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ENGLISH FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

**Навчальний посібник
для самостійної роботи**

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INTRODUCTION

These methodological guidelines address the growing need for professionals to combine technical expertise with effective English-medium communication in AI-driven, risk-sensitive project environments. They were developed with reference to project-management research, World Economic Forum analytics, IPM recommendations, insights from the 2026 Davos Forum, and survey data from project managers and master’s students in the “IT Project Development Technologies” programme at the Faculty of Information Technology.

Designed for part-time learners, the guide supports independent study through authentic professional texts. It develops active vocabulary, strengthens listening via video-based tasks, and builds writing skills in business correspondence and technical reporting, with an emphasis on professional etiquette and evidence-based argumentation. The materials are aligned with CEFR B2–C1 and aim to help learners produce clear, detailed texts and well-structured arguments in common academic and professional genres.

The course is organised into four modules. Each module includes reading input, vocabulary-and-grammar practice, video activities, case-based discussion, self-check tasks, and productive speaking and writing assignments. Module 1 focuses on crisis and intercultural communication, including interaction under time pressure, direct and indirect styles, mitigation strategies, email etiquette, reporting genres, and argumentation. Module 2 introduces innovative risk-management technologies (agentic AI, blockchain applications, and cloud solutions) and trains learners to explain technologies, assess risks and constraints, and communicate decisions to stakeholders.

Module 3 explores AI for IT project delivery, especially language models and related tools for automation, decision support, and predictive analytics. It also practices prompt formulation, process description, results reporting, recommendation writing, and risk communication. Module 4 examines partnerships in Asian business culture, highlighting the roles of trust, hierarchy, and time in negotiations, and developing competence in indirect and face-saving communication through scenarios; it also offers optional extension readings for more individualised learning.

The appendix provides IPM-related guidance on professional certification, and an answer key supports self-assessment. Summative assessment is based on an oral project presentation built around authentic business case analysis, allowing instructors to evaluate learners’ use of professional English and project-management terminology in international collaboration contexts.

TEACHING GUIDELINES

Students work through tasks independently. Teachers should use each module as a self-access pathway. They only a) set deadlines, b) explain how to submit evidence, and c) give brief feedback on the outcomes.

By the end of **Module 1**, students should be able to communicate project risks clearly and professionally by identifying target audiences, selecting appropriate channels, using key PM collocations/phrasal verbs, and applying hedging to adapt tone for international stakeholders.

1.1. Teacher's role: Set the self-study route and deadlines, point to students the "risk communication procedures" they must apply (target groups → clear messages → channels → two-way communication → updates), and require a small evidence – final speaking). Give only light-touch feedback on the final submission.

1.2. Students' self-directed learning route based on Module 1.

1.3. The evidence students should submit: a 60–90 sec video speaking response to one of the discussion points using required collocations/phrasal verbs.

1.4. As a feedback focus use a 3-point checklist: a) message clarity for the target group, b) appropriate tone, c) accurate PM collocations/phrasal verbs.

By the end of **Module 2**, students should be able to explain key AI/risk-management trends for 2026, use the target vocabulary and collocations accurately, and produce professional risk-management outputs (forum post) using an appropriate discussion style (giving opinions, agreeing/disagreeing).

2.1. Teacher's role: use Module 2 as a self-access sequence where students work independently and you only manage pacing, submission rules, and short feedback on the final video speaking. Tell students their goal is "usable workplace communication" as they must reuse collocations (e.g., "mitigate risk," "ensure transparency," "provide oversight," "process data locally") rather than just answer comprehension questions.

2.2. Students' self-directed learning route based on Module 2.

2.3. The evidence students should submit: 90–120 second recorded video discussing (pair work), one of the points using at least 2 opinion markers (e.g., "Personally...", "To be honest...") and 2 agree/disagree moves (e.g., "Absolutely...", "That's a good point, but...").

2.4. As a feedback focus check correct use of the module vocabulary (“According to... Based on...”), plus professional tone in agreement/disagreement (avoid blunt “You’re wrong”).

By the end of **Module 3**, students should be able to describe how AI improves project delivery (automation, predictive analytics, dashboards, communication), use the target collocations/idioms accurately, and speak on AI priorities while explaining why human judgment remains essential.

3.1. Teacher’s role: use Module 3 as a self-access learning cycle as students read/watch, do the language practice, and produce a video (in pairs). You only set the pacing and give brief outcome-focused feedback. Position the module as “communication for AI-enabled PM work” where students reuse the module’s phrases (e.g., “flag a risk early,” “keep everyone in the loop,” “make a data-driven decision,” “streamline a process”) in their final output.

3.2. Students’ self-directed learning route based on Module 3.

3.3. The evidence students should submit: a 90-120 sec video recording (pair work) containing persuasive recommendation using the “persuading” strategies (recommendations, reasons, handling objections, and compromise).

3.4. Feedback focus: a) task achievement for student is to clearly choose TWO priority areas and link each to a specific project problem + benefit; b) language quality check is how accurately they use core phrases (“stay on track”, “keep everyone in the loop”, “streamline a process”, “put out fires”, “make a data-driven decision” etc.) and professional tone.

By the end of **Module 4**, students should be able to: a) identify the three key factors in Asian business culture highlighted in the text (relationships, hierarchy and time), b) explain the basic difference between relationship-focused and deal-focused business behavior and its impact on project communication.

4.1. Teacher’s role: set the goal to understand 5 culture variables that affect PM communication (relationships, hierarchy, time/patience, indirect language, face). Tell students to avoid judging (“right/wrong”) and instead use a neutral lens: *deal-focused vs relationship-focused* expectations can differ across contexts.

4.2. Students’ self-directed learning route based on Module 4.

4.3. The evidence students should submit: compose 2 questions to an expert in Asian cultures and upload them to Menti.com. Encourage students to vote for the questions to make a 5-7 question shortlist.

Host a workshop with an expert or ask the students to watch its recording. Involve students in 15-minutes class discussion.

4.4. Feedback focus. Students should: a) correctly connect the issue to relationships/hierarchy/time (not stereotypes) and b) use 2–3 key terms accurately (e.g., build rapport, indirect approach, climate of trust).

For **students' summative assessment**, set a project assignment and act as a facilitator and assessor. The timeline and submission rules must be set (students choose one Agile case, research 2–3 simple facts about the company's problem, come up with Agile solution and results, and prepare a 1–2 minute video pitch). Then remind them to structure the talk: “hook” 3 reasons why Agile worked and a short conclusion), and require the use of professional PM language (e.g., “One reason is that... This helped... As a result...”). Give light-touch support through rehearsal guidance (e.g. pronunciation practice and optional AI tools) and run peer feedback via Google Class. Finally, give a grade using the rubric priorities from the brief (clear explanation of at least 3 success reasons linked to outcomes, correct use of the chosen case with evidence, coherent structure, and professional English).

MODULE 1. INTRODUCTION TO RISK COMMUNICATION IN IT PROJECT MANAGEMENT



1.1. Risk communication

Pre-reading task:

1. What problems might arise in a project if risks are not communicated clearly and on time to the right people?
2. How can effective risk communication change the outcome of a project when problems start to appear?

Task 1. Dr. Roland Ottmann from International Association of Project Managers states: “Communicating risks, including communication with the public, is important for several reasons” [1]. Dealing with the issue “Why do risks need to be communicated?” he comes up with 5 purposes of risk communication.

Match each purpose of risk communication (1–5) with the correct explanation (A–F). One explanation is extra.

Purpose (1–5)	Explanation (A–F)
1. Create transparency	A. Helps identify possible effects on society, the environment, or public welfare and apply measures to reduce harm and protect people.
2. Assign responsibilities	B. Makes stakeholders aware of their responsibility for risks and their consequences, so action must be taken and risks are not ignored.
3. Build a basis for decision-making	C. Provides clear information about risks so decisions can be made on a sound and informed basis, not on assumptions.
4. Act early	D. Encourages open discussion of uncertainties even when risks are still unclear or developing. (extra)
5. Maintain safety	E. Supports openness about potential hazards and uncertainties, which helps build trust and credibility with the team and stakeholders.
—	F. Allows risks to be identified, analyzed, and managed before they turn into serious problems by giving enough time to respond.

Now read the text:

What is the approach to risk communication?

If the decision is made to present the truth, a decisive approach is important. Half-heartedness is interpreted as uncertainty and challenges interested parties to ask uncomfortable questions.

When communicating risks, the project manager should follow certain procedures to ensure effective and targeted communication, that is:

Create risk awareness

In addition to simply communicating risks, it is important to raise awareness of risk management throughout the project team and among stakeholders. Explain the importance of risks, their impact on the project and the role of each individual in addressing risks.

Identify target groups

Determine who the relevant stakeholders are for risk communication. These can be internal team members, project managers, executives, clients,

suppliers, external participants or the general public. Consider the specific information needs and expertise of the target groups.

Define messages clearly

Formulate the risk messages clearly, precisely and understandably. Avoid jargon or technical details unless they are relevant to the target group. Ensure that the messages contain the essential information about the risk, its impact and the planned measures to address the risk.

Select communication channels

Select the appropriate communication channels to convey the risk information to the target audiences. This may include meetings, emails, reports, presentations, internal communication tools or public communication tools. Consider the preferences of the target audiences and ensure that the chosen channels convey the information effectively.

Support two-way communication

Encourage open and constructive communication by giving stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback, ask questions or raise concerns. Create an environment where dialogue can take place to promote a better understanding of the risks and develop potential solutions.

Consider appropriate frequency

Determine the required frequency of risk communication to ensure that information remains current and relevant. This may vary depending on the stage of the project, the extent of the risk or the needs of the target groups. Regular exchange of information is important to enable continuous risk management.

Keep communication up to date

Regularly review and update risk communication to reflect new risks or communicate changes in existing risks. Ensure that risk information is up to date and that relevant updates are communicated in a timely manner.

Considering these points can help the project manager to improve the communication of risks in their project management.

The exact approach to communicating risks can vary depending on the project, organization and stakeholder. In order to ensure effective and successful risk communication for the project, communication needs to be project-specific and adapted to the specific requirements and needs of the project. The project manager should make the first necessary considerations in the start-up process of their project and implement the measures derived from this during the realization and closing process [1].

Task 2. Match the verbs (1–8) with the correct endings (A–I) to form correct project-management collocations.

No.	Verb	Letter	Collocation Ending
1	adapt	___	A. two-way communication
2	define	___	B. communication channels
3	ensure	___	C. communication up to date
4	identify	___	D. awareness
5	keep	___	E. timely updates
6	raise	___	F. target groups
7	select	___	G. messages clearly
8	support	___	H. communication to the project

Task 3. Complete each sentence with the correct collocation from Task 2. Use each collocation once.

1. At the start of the project, the PM should _____ so that all stakeholders understand the importance of managing risks.
2. Before sending any information, it is important to _____ because different stakeholders need different levels of detail.
3. The project manager must _____ so that risk information is precise, relevant, and easy to understand.
4. To reach all stakeholders effectively, the team should _____ that match their preferences, such as meetings, emails, or reports.
5. During risk meetings, the PM should _____ by encouraging questions and feedback from the team.
6. When new risks appear, it is essential to _____ and inform stakeholders about any changes.
7. Risk reports should be shared regularly to _____ and avoid outdated or misleading information.
8. Since every project is different, PMs must _____ rather than using the same approach for all projects.

Task 4. Read the text and decide if the statements are True (T), False (F), or Not Given (NG).

1. A hesitant communication style can make stakeholders feel uncertain and encourage difficult questions.
2. Risk communication should focus only on informing senior management.
3. Technical language should always be avoided when communicating risks.
4. Different stakeholders may need different types of risk information.
5. Two-way communication helps stakeholders better understand risks and possible solutions.
6. The frequency of risk communication should be the same throughout the whole project.
7. Risk communication strategies must be adapted to the specific project and organization.

Task 5. Answer the questions using information from the text. Give your reasons or refer to your professional experience:

1. Why is a decisive approach important when communicating risks?
2. What does “creating risk awareness” involve besides sharing information?
3. Why should project managers identify target groups before communicating risks?
4. Give two examples of communication channels mentioned in the text.
5. Why is it necessary to review and update risk communication regularly?

Task 6. You are going to watch a video about a major outage of a work communication platform.

Before watching, discuss:

1. What problems might occur if a company’s main communication tool suddenly stops working?
2. Which project activities would be affected first?

Tick (✓) the most likely:

- Team meetings
- File sharing
- Task coordination
- Client communication

- Decision-making
- System integrations

If you were managing this crisis, what would be your **first three actions**?

Be ready to justify your choice:

- Inform users on social media
- Fix the technical problem
- Send messages to business clients
- Publish a public explanation
- Investigate what went wrong

Task 7. Watch the video and do the tasks that follow:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhZ5--R42AM>

A. Match the causes with their consequences mentioned in the video.

Causes	Effects
1. Increased traffic after the holiday break	A. Investors and stakeholders became concerned
2. Server connectivity and network failures	B. Slack’s infrastructure could not handle the load
3. Platform outage	C. Third-party integrations stopped working
4. Loss of communication tools	D. Teams could not coordinate work effectively

B. Evaluate Slack’s response using evidence from the video. Complete the table with one example for each category.

Aspect	What Slack Did
Communication	_____
Technical action	_____
Long-term prevention	_____

Context: In February 2022, Slack, a widely used messaging platform, experienced a significant outage that left many users unable to access its

services. The disruption was attributed to a configuration change that unexpectedly increased activity on the company's database infrastructure, causing instability and downtime [2].

Then discuss:

1. Which action was the most important for reducing business impact?
2. Which improvement would you prioritize: **scaling, redundancy, or client communication**? Why?

Writing

Task 8: Write an email to management (100–120 words).

You are asked to suggest how the company can reduce risks from similar outages in the future.

In your email, recommend **two actions** and explain why they are important. Include:

- one technical recommendation (e.g., backup tools, redundancy)
- one communication-related recommendation (e.g., emergency contact plans)

Use at least two expressions:

- *proactive risk management*
- *system reliability*
- *contingency plan*
- *stakeholder communication*

1.2. Bridge the Gap Between Direct and Indirect Communication



Pre-reading task.

1. What communication problems might occur when people from different cultures work together on the same IT project?
2. How do you usually express a problem or mistake: directly or indirectly? Why?

Reading

Task 9. Now read the text about cultural notes and communication styles and explain the meaning of the following word combinations: “direct communicator”, “indirect communicator”, “open-ended question”, “shared language”, “hierarchy”, “individualism”, “read between the lines”.

The complexity of language and communication in international business environments runs deeper than one might assume. Communication with Americans or someone of a different culture comes with unique challenges. One of the biggest difficulties when working in an international environment is the enormous potential for misunderstanding and confusion caused by communication issues. However, when each individual involved makes an

intentional effort to understand and be understood, the narrative can change. Regardless of how much or how little international experience you have had in your career thus far, communication seems to be a recurring challenge in even domestic settings. This article should shed light on those communication challenges and propose practical solutions that you can immediately implement.

Communication Styles

Although the more overt global communication challenges arise from language barriers, there are other more nuanced factors that contribute to intercultural miscommunication as well. Many of those factors are linked to the fact that different cultures use language differently. What one culture feels to be a very positive communication style can often be considered an inferior communication style in another culture.

An understanding of these different approaches to communication can prove invaluable when trying to build relationships across cultures. All too often, approaches to communication that differ from the norm in your own culture can be misinterpreted as a personality shortcoming. Instead of people thinking, “that’s the way they use language in that particular country,” people associate language style with negative characteristics such as rudeness.

To understand the difference between direct and indirect communication styles, please see the brief case study below.

“The VP of sales politely asked her subordinate if it would be possible for him to speed up the completion of an important proposal for a client by three weeks. Her subordinate knew he had a very full schedule and it would be difficult, but said, “I’ll try.” He then put the request on the back burner until the VP contacted him three weeks later and asked for the proposal. The subordinate apologized and didn’t understand why the VP wouldn’t have contacted him again if the proposal was so urgent.”

In this case, the VP of sales is a direct communicator and her subordinate is an indirect communicator. The directness of the VP is demonstrated through her overt request to speed up the completion of a task. The indirectness of the subordinate is seen through his response, “I’ll try.” This is a common response in indirect cultures– the actual meaning is “it won’t happen.” However, it is common for direct communicators to interpret this without reading between the lines.

How do I improve my communication style?

If your communication style is more direct, people might see your communication style as confrontational and blunt. They might feel hurt, offended, or uncomfortable by your upfront approach to handle conflict. Since individuals tend to value harmony, they may avoid bringing up difficult conversations.

If your communication style is more indirect, people might perceive you as evasive or dishonest when you avoid difficult conversations or sidestep a request with a vague response. They might be confused about what you say since they do not understand your implicit communication style. This typically leads to a lack of trust.

We have created the following top tips on how to bridge the gap between direct and indirect communicators:

How can I communicate with more indirect communicators?

- Use open-ended questions and more nuanced verbiage when sharing your opinion and feedback.
- Listen for what's not being said and paraphrase what you heard.
- Start by focusing on the relationship when bringing up difficult topics.
- Take a step back to observe and notice the environment and context of the interaction.
- Practice accepting answers that are not “yes” or “no”.
- Be patient with longer responses than you may be used to.
- Try communicating your message through a story.
- Explore multiple ways to convey your message.

How can I communicate with more direct communicators?

- Practice saying “no” to requests or questions to which you cannot give an affirmative answer.
- If your counterpart shares their thoughts bluntly, it's nothing personal.
- Avoid saying “yes” if you don't mean it or don't agree.
- Express your messages as explicitly as you can.
- Give “yes” or “no” answers with intention.
- Share clear agendas and goals so others don't need to guess.
- Address issues quickly and clearly.

- Speak specifically and concisely; only use words that you need to get your message across.

For those that exhibit both direct and indirect communication:

- Remain aware that it is possible to communicate effectively in a style that is not your own.
- Be conscious of your biases and how they may influence your perception of other communication styles.
- Practice the opposite communication style to become more flexible in your ability to “code switch” across different cultures.

In conclusion, in cultures that put directness before diplomacy, it is important that the truth be made clear, simple, and without deviation. In that way, everybody is certain about the issue being discussed– little is left to chance. Those (indirect) cultures that put diplomacy before directness will never directly say the truth (not the same as saying that they lie) if they feel that, by speaking the truth, they risk having a negative emotional impact on the people they are speaking to [3].

1. According to the article, what is one of the biggest difficulties when working in an international environment?
2. In the case study, why did the VP of Sales and her subordinate misunderstand each other’s intentions?
3. Why might direct communicators misunderstand indirect communicators, according to the article?
4. What does the article recommend for people who exhibit both direct and indirect communication styles?
5. What are two strategies mentioned in the text that can help bridge the gap between direct and indirect communicators?

Task 10. Match each expression (1-13) with its correct definition (a-l).

Expression	Meaning
1. to be on a tight schedule	A. to investigate
2. to be in hot water	B. to give special attention to something
3. to follow up (on)	C. to be in trouble for a mistake
4. to take a risk	D. to have very limited time to do something
5. to look into	E. to choose a careful option

6. to be on the same page	F. to raise a topic or issue
7. to set up	G. to arrange or organize
8. to be under pressure	H. to feel stressed due to workload or time
9. to bring up	I. to perform a task
10. to play it safe	J. to check or continue a previous action
11. to carry out	K. to share the same understanding
12. to focus on	L. to contact someone for help or information
13. to reach out	M. to do something uncertain

Task 11. Speak for one minute about an IT project risk (e.g., missed deadlines, unclear tasks). Use at least three collocations, one idiomatic expression, and one phrasal verb. Use these helpful phrases to organize your speech.

Helpful Phrases: “One common risk in projects is ...”, “This usually occurs when ...”, “The main problem is that ...”, “To deal with this, we should ...”, “A good communicator knows how to ...”

Vocabulary: lack of communication, unclear requirements, technical issues, tight schedules, limited budgets, and human errors.

Collocations: to meet/miss a deadline, to run into problems, to take responsibility, to raise a concern, to avoid mistakes, to cause delays, to keep everyone informed, to be under pressure.

Idioms: to be under pressure, to be on the same page, to play it safe, to be a red flag.

Phrasal Verbs: bring up, follow up on, carry out, set up, look into.

Example: *One common risk in IT projects is unclear requirements. This usually occurs when the project team and clients are not on the same page about what needs to be delivered. The main problem is that unclear requirements often cause delays and make it hard to meet a deadline. When this happens, teams may run into problems during development, leading to frustration and wasted time. To deal with this, we should set up regular meetings to keep everyone informed and bring up any doubts early. A good communicator knows how to raise concerns and follow up on feedback to avoid mistakes. Being under pressure to deliver can be tough, but it's important not to play it safe by ignoring issues. Instead, we must take responsibility and address risks proactively.*

Task 12. Compare the sentences. What is the tone of each sentence: polite or direct?

“We are going to miss the deadline.”; “It seems that we might run into some delays with the deadline.”

“You are ignoring the risks.”; “I feel we may need to look more closely at the potential risks.”

Grammar note! *Hedging* means using language that makes your message softer, less absolute, and more diplomatic. It helps you sound professional, polite, and cooperative. Instead of sounding certain or accusatory, show that your opinion is open to discussion. *Hedging* is important in risk communication because it reduces conflict and protects working relationships. These expressions reduce the strength of criticism, show respect for others’ opinions, and make communication more professional and polite.

Common hedging expressions: I’m afraid that ... I’m slightly concerned about ... It might be better to ... There is a chance that ... It seems that ... We may need to ... Perhaps we could ... It might be worth considering ...

Task 13. Rewrite the following direct sentences politely and professionally. Use hedging and one of these phrasal verbs: bring up, follow up on, or look into.

1. You have forgotten to report the problem.
2. No one checked the client’s messages.
3. This bug is your fault.
4. You have not completed your task.
5. This plan is wrong.
6. You did not meet the project deadline.
7. The report contains several errors.
8. You ignored feedback from the manager.
9. The system crashed because of your error.
10. Your presentation is unclear and confusing.

Writing an email on risk awareness.

Email Etiquette

In international IT teams, email etiquette is important. The emails should be clear, polite, and easy to understand. Authors should avoid using idioms, slang, or very informal expressions because they may confuse non-native

speakers. Simple and direct language helps to prevent misunderstandings. If a message is complex, it is useful to add short explanations and examples.

Feedback and criticism should always be constructive and respectful. The aim is to help improve work, not blame or embarrass others. In many cultures, negative feedback is given privately and gently. Using polite language and focusing on solutions helps to maintain good professional relationships.

Task 14. Fill in the gaps using professional vocabulary, target phrases, and phrasal verbs.

Collocations: draw your attention to, run into a delay, fully clear, arrange a meeting, clarify the situation

Phrasal Verbs: bring up, follow up on, look into, set up.

Subject: Potential Issues with Project Requirements.

Dear Team,

I would like to ___ a potential issue that might affect our timeline and also ___ any concerns you may have. We may ___ because some of the project requirements are not ___ yet. To avoid misunderstandings, I suggest we ___ as soon as possible to ___. In the meantime, please ___ the pending tasks and ___ any other possible risks early. I will also ___ a call invitation so we can discuss everything in detail.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

Listening

Task 15. Watch the video “Communicating Risk on a Project” and answer the following questions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sIBSA2yYQ>

1. According to the video, how is “risk” defined in project management?
2. What is the difference between the known unknowns and unknown unknowns?
3. What are the two main components of risk, as shown in the risk matrix?
4. Why is the risk matrix useful for teams when discussing risks?
5. What is the difference between something that is difficult and something that is risky?

Task 16. Complete the sentences using the correct phrasal verb below from the box.

bring up / follow up on / look into / set up / carry out

1. We should _____ this issue at the next team meeting.
2. The manager asked the team to _____ the customer's complaint.
3. I will _____ the test results to ensure that everything is correct.
4. let us _____ a short meeting to discuss the risks.
The engineers will _____ the safety checks tomorrow.

Task 17. Match the collocation (1–10) with its meaning (a–j).

Collocation	Meaning
1. assess a risk	A. accept that something is your duty or fault
2. raise a concern	B. not make errors
3. miss a deadline	C. complete work on time
4. meet a deadline	D. talk about a possible problem
5. run into a problem	E. evaluate how serious a danger is
6. manage a risk	F. not finish work on time
7. avoid mistakes	G. control or reduce the impact of a problem
8. cause delays	H. make something happen later than planned
9. keep informed	I. encounter a difficulty unexpectedly
10. take responsibility	J. make sure people know what is happening

Discussion points.

1. Why is risk communication as important as technical skills in IT project management?
2. What problems can arise if risks are not communicated clearly within an IT team?
3. How can cultural differences influence the way risks are reported and discussed in international projects?
4. Share an experience when you were "on a tight schedule. How did you handle it, and what would you do differently?
5. What role does hierarchy play in risk communication between team members and managers?
6. How can effective risk communication improve teamwork and trust in an IT project?
7. In your opinion, what makes a risk message professional and effective?

SPEAKING STRATEGIES 1. Speaking to Inform

A. Giving information clearly

You can inform others effectively in project communication using these strategies.

Function	Example (Project Management)
giving project updates	A: How is the testing phase going? B: It's 80% complete and on schedule.
reporting risks	A: Are there any major risks? B: Yes. The main risk is supplier delay.
explaining causes	A: Why was the milestone missed? B: Because two key tasks took longer than expected.
explaining effects	A: What happens if we delay the release? B: It may affect customer satisfaction and revenue.
giving figures and facts	A: What is the current budget status? B: We have used 65% of the total budget.
summarizing progress	A: Can you summarize this week's progress? B: We completed development and started integration testing.

B Checking and clarifying information

Listeners often check understanding to avoid mistakes in projects.

Function	Example (Project Management)
checking facts	A: The deadline is May 10th. B: So, May 10th, not May 12th?
asking for clarification	A: We need to revise the scope. B: Could you explain which parts will change?
confirming understanding	A: We will outsource testing. B: Right, so testing won't be done in-house?

asking for details	A: The costs will increase slightly. B: How much exactly will they increase?
summarizing what you heard	A: We'll delay the demo and update the client. B: So, first delay the demo, then inform the client?

Practice

A1 Match the statements (1–8) with a suitable response (a–h).

1. The client requested three new features.
2. The schedule slipped by two days.
3. Testing will start next Monday.
4. We have exceeded the budget by 5%.
5. The vendor confirmed delivery for Friday.
6. Two team members are on sick leave.
7. The defect rate has dropped significantly.
8. We will move the meeting online.

Responses:

- A. So the delivery is confirmed for this week?
- B. That explains the delay.
- C. That's good progress.
- D. Does that mean we must revise the plan?
- E. OK, so we don't need to travel.
- F. So we need to update the client?
- G. That's helpful to know.
- H. So testing begins next week?

A2 Complete the responses.

1. A: We are behind schedule due to late approvals.
B: So the delay is caused by _____.
2. A: The total cost is now \$120,000.
B: So we have used _____.
3. A: Integration testing will start on Thursday.
B: Right, so testing begins _____.
4. A: Customer feedback was mostly positive.
B: That's good. Did they mention _____?

5. A: We may need to reduce the scope.
 B: Could you explain which parts will _____?
6. A: The release may be postponed.
 B: So the launch will be _____.

B3 Give information using the prompts.

1. Explain the current project status to a stakeholder.
2. Report a new risk to your project sponsor.
3. Explain why the deadline needs to change.
4. Give budget information to your team.
5. Summarize weekly progress in two sentences.

Student Reflection Checklist 1.

After the speaking task, tick ✓ what you can do.

◆ **Giving Information**

- I explained the main project situation clearly.
- I gave important facts (time, budget, progress, risk).
- I explained why something happened.
- I explained what may happen next.

◆ **Interaction**

- I checked or confirmed information (So..., Right..., Do you mean...?).
- I asked for clarification when needed.

◆ **Language & Professional Style**

- I used project management vocabulary.
- My language was professional and clear.

◆ **My Goal for Next Time**

- give clearer facts
- explain reasons better
- explain impact better
- use more PM vocabulary

Next time I will focus on: _____

Vocabulary Bank – 1

<p>◆ Collocations</p> <p>risk communication create transparency assign responsibilities build a basis for decision-making act early maintain safety create risk awareness identify target groups define messages clearly select communication channels support two-way communication consider appropriate frequency keep communication up to date adapt communication to the project effective risk communication project-specific communication informed decision-making</p>	<p>◆ Key Vocabulary</p> <p>stakeholder risk awareness uncertainty impact procedures target audience feedback dialogue credibility assumptions misunderstandings language barriers communication style hierarchy individualism intercultural communication implicit meaning explicit message</p>
<p>◆ Idiomatic Expressions</p> <p>to be on a tight schedule to be under pressure to be in hot water to be on the same page to hit a roadblock to play it safe to be a red flag read between the lines on the back burner nothing personal bridge the gap shed light on leave little to chance</p>	<p>◆ Phrasal Verbs</p> <p>bring up follow up (on) look into set up carry out reach out focus on deal with take place put off</p>

Progress Review 1.

Read the statements and decide if they are True (T), False (F), or Not Given (NG) according to the Project Scenario

You are managing a cloud migration project for a financial services company. During final system testing, your IT team discovers a security vulnerability that could allow unauthorized access to customer data. The issue has not yet caused any incidents, but it could lead to regulatory problems and reputational damage if it becomes public.

Stakeholders include: internal IT development and security teams, company executives, external software vendors, regulatory authorities

The project is in the final phase, and system launch is planned in two weeks.

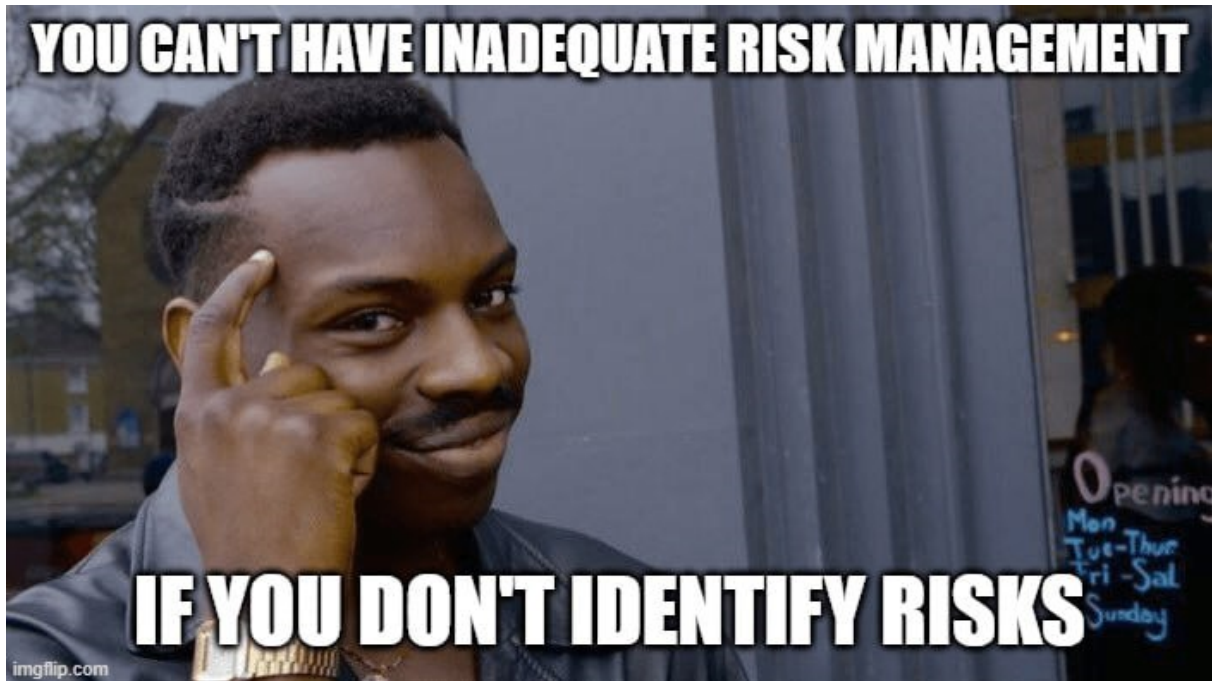
1. The risk should be communicated in a clear and decisive way to avoid creating uncertainty among stakeholders.
2. Different stakeholder groups may need different levels of technical detail about the risk.
3. The text states that technical language must always be avoided when communicating risks.
4. Regulatory authorities must be contacted before any internal teams are informed.
5. Stakeholders should be able to ask questions and give feedback about the risk.
6. The scenario says that external vendors have already been informed about the vulnerability.
7. Risk communication should be reviewed and updated if new information appears before launch.
8. Using the same communication method for all stakeholders is recommended to keep messages consistent.

Answer the following questions.

1. How do direct and indirect communication styles differ, and why can misunderstanding occur between them in international IT teams?
2. Why is hedging important in professional risk communication, and give two examples of hedging expressions.
3. Rewrite this direct sentence using hedging: “We will miss the deadline.”
4. What does it mean to “read between the lines,” and in which communication style is this skill especially important?
5. Explain the difference between “raising a concern” and “bringing up an issue”. Why are they both important in IT projects?
6. What are the first three steps in the IT risk management process, and why are they necessary?
7. How can cultural differences (such as hierarchy and individualism) influence the way risks are reported to managers?

MODULE 2. RISK MANAGEMENT INNOVATIONS IN 2026

2.1. Five AI trends for 2026 that project managers need to consider



Pre-Reading task:

1. How has your use of AI in your daily work changed in the last 12 months?
2. What do you think is the difference between "simple automation" and "agentic AI"?
3. If a project report contains a significant error, who should be held responsible: the person who generated it or the AI tool used to create it?

Reading

In 2025, TIME magazine crowned the “Architects of AI” as its Person of the Year, recognising the handful of leaders who are fundamentally reshaping our world. This was not a niche tech award; it was a mainstream acknowledgment that artificial intelligence (AI) has become a dominant force in the global economy, geopolitics and the fabric of our daily lives.

As we step into 2026, project management finds itself just as impacted by this transformation as other professions. The question is no longer if AI will

impact projects, but how project professionals can navigate the complex and often contradictory currents of this new era.

Here are five critical trends that I think will define AI in project management in 2026.

The rise of the hybrid human-AI workforce

The most significant shift in 2026 will be the emergence of a hybrid human-AI workforce. This goes beyond simple automation. We are entering the era of agentic AI, where autonomous systems can manage entire workflows, from planning and resource allocation to risk mitigation.

This ‘silicon workforce’ will handle the hyper-automation of routine tasks, freeing up project managers to focus on strategic oversight and complex problem-solving. Further, this digital workforce is taking physical form. With companies like Tesla and Figure ramping up production, 2026 may be the year you see your first humanoid robot in a real-life environment, performing tasks alongside human colleagues.

This convergence demands that data and AI fluency become a core competency for all project professionals, who must now learn to manage, orchestrate and collaborate with their digital and robotic team members.

Consultancies morphing into tech companies

The line between professional services and technology is blurring. The most telling sign of this shift was AECOM’s headline-grabbing \$390m acquisition of Norwegian AI start-up Consigli in late 2025. This was not a simple technology purchase; it was a strategic declaration that the future of infrastructure consulting is inextricably linked with proprietary AI.

We can expect to see a wave of similar acquisitions as major consultancies race to embed AI at their core, transforming themselves into tech-driven organisations. For project managers, this means that the tools and platforms they use will become increasingly sophisticated and integrated, with AI-powered predictive analytics moving from a nice-to-have feature to a central element of project forecasting and delivery.

The AI trust deficit

The Wild West era of AI implementation is ending. As AI’s influence grows, so does the scrutiny. This year will be marked by a significant push for regulation, driven by both professional bodies and the harsh lessons of corporate

missteps. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has been at the forefront, launching a global professional standard for the responsible use of AI that becomes mandatory in March 2026.

The urgent need for guardrails was starkly illustrated by the news in 2025 that a major consultancy was forced to repay a portion of its fees to the Australian government after its report was found to contain AI-generated errors. The growing trust deficit is fuelling an AI pushback, with some companies beginning to position themselves as ‘AI-free’ as a mark of quality and human craftsmanship. Project managers must balance the drive for AI-led efficiency with the critical need for ethical oversight, regulatory compliance and client trust.

The unrelenting march towards AGI

Equal parts tantalising and terrifying is the prospect of artificial general intelligence (AGI) – the point at which an AI’s cognitive abilities match or surpass those of a human. While predictions on the timing of AGI’s arrival vary wildly, with some experts suggesting it could be as early as 2026 or 2027 (I think it will be nearer 2030), our mere proximity to this milestone is already having a profound impact.

The race to AGI is driving unprecedented levels of investment and innovation, but it is also forcing a critical conversation about the long-term implications for humanity. For project managers, the approach of AGI is a stark reminder of the exponential pace of change and the need to be adaptable, forward-thinking and deeply engaged in the ethical and societal debates that will shape our future.

Enhanced communication and data-driven decision-making

As teams become more distributed and projects more complex, AI will become an indispensable partner in fostering communication and enabling smarter decisions. AI-powered assistants will facilitate seamless collaboration across time zones, while advanced, customisable dashboards will provide stakeholders with real-time, data-driven insights into project health.

This move towards decision intelligence, where AI doesn’t just present data, but also recommends actions, will empower project managers to make faster, more informed choices. By automating reporting and enhancing data visualisation, AI will ensure that all stakeholders have a clear and accurate view of project progress, fostering transparency and alignment [4].

Abridged from: <https://www.apm.org.uk/blog/five-ai-trends-for-2026-that-project-managers-need-to-consider/>

Task 1. Match each word (1-8) with its correct definition (a-h).

Word	Definition
1. Agentic AI	A. The ability to understand, interpret, and work effectively with data.
2. Inextricably	B. Autonomous systems that can manage entire workflows and make decisions
3. Fluency	C. A lack of confidence or faith in something's reliability or ethics.
4. Deficit	D. In a way that is impossible to disentangle or separate
5. Guardrails	E. To increase or escalate something rapidly (e.g., production).
6. Ramping up	F. Rules or systems that prevent errors or unethical behavior
7. Proprietary	G. Relating to an owner or ownership; protected by trademark or patent
8. Scrutiny	H. Critical observation or examination

Task 2. Fill in the blanks with the correct vocabulary word from the box.

tantalising / morphing / convergence / mitigation / exponential

1. The _____ of physical robotics and digital AI means project managers might soon work alongside humanoid robots.
2. AI agents are now capable of handling complex tasks like resource allocation and risk _____.
3. Traditional consultancies are _____ into tech companies by acquiring specialized AI firms.
4. The prospect of AGI is _____, offering incredible potential but also significant risks.
5. Project managers must prepare for an _____ pace of change as AI cognitive abilities evolve.

Task 3. Now, read the text again and answer the questions that follow.

1. According to the text, what is the "hybrid human-AI workforce" and how does it go beyond simple automation?
2. What specific tasks is the "silicon workforce" expected to handle by 2026?
3. What is the "AI trust deficit," and what recent event in Australia contributed to it?
4. Which professional body is launching a mandatory global standard for the responsible use of AI in March 2026?
5. How are some companies using the label "AI-free" in the current market?
6. What is Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), and when does the author predict it will truly arrive?
7. According to the article, why is "data and AI fluency" now considered a core competency for project managers?

Writing

Task 4. You are managing a project to launch a new mobile application in 2026. Complete the table with five possible risks.

No.	Risk Description	Strategy	The Action Plan
1.	The AI makes a mistake in the app code	Avoid	
2.	A different company launches the same app first.	Mitigate	
3.	The app crashes because too many people use it	Transfer	
4.	New laws say we cannot use certain AI data	Accept	
5.	Small colors or fonts look slightly wrong	Exploit	

Task 5. Imagine you are communicating on an online forum and you need to respond to the following question. Which risk management strategy is the most important today: avoidance, mitigation, or exploitation? Why? Write 5–7 sentences.

Listening

Task 6. Watch the video about AI Trends 2026: Quantum, Agentic AI & Smarter Automation. Fill in the blanks (1-8) using the correct words from the box below. There are more words than you need.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt0JA5rxdM>

orchestration / mistakes / protocols / team / robots / regulations / local /
efficiently / infrastructure / guidelines

In the video, experts discuss how AI will change by 2026. One significant development is multi-agent orchestration. This means instead of one AI attempting to manage every task, we will have a (1) _____ of specialized AI "agents" collaborating. For example, one agent plans the workflow, another writes the code, and a third agent—the critic—reviews the output for (2) _____.

Another major trend is Physical AI. In the past, engineers had to program specific (3) _____ for every movement a machine made. Now, AI can understand gravity and how to handle objects by practicing in a simulated digital environment. This allows (4) _____ to interact with the real world more naturally without constant human programming.

We also learn about the importance of Verifiable AI. New (5) _____ in Europe, such as the AI Act, will require companies to be transparent about how their systems function. They must provide documentation to prove their data sources and follow ethical (6) _____.

Finally, for better privacy and speed, the industry is moving toward Reasoning at the Edge. This means smaller, (7) _____ AI models will run directly on your smartphone or laptop. Because the processing happens on the device itself, your data remains private and the AI responds more (8) _____ because it does not rely on a connection to a distant data center.

Task 7. Brainstorm the ideas in the discussion blocks given. Make your English sound authentic. Try using these "discourse markers" to start your sentences:

- 1) *As far as I'm concerned...*
- 2) *It seems to me that...*

- 3) *Taking everything into account...*
- 4) *I'm of the opinion that...*

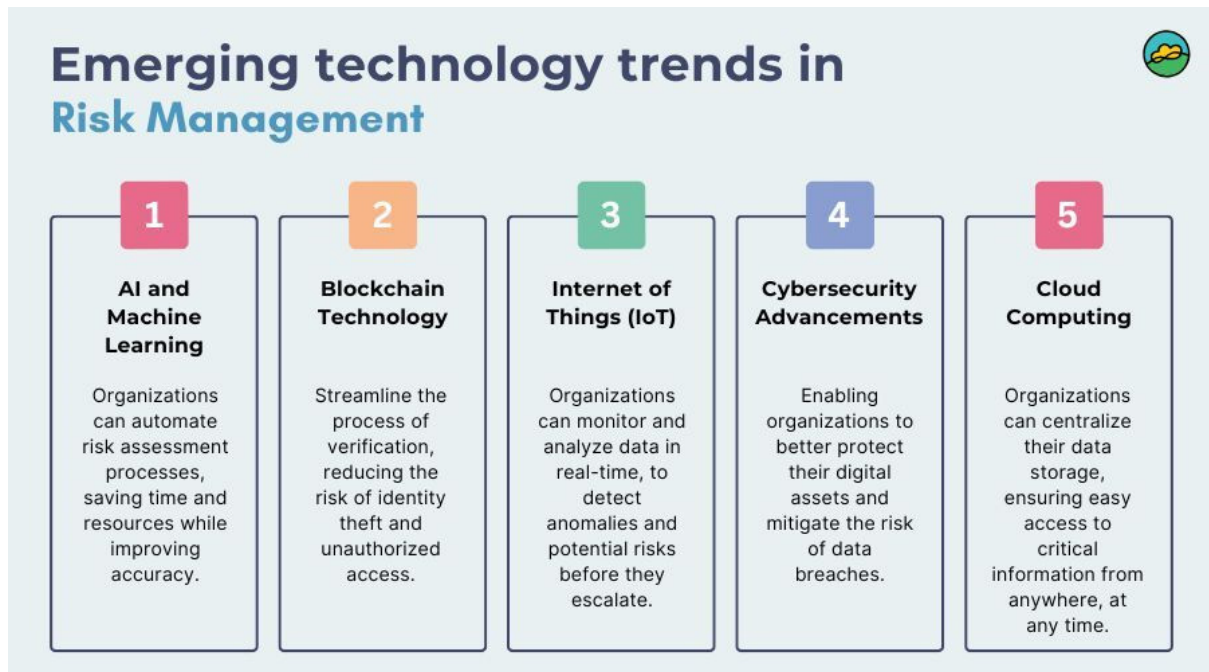
To help you answer these questions, try to use these collocations:

- 1) *to follow regulations* (to obey the official laws);
- 2) *to provide oversight* (to watch and manage a process to ensure it is done correctly);
- 3) *to ensure transparency* (to make sure information is clear and not hidden);
- 4) *to process data locally* (to handle information on your own device rather than in the cloud).

Example: On Multi-agent Orchestration: In the video, we saw that AI will work in "teams" where one agent checks the work of another. Do you think this will make project management more efficient, or will it make the process more complicated for humans to oversee?

1. On Physical AI: The experts mentioned that robots are now learning about the real world through digital simulations. In which industries (e.g., healthcare, construction, or delivery) do you think Physical AI will have the biggest impact by 2026?
2. On Verifiable AI: New regulations like the EU AI Act will soon be fully active. Do you believe that forcing companies to be more transparent will slow down innovation, or will it actually help people trust AI more?
3. On Reasoning at the Edge: Having AI run locally on your phone (without the internet) is a major trend for 2026. For you personally, which is more important: the speed of the AI's response or the privacy of your data?
4. On the Human-in-the-loop: Even with "autonomous agents," the video emphasizes that humans are still needed for strategic guidance. What specific human skills (like empathy or ethics) do you think will be the most valuable in a world full of AI agents?

2.2. Emerging technology trends in risk management



Task 8. Match each word (1-10) with its correct definition (a-j).

Word	Definition
1. mitigate	A. strong, sturdy, and able to withstand difficult conditions
2. robust	B. to use something to maximum advantage
3. immutable	C. the ability to track something through all stages of production and distribution
4. decentralized	D. things that deviate from what is standard, normal, or expected
5. traceability	E. to reduce the severity, seriousness, or impact of something
6. escalate	F. distributed across multiple locations rather than controlled from one central point
7. sophisticated	G. unable to be changed or altered
8. anomalies	H. the capacity to be changed in size or scale
9. leverage	I. to increase or intensify, often rapidly
10. scalability	J. highly developed, complex, and advanced

Reading

The landscape of risk management is undergoing a profound transformation driven by the rapid rise of new technologies. From artificial intelligence and machine learning to blockchain and advanced analytics, these innovations are redefining how organizations identify, assess, and mitigate risks in the supply chain. Modern risk management is no longer confined to static reports and periodic reviews; it has become dynamic, predictive, and automated.

These technologies enable real-time threat detection, smarter decision-making, and greater agility in responding to evolving challenges. As businesses face increasingly complex risks, from cyber threats to regulatory changes, the integration of cutting-edge tools is not just an advantage but a necessity for building resilient and forward-looking risk-management strategies.

1. Artificial Intelligence and machine learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are revolutionizing risk management by enabling organizations to analyze vast amounts of data in real time. AI-powered analytics can identify patterns, detect anomalies, and predict potential risks with high accuracy. By leveraging AI and ML algorithms, organizations can automate risk assessment processes, saving time and resources while improving accuracy.

AI and ML can also assist in fraud detection and prevention. By analyzing transactional data and user behavior patterns, these technologies can identify suspicious activities and flag potential frauds. This proactive approach allows organizations to take immediate action to prevent financial loss.

Another area where AI and ML can have a significant impact is in predicting market fluctuations. By analyzing historical data and market trends, these technologies can provide insights into potential market risks, enabling organizations to make informed decisions and adjust their strategies accordingly.

2. Blockchain technology

Blockchain technology offers a secure, transparent, and decentralized method for managing and tracking transactions. In risk management, blockchain can be used to enhance data integrity and reduce the fraud risk. By implementing blockchain-based solutions, organizations can create immutable transaction records, ensuring that data cannot be tampered with or altered.

Blockchain can also streamline the process of verifying identities and credentials, thereby reducing the risk of identity theft and unauthorized access to sensitive information. With blockchain-based identity verification systems,

organizations can ensure that only authorized individuals have access to sensitive information, thereby minimizing the risk of data breaches and ensuring data integrity.

Furthermore, blockchain technology can facilitate efficient supply chain management by providing end-to-end visibility and traceability of the supply chain. By leveraging blockchain technology, organizations can mitigate the risk of counterfeit products, improve product quality control, and enhance overall transparency in the supply chain.

3. Internet of Things (IoT)

The Internet of Things (IoT) has the potential to revolutionize risk management by allowing organizations to gather real-time data from various sources. IoT devices can collect data on environmental conditions, equipment performance, and other relevant factors, providing valuable insights into potential risks.

By deploying IoT sensors, organizations can monitor and analyze data in real time, enabling them to detect anomalies and potential risks before they escalate. For example, in the manufacturing industry, IoT sensors can detect changes in equipment temperature or vibration, indicating potential equipment failure, allowing organizations to take preventive measures and avoid costly downtime.

The IoT can also enhance risk management in the insurance sector. By leveraging data from IoT devices, insurance companies can gain a deeper understanding of individual risks, enabling them to personalize insurance policies and offer more accurate pricing. For example, in auto insurance, IoT devices installed in vehicles can track driving behavior and reward safe drivers with lower premium rates.

4. Cybersecurity advancements

Cybersecurity is a critical aspect of risk management because of the increasing frequency and sophistication of cyberattacks. Advancements in cybersecurity technologies enable organizations to better protect their digital assets and mitigate the risk of data breaches.

One of the key advancements in cybersecurity is the use of advanced encryption algorithms to secure sensitive information. By implementing robust encryption measures, organizations can ensure that data remain protected even if they fall into the wrong hands. Encryption technology also enables secure

communication and data transfer, thereby reducing the risk of unauthorized access to sensitive information.

Additionally, advancements in threat detection and response technologies empower organizations to identify and respond to cyber threats in real-time. AI-powered threat intelligence platforms can analyze vast amounts of data to identify potential threats and anomalies, enabling organizations to take immediate action and mitigate risks before they cause significant damage.

Cloud-based cybersecurity solutions are also gaining traction because they offer scalable, flexible, and cost-effective protection against cyberattacks. By leveraging cloud-based cybersecurity solutions, organizations can offload the burden of managing and maintaining their security infrastructure, allowing them to focus on their core business activities while ensuring robust protection against cyber threats.

5. Cloud Computing

Cloud computing has transformed the way organizations manage and store data and offers numerous benefits for risk management. By leveraging cloud-based solutions, organizations can centralize their data storage, ensuring easy access to critical information from anywhere and at any time.

Cloud computing also enhances data backup and disaster recovery capabilities. By storing data in the cloud, organizations can ensure that their data remain safe and accessible even in the event of a physical disaster or system failure. Cloud-based backup solutions offer automated and secure data backup, reducing the risk of data loss and minimizing downtime.

Moreover, cloud computing provides organizations with the scalability and flexibility required for effective risk management. Organizations can easily scale their cloud infrastructure to accommodate changing business needs, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to handle potential risks. Additionally, cloud-based risk management solutions offer flexible pricing models, allowing organizations to pay for the resources they use and eliminating the need for upfront investment in infrastructure [5].

Abridged from: <https://www.trustcloud.ai/risk-management/winning-risk-management-harness-emerging-technology-trends-for-unstoppable-success/>

Task 9. Read each statement and mark whether it is true (T) or false (F).

1. Modern risk management primarily relies on static reporting and periodic reviews.
2. AI and ML algorithms can automate risk assessment processes and improve their accuracy.
3. Blockchain technology allows data to be easily altered and modified.
4. IoT devices can only collect data after a risk event occurs.
5. Advanced encryption algorithms help protect sensitive data even if they fall into the hands of unauthorized personnel.
6. Cloud-based cybersecurity solutions require organizations to manage their security infrastructure.
7. IoT sensors in manufacturing can detect temperature changes that indicate potential equipment failure.
8. Blockchain technology can improve supply chain transparency and reduce the number of counterfeit products.
9. AI-powered threat intelligence platforms can only respond to threats after significant damage has occurred to the system.
10. Cloud computing provides scalability and flexibility for organizations' risk management needs.

Task 10. Read the text again and answer the following questions:

1. How has modern risk management changed from traditional approaches, according to the text?
2. What are the three main capabilities that AI and ML provide for risk management?
3. Explain how blockchain technology enhances data integrity in risk management.
4. How can IoT sensors help prevent equipment failure in the manufacturing industry?
5. What role does blockchain technology play in identity verification and access control?
6. Describe how IoT technology can be used to personalize auto insurance policies.
7. What are the two key cybersecurity advancements mentioned in the text for protecting against cyber threats?

8. How does cloud computing improve the disaster recovery capabilities of organizations?

Task 11. Complete each sentence with the correct word from the list:

detect / revolutionizing / predictive / facilitates / streamline / deployed / offload / accommodate / insights / fraudulent
--

1. Emerging technologies are _____ how organizations approach risk management.
2. Modern risk management is becoming more _____, rather than just reactive.
3. AI-powered analytics can _____ patterns and anomalies in large datasets.
4. Blockchain can _____ efficient supply chain management through improved visibility.
5. Organizations can _____ IoT sensors to monitor equipment performance in real time.
6. Advanced analytics provide valuable _____ into potential market risks.
7. Machine learning helps identify _____ activities and suspicious behavioral patterns.
8. Blockchain solutions can _____ the process of verifying identities and credentials.
9. Cloud-based solutions allow organizations to _____ the burden of security infrastructure management.
10. Cloud computing enables organizations to _____ changing business needs with flexible resources.

Writing

Task 12. Choose ONE of the following prompts and write a well-developed response of 6-8 sentences. Use at least five vocabulary words or collocations from the text.

Prompt A	Prompt B
Explain how emerging technologies are transforming risk management in modern organizations. Discuss at least two specific technologies and their practical applications.	Imagine that you are a risk management consultant advising a manufacturing company. Describe the emerging technologies you would recommend, and explain how these technologies would help mitigate risks and improve operations.

Technical Proposal Report Writing

What is a technical proposal report? In IT project management, a technical proposal report is a formal document written to persuade a supervisor or client to adopt a specific solution. For a Project Manager, this is a key "decision-making" document. It usually follows a logical structure. It describes the current situation, summarizing the problem using data or "insights." It usually proposes a solution, explains the technical fix (e.g., using cloud-based services), and summarizes the expected benefits, describing how the solution will improve the project in the future.

Task 13. The "Cloud Burst" Migration Strategy writing task.

Scenario: The year is now 2026. Your company has deployed a new AI-powered project management application. Typically, the system handles 5,000 users per day. However, a viral marketing campaign caused a massive surge in the traffic. The Sentinel AI dashboard provides the following predictive insights:

1. **System Load:** Local servers will reach 100% capacity within 24 h.
2. **Security Risk:** System instability may lead to fraudulent access attempts by unauthorized personnel.
3. **Storage:** The local database cannot accommodate new users' data.

Your Task: As the IT Project Manager, you must write a short proposal report (100-150 words) to the Chief Technology Officer (CTO). You need to explain why the company should partially or fully offload its infrastructure to a cloud-based provider to streamline its operations. In your report, you must explain the risks identified by the AI insights and suggest a way to facilitate

better performance using the cloud computing. To organize your report include the expressions “According to...”, “Based on...”, “To mitigate this risk...”, “In order to...”

Template:

To: Chief Technology Officer

Subject: Urgent Proposal for Infrastructure Migration

1. Current Situation: According to our predictive analytics, our current local servers are...
2. Proposed Solution: To mitigate the risks, I recommend that we offload...
3. Expected Benefits: This move will streamline our... and facilitate...

SPEAKING STRATEGIES 2. Discussing

Read this conversation.

Which words show who agrees or disagrees?

PM: We should shorten the testing phase to meet the deadline.

QA Lead: I'm not sure. That could increase the risk of defects.

PM: That's true, but the client is under strong time pressure.

A Giving opinions

A1 You can use these expressions to give your opinion to sound less direct:

I think (that), I'd say (that), I feel (that), in my opinion, as far as I'm concerned.

Function	Example (Project Management)
giving a direct opinion	A: Should we change the schedule? B: I think we should revise it.
giving a less direct opinion	A: Is the budget realistic? B: I'd say it's quite tight.
personal viewpoint	A: Do you support outsourcing? B: As far as I'm concerned, in-house is safer.

A2 You can use these expressions to give opinions about hypothetical situations:

I would think, I would imagine, I would have thought.

Function	Example
predicting results	I would imagine delays will affect customer trust.
expecting a situation	I would have thought the client would request changes.

A3 You can use these expressions to show your attitude:

When you think...	You can say...	PM Example
something is obvious	obviously / of course	Obviously, we need to inform stakeholders.

something is a fact	in fact / as a matter of fact	As a matter of fact, costs are rising.
something is good/bad	fortunately / unfortunately	Unfortunately, the vendor is late.
this is the main point	basically / really	Basically, we must revise the plan.
honest opinion	to be honest	To be honest, the timeline is unrealistic.
personal view	personally	Personally, I prefer agile reporting.

B Agreeing

B1 You can use these expressions to agree with someone:

(That's) right, (That's) true, Absolutely, Definitely, Exactly, I agree.

Statement	Agreement
We need better risk monitoring.	Absolutely.
The client expects weekly reports.	That's true.
Testing needs more time.	Exactly.

B2 You can invite agreement:

Do you know what I mean? / Do you see what I mean?

C Disagreeing

C1 You can give a different view using:

but, however, on the other hand, ... though.

Statement	Partial Disagreement
Outsourcing will reduce costs.	It might, but quality could drop.
We can skip the pilot phase.	That's risky, though.

C2 You can use **actually** to correct information.

Statement	Correction
The report excludes April data.	It includes April data, actually.
Testing starts next month.	It starts next week, actually.

C3 You can partly agree:

That's a good point, but... / I take your point, but...

Statement	Balanced Response
The tool is powerful.	That's a good point, but it's expensive.
The deadline is important.	I take your point, but quality matters too.

Practice

A–C 1 a Replace the words in italics with expressions from A3.

1. My main point is we must update the risk register.
2. My honest view is the deadline is too optimistic.
3. It's obvious that resources are limited.
4. It's a fact that costs are increasing.
5. Personally, I think communication needs improvement.

c Decide whether you agree or disagree and write a response.

1. We should remove the testing phase.
2. Weekly meetings waste time.
3. Outsourcing will solve the problem.
4. The client should approve all changes.
5. Budget is more important than quality.

B, C 2 a Write responses using expressions from B and C.

PM says	Other view	Your response

We should cut training costs.	Training improves performance.	
We can skip stakeholder meetings.	They help avoid conflicts.	
Deadlines are flexible.	Clients expect delivery dates.	
Automation will fix delays.	Processes are still needed.	

Student Reflection Checklist 2.

After the discussion, tick ✓ what you can do.

◆ Giving Opinions

- I gave my opinion clearly (I think..., In my opinion..., Personally...).
- I used soft language when needed (I'd say..., I would think...).

◆ Agreeing & Disagreeing

- I agreed politely (Absolutely, That's true, Exactly...).
- I disagreed politely (but..., however..., though...).
- I partly agreed and added another idea (That's a good point, but...).

◆ Interaction Skills

- I reacted to what others said, not only to my own ideas.
- I invited agreement or checked understanding (Do you see what I mean?).

◆ Professional Communication

- I used project vocabulary (risk, deadline, cost, quality, stakeholder).
- My tone was professional and respectful.

🎯 My goal for the next discussion:

- give clearer opinions
- disagree more politely
- use more PM vocabulary
- react more to others

Next time I will try to improve: _____

Vocabulary Bank – 2

<p>◆ Key Vocabulary</p> <p>Agentic AI Multi-agent orchestration Silicon workforce Physical AI Digital labor World foundation models Verifiable AI AI trust deficit Shadow AI Quantum utility Amorphous hybrid computing Edge reasoning Ethical guardrails Inference time compute Latent state Neuromorphic chips State space models Data lineage Synthetic text Traceability</p>	<p>◆ Collocations</p> <p>to provide oversight to ensure transparency to establish guardrails to mitigate risk to orchestrate workflows to process data locally to follow regulations to perform predictive analytics to demonstrate compliance to simulate environments to identify early warning signals to balance flexibility and control</p>
<p>◆ Idiomatic Expressions</p> <p>A game-changer Blurring the line Crown as Force multiplying effect Gaining traction Harsh lessons Headline-grabbing Human-in-the-loop In the wrong hands Nice-to-have Silicon workforce The fabric of daily lives</p>	<p>◆ Phrasal Verbs</p> <p>carry out take on scale up focus on set up break down follow through roll out</p>

Progress Review 2.

A. Complete each sentence with the correct collocation from the box. Use each expression once.

strategic oversight / AI-powered analytics / mandatory standard / data integrity / hybrid workforce / resource allocation / market fluctuations / ethical oversight

1. To maintain a competitive edge, our firm uses _____ to predict project bottlenecks before they occur.
2. The board of directors provides _____ to ensure all projects align with the company's long-term goals.
3. In 2026, managing a _____ requires new leadership skills to coordinate both human employees and AI agents.
4. We must ensure _____ so that the information used by our AI models is accurate and has not been tampered with.
5. The RICS global standard for AI is now a _____ that all professional project managers must follow.
6. Effective _____ is difficult when multiple high-priority projects are competing for the same technical experts.
7. Project budgets often need to be adjusted due to sudden _____ that affect the cost of raw materials.
8. We have established a dedicated committee to provide _____ regarding the use of personal data in our algorithms.

B. Choose the best option (a–c) to complete the beginning of each sentence.

1. _____ is the process of reducing the impact of a potential risk.
a) risk identification b) Risk mitigation c) Risk exploitation
2. In 2026, "Agentic AI" is different from simple automation because it _____.
a) only follows basic human commands b) requires constant manual updates c) can reason, plan, and take autonomous action

3. To address the "AI trust deficit," project managers must prioritize _____ .
 - a) transparency and auditable workflows b) hidden data processing c) faster delivery over safety

4. When a project is "Reasoning at the Edge," it means the AI _____ .
 - a) is failing to complete its tasks b) processes data locally on a user's device c) depends entirely on a remote cloud server

5. A "Silicon workforce" refers to _____ .
 - a) workers in the semiconductor industry b) human employees who work remotely c) AI agents that handle routine administrative tasks

6. The EU AI Act of 2026 requires high-risk systems to have _____ .
 - a) no human supervision b) clear documentation and traceability c) unlimited access to private data

7. Project managers in 2026 need "AI fluency," which is the ability to _____ .
 - a) write complex code in Python b) work effectively with and manage AI systems c) replace all human team members with software

MODULE 3. LEVERAGING AI FOR EFFICIENCY GAINS

3.1. AI in Project Management: Transforming Chaos into Strategic Success



Pre-reading task: If risks are not managed effectively, AI-supported projects are more likely to fail. Scan the list of possible risks:

- The project goals are unclear or keep changing.
- The budget is too small for required AI tools and infrastructure.
- There is resistance to AI from the wider organisation.
- The team is distributed across many locations and time zones.
- The project sponsor is not actively involved.
- Team members lack experience with AI systems or data analysis.
- The workload is too high due to constant system updates and data issues.
- Data quality is poor or data is not available when needed.
- AI outputs are not well understood or trusted by decision-makers.

- Legal, ethical, or security concerns slow down implementation.
- a) Add 1–2 more AI-related risks based on your experience or expectations.
 - b) Choose the three most significant risks for your type of projects.
 - c) Explain why these risks are critical and what impact they may have on delivery.

Now read the article by Manav Mittal Sr. Project Manager

Task 1. Insert the subheadings related to the paragraph:

Upskilling for the AI Era: What PMs Need to Thrive
 Navigating the Challenges: Data, Ethics, and Trust
 The Future: AI Trends Redefining Project Management
 Benefits: Efficiency, Precision, and Beyond
 The Rise of the AI Co-Pilot

In the dynamic world of project management, where deadlines, budgets, and team dynamics collide, a new co-pilot has emerged: artificial intelligence (AI). Gone are the days when project managers (PMs) relied solely on spreadsheets and gut instinct. Today, AI is revolutionising how teams plan, execute, and deliver projects—turning chaos into clarity and uncertainty into opportunity. Let’s explore how AI is reshaping project management, the challenges it brings, and why the future belongs to those who embrace this powerful partnership.

1. _____

Imagine a world where mundane tasks vanish, risks are predicted before they materialise, and teams collaborate seamlessly across time zones. This is the promise of AI in project management. By leveraging machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics, AI acts as a force multiplier for PMs, automating routine work and unlocking data-driven insights.

Key Applications:

Task Automation: AI handles repetitive tasks like scheduling, status updates, and resource allocation. Tools like ClickUp and Asana use AI to auto-assign tasks based on team workload, while chatbots like Slack’s Workflow Builder streamline communication.

Predictive Analytics: Platforms such as Forecast.app analyse historical data to predict delays, budget overruns, or resource bottlenecks, allowing PMs to course-correct proactively.

Risk Management: AI algorithms flag risks by scanning project variables (e.g., vendor delays, code vulnerabilities) and suggest mitigation strategies.

Stakeholder Communication: Tools like Grammarly Business and Otter.ai draft emails, transcribe meetings, and ensure tone consistency, saving hours per week.

2. _____

AI isn't just about speed—it's about smarter work.

Enhanced Decision-Making: AI crunches vast datasets to uncover patterns invisible to humans. For example, construction giant Bechtel uses AI to optimise site logistics, reducing delays by 15%.¹

Resource Optimisation: AI tools like SavvyPlan dynamically allocate team members based on skills, availability, and project priorities, minimising burnout.

Real-Time Insights: Dashboards powered by AI (e.g., Microsoft Project's Copilot) provide instant updates on KPIs, enabling agile responses.

Democratising Expertise: Startups and small teams can access enterprise-grade insights through AI-driven platforms like Monday.com, levelling the playing field.

A 2023 PMI report found that organisations using AI in project management see a 25% increase in on-time delivery and a 20% reduction in costs.

3. _____

While AI offers immense potential, it's not without hurdles.

Data Quality: Garbage in, garbage out. AI's effectiveness hinges on clean, relevant data. Incomplete datasets can lead to flawed predictions.

Ethical Concerns: Bias in AI algorithms (e.g., favouring certain vendors or overlooking diverse team needs) remains a risk. Transparency in AI decision-making is critical.

Human-AI Collaboration: Teams may resist AI tools perceived as "Big Brother." Successful integration requires fostering trust—positioning AI as an ally, not a replacement.

Case in Point: When IBM’s Watson was deployed to manage a global IT project, initial pushback occurred until teams saw how AI handled repetitive tasks, freeing them for creative problem-solving.

4. _____

The AI revolution is just beginning. Emerging trends include:

Generative AI: Tools like ChatGPT draft project charters, meeting minutes, and reports, cutting documentation time by 50%.

AI-Powered Talent Matching: Platforms like Gloat use AI to align project needs with internal talent, reducing hiring bottlenecks.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Augmentation: Tools like Humu analyse communication patterns to suggest conflict-resolution strategies, enhancing team cohesion.

According to Gartner, by 2025, 80% of PM tasks will be augmented by AI, shifting PM roles toward strategic leadership and innovation.

5. _____

To stay relevant, PMs must evolve:

Embrace AI Literacy: Understand AI capabilities and limitations. Certifications in AI-driven tools (e.g., Jira, Trello) add value.

Focus on Soft Skills: Strengthen leadership, empathy, and stakeholder management—areas where humans excel.

Adopt a Hybrid Mindset: Use AI for data-heavy tasks but lead with human intuition for ambiguous challenges.

Pro Tip: Start small. Pilot AI tools for specific tasks (e.g., risk analysis) before scaling [6].

Task 2. Look at the vocabulary focus (collocations, idioms, and phrasal verbs) and match the expressions to the correct meanings.

Expression	Meaning
1. keep everyone in the loop	a) to delay a task or decision until later
2. flag a risk	b) to solve a problem using a simple or temporary solution

3. stay on track	c) to inform the team about important updates or changes
4. fall behind schedule	d) to continue making progress according to the plan
5. smooth out issues	e) to identify and point out a possible problem early
6. make a data-driven decision	f) to work together effectively to reach a shared goal
7. collaborate closely	g) to not meet planned deadlines or milestones
8. push back a deadline	h) to base a choice on analysis and evidence, not opinions
9. streamline a process	i) to simplify steps to save time and reduce errors
10. put out fires	j) to deal with urgent problems instead of planned work

Task 3. Complete the sentences with the correct expressions from the box. Use each expression once.

keep everyone in the loop · flag a risk · stay on track · make a data-driven decision · collaborate closely · streamline a process · put out fires

1. With real-time dashboards, the AI system helps the project manager _____ by showing progress against milestones.
2. Predictive analytics can _____ early, so the team can act before problems escalate.
3. Automated reporting tools help _____ by instantly sharing updates with all stakeholders.
4. When developers and testers _____ using shared AI platforms, handovers become faster and clearer.
5. Instead of relying on intuition, AI enables managers to _____ based on performance metrics and forecasts.

6. Workflow automation can _____ by removing unnecessary approval steps and manual data entry.
7. Without AI support, project managers often spend most of their time trying to _____ rather than focusing on long-term strategy.

Task 4. Read the text and decide if the statements are True (T), False (F), or Not Given (NG):

1. Before AI, project managers mainly used spreadsheets and personal judgment to manage projects.
2. AI tools can automatically assign tasks based on team workload.
3. Predictive analytics can help identify possible delays before they happen.
4. AI-powered dashboards can replace the need for human decision-making in projects.
5. All organisations that use AI achieve at least a 25% increase in on-time delivery.
6. AI systems always make unbiased decisions when choosing vendors or team members.
7. Some team members may initially resist AI tools because they do not trust them.
8. IBM's Watson immediately improved team satisfaction when it was introduced.
9. Generative AI can help with writing project documents and reports.
10. The text says that AI tools are cheaper than traditional project management software.

Task 5. Read the article again and answer these questions.

1. According to the introduction, how has AI changed the way project managers plan and deliver projects compared to the past?
2. What routine project management tasks can AI automate, and how does this help project managers and teams?
3. How does predictive analytics support proactive decision-making in projects? Give one example from the text.
4. What benefits does AI bring to small teams and startups compared to large organisations?
5. Why is data quality important for AI systems in project management, and what can happen if the data is poor?

6. What problems can appear when teams first start using AI tools, and how can these problems be reduced?
7. How will the role of project managers change in the future, and what new skills will be more important for them?

Listening.

Task 6. Watch the short talk about AI in project management (5.30' - 8.25'). Complete the table with one key function of AI in each area.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52LvBimNG_w

Area	What AI helps to do
Project Planning & Scheduling	_____
Resource Management	_____
Risk Management	_____
Decision-making	_____
Team Collaboration & Communication	_____
Task Automation	_____
Predictive Analytics & Forecasting	_____

Writing

Task 7. Professional Email / Project Note (120–150 words)

Your company plans to introduce AI tools into project management next quarter. Your project sponsor asked for a short written recommendation. Write a short professional note answering:

1. Which TWO areas from the listening should be prioritised first?
2. What specific problem will AI help to solve in each area?
3. Why is human judgement still needed in these areas?

Use at least 3 expressions from the listening, for example:

- draft a project plan
- intelligent resource allocation
- mitigation plans
- data-driven decisions
- routine administrative tasks
- early warnings of delays

3.2. Smarter, Faster, Better: The role of AI in transforming project management

Reading.

Read the text and answer the questions that follow:

By Kousheyee Ghosh – GDS Consulting Transformation Delivery Leader, EY Global Delivery Services

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fundamentally altering project management across industries. Forward-thinking companies are gaining a competitive edge as they integrate AI into various aspects of their project management processes.

In project management, manual activities like project planning and static reporting are now being automated using AI. Smart planning, proactive risk identification, real-time reporting, and intelligent resource management are driving efficiency, precision, and innovation across industries.

AI has now become essential to make project management more agile and resilient. The reason? Teams are unaware when a disruption may happen and how swiftly trends in industry may change. By quickly adapting to changes, the AI shift is improving operational efficiency and the quality of customer service and support.

According to the Project Management Institute (PMI), organizations that are fully leveraging AI are 30% more likely to deliver on time and 23% more likely to exceed ROI goals. Today, AI is not just an enhancement; it is assisting project managers in driving efficiency and innovation by automating complex processes, providing predictive insights, and enabling real-time collaboration. Let us discuss in some detail how AI is transforming the field of project management and will explore its several use cases.

Balancing automation with expertise

A study by Harvard Business Review found that organizations that successfully integrate AI with human expertise achieve higher performance metrics compared with those that rely exclusively on one or the other.

While the capabilities of AI are transformative, organizations must recognize the importance of human knowledge in providing exceptional client outcomes. AI tools are designed to complement, not replace, the judgment and expertise of subject matter professionals.

Even though an AI system can process data or automate documentation, interpreting the results or tailoring the insights to a specific client scenario requires deep industry knowledge. Therefore, human-AI partnership is key to ensure that automation does not compromise the personalized and high-quality service that clients expect [7].

Abridged from <https://www.expresscomputer.in/guest-blogs/smarter-faster-better-the-role-of-ai-in-transforming-project-management/129201/>

1. What manual project management activities are mentioned as being automated by AI in the text?
2. Why does the text say AI helps make project management more agile and resilient?
3. How could real-time reporting and predictive insights improve decision-making in an IT project you are familiar with?
4. In what way could AI support customer service quality in project delivery, according to the text?

5. How does the text contrast the roles of AI tools and human expertise in project management?
6. Why might relying only on AI or only on human judgment reduce project performance, based on the studies mentioned?
7. Do you agree that AI should complement rather than replace project managers? Why or why not? Use ideas from the text to support your opinion.

- **Discussion points.**

1. How does an ancient proverb “A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor” relate to PM manager’s agility in AI-rich environment
2. Use the Vocabulary Bank 3 to comment on the Meme below:



Me at the start of the project



Me after the first scope change

**A smooth sea never
made a skilled sailor**

SPEAKING STRATEGIES 3. Persuading in Project Communication

A. Making persuasive suggestions

A1. You can use these expressions to suggest actions and influence decisions:

I suggest (that)..., I recommend (that)..., We should..., It would be better to..., Why don't we...

Function	Example (Project Management)
making a direct recommendation	<i>A: How can we reduce risks? B: I recommend adding a pilot phase.</i>
softening a suggestion	<i>A: The schedule is tight. B: It would be better to extend testing by one week.</i>
inviting agreement	<i>A: Costs are rising. B: Why don't we renegotiate with the vendor?</i>

B. Giving reasons and benefits

B1. You can support your proposal by explaining benefits and outcomes: because..., this will..., so that..., which means...

Function	Example
explaining a reason	<i>We should outsource because it will reduce development time.</i>
showing benefit	<i>This will improve product quality.</i>
showing consequence	<i>Which means fewer support tickets after launch.</i>

B2. You can strengthen your argument using data and experience: According to..., Based on previous projects..., In similar cases...

Strategy	Example
referring to data	<i>According to last year's report, delays cost us 15% more.</i>
referring to experience	<i>In similar projects, automation reduced errors significantly.</i>

C. Handling objections

C1. You can acknowledge concerns before restating your proposal:

I understand..., That's true, but..., I see your point, however...

Objection	Response
It's too expensive.	<i>I understand, but it will reduce long-term costs.</i>
We don't have enough time.	<i>That's true, but delaying now may save time later.</i>

C2. You can offer compromise:

We could..., What if we..., As a first step...

Situation	Compromise
Full rollout is risky.	<i>What if we start with one pilot team?</i>
Budget is limited.	<i>We could implement this in phases.</i>

Practice

A.–C 1. a Rewrite the sentences using persuasive language from A and B.

1. We must improve communication. (suggest)
2. Testing is slow. (recommend)
3. Costs are high. (give a reason and benefit)
4. The client is unhappy. (propose a solution)
5. Delivery is late. (use data or experience)

C. Decide how to respond to objections and write a persuasive reply.

1. This change will increase workload.
2. The tool is too complex.
3. We can't change the contract now.
4. Training will take too much time.
5. Automation is risky.

B, C 2. a Write persuasive responses using the ideas given.

Manager says	Your idea	Your persuasive response
We should keep the current process.	New tool saves time.	
We can't afford consultants.	They reduce project risk.	
Let's delay training.	Training prevents errors.	
We should skip the pilot.	Pilot reduces uncertainty.	

Student Reflection Checklist 3

After the speaking task, tick ✓ what you can do.

◆ Making Suggestions

I suggested actions clearly (I suggest..., I recommend..., We should...).

I sounded polite, not too direct.

◆ Giving Reasons & Benefits

I explained why my idea is good (because...).

I explained what will improve if we follow my idea.

◆ Handling Objections

I acknowledged other opinions (I understand..., That's true, but...).

I offered a compromise or alternative when needed.

◆ Professional Communication

I used project vocabulary (risk, cost, deadline, quality, scope).

My tone was professional and respectful.

◆ My goal for next time:

give stronger reasons

use more persuasive phrases

respond better to objections

Next time I will focus on: _____

Vocabulary Bank – 3.

<p>◆ Key vocabulary</p> <p>predictive analytics real-time data automated reporting risk forecasting resource planning performance tracking data-driven decisions workload distribution flag a risk early fall behind schedule make a data-driven decision keep stakeholders informed rely too heavily on automation lack of transparency in AI outputs</p>	<p>◆ Collocations</p> <p>predict potential risks improve project visibility reduce manual work make faster decisions allocate resources efficiently monitor team performance identify bottlenecks support decision-making flag a risk collaborate closely streamline a process</p>
<p>◆ Idiomatic Expressions</p> <p>stay on track keep everyone in the loop put out fires to be a game changer to get ahead of problems to keep things running smoothly to be ahead of the curve</p>	<p>◆ Phrasal Verbs</p> <p>look into (data / issues) speed up (processes) roll out (new tools) cut down on (errors / time) step in (when problems appear)</p>

Progress Review 3

A. Complete each sentence with the correct collocation from the box. Use each expression once.

predict potential risks / improve project visibility / reduce manual work /
make faster decisions / allocate resources efficiently /
monitor team performance / identify bottlenecks / support decision-making

1. AI-generated dashboards _____ by showing real-time progress on scope, budget, and timelines across all workstreams.
2. With historical data and forecasting models, AI can _____ long before they threaten delivery.
3. Automated reporting and data entry help _____, so PMs can focus on stakeholder management and strategy.
4. Resource-planning tools use AI to _____ across projects, avoiding both overload and under-utilisation.
5. Real-time analytics on task completion and quality metrics enable managers to _____ and coach people proactively.
6. By analysing cycle times and handover delays, AI can _____ in the workflow and suggest improvements.
7. When KPIs are updated continuously, leadership can _____ instead of waiting for monthly reports.
8. AI insights _____ by highlighting trends and scenarios that humans might miss in complex portfolios

B. Choose the best option (a–c) to complete the beginning of each sentence so it matches the ideas from this unit.

1. AI has changed how project managers plan and deliver projects because
 - a. it guarantees that every project is delivered on time and under budget.
 - b. it automates routine tasks and provides data-driven insights instead of relying only on spreadsheets and gut instinct.
 - c. it replaces the need for project managers in most organisations.

2. One way AI supports routine project management work is that
 - a. tools can schedule tasks, assign resources, and generate status reports automatically.
 - b. teams no longer need to monitor progress or share any updates.
 - c. sponsors can approve budgets without any data.
3. Predictive analytics helps proactive decision-making because
 - a. it hides early warnings so teams can focus on current tasks.
 - b. it predicts potential delays, budget overruns, or bottlenecks before they happen.
 - c. it only shows historical data without any forecasts.
4. Data quality is critical for AI systems in project management because
 - a. poor or incomplete data can lead to biased or unreliable recommendations.
 - b. AI can always correct bad data automatically.
 - c. AI decisions are never influenced by the input data.
5. When teams first start using AI tools, one common challenge is that
 - a. everyone immediately trusts AI and stops questioning its suggestions.
 - b. some people resist AI because they worry about monitoring or job security.
 - c. no training is needed for successful adoption.
6. According to the texts, the future role of project managers will
 - a. focus more on strategic leadership, soft skills, and working with AI as a partner.
 - b. disappear completely as AI takes over all project tasks.
 - c. stay exactly the same as before AI.
7. AI should complement rather than replace human expertise because
 - a. only AI can understand client context and industry specifics.
 - b. human judgment is needed to interpret AI outputs and adapt them to complex stakeholder needs.
 - c. data and automation are not useful for projects.

MODULE 4. MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION IN IN ASIAN BUSINESS AND PROJECT CULTURES

Introduction: Building relationships with Asians

Read the text and answer the questions:

We aim to provide a framework to help both Westerners and Asians bridge the East-West culture gap that frustrates entrepreneurs and managers on both sides of the divide. Looking through Western eyes, we highlight three keys to understanding the way Asians conduct business – especially across the bargaining table:

- The importance of Relationships.
- The importance of Hierarchies.
- The use of Time.

Let's start by looking at the major role played by relationships and interpersonal connections throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Relationships

Whether we are marketing, selling, sourcing, or negotiating a joint venture, the fundamental differences between relationship-focused and deal-focused business behavior impact our business success throughout the global marketplace. This is especially true for Asia. Most of the world's business cultures are in fact relationship-oriented.

Most Asians, Africans, Latin Americans and people from the Mediterranean region prefer to get things done by working with people with whom they have solid connections.

Being relationship-focused, Asians prefer to deal only with family, friends, and persons or groups well known to them – people who can be trusted. They are uncomfortable talking business with strangers, especially strangers who also happen to be foreigners. Because of this key cultural value, Asian firms typically want to know their prospective business partners well before thinking about doing business with them.

In contrast, Westerners – especially those in northern Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand – tend to be less wary of talking business with people they don't know. They are more deal-oriented.

The following chart is our 'Who's Who' of relationship focused and deal-focused business cultures.

Deal-focused business behavior:

- Anglo cultures: UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand
- Northern Europe

Moderately deal-focused:

- Latin Europe, Central and Eastern Europe
- Chile, southern Brazil, northern Mexico
- Hong Kong, Singapore
- South Africa

Relationship-focused business behavior:

- Arab World, the Mediterranean region, most of Africa
- Most of Latin America
- Most of Asia [8]

1. What are three keys to understanding the way Asians conduct business?
2. Are there any fundamental differences between relationship-focused and deal-focused business behavior?
3. What countries belong to the group of relationship-focused cultures?
4. What countries belong to the group of deal-focused cultures?
5. What countries belong to the group of moderately deal-focused cultures?



4.1. Deal first or relationship first?

Reading:

In deal-focused markets you can usually get down to business after just a few minutes of small talk. And you can learn most of what you need to know about your potential DF (deal-focused) counterpart in a matter of days, rather than the weeks or months it may take in strongly RF (relationship-focused) cultures such as China and Saudi Arabia.

Deal-focused buyers and sellers socialize over drinks, meals and on the golf course. But they also build rapport right at the bargaining table in the course of hammering out an agreement.

Of course, DF exporters and importers will want to learn a lot more about each other before they are ready to sign a distribution agreement. But that can come later. Meanwhile the two sides are sizing each other up while they discuss price, payment terms, specifications, quality, quantity, delivery dates, and all the other issues involved in an international distribution agreement. They talk business right from the start and get to know each other as discussions proceed.

Getting to Know Each Other

It takes time, patience, and sometimes a cast-iron liver to develop a strong relationship in some RF markets such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Getting inebriated together seems to speed up the rapport-building process in East Asia, but normally only for men.

While there are increasing exceptions these days, women usually don't fit in at these quasi-adolescent male bonding rituals.

The best way to get to know your local counterpart varies from one RF culture to another. In much of the Arab world, steaming platters of rice and lamb take the place of booze. Brazilian and Mexican executives love to talk about their art, music, literature and films. And then there is golf. In many parts of the world today a five iron closes the culture gap faster than a fifth of Scotch.

Yes, building trust and rapport with your customer is important everywhere in the world, not only in relationship-oriented markets.

The big difference is that with Arabs, Africans, Latin Americans and most Asians, you have to develop that climate of trust before you start talking business. In RF markets, first you make a friend, then you make a deal.

You need to develop a personal relationship

In RF markets the relationship you build with your counterpart will have a strong personal component in addition to the company-to-company aspect. Your

customer or partner will want to know that you personally, as well as your company, are committed to the success of the venture.

Because of this personal element it is important that continuity is maintained as far as possible throughout the relationship. So if you are promoted or transferred to another assignment, take care to personally introduce your replacement.

Bureaucracy in RF Markets

Business negotiations usually take longer in RF than in DF cultures, for two reasons. First, it often takes more time to arrange an indirect approach. And then comes the lengthy process of building trust and developing a personal relationship.

When negotiating with government officials and public sector companies in relationship-focused markets, a third factor – bureaucratic inertia – often comes into play. Of course, officials everywhere tend to be cautious. They seem to find it safer to postpone a decision or to deny your request rather than to give their approval. Moreover, red tape often slows the process of getting things done. But in RF cultures suspicion of strangers, especially foreign strangers, often make officials even more hesitant to move things along. That's why it took Volkswagen over nine years to negotiate the opening of an automobile factory in Shanghai with the government of China. Visitors should load their briefcases with an extra-large supply of patience when preparing to do business with bureaucrats in many RF markets [8].

Task 1. Match each collocation (1–10) with its correct meaning (A–J).

Collocations	Meanings
1. get down to business	A. to delay making a final choice or commitment
2. build rapport	B. to begin discussing the main work or task
3. hammer out an agreement	C. to slowly and carefully create a cooperative atmosphere
4. size each other up	D. to keep the same people involved over time
5. develop a climate of trust	E. to negotiate details until a deal is reached
6. maintain continuity	F. to help a process progress faster
7. take an indirect approach	G. to evaluate the other party's intentions or reliability

8. postpone a decision	H. to avoid direct confrontation and use a gradual strategy
9. move things along	I. to establish friendly and cooperative relations
10. work out an agreement	J. to reach a final arrangement after long negotiations

Task 2. Complete each sentence using the most suitable word or phrase from the box. Use each item once only.

rapport / specifications / continuity / bureaucracy / personal component / indirect approach / red tape / bargain / counterparts / trust

1. In RF markets, building _____ is essential before any serious negotiations can begin.
2. Project partners often expect a strong _____, not only formal company cooperation.
3. Government projects may be delayed due to heavy _____ and slow approval systems.
4. Managers may choose an _____ to avoid putting pressure on the other party too early.
5. Detailed technical _____ are often discussed later in RF cultures.
6. Maintaining _____ in project leadership helps preserve long-term relationships.
7. Excessive _____ can slow even routine project decisions.
8. In DF markets, teams may _____ directly at the negotiation table.
9. Foreign project managers must invest time in getting to know their local _____.
10. Without mutual _____, joint ventures in RF cultures rarely succeed.

Task 3. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. In relationship-focused markets, you can usually get down to business after just a few minutes of small talk.
2. Brazilian and Mexican executives do not love to talk about their art, music, literature and films.
3. It takes time, patience, and sometimes a cast-iron liver to develop a strong

relationship in some RF markets such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

4. In RF cultures suspicion of strangers, especially foreign strangers, often make officials even more hesitant to move things along.
5. Building trust and rapport with your customer is important everywhere in the world, not only in relationship-oriented markets.

Task 4. Answer the following questions.

1. What countries belong to the group of RF (relationship-focused) cultures?
2. What is the best way to get to know your local counterpart from RF cultures?
3. Are there any common features between DF and RF markets?
4. Why do business negotiations take longer in RF than in DF cultures?
5. What are the examples of negotiations between RF and DF counterparts?

Listening.

Pre-listening: Predicting the content.

Task 5. Look at the statements below. Decide whether you think they are True (T) or False (F). Do not check answers yet – just make your best guess.

1. In some cultures, teamwork is more important than individual success.
2. Being exactly on time is equally important in all countries.
3. Small talk before business is considered unprofessional everywhere.
4. Work ethic is the same across most developed countries.
5. In some cultures, employees expect managers to make all decisions.
6. Bribery is illegal and unacceptable in every country.

After watching, check if your predictions were correct.

Task 6. Watch the video and choose the best summary of the speaker's main message. <https://youtu.be/ThU4Mq7Kpyw?si=RtqG7ghO90LNFEx8>

- A. Cultural differences are disappearing because of globalization.
- B. Business practices are mostly the same in developed countries.
- C. Cultural values strongly influence communication, teamwork, time, and management styles.
- D. Legal systems are the biggest problem in international business.

Task 7. Watch the video again and complete the table with one or two words or a short phrase.

Topic	Culture / Country	What is valued or expected
Teamwork	Japan / China	_____
Individual success	France	_____
Personal space	Americans	_____
Meeting style	Hispanics	_____
Time orientation	Chinese	_____
Punctuality	USA / Switzerland	_____
Work ethic	Japanese	_____

Writing

Task 8. During a project meeting, you started discussing tasks immediately. Later you learned that your partners expected some small talk first and felt the meeting was too formal and cold.

Write a short reflection (100–130 words) answering these questions:

What went wrong in the situation?

Which cultural difference caused the problem?

What would you do differently next time as a project manager?

Focus on: cause–effect, awareness of cultural norms, practical solutions.

Useful language:

I realized that...

In their culture, it is important to...

This led to misunderstanding because...

Next time, I would...

4.2. Making initial contact

Reading:



Because Asians don't normally like to deal with strangers, smart marketers make the first approach to potential buyers or partners indirectly. One good way is to meet Asian counterparts at international trade shows. That's where buyers look for new suppliers, exporters seek importers, and investors search for partners. Business behavior at international shows and exhibitions tends to be somewhat deal-focused because those who attend are usually there for the express purpose of making new contacts.

Another good way is to join an official trade mission. All over the world today governments and trade associations organize guided visits of business people in order to open new markets. The trade-mission organizer makes appointments with interested parties and provides formal introductions to them. Introductions break the ice and smooth the way to a business relationship.

You can also arrange to be introduced by a third party, an intermediary. The ideal introducer in Asia is a high-status person or organization known to both parties. So if you happen to be good friends with a respected retired statesman who just happens to be well acquainted with one of your prospects, that's

wonderful. Otherwise, a number of organizations are able to act as respected intermediaries.

For example, your country's trade representatives in the target market are usually able to provide introductions. Embassy and consular officials tend to be accorded high status in Asian cultures, and of course it's part of their job to promote your country's exports. Chambers of commerce, banks, trade associations, freight forwarders, ocean and airfreight carriers, international law and accounting firms are also potential introducers.

And don't forget that poker buddy of yours who works for a company with offices in Tokyo, Shanghai, and Mumbai. Try letting him win a big pot – maybe his firm will arrange a key introduction for you!

Recognizing the importance of third-party introductions in their home market, the Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO) is willing to provide that service to reputable foreign companies. In fact, proper introductions are so critical that specialized consulting firms exist whose main function is to introduce gaijin [foreigners] to Japanese companies. Of course, using consultants is likely to cost you more than other ways of obtaining an introduction [8].

Task 9. Complete each sentence with the most suitable word or phrase from the box. Use each item once only.

third party / trade mission / break the ice / intermediary / deal-focused / high-status / provide introductions / prospects
--

1. At international trade shows, business behaviour is often quite _____ because participants come to find partners and suppliers.
2. An _____ can help two companies connect when direct contact would be culturally inappropriate.
3. Official _____ are organised by governments to help companies enter new foreign markets.
4. Formal meetings arranged by embassies can help _____ and make future negotiations easier.
5. In many Asian cultures, it is important that the introducer is a _____ person respected by both sides.
6. Chambers of commerce and trade associations often _____ to foreign companies.

7. Being introduced by a trusted _____ increases credibility and trust.
8. Companies usually research potential _____ before requesting an introduction.

Task 10. Complete each phrase by choosing the most suitable noun from the box. Then use **two of the phrases** in your own sentences related to project or business development.

contacts / markets / partnerships / exports / the way /

introductions / opportunities / relationships

1. open _____
2. make _____
3. arrange _____
4. seek _____
5. smooth _____
6. promote _____
7. build _____
8. enter _____

Task 11. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. The trade-mission organizer usually does not make appointments with interested parties.
2. Chambers of commerce, banks, trade associations, freight forwarders, ocean and airfreight carriers, international law and accounting firms can be potential introducers.
3. One good way to make an initial contact is to meet Asian counterparts at international trade shows.
4. Business behavior at international shows and exhibitions tends to be somewhat relationship-focused.
5. You can contact with an Asian partner through introduction by a third party, an intermediary.

Task 12. Answer the following questions.

1. Why Asians don't normally like to deal with strangers?
2. What are the ways to meet Asian counterparts?
3. How to arrange to be introduced by a third party, an intermediary?

4. In what country third-party introductions are extremely important?
5. What is big pot for Asian company?

Writing.

Task 13. Draw a Networking Map that shows how you can reach an Asian business partner indirectly.

Start point: You (Foreign Businessperson)

End point: Asian Business Partner

Your map must include at least four of the following:

- Trade show
- Trade mission
- Embassy or Consulate
- Chamber of Commerce
- Bank or trade association
- Personal contact (friend, colleague, “poker buddy”)
- Consulting firm (e.g., JETRO-style organization)

Written explanation (80 words):

1. Which path did you choose and why?
2. Which intermediary has the highest status in your map?
3. Why is this approach better than making direct contact?

Task 14. Read the short case below and complete the tasks.

Title: “Rebuilding a Failed Market Entry”

Case: A European software company emailed several Japanese firms directly to propose a partnership. After two weeks, they received no replies. The company concluded that Japanese firms were “not interested” and decided to withdraw from the market.

Step 1. identify the main cultural mistake:

Step 2. Rewrite the company’s strategy using at least three indirect contact methods mentioned in the text:

Method 1: _____

Method 2: _____

Method 3: _____

Step 3. Choose the best intermediary for this case and justify your choice (50-60 words):

Step 4. Write a short recommendation (80–100 words) beginning with:

“To improve their chances of success in the Japanese market, the company should...”

Supplementary reading

4.3. Getting down to business

Reading:

How things proceed at the first meeting is also influenced by culture. While transaction-oriented people get down to business quickly, relationship-focused people like to take their time getting to know each other first. Asians say, ‘First you make a friend. Then you make a deal.’

Why is this difference in meeting behavior so important for U.S. companies, for example? A recruitment ad which keeps appearing every few months in the Wall Street Journal provides a clue. It is an ad seeking ‘one-call closers,’ people who are able to sell a big-ticket intangible to prospects at the first meeting. Such an ad can only work in America, the world’s most deal-focused culture.

Selling in Asia requires exactly the opposite approach. Once you’re introduced you can expect a series of meetings devoted to relationship building. Sure, you’ll also talk business during these meetings – though in Japan often not at the initial get-together. But you certainly should not expect to ‘close,’ to ‘ask for the sale’ the first time you meet!

The vice-president of marketing for one of America’s largest breweries was not briefed about this cultural trait before he flew to Tokyo.

At his first meeting with Japan’s largest importer-distributor of beverages, our friend expected to start talking business within five minutes or so, as he would in Milwaukee. After 20 minutes of small talk he began to fidget and look

at his watch. After half an hour the U. S. executive cleared his throat and interrupted his counterparts to say,

‘Gentlemen, if you don’t mind, can we get down to business now? I have a busy day ahead of me ...’

There was an awkward silence, and then the boss of the Japanese company stood up. ‘Ah, Smith-san, you’ve had a very tiring trip from the U. S. We’ll take you back to your hotel for a rest.’

‘Well thanks,’ replied the marketing VP. ‘But when do we get together to discuss the distribution agreement?’

‘We’ll call you,’ came the smiling reply. But that call never came, and the American had to return empty handed. This U. S. brewery kept trying for over seven years without success to interest a Japanese distributor in importing their well-known brand. They finally cracked the market when they found a large retailer willing to import directly, thus bypassing the importers. The brewery’s management learned from the retailer why the importers were reluctant to do business with them. ‘Lots of Japanese are uncomfortable talking business with people who do not take time to build rapport. Of course, we Japanese know this. It’s only gaijin who have that problem.’

It takes time, patience and (sometimes a cast-iron liver) to develop strong relationships in East Asian markets such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Getting drunk together seems to speed up the rapport-building process – but normally only for men. While there are increasing exceptions these days, women as a rule don’t fit in at these male-bonding drinking rituals.

Of course, building trust and rapport with your customer is important everywhere in the world, not only in relationship-oriented markets. The big difference is that with most Asians you have to develop that climate of trust before you start talking business. It also means that face-to-face contact is important. Even electronic communications has not reduced this need. Asians are less comfortable discussing important matters in writing, over the phone or via videoconferencing. They expect to see their suppliers and partners in person more often than is necessary in most Western markets.

In Asia, building rapport should always be the first step. This often causes problems for deal-oriented business people who rely heavily on written agreements to prevent misunderstandings and solve problems.

Americans in particular tend to take a legalistic, contract-based approach when disagreements and disputes arise. Many U. S. negotiators bring a lengthy draft contract and a lawyer to the bargaining table with them and proceed to

discuss the proposed agreement clause by clause, consulting their legal adviser every time a question arises. In most of Asia, however, a better approach is to keep the lawyers more in the background until the later stages of the discussions, conferring with them during breaks.

Of course, good legal advice is as important in Asia as anywhere else. The difference lies in the role of lawyers; how they should contribute to the negotiating process [8].

Task 15. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. While transaction-oriented people get down to business quickly, relationship-focused people like to take their time getting to know each other first.
2. In Asia, once you're introduced you can expect one meeting devoted to talking business.
3. Getting drunk together seems to speed up the rapport-building process – and these days for women too.
4. With most Asians you have to develop climate of trust before you start talking business.
5. In most of Asia as well as in America, however, a better approach is to keep the lawyers more in the background until the later stages of the discussions, conferring with them during breaks.
6. In Asia lawyers do not contribute much to the negotiating process.

Task 16. Answer the following questions.

1. Who are 'one-call closers'?
2. What do you need to build relationship in Asian business environment?
3. Is building trust and rapport with your customer important everywhere in the world?
4. Do electronic communications ease building relationship with the Asians?
5. How do Americans and Asians behave when disputes arise?

4.4. Direct vs indirect language

Deal-oriented Western business people tend to value direct, frank, straightforward language, whereas their Asian counterparts more often favor an indirect, subtle, roundabout style. In our experience, this communication gap is

one of the greatest causes of misunderstandings between Asian and Western business people, because the two sides expect different things from the communication process.

When communicating with others, the top priority for task-focused business people is to be clearly understood. Most of the time they say what they mean and mean what they say. German and Dutch negotiators, for example, are well known for their very frank, blunt language.

On the other hand, Asian negotiators usually assign the highest priority to maintaining harmony and promoting smooth interpersonal relations. Because preserving harmony within the group is so important, Asians carefully watch what they say to avoid embarrassing or offending others.

East and Southeast Asian negotiators seem to treat 'no' as a four letter word. To avoid insulting you they may murmur, 'That will be difficult' or 'We will have to give that further study.' Popular variations are 'Maybe' and 'That may be inconvenient.' They often smile and change the subject or simply say nothing at all. Silence during a meeting with East Asian negotiators often means no.

Richard Butler, the former chief UN arms inspector, was quoted in the New York Times of March 28, 1999 about his experiences as his country's ambassador to Thailand. 'I learned that when you want to make your main point, a point about which you may even be very angry, the Thai way is actually to go as quiet as possible. Really lower your voice. It's the opposite of what we in the West are taught ... And it works.'

Over the years we have noticed a similar paraverbal communication tactic in Japan. When the senior Japanese negotiator wishes to emphasize a very important point, he may lower his voice almost to a whisper. That can confuse European and American as well as Arab negotiators, who are more likely to raise their voice in the same situation [8].

Task 17. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. Asian business people tend to value direct, frank, straightforward language, whereas their deal-oriented Western counterparts more often favor an indirect, subtle, roundabout style.
2. When communicating with others, the top priority for task-focused business people is to be clearly understood.
3. German and Dutch negotiators, for example, are well known for their very subtle language.

4. Asian negotiators usually assign the highest priority to their clear expression and understanding of counterparts.
5. Asians often smile and change the subject or simply say nothing at all.
6. It is no use to lower your voice with Asian negotiators.

Task 18. Answer the following questions.

1. What style of language Western people prefer?
2. What is the greatest cause of misunderstandings between Asian and Western business people?
3. What is the highest priority for Asian negotiators?
4. How do Asians say 'no'?
5. What does Richard Butler, the former chief UN arms inspector, speak about his experiences in Thailand?

4.5. 'Inscrutable oriental'?

Reading:

Many Western negotiators find Asian indirectness and paraverbal behavior confusing. They say East and Southeast Asians are 'hard to read,' that they tend to hide their emotions – especially negative emotions.

In Asia showing impatience, irritation, frustration, or anger disrupts harmony. It is rude and offensive. So, people often mask negative emotion by remaining expressionless or by smiling. Thais, for example, seem to smile all the time. They smile when they are happy, they smile when they are amused, they smile when they are nervous. They may even smile when they are absolutely furious. Thai people smile that way because to openly display anger would cause everyone concerned to lose face. So what some Westerners perceive as 'inscrutability' really reflects the Asian concern with maintaining harmony and not offending people.

'Face' While Westerners associate the concept of 'face' primarily with East Asian and Southeast Asian societies, it is in fact a cultural universal. It's what Anglo-Saxons, for example, call self-respect. True, Asians do seem especially sensitive to face issues, perhaps because relationship-focused cultures are so group-oriented. More than with most Westerners, Asian self-image and self-respect depend very much on how they are viewed by other people.

That's why business visitors to the Pacific Rim need to be especially conscious of how their verbal and nonverbal messages may be interpreted.

This case drawn from our negotiating experience in Asia may serve as a useful reminder.

Case: 'Negotiating in Shanghai.'

A 32 year-old sales engineer we'll call Bob Andretti was in Shanghai on his first visit to the PRC. He was there to negotiate a joint-venture (JV) agreement with a public-sector company. On the fourth day of meetings the two sides were discussing the factory equipment worth about US\$ 7.5 million that Bob's company was to supply the JV. At one point the American could see that the Chinese side apparently did not understand the shipping term 'Free on Board' (F. O. B.), thereby understating the value of the U. S. firm's contribution to the project.

To clear up the misinterpretation Bob turned to the Chinese company's 55 year-old senior engineer. 'Mr. Li, I guess you don't understand what we mean by F. O. B. Let me explain it to you briefly ...' Having smoothly corrected his counterpart's mistake, Bob expected the meeting to get back on track. But to his surprise, the Chinese negotiators suddenly seemed to lose interest in the proceedings and adjourned the meeting without setting a date for the next session.

Bewildered, Bob called his home office that evening to report that after a very promising beginning, negotiations were suddenly at an impasse.

Participants in our negotiating seminars are asked two questions:

A. 'If you were to explain to Bob Andretti what happened to damage the atmosphere of the meeting, which explanation would you choose?

1. The Chinese were unhappy because under Bob's interpretation of the delivery terms they would have to pay several hundred dollars more than originally anticipated.

2. Bob was being much too formal. After three or four days of meetings it was high time for him to address the Chinese senior engineer by his first name.

3. In correcting the leader of the Chinese team in an open meeting Bob had caused him to lose face.

4. Bob's interpretation of 'F. O. B.' was in fact incorrect, and while too polite to argue, the Chinese were justifiably upset with Bob.

There is no information given in the case to support number 1 or 4. Seminar attendees usually agree that the best explanation is number 3: the young U. S.

negotiator had unintentionally insulted his senior counterpart by correcting him in front of others.

B. ‘How can visiting negotiators avoid this kind of negative outcome?’ To avoid causing loss of face, Bob should have called for a break, taken Mr. Li aside and quietly said something like, ‘I am sorry that clause is so poorly written. What we meant is ...’ By speaking that one and taking the blame on himself, Bob could have cleared up the misunderstanding without causing his high-status Asian counterpart to lose face.

Another real-world case of a cross-cultural misunderstanding involving face comes from a participant in one of our recent University of Wisconsin Executive Education workshops.

Case: ‘Managing Asian Distributors: Thailand’ As your firm’s new export manager, you face a big problem in your largest Pacific Rim market: Thailand. Your Thai distributor is doing a very good job of moving ‘Thunder Bucket’ whirlpool baths in a tough market. Even now, despite the recent sharp devaluation of the baht, Chiang Mai Imports remains your best-performing Asian distributor.

The problem is a complete breakdown in communication. It all started a week before you took over exports, during a routine phone conversation. Frank Blunt, technical support specialist for the Thunder Bucket bath line, called the boss of Chiang Mai Imports, Aya Pornchai – daughter of CMI’s late founder.

Khun Aya had faxed an urgent question that day concerning installation, and Frank phoned her back right around noon. That was quick response, but Aya seemed a little slow on the uptake – maybe because it was midnight in Bangkok. In view of the urgency Frank got right to the point, telling Aya that her question was answered quite clearly on page 31 of the Installation Manual.

After a pause, the managing director of CMI replied slowly, ‘Well, I’m afraid that particular paragraph is not clear to us over here. That’s why I faxed you for a clarification.’

By that time it had already been a very long day. Frank was half an hour late for his lunch date with the new secretary in Logistics. Exasperated, Blunt replied: ‘Hey, I rewrote that whole section last month myself. Wanted to make sure customers know how to connect the binary pump with the analog escutcheon. Why don’t you try reading the manual once!’

This time there was a longer pause followed by some one-syllable words Frank took to be Thai, and then came a busy signal. Assuming it was just

another problem with the Bangkok phone system, Frank redialed the number, but nobody picked up.

Since that phone call, Khun Aya has absolutely refused to talk with Frank Blunt – the guy with all the answers. Instead she pesters you with questions that you have to refer to Frank. You’ve had enough experience over the years doing business with Asians to know that if your relationship with CMI’s boss were stronger, you’d be able to smooth things over somehow. But unfortunately, you’re new to the job; you’ve only spoken with Khun Aya over the phone. What do you do now?

In small-group discussions, seminar participants with business experience in Asia usually conclude correctly that the new export manager should get on a plane at the first opportunity to meet with Khun Aya. A few days of face-to-face relationship building plus a good Thai translation of the manual will smooth things over. Oh yes, and how about some intercultural communication training for Frank Blunt?

As these cases demonstrate, variations in verbal and nonverbal behavior do indeed cause culture clashes. But a skilled interpreter can smooth over potential problems. That's what is going on when an interpreter takes several minutes to render in Japanese or Chinese what a Western visitor just said in a couple of short sentences. In Asia, part of the translator's task is to cloak overly-direct statements with the proper amount of polite, diplomatic circumlocution.

The Meaning of ‘Sincerity’

As a final example of the differences in communication styles, let’s look at contrasting meanings of the word ‘sincerity.’ To English speakers from deal-focused parts of the world, sincerity connotes honesty and frankness. A sincere friend for instance is one who tells you the truth even when that truth happens to be unpleasant.

In contrast, for Asian negotiators a ‘sincere’ friend is someone who is willing to be helpful. For example, to agree to a better price, to accept a late delivery, to make a generous compromise on a claim. A Western negotiator who truthfully reports her inability to shave another five percent off the price may well be thought of as ‘insincere’ [8].

Task 19. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. Many Western negotiators do not find Asian indirectness and paraverbal behavior confusing.

2. In Asia showing impatience, irritation, frustration, or anger disrupts harmony.
3. Thai may even smile when they are absolutely furious.
4. What some Westerners perceive as ‘inscrutability’ really reflects the Asian concern with maintaining harmony and not offending people.
5. Asians do not seem to be especially sensitive to face issues, perhaps because their cultures are not so group-oriented.
6. Variations in verbal and nonverbal behavior do indeed cause culture clashes.
7. To English speakers from deal-focused parts of the world, sincerity connotes honesty and willingness to be helpful.

Task 20. Answer the following questions.

1. Why do many Western negotiators find Asian indirectness and paraverbal behavior confusing?
2. What can the smile in Asian culture mean?
3. What the Westerners perceive as ‘inscrutability’ of Asian culture?
4. Why do Asians seem to be so concerned about face issues?
5. What is the interpreter’s role in business negotiations between Asians and the Westerners?
6. What is the meaning of the word ‘sincerity’?

4.6. Chinese negotiating behavior

Reading:

Opportunities for marketers abound in Greater China, especially in the PRC (People's Republic of China). The privatization trend continues, with state companies now accounting for less than a third of total national output compared with over half in 1990. Although legal transparency is still lacking, new regulations continue to gradually open the market. For example, foreign-invested companies may now own and control distribution networks. Beijing is also working hard to attract investment in the country’s poor interior provinces.

Hong Kong remains a popular entry point for Western firms new to China, although the explosive growth of Shanghai is creating a serious competitor. The integration of the former British colony into the PRC is proceeding slowly. A

2001 survey by the Hong Kong Transition Project of people's attitudes before and after the handover showed that only 28 percent of those polled saw themselves as 'Chinese,' compared with 25 percent in June 1997. About two out of three describe themselves as 'Hong Kong Chinese' or 'Hong Kong people.'

Unfortunately, English-language proficiency in Hong Kong is deteriorating because instruction in Mandarin or 'putong hua' is now required in all schools there, along with the local dialect of Chinese. That means English is now a third language, almost always taught by non-native speakers. So you may soon need interpreters even in the Fragrant Harbor – quite a shock for Old China Hands!

Meanwhile, the risk for Taiwan is that it will not only continue to lose low-end manufacturing to the PRC, but also research and development.

Taiwan is the third largest manufacturer of information technology products in the world, making more than half the world's laptop computers, monitors and modems. IT companies might prefer to keep their R&D work in Taiwan, but the lack of direct-flight connections with factories on the mainland makes things awkward [9].

Task 21. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. Although legal transparency is still lacking, new regulations continue to gradually open the market of China.
2. A 2001 survey by the Hong Kong Transition Project of people's attitudes showed that only 20 percent of those polled saw themselves as 'Chinese'.
3. English-language proficiency in Hong Kong is no longer deteriorating.
4. Taiwan is the second largest manufacturer of information technology products in the world.
5. IT companies might prefer to keep their R&D work in Taiwan, but the lack of direct-flight connections with factories on the mainland makes things awkward.

Task 22. Answer the following questions.

1. How has investment climate changed in China?
2. What are the most developed cities in China?
3. Why Hong Kong needs to be integrated into China?
4. What is the status of English language in Hong Kong?
5. What threatens Taiwan's development?

4.7. The Indian negotiator

Reading:

Communication. India is a linguistic mosaic with over 300 different languages - and that does not include dialects. While Hindi is the most widely spoken, 14 other major tongues are official languages. For instance, there are more speakers of Bengali in the world today than German speakers. Luckily English, usually spoken with a delightful lilt, is the language of international business. But do watch out. Indian English is sprinkled with local terms which sometimes confuse foreign visitors. If you hear your partner referring to "a lack of rupees" he may be talking about a *lakh* of rupees, meaning 100,000 of them. And if your customer shocks you by saying she has just 'fired' her assistant, that just means her employee got a reprimand.

The Family. Indian business culture of course reflects the basic values of the society. One such value is the importance of the family, which explains the structure of most small and medium businesses from Chandigarh to Calcutta. Indians also value respect for age and authority. Young people are expected to defer to elders; white hair confers status.

Hierarchy, Status, Power and Caste. The concept of status leads logically to a discussion of caste. Hindus belong to whatever caste they are born into. They cannot move up the caste ladder by getting a PhD, by getting elected to high office, or by becoming a millionaire. Some 14 percent of Hindus fail to qualify for even the bottom rung of the caste ladder. These are the untouchables, formerly known as harijans, currently as dalits.

Some years ago a harijan named Jagjivan Ram was the Minister of Defense and the second most powerful political figure in the country. In New Delhi he was treated with all the outward signs of respect due his exalted status. But whenever he returned to his native village Jagjivan Ram was treated by his upper caste neighbors as just another untouchable, a social outcast. Culture changes at a glacial pace, even in a torrid climate like India's.

Relationship Focus. Europeans and North Americans also need to be aware that Indians are strongly relationship-focused. Budget plenty of time to get to know your counterpart before launching into your sales pitch. In India you need to make a friend before you make a deal.

But even though *who* you know is critical, you can't neglect the *what* either. You need to know the local do's and don'ts of relationship-building. When

meeting and greeting people for example, many Indian women prefer to give the graceful *namaste* gesture (*namaskar* in the South) rather than shake hands. You return this greeting by placing both hands together just below the chin, finger tips up, while inclining your head in a slight nod.

Another charming South Asian custom is the garlanding of important visitors. Business visitors often wonder what to do with the garland after it has been draped around their neck. The appropriate response is to smile in thanks, remove it as soon as the flash bulbs stop popping, and carry it in your hand until your hosts relieve you of the fragrant burden [9].

Task 23. Read the text and decide if the statements are True or False.

1. While Hindi is the most widely spoken, 17 other major tongues are official languages.
2. If you hear your partner referring to "a lack of rupees" he may be talking about a lack of rupees, meaning 100,000 of them.
3. Some 25 percent of Hindus fail to qualify for even the bottom rung of the caste ladder.
4. You need to know the local do's and don'ts of relationship-building.
5. The appropriate response is to smile in thanks, remove it as soon as the flash bulbs stop popping, and carry it in your hand until your hosts relieve you of the fragrant burden.

Task 24. Answer the following questions.

1. What should you take into consideration while associating with Indians?
2. In what there is a contradiction between cast division and social status?
3. Are the Indian relationship-focused or deal focused?
4. Why do they have a custom of garlanding of important visitors?
5. Who cannot move up the caste ladder by getting a PhD, by getting elected to high office, or by becoming a millionaire?

Discussion points:

1. Why is relationship-building more important than quick negotiations in many Asian cultures?
2. How could this affect project timelines and deadlines in international projects?
3. What problems can happen when deal-focused Western managers work with relationship-focused Asian partners?

4. Asians often avoid saying “no” directly and use phrases like “That may be difficult.” How could this cause misunderstandings in project management or negotiations?
What strategies could help international teams interpret such messages correctly?
5. Why is correcting someone in public considered offensive in many Asian cultures?
How can managers give feedback without causing loss of face?
6. How do age, seniority, and social position influence decision-making in Asian organizations? How should younger Western managers behave when working with senior Asian partners?
7. Why are emails, contracts, and video calls often not enough to build trust in Asia?
Do you think digital communication can fully replace personal meetings in global projects? Why or why not?
8. In Western cultures sincerity means being honest and direct, while in Asia it often means being helpful and flexible. Which approach is more effective in long-term partnerships? Can they be combined?

SPEAKING STRATEGIES 4.

A. Building rapport before business

A1. You can use these expressions to start relationship-building before discussing tasks:

Nice to finally meet you..., How was your trip?, I've heard a lot about your company..., It's a pleasure to meet you in person..., I hope we can work closely together.

Function	Example (Project Management)
opening politely	A: Nice to finally meet you, Mr. Tanaka. How was your trip?
showing interest	B: I've heard a lot about your company's recent projects.
building goodwill	A: I hope this is the start of a strong partnership.

A2. You can delay business topics politely:

Perhaps we can discuss the project details a little later..., Before we talk numbers, I'd like to..., Let's take some time to get to know each other first.

Strategy	Example
postponing business	Perhaps we can talk about timelines after lunch.
prioritizing relationship	Before we discuss contracts, I'd like to learn more about your team.

B. Using indirect language to avoid conflict

B1. You can soften disagreement or refusal:

That may be difficult..., We may need to think about that..., It might be better to consider another option..., We'll need to study this further.

Situation	Indirect response
rejecting proposal	That may be difficult with the current resources.

delaying decision	We'll need to study this further before confirming.
suggesting change	It might be better to consider another approach.

B2. You can suggest problems without blaming:

There may be a small issue..., Perhaps we could review this part again..., I'm not sure if this fully meets the requirements.

Function	Example
raising concern	There may be a small issue with the delivery schedule.
avoiding blame	Perhaps we could review this section together.

C. Protecting “face” and giving respectful feedback

C1. You can correct mistakes privately and carefully:

May I clarify something quietly?, Perhaps I didn't explain this well..., Could we look at this together after the meeting?

Situation	Face-saving strategy
technical error	Perhaps I didn't explain the shipping terms clearly.
public correction	Could we discuss this after the meeting?

C2. You can take responsibility to reduce embarrassment:

I may be mistaken..., Let me rephrase that..., Maybe I wasn't clear earlier.

Strategy	Example
shifting blame to self	Maybe I wasn't clear about the specifications.
soft correction	Let me rephrase that more clearly.

Practice

A. Rewrite using relationship-focused and indirect language

1. We should start the meeting now. (build rapport first)
2. This plan will not work. (soften disagreement)
3. You made a mistake in the report. (save face)
4. We need to change suppliers. (indirect suggestion)
5. The deadline is impossible. (raise concern politely)

B. Respond using indirect and face-saving strategies

Situation	Your polite response
The client demands faster delivery.	
Your partner misunderstood the contract term.	
The budget is too low.	
The team is unhappy with new rules.	
The manager made an incorrect assumption.	

Student Reflection Checklist 4

After the speaking task, tick ✓ what you can do.

◆ Building Relationships First

- I started with small talk before discussing business.
- I showed interest in my partner as a person, not only in the task.
- I did not push for quick decisions at the first meeting.
- I understood that trust must come before contracts or deals.

◆ Using an Indirect Approach

- I avoided saying “no” directly.
- I used soft expressions (That may be difficult..., We will study this...).
- I suggested changes without sounding confrontational.
- I allowed time for reflection instead of demanding immediate answers.

◆ **Saving Face and Maintaining Harmony**

- I did not correct mistakes in front of others.
- I used self-blame to soften feedback (Maybe I wasn't clear...).
- I avoided showing frustration or impatience.
- I kept my voice calm and respectful.

◆ **Respecting Hierarchy and Status**

- I showed respect to senior or high-status partners.
- I avoided interrupting senior team members.
- I waited for decisions from the appropriate authority.
- I adjusted my tone when speaking to senior partners.

◆ **Understanding Time and Patience**

- I accepted that negotiations might take longer.
- I did not rush relationship-building stages.
- I understood that bureaucracy may slow decisions.
- I showed patience during long discussions.

◆ **Making Contact through Proper Channels**

- I used or suggested third-party introductions.
- I understood the role of embassies, trade missions, or chambers of commerce.
- I avoided cold emails or direct pressure for partnerships.
- I chose high-status intermediaries when possible.

◆ **My goal for next time:**

- build stronger relationships before business
- use more indirect and polite language
- respect hierarchy more clearly
- be more patient with decisions
- improve my intercultural awareness

Next time I will focus on: _____

Progress Review 4.

Complete each sentence with the most appropriate word or phrase from the box. Use each item once only. Two options are odd.

rapprochement • indirectness • continuity • hierarchy • rapport • intermediaries •
bureaucratic inertia • deal-oriented • counterparts • harmony • bypass • explicit

1. In many Asian business settings, preserving _____ is more important than proving technical competence in public.
2. Project negotiations may stall due to _____, even when all technical conditions have been met.
3. Successful long-term partnerships depend not only on contracts but also on sustained _____ between key personnel.
4. When Western managers misinterpret polite silence, they often fail to recognize culturally motivated _____ rather than agreement.
5. Because trust is personal, partners may prefer working with familiar _____ instead of rotating project teams.
6. Respect for _____ determines who is expected to speak, disagree, or make final decisions in meetings.
7. Companies entering RF markets often rely on _____ to establish credibility before initiating negotiations.
8. In highly _____ cultures, it is acceptable to challenge ideas openly during technical discussions.
9. Correcting a senior engineer publicly may cause loss of _____ and damage the relationship.
10. In some cases, firms succeed by _____ traditional distributors and working directly with retailers.

Choose the best answer (A, B, or C) for each scenario.

1. A Western supplier presents a detailed contract and legal framework at the first meeting with a Japanese distributor. Talks end politely but no follow-up occurs.

What was the most likely problem?

- A. The contract terms were financially unattractive.
- B. Legal advisers should not attend international negotiations.
- C. Relationship building was expected before formal negotiations.

2. Your infrastructure project in an RF culture faces repeated postponements by local authorities, despite political support. What should be your primary response?
- A. Apply public pressure through media to speed up decisions.
 - B. Strengthen personal networks and allow more time for approvals.
 - C. Replace local partners with international contractors.
3. During scope negotiations, your partner repeatedly says, “We will study this further.” How should a project manager interpret this?
- A. As a neutral request for more technical data.
 - B. As probable resistance expressed indirectly.
 - C. As agreement with minor adjustments needed.
4. A junior Western engineer notices a major technical mistake by a senior Asian counterpart during a meeting. What is the most culturally effective response?
- A. Ask detailed questions that guide the partner to self-correct.
 - B. Interrupt immediately to prevent further misunderstanding.
 - C. Send a critical follow-up email to all stakeholders.
5. A multinational company frequently rotates project managers in its Asian partnerships. What risk does this most directly create?
- A. Loss of technical consistency
 - B. Breakdown of personal trust networks
 - C. Increased training costs

Project Work: Lessons from Real Companies

Agile in Action: Case Studies from Successful Projects

Background: Imagine speeding up your project delivery ten-fold. Imagine streamlining your team’s processes to a point where productivity soars sky-high. Picture a work environment so flexible that it feels as though your team is dancing gracefully through each project, rapidly adapting to changes and

embracing collaboration like never before. This isn't just some utopic vision, it's a reality for many companies around the globe, thanks to a powerful methodology known as Agile.

At its core, Agile is all about flexibility, adaptability and customer satisfaction. It employs iterative planning and feedback for exponential accomplishments. Agile isn't confined to a single industry or type of project its principles and frameworks have been successfully applied in diverse fields, from software development to marketing to supply chain management.

Agile offers room for continuous innovation, differing from Waterfall's fixated sequence.

In Agile, collaboration is key, promoting unity and ownership. It comes in various forms like Scrum, Kanban, Lean, among others, always putting people above process. Its adaptation is broad, leading to its use in multiple industries, showcased in the following case studies [10].

Project objective: To help you understand **why Agile is successful in real companies** and to practise **short professional presentations in English**.

You will analyze how Agile works in practice (using any case of your choice from the list below) and explain the **main reasons for success** in a **2-minute** video-presentation, answering the question: **Why was Agile successfully implemented in this company?**

Assessment Criteria

Area	What is expected
Content	Clear explanation of 3 reasons for Agile success
Use of case	Correct reference to the company of your choice
Structure	Creative introduction (to grab the audience's attention), body, and conclusion
Language	Clear, professional English
Timing	About 2 minutes

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this task, you will be able to:

- Explain why Agile works in real companies
- Use project management vocabulary in speaking
- Present key ideas clearly and briefly
- Link theory with business practice

Case study list

Case study 1 | Sony Goes Modern: Using Agile.

Turning the spotlight on Sony, the tech titan maximized Agile project management to smoothly navigate the tumultuous terrains of competition and expedited product delivery. Sony's full commitment to Agile resulted in a remarkable business transformation, demonstrating Agile's potential to shape success in diverse settings.

Project Decomposition: Agile methodologies enabled Sony to divide larger projects into smaller, manageable parts, ensuring steady delivery of high-quality products.

Adaptability: Agile allowed Sony to swiftly adapt to changing requirements, emerging market trends, and pivotal testing results.

Target Realization: Agile provided Sony with a robust framework to methodically address tasks, realize objectives, and recover from setbacks promptly.

In brief, Sony's Agile adoption spurred enhancements in project management and overall operational efficiency, underscoring the versatility and scalability of Agile across organizations of various sizes and sectors.

Case study 2 | Intralinks: Swapping Stagnation for Success with Agile

Jumping into the dynamic Intralinks case study, this technology firm swiftly transitioned from a stagnating Waterfall model to an Agile framework to rapidly progress.

The shift, albeit demanding in terms of training and reorganization, was pivotal for their stride towards success.

The integration of Agile spurred the advent of Stallion, Intralink's unique model, resulting in a surge of timely product releases and updates.

Such frequency in updates enhanced customer satisfaction, propelling the company’s growth trajectory.

Company	Challenge	Solution	Outcome
Intralinks	Impeding waterfall model	Agile methodology adoption	Rise in innovation and customer satisfaction

Intralinks experience reflects the transformative power of Agile methodologies, endorsing flexibility, collaboration, and effective project control. For more insights into Agile in software development, peruse [Unveiling the Software Development Process: Beginner’s Guide](#).

Case study 3 | Penta Technologies: Agile Sparks a Culture Change

Penta Technologies, a software and technology firm, switched from the restrictive Waterfall method to the more dynamic Agile methodology, a change that had a transformative impact across the firm.

Agile adaptation: The gradual shift to Agile began with Scrum, despite initial opposition. The increased advantages quickly counterbalanced the hurdles.

Delivery improvement: Utilizing Agile, Penta delivered user-friendly software quicker, in line with current customer demands.

Culture transformation: Agile initiated a company culture shift, emphasizing teamwork, empowerment, and customer satisfaction.

Current state: Penta Technologies, from a Waterfall devotee, has since emerged as a hallmark of Agile transformation in the tech world.

With Agile, Penta Technologies illustrates not just a change in project management tactics, but a broader mindset shift that fosters adaptability, perpetual enhancement, and easier response to change. Agile enables managing transitions effectively, delivering superior value at speed.

Case study 4 | Omega Software: Putting Waterfall Behind for Scrum

Omega Software switched from Waterfall’s rigid structure to Agile’s adaptive Scrum framework, experiencing significant improvements:

Waterfall to Agile: Their transition to Agile and Scrum from Waterfall led to enhanced flexibility and timeliness in delivering [software solutions](#).

Scrum adoption: By converting large projects into Scrum “sprints”, they could regularly adapt and correct course – a restriction under the Waterfall model.

Method	Benefits
Waterfall	Well-structured but lacks flexibility
Agile (Scrum)	Adaptive, fast, facilitating collaboration and quick changes

With Agile, they achieved:
Boosted productivity higher client contentment, and increased flexibility to shifts.

The transition of Omega Software from Waterfall to Agile’s Scrum provides a valuable case study for organizations seeking more effective project management approaches.

Case study 5 | Lola Tech: ROI Rise with Nexus Framework

Diving into Agile success stories, Lola Tech stands out. They seamlessly adopted the Agile Nexus Framework, met challenges with swift adaptability, and witnessed a substantial rise in ROI. Their journey highlights the transformative potential of Agile project management for enhanced productivity and profitability.

Nexus Framework adoption: Lola Tech scaled their Scrum practices with Nexus, enabling multiple teams to deliver an integrated increment each Sprint.

Adapting change swiftly: Agile helped solve complexities, respond quickly to change, and accelerate delivery.

Impressive ROI improvement: Agile’s positive impact was evident in Lola Tech’s remarkable ROI surge.

This case illustrates how combining Agile management with a receptive culture can enhance team dynamics and financial outcomes, demonstrating Agile’s ability to thrive amidst rapid change. It’s more than just survival – Agile enables organizations to flourish in an ever-evolving business landscape.

Case study 6 | Spotify Scales Up: Buzzing with Continuous Agile Innovation

Spotify’s persistent innovation draws from a strategic application of the Agile methodology.

Using ‘squads’, Spotify fosters innovation, offering team members autonomy. ‘Tribes’, collections of similar ‘squads’, promote synergy and creativity.

Regular introspection through Agile rituals, supports continual improvement. Spotify thrives on adaptability and continuous learning, the core of Agile. Notably, the Agile strategy brought novel features like Discover Weekly and Family Plan.

Key Agile Principle	Spotify’s Implementation
Sustainable Pace	Spotify avoids burnout by maintaining a sustainable pace for its teams.

In essence, Agile steers Spotify’s culture towards relentless innovation.

Case study 7 | Salesforce Soars: Agile Near and Far with Scrum of Scrums

Our journey into the SaaS sector takes us to Salesforce, a great example of Agile’s potential. Their key to success lies in the Scrum of Scrums strategy. The Scrum of Scrums approach divides projects into manageable tasks done by independent Scrum teams. Each team plans, executes, reviews, and adjusts according to the Scrum framework. Daily meetings between teams ensure smooth progress and efficient communication.

By applying the Scrum of Scrums, Salesforce has enhanced project results, reduced duplicate efforts, streamlined communication, and minimized project delivery times. Thus, Agile can effectively improve productivity in complex projects.

Salesforce’s Scrum of Scrums Impact | Data 2024

Indicator	Measure
Delivery times	Down 30%
Productivity	Up 20%
Duplicate efforts	Down 50%
Communication	Up 40%

As seen, Scrum of Scrums effectively fortifies Agile in complex projects.

Case Study 8 | Redgate Software: Agile Makes Remote Work Work

Redgate Software’s 2020 transition to remote work showed Agile’s adaptability advantage amidst unplanned changes.

Chris Auckland, Head of Product Development at Redgate Software emphasised, “Our 15 years of Agile proficiency made the shift to full remote work remarkably effortless.”

Chris Auckland, Head of Product Development at Redgate Software emphasised Noteworthy benefits Redgate gained from Agile during remote work included:

Collaboration: Platforms like Jira and Confluence enabled remote teamwork through Agile.

Workflow Continuity: Agile mechanisms like sprints and stand-ups maintained consistent workflow amidst team dispersion.

On-time Delivery: Agile ensured timely delivery of reliable product solutions during blurred times.

The experience underlined Agile’s role as a coping tool during volatile situations besides improving productivity and quality.

Case study 9 | Valve Corporation: Flat Hierarchy and Agile Game Creation

Exploring Valve Corporation’s Agile strategies unveils the pivotal role of innovation and flexibility in the gaming sector.

Valve made a paradigm shift to a flat hierarchy – a core Agile principle, bolstering team autonomy.

The unique structure fostered an empowered development climate, inspiring novel game development by intrinsically aligning projects with developers’ interests.

Leveraging the Scrum framework – an Agile method, Valve mastered the art of managing changing priorities, stimulating flexibility, collaboration, and perpetual learning.

Key Insights from Valve’s Agile Adoption

Switch to Flat Hierarchy: Empower teams, stimulate self-organization.

Empower Development Climate: Foster innovation, align personal interests with project pursuits.

Leverage the Scrum Framework: Effectively handle shifting priorities, foster flexibility and collaboration.

Undeniably, Agile has been a catalyst for Valve, driving innovation amidst the rapid transformations in the gaming industry. This case study sets the importance of Agile principles into sharper focus for your development environment.

Case study 10 | Spotify Strikes Again: Beyond Software with Agile

Let’s zoom in on our 10th case study; Spotify’s venture into Agile methodology outside the tech-sphere, showcasing Agile’s versatility beyond software development.

Company	Agile Application	Outcome	Key Benefit
Spotify	Extended Agile from software creation to HR, finance, and strategic planning	Successfully showcased Agile’s extensive applicability outside of software innovation	Promoted effective collaboration, swift adaptability, and heightened innovation across various departments

Moving away from classic top-down management, Spotify embraced Agile’s progressive, self-organizing spirit, endorsing innovation and efficiency. Let’s underline that Agile is not merely a tactical tool; instead, it is an integral ethos that promotes continual learning and receptivity, ultimately driving business success. Thus, the scope of Agile is seen to stretch across diverse business domains, invigorating innovation and boosting efficiency [10].

For more case studies, visit <https://kvytechnology.com/blog/software/agile-case-studies/>

APPENDIX

Choosing the Right Risk Management Certification Tips from Institute of Project Management

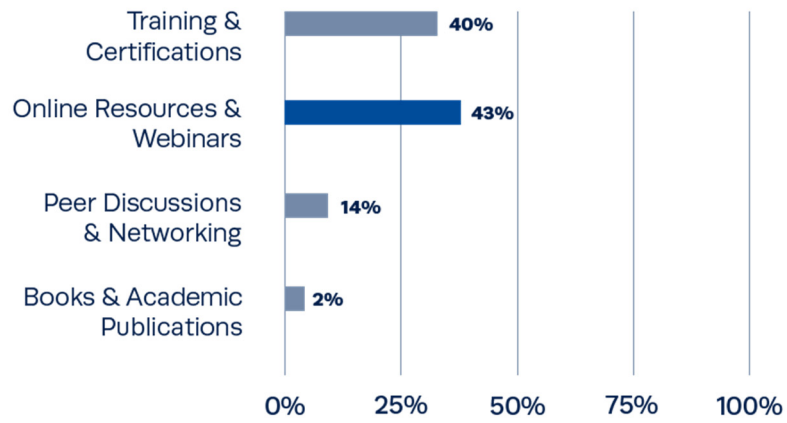
For professionals looking to enhance their skills in project risk management, obtaining the proper certification is a top priority. Several certifications are recognised globally for their focus on risk management in project environments:

- **PMI-RMP® (Risk Management Professional):** The Project Management Institute (PMI) offers this certification for project managers specialising in risk management. It covers the entire risk management framework from planning to monitoring.
- **PRINCE2® Practitioner:** PRINCE2 is a widely recognised project management methodology that strongly focuses on risk management. The Practitioner level certification equips professionals with the skills to manage risks effectively in complex projects.
- **Certified Risk Manager (CRM):** The CRM designation, offered by The National Alliance for Insurance Education & Research, is tailored for professionals in various industries responsible for managing risk. It covers risk identification, analysis, control, financing, and administration.
- **ISO 31000 Risk Management Certification:** ISO 31000 is an international standard that provides guidelines for effective risk management. Certification in ISO 31000 demonstrates a deep understanding of risk management principles and practices.

Choosing the proper certification depends on your career goals, industry, and experience level. Each certification offers unique benefits and can significantly boost your ability to manage project risks effectively.

https://projectmanagement.ie/blog/ipm-data-digest-september-enhancing-project-success-through-risk-management/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Practitioner's Methods for Staying Informed on Risk Management Best Practices



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KEYS

Module 1.

Task 1. 1e, 2b, 3c, 4f, 5a, Extra: d

Task 2. 1h, 2f, 3e, 4b, 5c, 6d, 7g, 8a

Task 3.

1. draw your attention to; 2. bring up; 3. run into a delay; 4. fully clear; 5. arrange a meeting; 6. clarify the situation; 7. look into; 8. follow up on; 9. set up.

Task 4. 1. T, 2. F, 3. F, 4. T, 5. T, 6. F, 7. T

Task 7A. 1b, 2c, 3a, 4d

Task 7 B.

Communication: Updated status page, used social media to inform users

Technical action: Rerouted traffic, stabilized platform, restored core services

Long-term prevention: Post-mortem report, scalability and redundancy improvements

Task 9. (Suggested answers)

Direct communicator: A person who communicates in a clear, explicit, and straightforward way. They say exactly what they mean, express opinions openly, and address problems or conflicts directly.

Indirect communicator: A person who communicates in a more subtle and implicit way. They avoid saying things too directly, often use hints or polite language, and expect others to understand the meaning through context and tone.

Open-ended question: A question that cannot be answered with just “yes” or “no.” It encourages explanation and discussion, such as “How do you feel about this plan?” or “What do you think we should do?”

Shared language: A common language spoken by two or more people or cultures. Even when people share a language (like English in the U.S. and the U.K.), misunderstandings can still happen because of different communication styles and cultural expectations.

Hierarchy: The way power and authority are organized in a society or organization. In hierarchical cultures, people respect rank and status strongly; in less hierarchical cultures, people value equality and informal communication.

Individualism: A cultural value that emphasizes personal independence, personal goals, and individual responsibility rather than group harmony or collective needs.

Read between the lines: To understand the hidden or implied meaning of what someone says, not just the literal words. It involves paying attention to context, tone, and what is not said.

Task 10. 1d, 2c, 3j, 4m, 5a, 6k, 7g, 8h, 9f, 10e, 11i, 12b, 13l

Task 13.

1. I just wanted to bring up that we might need to report this problem.
2. We could follow up on the client's message to ensure that everything is clear.
3. There is a chance we should look into what caused this bug.
4. I am afraid we may need to follow up on this task to determine whether any support is required.
5. I am slightly concerned about this plan, and it might be worth looking into some alternatives.
6. I am afraid we may need to follow up on the project deadline to understand any challenges.
7. I wanted to bring up that there might be some errors in the report worth looking into.
8. It seems that we should follow up on the manager's feedback to ensure that it is fully addressed.
9. There is a chance we need to look into what caused the system crash to prevent it happening again.
10. I am slightly concerned that some parts of the presentation could be clarified for a better understanding.

Task 14.

1. draw your attention to; 2. bring up; 3. run into a delay; 4. fully clear; 5. arrange a meeting; 6. clarify the situation; 7. look into; 8. follow up on; 9. set up.

Task 16. 1. bring up 2. look into 3. follow up on 4. set up 5. carry out.

Task 17. 1b, 2i, 3a, 4c, 5h, 6g, 7j, 8e, 9d, 10f

Progress review 1

1. **T** – Hesitant communication is seen as uncertainty; a decisive approach is recommended.
2. **T** – Target groups have different information needs and expertise.
3. **F** – Technical details can be used if relevant to the target group.
4. **NG** – The scenario does not state the order of communication.
5. **T** – Two-way communication is encouraged in the text.
6. **NG** – The scenario does not say vendors were informed.
7. **T** – Communication should be kept up to date when risks change.
8. **F** – Channels should be selected based on the target audience, not kept the same for all.

Module 2.

Task 1. 1b, 2d, 3a, 4c, 5f, 6e, 7g, 8h

Task 2. 1. convergence 2. mitigation 3. morphing 4. tantalising 5. exponential

Task 4.

The Risk	What we will do (Strategy)	The Action Plan
The AI makes a mistake in the app code.	Mitigate (Reduce)	A human programmer will check all the AI's work every day.
A different company launches the same app first.	Exploit (Use it)	Use AI to find what users hate about the rival app and make ours better.
The app crashes because too many people use it.	Transfer (Move it)	Pay a professional hosting company like Amazon or Google to handle the traffic.

New laws say we cannot use certain AI data.	Avoid (Stop it)	Change the app design so it doesn't need that private data at all.
Small colors or fonts look slightly wrong.	Accept (Live with it)	Don't worry about it now; fix it in a small update next month.

Task 5.

Sample answer: In my opinion, mitigation is the most important strategy for 2026 because AI is now a part of almost every project. We cannot use "avoidance" because if we stop using AI, our companies will not be able to compete with others. Instead, we must use mitigation to create "guardrails," which are rules that keep the AI safe and honest. For example, we should always have a human check the AI's work to find any mistakes or "hallucinations." While "exploitation" helps us grow, mitigation is what keeps our projects reliable and follows the new 2026 global laws. By focusing on reducing risks, we can use new technology without causing big problems for our clients.

Task 6. 1. team 2. mistakes 3. protocols 4. robots 5. regulations 6. guidelines 7. local 8. efficiently

Task 7. Suggested answers

Sample answer: *"In my view, multi-agent orchestration will significantly increase efficiency because it allows for specialized focus. Instead of one human trying to monitor everything, specialized agents can perform tasks like coding and cross-checking simultaneously. However, I believe human managers will still be necessary to provide high-level oversight and ensure that the 'team' of agents is moving in the right strategic direction."*

1. On Physical AI: In which industries will it have the biggest impact?
2. "I would say that healthcare and delivery services will see the most transformation. If Physical AI allows robots to interact with the world more naturally, they could be used to assist patients or navigate crowded city streets without constant human intervention. This technology is a game-changer for any field that requires moving physical objects in a complex environment."
3. On Verifiable AI: Will transparency slow down innovation or help trust?

4. "Actually, I think that transparency is essential for long-term growth. While some might argue that regulations create more paperwork, I believe that people will only adopt AI tools if they feel safe. If companies are forced to follow strict ethical guidelines, it will actually reduce the 'AI trust deficit' and encourage more people to use these products in their daily lives."

5. On Reasoning at the Edge: Is speed or privacy more important to you?

6. "Personally, I find the privacy aspect more compelling. While having the AI respond efficiently and without latency is great, the fact that my data is processed locally on my device gives me peace of mind. In 2026, when AI handles so much of our personal information, knowing it doesn't leave the device is a major advantage."

7. On the Human-in-the-loop: What human skills will be most valuable?

8. "I strongly believe that emotional intelligence and ethical judgment will be the most sought-after skills. Even if an AI agent can reason through a technical problem, it cannot truly understand human empathy or the subtle 'grey areas' of a business crisis. Humans will remain at the center of the process to provide strategic guidance that machines simply cannot replicate."

Task 8. 1e, 2a, 3g, 4f, 5c, 6i, 7j, 8d, 9b, 10h

Task 9.

1. F (False - modern risk management is dynamic, predictive, and automated)

2. T (True)

3. F (False - blockchain creates immutable records that cannot be tampered with)

4. F (False - IoT collects real-time data to detect risks before they escalate)

5. T (True)

6. F (False - cloud-based solutions allow organizations to offload infrastructure management)

7. T (True)

8. T (True)

9. F (False - they identify threats in real time for immediate action)

10. T (True)

Task 11. 1. revolutionizing 2. predictive 3. detect 4. facilitates 5. deployed 6.insights 7. fraudulent 8. streamline 9. offload 10. accommodate

Task 13. Suggested answer:

To: Chief Technology Officer

Subject: Technical Proposal for Infrastructure Migration

1. Current Situation According to our predictive AI dashboard, our local servers are currently under a lot of pressure. It seems that we might hit a roadblock because the system cannot accommodate the 500,000 new users expected this weekend. Additionally, there is a chance of fraudulent access attempts if the system becomes unstable.
2. Proposed solution: To play it safe, I suggest that we offload our primary database to a cloud-based provider immediately. We may need to move our infrastructure before the traffic peaks tomorrow morning.
3. Expected Benefits This move will facilitate better performance for our global users and streamline our internal operations. Furthermore, using the cloud will provide us with the scalability we need for future growth.

Best regards,

[Student Name]

Speaking Strategies – 2: Discussing

A–C 1 a Replace the words in italics with expressions from A3

Sample answers (more than one answer may be possible):

1. Basically, we must update the risk register.
2. To be honest, the deadline is too optimistic.
3. Obviously, resources are limited.
4. In fact / As a matter of fact, costs are increasing.
5. Personally, communication needs improvement.

Note: Accept any correct attitude marker from A3 that matches the meaning (obviously, in fact, unfortunately/fortunately, basically, to be honest, personally).

A–C 1 c Agree or disagree – sample responses

Possible answers:

1. I'm not sure – that could increase risks.
2. That's partly true, but meetings help coordination.
3. I take your point, but outsourcing has its own risks.
4. That's a good point, but it may slow the project.
5. I don't fully agree – quality also affects cost.

Accept any response that uses agreeing/disagreeing language from sections B or C and shows logical reasoning.

B, C 2 a Suggested responses using B and C expressions

1. Yes, we should reduce costs, but training improves performance.
2. That's a good point, but stakeholder meetings help avoid conflicts.
3. I take your point, but clients expect clear delivery dates.
4. That may help, but processes are still needed.

Accept variations using: but, however, though, actually, That's a good point, but..., I take your point, but...

General Marking Guidance

Focus on functional language (agreeing, disagreeing, softening opinions), not grammar accuracy.

Accept alternative wording if pragmatic meaning is correct.

Encourage polite disagreement rather than direct contradiction.

For speaking follow-up, prioritize clarity of argument and professional tone.

Progress Review 2.

A. 1. AI-powered analytics 2. strategic oversight 3. hybrid workforce 4. data integrity 5. mandatory standard 6. resource allocation 7. market fluctuations 8. ethical oversight

B. 1b, 2c, 3a, 4b, 5c, 6b, 7b

Module 3.

Task 1.

1. The Rise of the AI Co-Pilot
2. Benefits: Efficiency, Precision, and Beyond
3. Navigating the Challenges: Data, Ethics, and Trust
4. The Future: AI Trends Redefining Project Management
5. Upskilling for the AI Era: What PMs Need to Thrive

Task 2. 1c, 2e, 3d, 4g, 5b, 6h, 7f, 8a, 9i, 10j

Task 3. 1. stay on track; 2. flag a risk; 3. keep everyone in the loop; 4. collaborate closely; 5. make a data-driven decision; 6. streamline a process; 7. put out fires.

Task 4.

1. T– The text mentions spreadsheets and gut instinct before AI.

2. T – Tools auto-assign tasks based on workload.
3. T – Predictive analytics predicts delays and risks in advance.
4. F – The text says AI tools are "designed to **complement, not replace**, the judgment and expertise of subject matter professionals."
5. F – The text gives statistics, but not that all organisations achieve this.
6. F – The text warns about bias in AI algorithms.
7. T – Teams may see AI as “Big Brother” and resist it at first.
8. F – There was initial pushback, improvement came later.
9. T – Generative AI drafts charters, minutes, and reports.
10. NG – The text does not compare costs of AI tools and traditional software.

Task 6. Optional answers:

- drafts project plans from specifications / creates first drafts quickly
- allocates resources intelligently / finds optimal schedules
- identifies risks and drafts mitigation plans
- supports data-driven decisions
- automates monitoring, reporting, and virtual assistance
- handles routine admin tasks and document work
- predicts delays, costs, and future trends

Speaking Strategies 3. Persuading

A–C 1. a Rewrite using persuasive language (sample answers)

1. I suggest improving communication across the team.
2. I recommend speeding up testing by adding more testers / improving tools.
3. Costs are high because of rework, but this will decrease if we automate testing.
4. We could schedule regular update meetings to improve client satisfaction.
5. Based on previous projects, delays usually increase costs, so we should act now.

Note: Accept any correct use of suggestion language (suggest, recommend, we should, it would be better to) and reason–benefit structures.

C. Respond to objections (sample persuasive replies)

6. I understand the workload will increase, but this will reduce problems later.
7. That’s true, but proper training will make the tool easier to use.

8. I see your point, but we could renegotiate part of the contract.
9. That's true, but short training now will save time later.
10. I understand the risk, but a pilot phase will reduce uncertainty.

Accept variations using: I understand..., That's true, but..., I see your point, however..., and any logical project-based justification.

B, C 2 a Table task — sample responses

We should keep the current process. → I understand, but the new tool saves time and reduces errors.

We can't afford consultants. → That's true, but they reduce project risk and prevent costly mistakes.

Let's delay training. → I see your point, but training now will prevent delays later.

We should skip the pilot. → I understand the time pressure, but a pilot will reduce uncertainty.

Progress review 3.

A.

1. improve project visibility
2. predict potential risks
3. reduce manual work
4. allocate resources efficiently
5. monitor team performance
6. identify bottlenecks
7. make faster decisions
8. support decision-making

B. 1b, 2a, 3b, 4a, 5b, 6a, 7b

Module 4.

Task 1. 1b, 2i, 3e, 4g, 5c, 6d, 7h, 8a, 9f, 10j

Task 2.

1. rapport; 2. personal component; 3. bureaucracy; 4. indirect approach; 5. specifications; 6. continuity; 7. red tape; 8. bargain; 9. counterparts; 10. trust.

Task 3. 1. False 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. True

Task 5. 1. T 2. F 3. F 4. F 5. T 6. F

Task 6. C

Task 7.

Topic	Culture / Country	What is valued or expected
Teamwork	Japan / China	teamwork / human relations
Individual success	France	less focus on team effort
Personal space	Americans	greater distance
Meeting style	Hispanics	small talk first
Time orientation	Chinese	long-term orientation
Punctuality	USA / Switzerland	exactly on time
Work ethic	Japanese	strong work ethic
Management relations	Japan	cooperative relations

Task 9.

1. deal-focused; 2. intermediary; 3. trade mission; 4. break the ice; 5. high-status; 6. provide introductions; 7. third party; 8. prospects.

Task 10.

1. markets; 2. contacts; 3. introductions; 4. partnerships; 5. the way; 6. exports; 7. relationships; 8. opportunities.

Task 11. 1. False 2. True 3. True 4. False 5. True

Task 15. 1. True 2. False 3. False 4. True 5. False 6. False

Task 17. 1. False 2. True 3. False 4. False 5. True 6. False

Task 19. 1. False 2. True 3. True 4. True 5. False 6. True 7. False

Task 21. 1. True 2. False 3. False 4. False 5. True

Task 23. 1. False 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. True

Speaking Strategies 4.

A. Sample answers:

- Perhaps we could take a few minutes to get to know each other before starting the meeting.
- That may be difficult to implement in the current situation.

3. Perhaps I wasn't clear earlier – could we review this part together?
4. It might be worth considering an alternative supplier.
5. There may be some challenges in meeting this deadline.

B. Sample answers:

Situation	Polite Response
The client demands faster delivery.	That may be difficult, but we will study how we can improve the timeline.
Your partner misunderstood the contract term.	Perhaps I didn't explain this clearly. Let me go over that section again.
The budget is too low.	We may need to review the budget to ensure quality is not affected.
The team is unhappy with new rules.	There may be some concerns from the team that we should discuss together.
The manager made an incorrect assumption.	Maybe I wasn't clear earlier – could I clarify this point?

Progress review 4.

Task 1.

1.harmony; 2. bureaucratic inertia; 3. continuity; 4. indirectness; 5. counterparts;
 6. hierarchy; 7. intermediaries; 8. deal-oriented; 9. face;
 10. bypass.

Odd are: rapport, explicit

Task 2. 1. c 2. b 3. b 4. a 5. B

Олена ЗЕЛІКОВСЬКА

Наталія ДОРОНІНА

ENGLISH FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

НАВЧАЛЬНИЙ ПОСІБНИК

для самостійної роботи

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