



3 On schedule

Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about managing projects
- Asking for and giving an update
- Making and responding to suggestions
- Catching up with colleagues
- Updating on current projects using the present perfect and past simple

Case study

- Organizing a road show

Starting point

- 1 In your experience, what are the key factors in managing a project (however big or small)?
- 2 What can go right with a project? What can go wrong?
- 3 What projects are you currently working on in or out of work?
- 4 What progress are you making? What problems have you had?



Working with words | Managing projects

- 1 What are the five most common problems in managing projects? Read the text and compare your ideas.
- 2 How do the problems mentioned in the text affect the project? What solution can you think of for each problem?

1 Not enough planning time

The planning stage may not be as exciting as the development stage, but it's just as important, if not more so. Lack of planning will always result in changes later on, eating up money and man-hours.

Solution: ____

2 Communication breakdowns

Anyone who runs a business knows that communication is absolutely vital to the success of any project. Breakdowns can occur between the project team and the end users (i.e. the clients or employers), and there can also be problems between the individual members inside the project team.

Solution: ____

3 Unrealistic budget

If your budget is unrealistic to start with, it will be impossible to stay within budget. As you run out of money, departments fall behind, resources are slow to arrive, and – because of budget constraints – the project, once again, goes out of control.

Solution: ____

4 Not checking progress

As the project goes along, the unexpected happens. Various different people use their own ideas to fix these challenges and – when you're on the point of finishing – you're suddenly faced with a huge list of problems that need to be addressed and you miss the deadline.

Solution: ____

5 Not reviewing existing standards

If most or all of your projects run behind schedule and over budget, ask yourself if you maintain the same standards time after time. Do they work? If you keep doing the same thing, you're likely to get the same results.

Solution: ____

3 Match these suggested solutions to the problems in the text in 1. Do you agree with the solutions? Why or why not?

- A** Never assume that everyone understands. Make sure that everyone can talk to each other and share information. Resolve any conflicts straight away or you will run into a lot of problems and complications later on.
- B** Take time to review how projects have gone in the past. Keep a running list of what worked, what didn't, and how to do it better next time.
- C** Spend longer on research and preparation. Make contingency plans, and don't just concentrate on making it to market before your competition. If you get there first but your product is faulty, you'll get nothing but complaints and a bad reputation.
- D** Create an accurate forecast. Outline ways to develop better upfront planning of the resources. Make sure you allocate enough funds to each department and keep track of spending.
- E** Define 'checkpoints' throughout the project so you stay on track. Monitor everyone's performance and prioritize tasks when there is a problem. Addressing problems quickly will save time later. You can still make the launch date you've set or even finish ahead of schedule.

4 Do you associate these phrases from the texts with successful (S) or unsuccessful (U) projects, or both?

run out of money within budget behind schedule upfront planning over budget
miss the deadline stay on track out of control budget constraints lack of planning
make the launch date accurate forecast ahead of schedule unrealistic budget

5 Choose the correct answer from the words in *italics*.

- Good communication will help you to *resolve* / *address* conflict quickly.
- When time is short, you must *promote* / *prioritize* tasks and do the most important ones first.
- Try to *hold* / *keep* track of spending so that you don't go over budget.
- Make sure you *allow* / *allocate* sufficient resources to the different departments.
- Always expect the unexpected and *manufacture* / *make* contingency plans.
- It is important to *examine* / *check* progress at every stage of a project in case there are any problems.

6 Choose a verb from the list that can go with *all three* phrases in each group.

stay set run keep check

- _____ smoothly / out of time / into problems
- _____ on track / within budget / the course
- _____ the facts / progress / details
- _____ a budget / a timescale / a launch date
- _____ to a budget / track of / costs down

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 3** on page 106.

7 Work with a partner. Turn to File 06 on page 137. Use the words and phrases in 4–6 to discuss what has gone right and wrong for the project. Suggest how the project could be managed better.

8 Work in small groups. Using the ideas from the texts and your own experience, make notes on how to manage a project successfully. Then give a short presentation to the class.



Business communication skills

Context

The Tech-Tariff project is a collaboration between MMT-Tec (service provider) and Anvikon (mobile phone manufacturer). The aim is to launch a high-tech phone with new advanced features from Anvikon in combination with MMT-Tec's new tariff which includes free videophoning and multimedia message services. Sarah and Michelle from MMT-Tec and Ian from Anvikon are meeting to discuss the progress of the project.

Meetings | Asking for and giving an update | Making and responding to suggestions



- 1 09▶** Read the *Context*. Listen to Part 1 of the meeting and make notes about the items on the agenda.

Tech-Tariff Update Meeting – 2 Sept

Agenda

- 1** Update on marketing activities (MMT-Tec):
 - Launch date ¹ Set for 15th November
 - Advertising campaign ² _____
 - Launch party: Venue ³ _____
Catering ⁴ _____
- 2** Update on Anvikon activities:
 - Handset ⁵ _____
- 3** Project schedule ⁶ _____

- 2 09▶** Listen again and answer questions 1–3.

- 1 What four phrases does Sarah use to ask for an update on the project?
- 2 What three phrases do Sarah and Michelle use to clarify the problem with the battery?
- 3 Turn to audio script **09▶** on page 152 and underline all the phrases Michelle and Ian use to give an update on the project.

- 3 10▶** Listen to Part 2 of the meeting and answer questions 1–3.

- 1 Why didn't Ian like the idea of finding another battery supplier?
- 2 Why didn't Sarah like the idea of not mentioning the battery life?
- 3 Which proposal did they finally decide on?

Tip | things

Use *things* to speak / ask about situations in general.

How are **things** with you?

How does your side of **things** look?

Things aren't running as smoothly as I'd hoped.

4 10► Listen again.

- Complete these suggestions made by the speakers.
 - _____ another battery supplier?
 - _____ keep the same battery but not mention its lifespan.
 - _____ and see what the technicians suggest ...?
 - Using a different phone for the launch _____
 - _____ look at what we can reschedule.
- What do the speakers say to respond to each of the suggestions in 1?

►► For more exercises, go to **Practice file 3** on page 106.

5 Work with a partner. It is two days before the launch of the new Tech-Tariff phone. Student A, you are Michelle. Turn to File 08 on page 137. Student B, you are Ian. Use the information below. Update each other on the progress of the project.

Make sure you

- clarify any information you're not sure about
- make and respond to suggestions as necessary.

Student B

- Read the 'To do' list you received from Michelle and the notes you have written under your tasks (I).
- Michelle will call you. Answer Michelle's questions about your tasks.
- Ask Michelle to update you on her tasks (M).
- Make and respond to suggestions as necessary.

Launch date 'To do' list

Bring Anvikon merchandise to venue (I)

Done! Already sent. Suggestion: bring extras and leave in car?

Finalize timetable of day with sound engineers (M)

Brief Anvikon staff about handset demonstration (I)

Problem - illness in office - rescheduled for tomorrow when all sales staff are present.

Suggestion: time - mid-afternoon?

Check replies from the press - who's coming? (M)

Send Anvikon PR manager's speech to MMT-Tec (I)

Not ready! Will contact him again today. Suggestion: PR manager emails it direct to MMT-Tec?

Make sure Sarah's briefed on everything (I / M)

On track! Have logged everything - will send brief to Sarah tomorrow p.m.

① ►► Interactive Workbook ►► Email

Key expressions

Asking for an update

How does your side of things look?
How's the ... coming along?
How far are you with ...?
How are things with ...?
What's the current status of ...?

Giving an update

Up to now (the launch date) has been (set) ...
He (booked the venue) two weeks ago.
I've already ...
I haven't ... yet.
We're on track.
Things aren't running as smoothly as I'd hoped.
We've hit a problem with ...

Clarifying a problem

So what do you mean exactly?
So what you're saying is ...?
So the real problem lies with ...?

Making a suggestion

How about (+ -ing)
We could (+ verb)
Why don't we (+ verb)
... would be my proposal.
If you ask me, we should ...

Responding to a suggestion

That's a good idea.
It's worth a try.
I don't think that would ...
That's possible (but ...).
That's not an ideal solution.
I'm not convinced.
I suppose so.

① ►► Interactive Workbook
►► Phrasebank

Practically speaking | Catching up with colleagues

1 11► Listen to four short conversations. What is being discussed in each conversation?

2 11► Listen again and answer questions 1–2.

- What questions does each person ask?
- What does each person say about what they are doing (or have done)?

3 Work with a partner.

- Make a list of three things that you do now, have done recently or used to do. Give this list to your partner.
- Have conversations with your partner about these activities. Refer to the *Useful phrases* on page 134.

Language at work | Present perfect and past simple

1 Read these extracts from audio 09▷.

- a Up to now, the launch date **has been set** for the 15th of November ...
- b We've **hit** a problem with the handset battery life.
- c He **booked** the venue two weeks ago.
- d I've **already received** offers from various catering companies.
- e I **haven't made** a final choice **yet**.
- f I **sent** you a proposed agenda yesterday.

Which of the extracts refer to

- 1 a present situation resulting from a past action – we don't know or say when the action happened? ____
- 2 a finished past action – we know or say when it happened? ____
- 3 something that has or hasn't happened during an unfinished period of time? ____

Which word in extract d and which word in extract e means that

- 4 something has taken place earlier than expected? ____
- 5 we expect that something will take place? ____

2 Which of these time expressions used when giving an update can we normally use

- 1 with the past simple?
- 2 with the present perfect?
- 3 with either – but under what circumstances? Give examples.
up to now so far (this week) since our last meeting in the last month
today last week a couple of weeks ago this morning yesterday
to date just over the last few months

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 3** on page 107.

3 Work with a partner. Student A, turn to File 03 on page 136. Student B, turn to File 42 on page 147. Update each other on your project.

4 Work with a partner. Student A and Student B, turn to File 37 on page 146. Follow the instructions and ask and answer questions about these 'To do' lists.

1

- Print out and collate six copies of proposal to submit to management.
- Contact office suppliers to check delivery date of latest order.
- Email all staff with agenda for next team meeting.
- Compile mailing list for this year's brochure.

2

- Email colleague and ask for all the details about the conference.
- Confirm acceptance of conference place with conference organizers.
- Book return flights to Madrid – Friday to Monday.
- Find two possible hotels in centre of Madrid.

5 Work with a partner. Think of five personal goals or plans you have had during the last six months. Tell your partner which of these you have achieved and when, and give some details. Which have you not achieved and why?

📄 » Interactive Workbook » Exercises and Tests

Organizing a road show

Background

Investor relations at Wolters Kluwer

Wolters Kluwer (WK) is a global company, based in Amsterdam, which provides information products and services for professionals in the health, tax, accounting, corporate, financial services, legal and education sectors. It employs approximately 18,400 people worldwide and has operations across Europe, North America and Asia Pacific. WK believes it is important to communicate with current and potential investors to provide up-to-date company information and

to build a relationship of trust. It does this by issuing regular press releases, publishing quarterly financial results and organizing 'Divisional days' when investors can learn more about the work of one of WK's five divisions. It also runs a series of investor 'road shows' in cities worldwide. At the road show, WK representatives give presentations to update potential investors on WK's key activities, financial performance and future developments.

Discussion

- 1 How does a policy of communicating with investors help big companies to build a relationship of trust?
- 2 What do you think is involved in the organization of an investor road show?

Task

- 1 Work in groups. You are a project team organizing a series of investor road shows in the Far East (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore) on behalf of WK.
 - 1 Read the road show guidelines provided by WK.
 - 2 Brainstorm the tasks for each item in the guidelines.
 - 3 Make a schedule for the project (you have eight weeks before the first road show). Decide on a timescale for each of the tasks.
 - 4 Allocate the tasks to the different members of your project team.

Wolters Kluwer Guidelines for investor road shows

- Prepare a timetable (when to visit each city and in what order).
- Prepare a target investor list (including key information on the investor and size of possible investment in company). We recommend 30 investors at each road show.
- Send out invitations to potential investors and keep a record of acceptances and declines.
- Book venues for the presentations and arrange refreshments.
- Arrange travel details for WK representatives – flights, car hire, hotel accommodation.
- Print a copy of the presentation and prepare a handout for each participant.

- 2 You are now four weeks away from the first road show.
 - 1 Decide which of your allocated tasks you have already done (make a note of when you did these) and which you still have to do.
 - 2 Decide on two tasks which have been delayed. Think of reasons for the delay.
- 3 Hold a project update meeting to check that the project is on schedule.
 - 1 Discuss progress of your tasks.
 - 2 Make suggestions for dealing with problems.
 - 3 Make a revised schedule for the final month.

The Expert View

There are two fundamental principles of project planning. Firstly, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. The creation of a plan that represents your best guess of what will happen with a particular project is a vital part of project management. The plan includes the tasks that need to be completed, their sequence and the resources required for them. The military have a saying: 'A plan never survives first engagement with the enemy'. In other words, things never work out quite how you expect. This is the second fundamental principle – you must be flexible, in order to respond to inevitable changes as you try to execute the plan.

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Case study