projects would be appropriate for your company?
  - b What resources would be necessary?
  - c How would the resources be managed?

- 7** Present your ideas to the rest of the group.





## Language at work | Using conditionals

- 1 Look at the meeting extracts 1–9 and underline all the verbs.
  - 1 ... if the IT system is updated, you'll be more efficient in terms of your customer admin ...
  - 2 Provided we check out the feasibility of these options thoroughly, I'm convinced we can find a system upgrade that will work for us.
  - 3 ... there's no point in investing in a system upgrade if we don't have the space, the personnel or the finances ...
  - 4 ... if we'd invested in our production facilities five years ago, ... we would have knocked down the old building and had one purpose-built.
  - 5 If we made them our key users, we could gradually train up the rest.
  - 6 ... if you'd recruited more young employees at the start, they would have had some IT knowledge from school.
  - 7 If we only had a couple of people initially who could use the system, how could they cope with the extra work?
  - 8 ... if we hadn't invested in the system, we'd be way behind the competition.
  - 9 If we work more efficiently with the customers, our reputation can only improve too.
- 2 Match the sentences in 1 to categories a–f.
  - a Predicting the results of a decision in the future: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b Making a suggestion: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c Stating a fact: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d Questioning the results of a future situation: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e Expressing regret for past inaction: \_\_\_\_\_
  - f Talking about the present results of a past action/inaction: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Work with a partner. Look at the verbs you underlined in 1 and the categories in 2. Identify the conditional type (zero, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, mixed) for each sentence.

» For more information, go to Unit 9 **Grammar reference** on page 131.

- 4 Work with a partner. Take turns to discuss these situations. Use conditionals to talk about past, present or future consequences.

*Example: Last year, your company outsourced catering. Now the standard of food in the canteen is lower and the number of employees eating there has halved.*  
 → *If we hadn't outsourced catering, we would still have a good canteen.*

- 1 Your company is making a loss. It needs to cut costs before it goes bankrupt.
- 2 The government is considering raising interest rates, but they are concerned about the effects on consumer spending.
- 3 Your department hired a bad manager. Since his arrival, three people have left.
- 4 You chose the wrong career path. You are bored and frustrated with your job.
- 5 Some staff will be relocated to Berlin (it might be you). You have friends there.
- 6 Your annual pay review is coming up. You want to go on holiday to the Caribbean, but you can't afford it at the moment.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 9** on page 119.

- 5 YP fitness studio is having its yearly review meeting. Work with a partner and turn to page 138. Talk about what happened and the future plans.
- 6 Think about the past year in your company, department or team. Make notes about what happened and add some suggestions for next year using headings 1–3. Then discuss your notes with a partner.
  - 1 Past action/inaction and past results
  - 2 Past action/inaction and present results
  - 3 Suggestions/predictions for next year and the results



**Key word | look**

Match the use of **look** in 1–5 to definitions a–e.

- 1 Look, you've got this wrong.
  - 2 It looks as if Nadine's left the office.
  - 3 You look great in that new outfit!
  - 4 I have to look for my car keys every morning.
  - 5 Could you take a look at this email before I send it?
- a it seems / it is apparent
  - b to focus on something, think about it, and give a reaction
  - c to describe appearance
  - d to indicate you're highlighting something
  - e to search

**Culture question**

- In your own language do you normally use direct or indirect language when informing someone they have misunderstood?
- How would you feel if someone corrected your English during a meeting?
- Would you be more direct in a meeting with native English speakers or with non-native English speakers? Why?

**Practically speaking | Dealing with misunderstandings**

- 1 ►9.6 Listen to five conversations and answer these questions. In which conversation(s) does the person react to the misunderstanding ...?

1 in a polite way                      2 in a less polite way

- 2 ►9.6 Listen again. In which conversation (1–5) do you hear phrases a–l?

- a I didn't mean that! \_\_\_\_
- b I don't know what you're talking about. \_\_\_\_
- c Sorry if I didn't make that clear. \_\_\_\_
- d I was thinking more along the lines of ... \_\_\_\_
- e Look, you've got it wrong. \_\_\_\_
- f What do you mean? \_\_\_\_
- g That's not really what I meant. What I actually wanted to say was ... \_\_\_\_
- h What I meant was ... \_\_\_\_
- i ... can I put this straight? \_\_\_\_
- j The amount may seem ..., but actually ... \_\_\_\_
- k No, that's not right. \_\_\_\_
- l No, that's not exactly what I'm saying. \_\_\_\_

- 3 Work with a partner and answer questions 1–3.

- 1 Which phrases in 2 are direct (D) and which are less direct (L)?
- 2 Which words and structures are used to make the message less direct?
- 3 When might you want to be less direct or more direct?

- 4 Change the phrases 1–5 to make them less direct using words from the list.

*exactly actually really sure mean quite*

- 1 That's not what I mean, I said ... \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 I didn't mean that. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 What do you mean? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 I don't know what you're talking about. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 No, that's not right. \_\_\_\_\_

» For extension and revision, go to **Useful phrases** on page 135.

- 5 Look at situations 1 and 2 below. Have short conversations with a partner. Take turns to deal with the misunderstanding using the phrases in 2.

**Situation 1:** Employee and employer discussing an employment contract

- Employee: understands bonuses are paid each year
- Employer: corrects information – bonuses paid depending on performance

**Situation 2:** Salesperson and customer discussing prices

- Customer: thinks the 2% discount is fixed
- Salesperson: corrects information – if the customer opens an account with them, 3.5% is offered immediately plus a quantity discount

- 6 Work with a partner. Make the complaints/suggestions below to your partner and deal with any misunderstanding.

**Student A:**

- make a complaint about a new system at work
- suggest an idea for your partner's next holiday

**Student B:**

- make a complaint about your partner's work
- suggest a task for your partner to do at work