

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ENGLISH

Managing Projects



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Bob Dignen



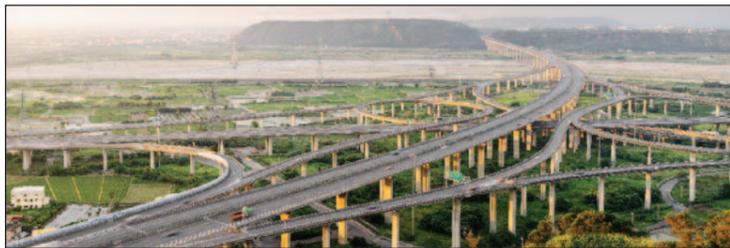
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Keeping projects on track

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.

D Intercultural competence: Focusing on goals

1 Work in pairs to discuss these attitudes to goals in projects. Which do you agree/disagree with? Why?

Successful project leaders need to be very goal-focused. Setting and reaching goals are fundamentals of project management.

One of the main differences with international projects is that goals need to become flexible, because things are changing all the time.

Being goal-oriented is not enough for success in projects. People-focus is more important.

Reaching team goals is more important than reaching personal goals in international projects.

Setting individual goals for team members is important to motivate performance in a team.

Leaders have to decide what 'goal' means – is it achieving the deadline or achieving the right quality solution? Very often, both are not possible in projects.



2 **36–37** Michelle Legeaux works for GFR, an energy company based in Paris. She is leading a project to modernise a gas power station in the south of France. Georgy Dorokhov is one of many external technical consultants who have been recruited to support the project. Listen and answer these questions.

- What does Michelle describe as the main goal of the project?
- How does Michelle describe the working style of the external consultants?
Why is this a problem for the project?
- What conflict does Michelle describe?
- What mistakes does Georgy see with the project leadership?
- What does Georgy do to get decisions quickly in the project?

3 What do you think is the best way for those running international projects to deal with such problems?

4 Some cultures are described as being typically 'high goal focus', meaning that goals are given a very high priority. Others are described as 'low goal focus', which means that other considerations are often given more emphasis. Complete the summary below, using words from the box.

direction flexible local original resistance waste willing

high goal focus	low goal focus
<p>potential advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to achieve (a) • Can give a strong sense of (b) • Keeps things clear and simple most of the time. 	<p>potential advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (d) to adapt to local ways and priorities. • Can explore different opportunities. • Can operate in a (e) and customer-friendly way.
<p>potential disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May overlook changing circumstances. • May compromise relationship-building. • May create (c) and conflict in local business units. 	<p>potential disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily distracted from the main task. • May (f) time and money. • May be too influenced by (g)

5 Think about your own international working style in terms of goal focus. Are you high, low or somewhere in between the two? Think about your style in a range of possible international project contexts. Note down three things you should do in order to manage goals effectively. Compare your ideas with others in the class.

Case study: A question of goals

Background Csaba Grozer is a research-and-development scientist working for MedTech, a manufacturer of high-quality surgery equipment based in Budapest, Hungary.

He is leading a project to develop new lasers for eye surgery. The project is part of a larger programme of laser-based development, which is co-ordinated from the company's office in London.

The programme manager and project sponsor is Michaela Arens, a senior executive based in London, who travels extensively in order to manage the full project programme for the company.



Situation Csaba is worried that a number of technical problems will soon put his project schedule under pressure. He urgently needs to talk to Michaela in order to get approval to employ extra technicians, required to solve the problems and avoid future delay. No meeting has yet been organised, due to Michaela's constant travelling. Telephone conferences are also cancelled regularly. E-mail is the only realistic channel of communication.

Csaba's project does not seem to be a priority for Michaela. This is a real issue for Csaba, as he hates to miss any targets or deadlines. He decides to e-mail Michaela to try to deal with the situation.

Dear Michaela
As per my previous e-mails, I am concerned about a number of technical issues which are threatening to cause delays to the eye-surgery project. I would like to schedule an urgent meeting – possibly in London – to discuss the status of this project. I think it would also be useful to discuss how we can communicate together effectively in the future, to keep things on track and avoid unnecessary delays. I look forward to hearing from you.
Regards, Csaba

Michaela schedules a telephone conference with Csaba after receiving his e-mail. However, she cancels that meeting later in the day, as she has to go on an urgent business trip. No new appointment is scheduled.

Task 1 In small groups, discuss these questions.

- How much do you sympathise with Csaba's frustration?
- How do you think Michaela sees the situation?
- How useful was Csaba's e-mail?

2 Write a second e-mail which Csaba could send to Michaela to help to resolve the situation. You can invent any necessary information.