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Project Management:
Principles, Challenges, and Solutions

C1-C2 Level Business English Lesson

Lesson Overview

This comprehensive business English lesson explores project management concepts, challenges, and solutions through interactive exercises and discussions.

Project Management Principles
Core principles for successful project execution

Common Challenges
Identifying and addressing project obstacles

Project Management Methodologies
Waterfall, Scrum, and Kanban approaches

Language Focus
Business vocabulary and complex conditionals

Exercise #1

Warm up

In pairs, discuss the following questions:

- Have you ever been involved in managing a project? If so, what was your role and what were the main challenges you faced?

- What do you consider to be the most important skills for an effective project manager?

- Can you think of a project that failed spectacularly? What were the main reasons for its failure?

- To what extent do you agree that traditional project management methodologies are becoming obsolete in today's rapidly changing business environment?

- How might the rise of artificial intelligence and automation transform the role of project managers in the future?

- Consider the statement: "The success of a project depends more on the people involved than on the methodology used." What is your perspective on this?

- How can organizations balance the need for structured project management processes with the flexibility required for innovation?

Take notes during your discussion to share with the class.

🔍 **Exercise #2**

Finding Vocabulary

Find vocabulary in the article on the next page with the same meaning as the following definitions:

1 **The process of planning, organizing, and managing resources** to achieve specific goals within a defined timeframe (n, para. 1)

2 **The gradual expansion of a project** beyond its original scope (n, para. 3)

3 **A person or organization that provides support and resources** for a project (n, para. 4)

4 **The identification, assessment, and mitigation of potential problems** (n, para. 7)

5 **A measurable value that demonstrates** how effectively a company is achieving key business objectives (n, para. 8)

6 **A project management approach that is linear and sequential** (n, para. 10)

7 **A project management framework that defines specific roles** and work cycles (n, para. 10)

8 **A visual approach to project management** that focuses on workflow (n, para. 10)

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Reading Text

Project Management Fundamentals

Project Management Principles and Challenges

Project management is the process of planning, organizing, and managing resources to achieve specific goals within a defined timeframe. Successful project management is **critical** for every company, as every major business activity consists of one or more projects.

To deliver maximum business value and user satisfaction, project management requires much more than spreadsheets or occasional meetings. All phases of every project must be supported by **clear, consistent, and transparent** decision-making processes and effective collaboration across multiple roles and teams.

The best project management efforts are built upon a core set of governing principles. These principles provide a structured yet flexible framework for collaboration and ensure consistent project management success.

Continue reading on the next page.

📖 **Exercise #3**

Reading Text (Continued)

Key Project Management Principles

1 Establish the project structure

Structure in a manageable, understandable way for team and stakeholders to evaluate

2 Define project goals

Articulate goals clearly and ensure alignment with company objectives

3 Identify a project sponsor

Provide assistance, guidance, and garner support from stakeholders

4 Form roles and responsibilities

Define roles clearly to ensure effective collaboration

5 Ensure team accountability

Foster a culture of accountability and track responsibility

6 Manage project scope

Include robust strategy for managing scope and changes

7 Create a risk management plan

Include steps for identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks

8 Monitor progress

Establish **KPIs** to measure progress toward goals

9 Focus on effective value delivery

Prioritize tasks that contribute to project success

10 Establish performance baseline

Use metrics to identify improvement areas and recognize achievements

11 Finalize the project

Complete all tasks and ensure deliverables meet quality standards

12 Examine successes

Reflect on successes and document lessons learned

Reading Text (Final)

⚠ Common Project Management Challenges

📈 Scope creep
Expansion beyond original requirements

❓ Unclear goals
39% of projects fail due to undefined plans

🛠 Inadequate skills
Team only as strong as its weakest link

💬 Poor communication
Affects teamwork and causes conflicts

📋 Budgeting issues
49.5% report costs as biggest challenge

📍 Risk management
Inadequate planning for potential problems

Project Management Methodologies

Kanban
Visual approach focusing on workflow visualization through shared boards

Waterfall
Linear and sequential approach with well-defined requirements for each phase

Scrum
Structured framework with specific roles and defined work cycles called **sprints**

End of Reading Text

Exercise #4

Skimming for gist

Match the following project management concepts to their descriptions:

Concepts

1 Scope creep

2 Risk management

3 KPIs

4 Waterfall

5 Kanban

Descriptions

a A visual approach to project management that focuses on workflow visualization

b The gradual expansion of a project beyond its original objectives

c A linear and sequential project management approach

d Measurable values that demonstrate how effectively a project is achieving its objectives

e The identification, assessment, and mitigation of potential project problems

Write your answers as pairs (e.g., 1-b, 2-e, etc.)

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Reading comprehension

✏️ Part A

Read the article again and complete the following sentences with one, two or three words:

1. Project management requires clear decision-making processes and effective —————— across multiple roles and teams.

2. A project sponsor can provide —————— and helpful guidance for the project.

3. To ensure effective collaboration, project managers should define —————— clearly.

4. Project management plans must include a robust strategy for managing project —————— and dealing with changes.

5. Establishing a performance management —————— helps evaluate and track team and project performance.

6. Approximately —————— percent of projects fail due to undefined project plans.

7. Scrum provides a highly structured framework with specific team member roles and defined work cycles called —————— .

Part B

Now, decide if the following statements are True (T), False (F), or Not Given (NG):

1. All project management challenges can be overcome with proper planning. (T) (F) (NG)

2. Scope creep is always detrimental to a project's success. (T) (F) (NG)

3. Waterfall methodology is more flexible than Scrum. (T) (F) (NG)

4. Regular communication can help minimize scope creep. (T) (F) (NG)

5. Project managers should document lessons learned from both successes and failures. (T) (F) (NG)

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Project Management: Principles, Challenges, and Solutions

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Focus on vocabulary

Part A

Match the vocabulary to the definitions:

1	**mitigate**	**h**	the state or degree of being easily or conveniently done
2	**contingency**	**e**	a system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity
3	**stakeholder**	**a**	to make something less severe, painful, or serious
4	**deliverable**	**f**	the fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility
5	**methodology**	**b**	a future event or circumstance that is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty
6	**accountability**	**d**	a tangible or intangible object produced as a result of the project
7	**iteration**	**g**	the repetition of a process or utterance
8	**feasibility**	**c**	a person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business

Part B

Now complete the following sentences with a different part of speech from the same word family as the Part A vocabulary in brackets:

1 The project manager implemented several measures to _____ the risks associated with the tight deadline. **(mitigate)**

2 We need to develop a _____ plan in case our main supplier fails to deliver the materials on time. **(contingency)**

3 The project's success depends on effectively managing the expectations of all _____. **(stakeholder)**

4 The team successfully completed all project _____ ahead of schedule. **(deliverable)**

5 The company is adopting a new project management _____ to improve efficiency. **(methodology)**

6 Creating a culture of _____ within the team is essential for project success. **(accountable)**

7 The software development process involves multiple _____ of testing and refinement. **(iterate)**

8 Before starting the project, we conducted a thorough _____ study to assess its viability. **(feasible)**

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

🎧 **Exercise #7**

Listening for details

Listen to a project management meeting and tick the correct box in the table to show which of the words from the vocabulary each speaker uses.

Vocabulary	John	Matteo
deliverables	☐	☐
stakeholders	☐	☐
timeline	☐	☐
accountability	☐	☐
methodology	☐	☐

John: Thanks, everyone, for coming to this project meeting. I know we're all working cross-functionally on this project, but so far the key stakeholders are really pleased with how it's going. This project will really benefit our overall value proposition and the company as a whole.

Akiko: Thanks, John. It's an important project. It's good to be collaborating on this together.

Matteo: Yes, it's important, but we're all so busy with our regular jobs. It'll be difficult to fit things in.

John: It's OK, Matteo. We'll work it out. I know that you all have a lot on at the moment, combining this project with your regular jobs.

Barbara: So, what do we need to do, and by when?

John: Good questions, Barbara. We have a number of key deliverables to discuss so it's essential we're all in agreement about roles and responsibilities and also the timelines we're working to.

Akiko: Great.

Matteo: Yes, it's good to get this clear.

John: So, the first thing we need to do is design the customer survey questionnaire. In my experience, this is best done through an online survey tool.

Akiko: That sounds like a great idea. I'm glad you have experience with this.

John: Yeah, we've done something similar on previous projects.

Matteo: So will you do that, John?

John: I'd love to but I'm already tied up managing this project, and my line manager, Kate, has agreed that I should focus on the timelines, reporting and financial management. I'd like Akiko to lead on the questionnaire. You learned about this on your marketing and PR course, didn't you?

Akiko: Yeah, happy to take it on.

John: Thanks, Akiko. Next thing is we need the new designs finalised. Matteo, you said you could do this in a couple of weeks, right?

Matteo: Yeah, I know, but that was last month, and then nothing happened. I'm overloaded at the moment and my line manager won't be happy if I don't hit my targets. Sorry, but this project has to take lower priority.

John: Hmm. I see. I can understand the challenge you're facing. I've been in that situation before. So, what can we do to help you hit those targets and free up some time?

Matteo: That's a good question. If I could get a slight reduction in my targets, I could use the extra time that would create to finish the designs for this project.

John: OK. We might not be able to get your targets reduced, but I'll see what we can do.

Barbara: How about if I support Matteo there? I know his job well and I have some capacity at the moment. I can help him meet his targets so he can free up some time to finish the designs for this project.

Matteo: Could you, Barbara?

John: Hmm. I'm not sure if it's fair to ask Barbara to be supporting Matteo in his regular job so he can work on this project.

Barbara: It's up to you, but I'm happy to support Matteo with his regular work, just for a couple of weeks so he can create the designs. He's the only one with the expertise.

John: Yeah, you're right. OK, thanks a lot, Barbara. I appreciate it. Matteo, would that work for you?

Matteo: Yes, that would work. Thanks. OK, you've made it easy for me to say yes.

John: OK, then that's settled. Thanks, both. I really appreciate your help in this. So, can you get them done by the end of the month?

Matteo: Yes, that should be no problem.

🎧 **Exercise #8**

Listening comprehension

Complete the notes on the listening with one or two words or numbers.

👤 John

1 Is focusing on _____, reporting and financial management.

2 Asks _____ to lead on the questionnaire design.

3 Wants the new designs to be completed by the end of the _____.

👤 Matteo

1 Is concerned about having too much _____ with his regular job.

2 Suggested getting a _____ in his targets to free up time.

3 Agrees that Barbara's support would make it _____ to say yes to completing the designs.

👤 Barbara

1 Offers to _____ Matteo with his regular work.

2 Believes Matteo has the necessary _____ for the design work.

3 Is willing to help for _____ weeks.

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Critical thinking task

Analyze the following project management scenarios and propose solutions to the challenges presented:

📅 Scenario 1

You are managing a software development project with a **fixed budget and deadline**. Two weeks before the delivery date, the client requests several **additional features** that were not in the original scope. How would you handle this situation while maintaining good client relations?

👥 Scenario 2

Your project team consists of members from **different departments** who have conflicting priorities. One team member consistently **misses deadlines** because they are prioritizing their departmental work over the project tasks. How would you address this issue?

⚖ Scenario 3

A **key stakeholder** is dissatisfied with the progress of the project and is considering withdrawing support. The project is actually **on track**, but the stakeholder feels they haven't been kept adequately informed. What steps would you take to regain their confidence?

Work in pairs to discuss possible solutions for each scenario.

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Complex Conditionals in Project Management

📍 Understanding Complex Conditionals

Complex conditionals are used to express hypothetical situations and their possible outcomes. In project management, they help us discuss potential scenarios, evaluate alternatives, and plan for different possibilities.

1 **First Conditional**

Likely future situations (If + present simple, will + base verb)

*If the team **meets** the deadline, we **will celebrate** their success.*

2 **Second Conditional**

Unlikely or hypothetical situations (If + past simple, would + base verb)

*If we **adopted** an agile methodology, we **would respond** more effectively to changing requirements.*

3 **Third Conditional**

Impossible past situations (If + past perfect, would have + past participle)

*If the project team **had identified** the risks earlier, they **would have implemented** better mitigation strategies.*

4 **Mixed Conditional**

Past actions affecting present results (If + past perfect, would + base verb)

*If we **had planned** better, we **would not have** these budget issues now.*

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✏️ Exercise #11: Grammar exercise

Focus on Complex Conditional Structures: Complete the following sentences using an appropriate conditional form (zero, first, second, third, or mixed) to express project management scenarios:

1 If project managers —————— (establish) clear goals from the beginning, they —————— (avoid) many common challenges later.

2 If the team —————— (have) better communication tools, they —————— (not experience) so many misunderstandings.

3 If the project sponsor —————— (provide) more resources last month, we —————— (meet) the deadline.

4 If stakeholders —————— (be) more involved in the planning phase, scope creep —————— (be) less of an issue now.

5 If I —————— (be) in charge of this project, I —————— (implement) a more agile methodology from the start.

Grammar Tip: Complex conditional structures are essential for discussing hypothetical situations in project management. Third conditionals are used for impossible past situations, while mixed conditionals can express how past decisions affect present circumstances.

Complete the sentences with the correct verb forms.

Exercise #12
Discussion section

💬 Discussion Questions

In pairs, discuss the following questions:

? Have you ever been involved in managing a project? If so, what was your role and what were the main challenges you faced?

? What do you consider to be the most important skills for an effective project manager?

? Can you think of a project that failed spectacularly? What were the main reasons for its failure?

? To what extent do you agree that traditional project management methodologies are becoming obsolete in today's rapidly changing business environment?

? How might the rise of artificial intelligence and automation transform the role of project managers in the future?

? Consider the statement: "The success of a project depends more on the people involved than on the methodology used." What is your perspective on this?

? How can organizations balance the need for structured project management processes with the flexibility required for innovation?

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Exercise #13: Extended activity/Homework

"Project management methodologies often fail because they are too rigid and cannot adapt to the unique challenges of each project. Instead of following established frameworks, project managers should develop their own approach based on the specific needs of each project."

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

- ✓ Write at least 300 words
- ✓ Provide examples from your own experience or research
- ✓ Check your grammar, spelling, and punctuation