Background

Managing time and schedules

Overview of the product

Timelines software takes all the time out of planning schedules. It allows you to analyse staff schedules and reduces the possibility of expensive **errors**. One of the main reasons is that *Timelines* has a unique feature where it can show you any change in relation to the rest of your planning. So if you change an employee's schedule, *Timelines* can show you any **implications** of this decision on the rest of your team.

[1]_____ The software will also **monitor** holidays, sick days, and anything specific to your business. You can even save yourself valuable time by integrating scheduled hours and staff payroll.

Other key features

Arranging the best time to meet

[2]_____ *Timelines* deals with scheduling meetings for two people or whole departments with a single email. Each participant simply enters five possible times that they are available during the week and *Timelines* works out the rest.

Linking in with web conferencing facilities

Whatever your time zone, and whoever is joining you for a conference, *Timelines* can not only schedule the meeting, but you can **integrate** it into your web conferencing facilities so that you even receive a link for the phone call.

Dealing with latecomers

You have the option to set a **countdown** to meetings and send email or SMS reminders. [3]_____ It will even continue to send messages once the meeting has started to tell any latecomers to hurry up!

Keeping to the agenda

For more formal meetings, you can use *Timelines* software to plan the agenda and how long each stage will take. So if item one of the agenda is **overrunning**, you'll receive an alert telling you to move on.

What our customers say

'Timelines stops errors before they happen. I never make mistakes with scheduling or payroll anymore.'
Hospital coordinator

'We had already looked at six other similar types of scheduling software. [4]_____ *So when we tried Timelines it was just so much more flexible and allowed us to **tailor** it to our needs.'*
Production Manager at a manufacturing plant

'We work 24/7 and we never had enough time for planning, so this program has helped reduce time wastage by scheduling day-to-day events while we can focus on the customers.'
Logistics Manager

'The customer support helpline is able to answer any question – quickly, efficiently, and politely. Thanks Timelines!'
Geoff Barnes, Barnes Packaging

'The funny thing was that we didn't buy Timelines at first because it was the cheapest on the market. [5]_____ *But after a lot of research, we couldn't find anything better. It's great value.'*
Personnel Manager, Travel Agency

'Because of the time and money we saved from unnecessary overtime and costly mistakes with timetabling, the product paid for itself within a couple of months.'
School head

'It lets us schedule table bookings as well as staffing, so it's the perfect answer. Especially when you have a lot of part-time staff.'
Restaurant manager

*'**Compatibility** with other programs and systems was an important factor for us. We got lots of help from Timelines customer service when we set it up.* [6]_____.'*
Volunteer coordinator for a major charity

Exercises

1 **Discuss as a class.**
1 What types of software do you normally use at work?
2 Are there any types of software specially designed for your type of business?
3 What is the purpose of these programs and software? How much time do you think they save you?

2 **Read the text about a type of software.**
1 What is the main purpose of this software?
2 Find three specific tasks it can help you with at work.

3 **Discuss as a class.**
1 Do you think the software in the text is something you could use at work?
2 Do you already use something similar? How is it similar?

4 **These sentences are missing from the text. Match a–f to gaps 1–6 in the text.**
a Tired of trying to find a good time for everyone to be in the same place at the same time?
b We thought that you needed to pay a lot for good scheduling software.
c But this software isn't only for managing projects, meeting deadlines, and organizing staff timetables.
d I think we integrated it within two weeks and didn't waste time.
e So now, no one has an excuse for being late or not turning up.
f We'd even bought one, but it wasn't satisfactory.

5 **Match the words in bold in the text to definitions 1–8.**
1 effects or problems caused by another action or decision _____
2 when you count ten, nine, eight, seven, six …, etc. _____
3 using more time than you planned _____
4 mistakes _____
5 control and check _____
6 change something for different situations _____
7 ability to work with _____
8 combine _____

6 **Discuss as a class.**
1 Do your meetings often overrun? How could you prevent this?
2 Do your products or services have to be flexible or compatible with others? In what ways?
3 Do you ever tailor your product or services to customers? In what ways?

7 **Role-play a telephone conversation between a sales representative for *Timelines* software and a potential customer. Before you start the conversation complete the following:**
Student A: You are the sales representative. Make a list of the key features and reasons why Student B might need this product. Student B is the owner-manager of three restaurants.
Student B: You are the owner-manager of three restaurants. You spend a lot of time scheduling part-time staff and dealing with mistakes in bookings. You have seen *Timelines* advertised but you want more information. Make a list of questions you have for the sales representative about this product.

When you are both ready, Student B telephones Student A about the software.