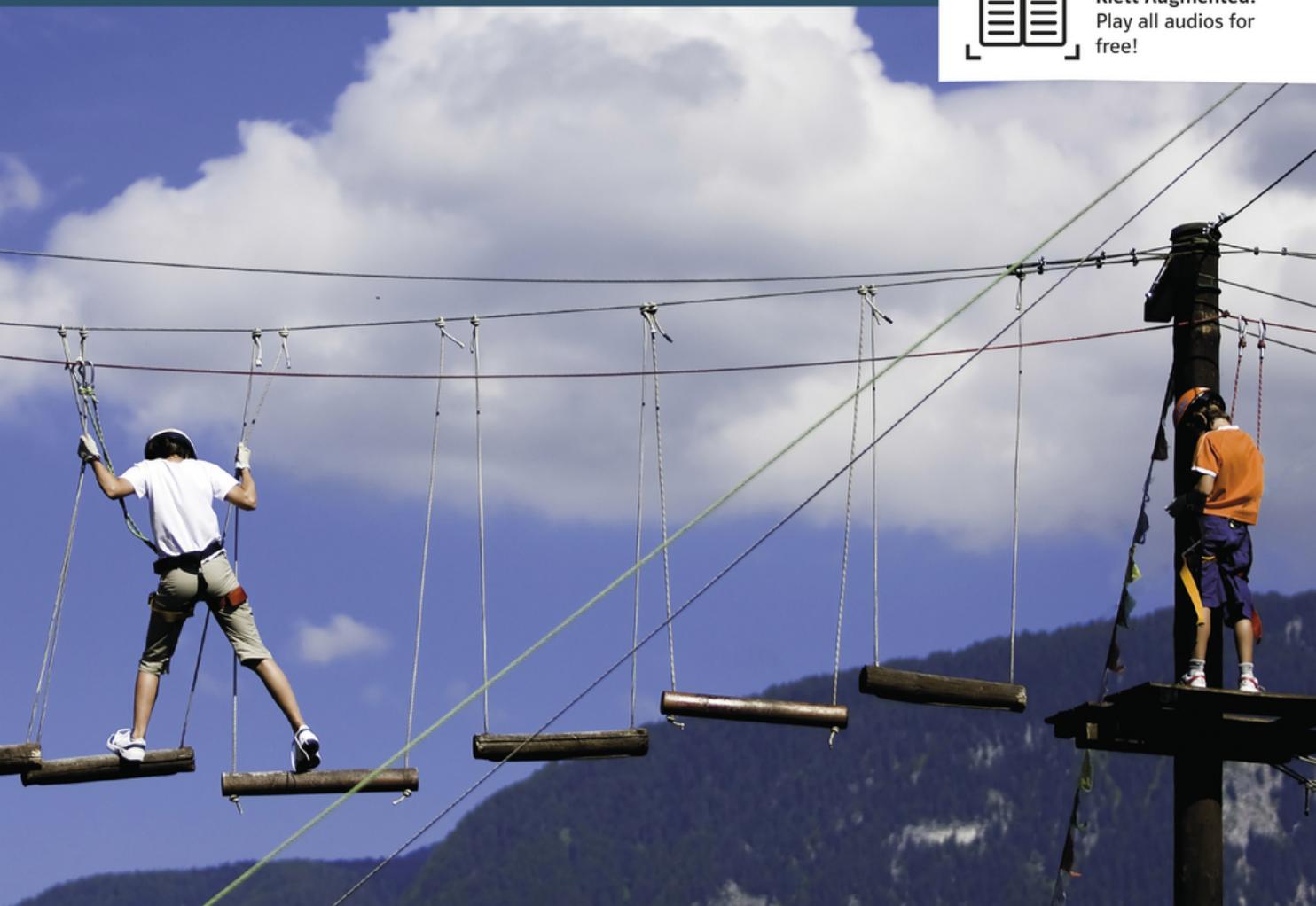


INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ENGLISH

# Working Virtually



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**Jackie Black**  
**Jon Dyson**



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	4	<b>5 Effective writing</b>	
<b>Learning diary</b>	5	A Discussion and listening	48
<b>Needs analysis</b>	6	B Communication skills: Being clear and concise	50
<b>1 Understanding virtual communication</b>		C Professional skills: Choosing the right content and technical level	52
A Discussion and listening	8	D Intercultural competence: Cultural differences in writing	54
B Communication skills: Adapting your communication style	10	Case study: The right message?	55
C Professional skills: Key competences for working virtually	12	E Language reference	56
D Intercultural competence: How culture affects virtual communication	14	F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	57
Case study: Why are we underperforming?	15	<b>6 Building relationships</b>	
E Language reference	16	A Discussion and listening	58
F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	17	B Communication skills: Effective virtual interpersonal skills	60
<b>2 Preparing for successful communication</b>		C Professional skills: Creating and sustaining trust	62
A Discussion and listening	18	D Intercultural competence: Managing conflict caused by cultural differences	64
B Communication skills: Planning effective virtual meetings	20	Case study: The international quality standards team	65
C Professional skills: Keeping people focused	22	E Language reference	66
D Intercultural competence: Thinking beyond the department	24	F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	67
Case study: An issue with sharing information	25	<b>7 Managing diversity</b>	
E Language reference	26	A Discussion and listening	68
F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	27	B Communication skills: Adapting communication styles	70
<b>3 Working in virtual groups</b>		C Professional skills: Using diversity for effective collaboration	72
A Discussion and listening	28	D Intercultural competence: Awareness of cultural diversity	74
B Communication skills: Language skills for conference calls	30	Case study: Crossed wires	75
C Professional skills: Success factors in virtual meetings	32	E Language reference	76
D Intercultural competence: Cross-cultural presentation skills	34	F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	77
Case study: Different international presentation styles	35	<b>8 Teams and leadership</b>	
E Language reference	36	A Discussion and listening	78
F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	37	B Communication skills: Skills for motivating and involving	80
<b>4 Working with technology</b>		C Professional skills: Team-building in a virtual environment	82
A Discussion and listening	38	D Intercultural competence: How culture affects leaders and teams	84
B Communication skills: The range of communication channels	40	Case study: EasyFix	85
C Professional skills: Choosing technology for collaboration and engagement	42	E Language reference	86
D Intercultural competence: Cultural diversity and technology use	44	F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	87
Case study: The virtual inbox	45	<b>Activity file</b>	88
E Language reference	46	<b>Audio script</b>	95
F Virtual working tips and personal action plan	47	<b>Answer key</b>	106
		<b>Word list</b>	114

# Introduction

At York Associates, we always aim to develop the skills which help professionals to do their jobs better. In recent years, we have worked hard to enrich our Business English and professional communication training with intercultural content. More recently, we have included a focus on important interpersonal and management skills for listening, building relationships and trust, influencing, etc.

Our approach is built on the premise that good communication is vital to achieving results at work. Effective international communicators need a blend of language, professional communication, intercultural and management skills to be successful.

Welcome to *International Management English*, a new series published jointly by York Associates and Delta Publishing. The four titles in this series are:

- *Leading People*
- *Managing Projects*
- *Working Virtually*
- *Managing Change*

Each book includes either one or two audio CDs.

## Professional language training with a management focus

Each book consists of eight units of study, containing four sections per unit:

- **Section A: Discussion and listening**  
Engaging and relevant content in areas of international management and teamwork
- **Section B: Communication skills**  
Opportunities for the practice of key skills in areas such as conflict management, team-building and giving/receiving feedback, as well as more familiar topics such as presentations, meetings, negotiations and writing e-mails
- **Section C: Professional skills**  
Authentic texts from leading management writers and thinkers, designed to encourage reflection and debate among readers
- **Section D: Intercultural competence and Case study**  
A focus on raising intercultural awareness, followed by an illustrative case study drawn from the authors' experience of the international business world

In addition, each unit offers:

- a strong emphasis on vocabulary learning, with glossaries of key terms at the end of each unit
- practical tips on how to improve performance at work
- the opportunity to use a learning diary, which encourages the setting of realistic goals to implement the learning points from each unit.

At the end of the book, the Word list provides a useful list of key words, referenced to the first occurrence of each word.

Having worked through the book, you will have developed not only your business language skills but also your ability to communicate and manage real challenges in your international working environment.

## To the teacher

The four titles in this series represent a new development in ELT. They broaden the scope of teaching to include highly relevant management topics and skills. The materials are not only engaging for teachers, allowing them to introduce and develop new management communication skills in an ELT classroom; students are also motivated as they learn how to manage real professional communication challenges which they face at work on a daily basis.

Each title is designed primarily for work with both small and larger groups, but can also be used in one-to-one situations and has many features which will support self-study.

Across the eight units of each title, there is a strong focus on developing fluency and skills to communicate effectively in real work situations. There are opportunities to practise listening, reading and writing skills. The intercultural case studies in Section D are drawn from real-life examples and provide engaging discussion and problem-solving material for the ELT classroom.

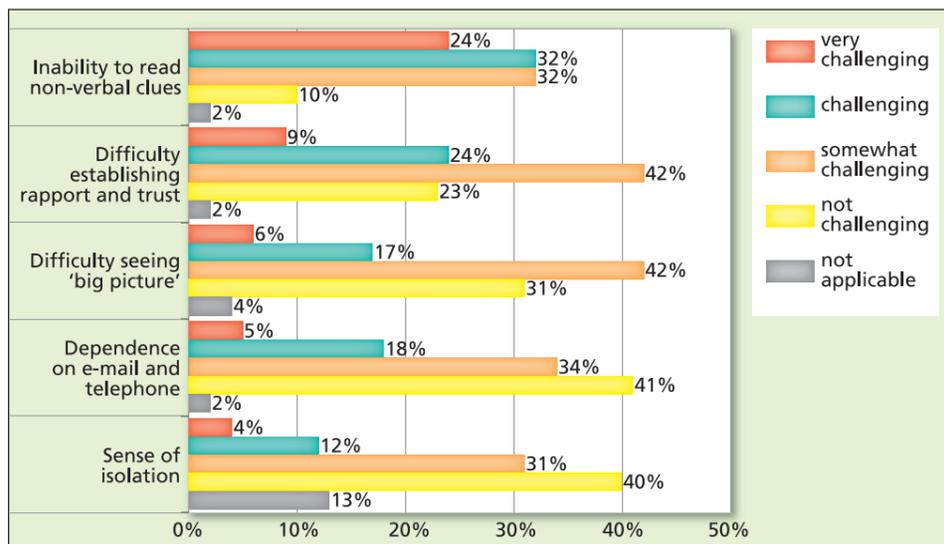
There is online support for trainers ([www.delta-publishing.co.uk/resources](http://www.delta-publishing.co.uk/resources)) in the form of notes for each unit, which provide background information on the management topics and skills presented.

## A final word

To both learner and teacher, we would like to express the hope that you find the materials stimulating, and that they help people to communicate more effectively at work.

## D Intercultural competence: How culture affects leaders and teams

- 1 What is your experience of working in a culturally diverse team? How, if at all, did you prepare for this diversity? How would the challenges have differed if the team had only been working virtually?
- 2 The chart below shows more results from the survey you saw on page 82, where respondents were asked to rank the challenges from most to least difficult. How far do the challenges you face personally when working virtually compare with these findings? Are there any challenges which are not mentioned in the survey which you feel are important? Discuss with a partner.



Taken from 2012 survey by RW3 Culture Wizard



- 3 Professor Geert Hofstede is a leading thinker and researcher into cross-cultural communication. He conducted one of the most comprehensive studies ever about how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. He is recognised internationally for having developed the first model of 'dimensions' of national culture, establishing a new way of measuring the effect of cultural factors on international economics, communication and co-operation. One of the five cultural dimensions he modelled was Individualism versus Collectivism. As he defined it:

*The degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of 'I' or 'we'. In Individualist societies, people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist societies, people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.*

The four cultures described below and on page 85 illustrate some of the key attributes of this cultural dimension. Can you think of four countries which could match the four descriptions? Discuss your opinions with your partner.

**Culture A:** This is amongst the most individualistic. Children are socialised from an early age, and are taught to think for themselves, to find out what their unique purpose in life is and how they can contribute to society, whilst benefiting themselves. The route to happiness is through personal fulfilment. As the affluence of this country has increased over the last 30 years, there has been a rise in consumerism, a fall in the observance of traditional religious values and a strengthening of the 'me' culture.

**Culture B:** Within Europe, this culture is considered as highly collectivist, due to its frequently expressed and strong sense of national identity. However, compared with other areas of the world, it is quite individualist. Teamwork is considered entirely natural, although management of team members is individual, and explicit recognition of individual contributions is expected. Employees tend to work well with no need for strong external motivation.

**Culture C:** This culture scores high on the individualistic index. This means that people favour individual and private opinions, taking care of themselves and immediate family rather than belonging to a group. Work relationships are contract-based, the focus is on the task, and a high acceptance of individual autonomy is normal. Communication is mostly direct, and everyone is allowed to voice opinions, especially if they do not agree.

**Culture D:** This is a highly collectivist culture, where people act in the interests of the group and not necessarily of themselves. Decisions affecting recruitment are often closely linked to family, community and personal contacts. Employee commitment to the organisation is often high, and relationships with colleagues are co-operative, supportive and team-oriented. Personal relationships can be as important as the task and company, and it is regarded as important not to 'lose face'.

adapted from <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>

- 4 How can a team leader with members from the four different cultures described in Exercise 3 ensure that the virtual team can work to its full potential?

## Case study: EasyFix

**Background** EasyFix is an automotive company specialising in spare parts for the car-leasing industry. It is based in the UK, but has partnerships with manufacturers in France and distributors in Spain and Portugal. The founding company was American. The US firm no longer has much influence over business decisions, but the management style is dominant and top-down, with the focus on short-term results. Like all its competitors, EasyFix is suffering from falling sales due to the continuing recession in Europe and it is under pressure from its shareholders to improve performance.

**Situation** The Sales Manager, Jayne, has been instructed by the Head of European Sales to set up a new initiative designed to increase the sales contracts secured by her team each month. Jayne knows that most of her team are feeling extremely demotivated. They are very worried by the lack of demand in their countries due to the economic situation. However, despite the current situation, Jayne is determined to maintain a positive mood and engage her team fully in the new initiative.

- 1 **45** Listen to an extract from the conference call, which Jayne organises to launch the initiative. Make notes on the behaviour displayed during the call.

- 2 Discuss these questions.

- a What cultural issues are highlighted by Jayne's call?
- b What should Jayne's priorities be after this meeting?
- c What action would you take in her position?