

Unit 4 Feedback

4.1 About business: The project team

1:58

OK. I think everyone's here apart from Mr Wong, who'll be joining us on the video link in half an hour. So, perhaps we can start? The purpose of today's meeting is to review the dam project schedule to date, look at why things have slipped and see what we can do to get things back on track. First, I'd like to take a look at the original schedule on the Gantt chart here, to put our current situation into perspective. I think you'll all agree, things ran pretty smoothly in Year 1 and we reached the first milestones, completion of the feasibility study and the geological survey bang on target at the end of August. Unfortunately, we got bogged down in bureaucracy – you know, the usual red tape – at the project approval stage. That set us back four months and we could only begin buying the land in May of Year 2. Land purchase went pretty much according to plan, despite some delays for legal reasons, but it still took twelve months. We were able to start population resettlement on time, but we had to postpone diverting the river for six months as it had to be done in the summer months, when the river was at its lowest, which meant starting June of Year 3. So, that's how things stand today. We've just completed the two tunnels to divert the river, so that's almost complete, and we're beginning excavations for the dam foundations next week – one year behind schedule! Which means we won't be able to begin work on the dam wall until at least September of Year 4. Of course, due to this schedule slippage, we're also facing considerable cost overruns. So, I'd like your suggestions on how we can crash the schedule – yes, I mean, accelerate things – to try to respect the original delivery date at the end of Year 7. Any ideas ...?

4.2 Vocabulary: Managing people and projects

1:59

Lucy: Well, Andrei, thanks for finding time to see me. I know things are very busy, what with the annual appraisal interviews. Anyway, perhaps you can just give me your impressions of Anna, Bjorn and Katia before we go through the interview results in a bit more detail.

Andrei: Sure, Lucy. So, first of all, Anna. Well, on the positive side, she's hard-working. But she's very independent and single-minded: she tends to do her own thing and she'll pass the buck if she feels it's not her problem, so the others in the team see her as selfish and a bit of a loner. They often think she's not pulling her weight and that she's letting the team down, just because she doesn't see things the same way. And she can be pretty direct, which of course the others interpret as being over-critical, but I don't think she means to be.

L: OK, so Anna has her good and bad points. Now, what about Bjorn?

A: Yes, Bjorn! To be honest, he seems very stressed and I'm worried that he may burn out. He works long hours – he's often in the office long after everyone's gone home. He's definitely organized – some of the others would say obsessive – but I'm not sure he's always really clear about what needs doing and what is less important, so he tends to create work for himself. He could certainly do with taking it easy sometimes, you know.

L: Yes, sounds as if he needs to learn to pace himself a little better!

A: Yeah, that's right. He could do with some time management training, in fact, and I'd like to come back to that when we look at the interview results in detail.

L: Good idea. But first, let's just finish with Katia.

A: Ah, Katia. Well, the first thing is she's new but she's settling in really well. She's friendly and easy-going and gets on well with nearly everybody, except Anna! She's really helpful and she knows what it means to pull together in a team; and she's always ready to cover for somebody. On the other hand, she can be a bit messy, but she's definitely not incompetent. And I think she's very cooperative with her colleagues ...

4.4 Speaking: Coaching

1:60

Mrs Gómez: Rafael?

Rafael: Yes, Mrs Gómez?

G: Do you have a moment?

R: Yes, of course.

G: Come in, Rafael. Have a seat. As you know, the last three weeks have been really busy. We could have lost a lot of business while Maria was off sick but, thanks to you, everything has gone really smoothly. So I just wanted to thank you for taking care of Maria's section and staying late while she was off sick.

R: Oh, it was no problem. I was glad to help.

G: Well, you've worked a lot of extra hours, and you've been very supportive of Maria's team. You're not only hard-working and conscientious, but you've shown that you can take initiative: these are qualities the company values highly.

R: Well, thank you.

G: I want to say how much I appreciate your dedication to the company and your solidarity with your colleagues. What's more, I'm very grateful for the support you have shown me personally by dealing with this difficult situation yourself.

R: It was my pleasure. And I enjoyed the chance to work with a bigger team.

G: Well, I'm sure there'll be opportunities for you to take on more responsibility in the very near future, and it's really good to know we can count on you. Well done, Rafael, and thank you!

1:61

Mrs Gómez: Rafael?

Rafael: Yes, Mrs Gómez?

G: Could I just have a word?

R: Yes, of course.

G: Come in Rafael. Have a seat. Now, it seems there was a problem with Mr Baitan last Friday. He called me to say he was very upset. Can you tell me exactly what happened?

R: I'm sorry, I messed up. I was really tired: it was 6 pm, I had two sales assistants off sick and Mr Baitan was being really difficult. I just lost my patience. He wouldn't stop asking me the same questions!

G: Well, Rafael, you're a good supervisor, but you can't afford to forget your basic customer care skills, can you?

R: No, I understand. I realize I didn't set a very good example for the team.

G: Quite. Now, do you have any ideas as to why Mr Baitan was so upset?

R: Well, I understand that he expects VIP treatment. I'm afraid I was probably a bit rude to him.

G: Look Rafael, you've been with us for, what, three years now? You do realize that this kind of problem can have serious consequences, don't you?

R: Yes, of course.

G: All right then, so what do you think we can do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

R: Well, I've been thinking about doing the stress management course. I think it could help me a lot. And, perhaps Maria could let me have someone to help out in my section when things are really busy?

G: Right. I think that's a good plan. I know you've been under pressure, so if you need help, you will get back to me, won't you?

R: Yes, thank you.

G: Good. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

R: No.

G: So, before you go, let's just summarize what we have agreed. I'll book you on the course next week, and I'll ask Maria to give you some help during the really busy periods. OK? And let's meet again in a month's time to see how you're getting on. Are you comfortable with that?

R: Yes, that's fine Mrs Gómez. Thank you very much.

4.6 Case study: Trident Overseas

1:62

John Thorpe: Abeba, you've been a mechanic in Witu for five and a half years, is that right?

Abeba: Yes, sir, that's right.

JT: So you worked for two other dealers before Mr Mbugua – would you say that things have got worse since he became the Dealer here?

A: Yes, sir. Before Mr Mbugua arrived, we had a good team. Everyone pulled together and we enjoyed our work. Now, it's not at all the same. Morale is bad and the customers can see the difference. A lot of our regular customers have stopped coming. Mr Mbugua fired several good colleagues for no reason, just so he could hire his friends and relatives instead. They get the easy shifts and the rest of us do the hard work.

JT: Have you spoken to the sales rep about this?

A: Mrs Mohamed? Huh! We never see her. She's too busy with the development project. Anyway, she can't do anything – Mr Mbugua is Mr Wambugu's nephew, didn't you know? To be honest, I'd leave it there was any choice. But there aren't any other jobs around here, so I just have to put up with it.

1:63

John Thorpe: Mr Mbugua, I've been hearing accusations of favouritism – and that you've employed friends and members of your family in your service station?

Mr Mbugua: Oh, don't pay any attention to what Abeba says, Mr Thorpe. She's not a team player – she's only interested in herself. It would be better for her to leave, and the sooner she leaves, the better.

JT: But is it true that you employ members of your family?

M: Yes, of course it's true. As a Young Dealer, I work my fingers to the bone for Trident, Mr Thorpe, and I get very little thanks for it. I need staff who will work hard for the company too, and it's not easy to find them, I can tell you. I employ two of my cousins and a couple of friends because I know they're hard workers, like me. What's wrong with that?

JT: Does Mrs Mohamed agree with this recruitment policy?

M: I haven't asked her. Anyway, I don't think Mrs Mohamed is interested. Her big development project is far more important! I get absolutely no support from her, or