

Discussing business problems with first, second and third conditional

Work in groups of two to four students. You all work for the same company. Choose an issue that your company has such as one of the situations below and discuss it. Say what you should have done in the past, dismiss impossible or unlikely solutions (e.g. because they don't match the real situation), and then try to come up with solutions which are more likely to be successful. Use the same three steps in that order in each discussion, with these three different conditional forms for each part of that discussion:

- Mistakes/ regrets – Third Conditional (e.g. “If we had launched a bid for those companies first, we would have grown bigger”)
- Unlikely or impossible solutions – Second Conditional (e.g. “If CDs became more popular again, we would be okay – but that’s not going to happen”)
- Realistic ideas with positive consequences – First Conditional (e.g. “If we hire a SEO expert, they will probably be able to sort it out”)

You will usually need to imagine you that you work for different kinds of companies for each situation, e.g. a music shop, and to use your imaginations when talking about past mistakes, market conditions, etc.

Problem situations to discuss with all three conditionals

Fewer and fewer people are buying CDs in your music shops

The other insurance companies have grown larger than yours by taking over smaller firms

Your bank has many bad debts

The market for your toys has shrunk because of the falling birth rate in your home market

Consumers have an image of your TVs as being expensive

Your website’s Google ranking has been slipping

You sell mid-range mobile phones, which is a rapidly shrinking sector

The staff in one of your factories in China have kidnapped the manager from your firm

Your global supply chain has been disrupted by a natural disaster in Thailand

Hackers have broken into your IT system and stolen customer and staff data

Your CEO has quit to join a competitor

Annual staff turnover of graduate recruits has been 30% this year

Share what you agreed on one of the situations and see if other teams feel the same.

Ask about any which you don't understand, couldn't make suitable sentences for, etc.

What are the similarities and differences between the three conditional forms?