1:39

Lauren: Hello?
Erich: Good afternoon. I wonder if I could speak to Ms Simpson, please?
L: Speaking.
E: Excuse me?
L: This is Lauren Simpson.
E: Ah, Ms Simpson. Erich Schrader, calling from Switzerland. We met at the conference in Nice last month.
L: Oh, yes, of course! How are you, Erich?
E: I am very well, thank you, Ms Simpson. And how are you?
L: Fine, thanks. Um, what can I do for you?
E: Well, I'm very sorry to disturb you, but I was wondering if I could ask you a favour?
L: Yes, of course ...
E: Do you think you could possibly send me a copy of the slides you showed at the conference? They were most interesting.
L: Ah. Well, normally I'd be glad to help, but I'm afraid my hard disk crashed last week.
E: Oh dear, how very unfortunate. I trust you didn't lose too much important information.
L: Well, everything, actually. But there wasn't too much important stuff on it – except the slides, of course.
E: And you wouldn't happen to have a backup, or a hard copy, would you?
L: No, I'm afraid not.
E: I see. Well, I mustn't take up any more of your time. Thank you all the same, Ms Simpson.
L: You're welcome. Goodbye Erich, I mean, Mr, um ...
E: Schrader.
L: Um, yes. Goodbye then.

1:40

Russell: Russell Pond speaking.
Mike: Hello, Russell – Mike.
R: Hello, mate. How's life?
M: Not so bad. And you?
R: Fine, fine. Looking forward to the weekend, though!
M: Yeah, me too. Er, Russell, you got a moment?
R: Yes; what's on your mind?
M: Well, I know this is asking a lot, but I've got this presentation on Monday and my laptop's got a virus. Any chance I could borrow yours for the weekend?
R: Ah. Look, it's not that I don't trust you or anything ...
M: OK, just forget it. I shouldn't have asked.
R: The thing is, I've got some really important data on it and the anti-virus isn't up-to-date ...
M: It's all right, Russell. I know what you mean. Anyway, I'd better get on. Are you going to the match on Saturday?
R: Yes, I expect so.
M: OK. I'll see you there, then. Bye.
R: Cheers.

2.5 Writing: Memos

1:41

Hello, Chris Webster here. I'm at the airport, just about to leave for my holiday, and I've just realized there's something important I've forgotten to do, so I wonder if I could ask you a favour? You know the new procedure we discussed for computer upgrades? Asking people to evaluate their computing needs for the next two years so we can budget for buying new equipment in advance? Well, do you think you could write a memo to everyone in the department, explaining the new system? Remind them that we've been dramatically over budget in the last two years, so, you know, some people who needed laptops didn't get one, while other people got an upgrade they didn't really need. I need to have the information in time for the budget meeting in October, so can you ask people to email me their evaluations as soon as possible, by the end of September at the latest? And make it positive and friendly please, because I know people complain about the amount of paperwork they have to do already. OK? I've got to go now: my plane's boarding. Thanks a lot, I really appreciate your help – and, see you in two weeks!

2.6 Case study: Meteor Bank

1:42–1:45

Tonye: Look, Astrid. We appointed Saul Finlay because he's a very bright, very ambitious young man. All right, he's irritated some of his colleagues – but as he says, you don't make an omelette without breaking eggs. Of course, I'm worried about staff turnover and down time costs, and so is Saul. But you have to remember that our transactions have increased by 40% since he joined us – our subsidiaries in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Cameroon, etc. are growing really quickly. We need to invest in the new equipment he's asking for.
Vincent: Well, if you ask me, I have to say that I think Saul is too ambitious – he's just empire-building. OK, he's increased our capacity. I suppose that's an achievement. But he's made our computer system too centralized. If the main server goes down, we're in trouble – not just in Nigeria, but all over West Africa. The trend today is towards grid computing: that way, if the server in Lagos goes down, we can just redirect transactions via Abidjan, Niamey or Dakar. I say we should decentralize our systems. And another thing, you can't explain the down time just by component failures and software errors. You have to wonder whether some of it isn't malicious ...
Kehinde: The problem is simple. Everybody in IT is exhausted. Mr Finlay is a very demanding manager. He works fifteen hours a day and he expects us to do the same. That's why so many people are leaving! Frankly, I'm not sure that appointing a European IT manager was such a good idea. OK, Mr Finlay has raised salaries. But he's made the job too hard – and it's going to get more complicated if he invests in more sophisticated equipment. So now some people are pleased when the system goes down – you know what I mean? We need to recruit more experienced staff, a lot more.
Joseph: Look, I've nothing against Saul Finlay. I like him. He's a nice young man, and he's succeeded in getting rid of some older staff who just couldn't adapt to change. Of course he's made mistakes, like not understanding the work culture here, but that's almost inevitable when you bring in a foreign manager. I just want efficient service and no more down time – some of our big customers are getting very angry. It seems to me the simple answer is to outsource our IT services. That way we don't have any of the investment, HR or recruitment problems to worry about.

Unit 3 Quality

3.1 About business: What quality means

1:46

Well, over the years, in the household electrical goods industry, or *white goods* as it's often called, there's been a lot of talk about planned or built-in obsolescence. This means making products that are designed to last a limited time. It's true that we are seeing a general trend towards shorter product lifespans. A fridge, for example, that would once have lasted for twenty years, now lasts for around ten on average. However, I wouldn't go as far as to call it planned obsolescence. But it's true that manufacturers these days decide very carefully what build quality they're aiming for. Consumer behaviour is changing and people don't want to keep things forever. They want to upgrade more often, and there's not much point in producing machines that will last for twenty years when people will be tired of them after ten. So, most manufacturers design accordingly. And that's why it's often cheaper to buy something new than to have a product repaired. The cost of the spare parts and the labour time to repair a broken washing machine, for example, may well come to more than the cost price of a new one. I think another factor is recent legislation regarding recycling. This means that today's ethical consumer can buy electrical goods knowing that we can recycle them at the end of their useful life. And, of course, they can also argue that by upgrading regularly, they're investing in more efficient, more environmentally-friendly technology. Now, if you want to buy a quality product that will last, you can still go for the top brands and ...

3.2 Vocabulary: Quality and standards

1:47–1:49

Speaker 1: Well, most of the time I'm looking for value for money, you know, for everyday things and that. So, a balance between quality and the price I'm paying. But, erm, if I'm splashing out on a pair of trainers or the latest mp3 player, I want something reliable that's going to last. And, of course, they've got to look great, too. Do you know what I mean?
Speaker 2: My job basically involves ensuring that the process is as efficient as possible and makes the best use of all the resources needed to make the final product. So, I'm constantly looking at ways to improve it, which means not only solving problems that come up, but also looking for new ways to do things even better. I let the design guys worry about pure product quality. Quality for me is really producing a part or a product which conforms to given technical specifications in the most cost-effective way.
Speaker 3: Erm, although I believe what I do contributes to the end quality of the product, it's not really my everyday concern. I check that the company has documented quality procedures in place and that they're being followed. So, erm, I suppose, in theory, the company might conform to the quality standards, but might be producing a product that is substandard in some way. We don't live in a perfect world, after all!

3.3 Grammar: Passive structures and *have something done*

1:50

Willi: Well, thank you all for coming. I know you're all very busy at the moment so we'll see if we can sort this out as quickly as possible. José, perhaps you can start and tell us the background from the Sales side?
José: Sure, Willi. Well, the problem is simple. Airbridge can't fix the pumps to the fuel tanks properly. The reason, it seems, is because they don't fit.