

## **Idioma Moderno (Inglés)**

### **Grado en Ingeniería Industrial y Desarrollo del Producto**

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#### **Práctica**

#### **Cross-Functional Team Role Play: Navigating Professional Conflict in English**

As part of the coursework within the subject “Idioma Moderno (Inglés)”, taught in the Degree in Industrial Engineering and Product Development at the University of Málaga, students were asked to participate in a simulated cross-functional team meeting through role play. This role play was carefully designed for the purposes of this task for two different reasons. First, it provides students with authentic practice in the kinds of professional communication scenarios they will encounter in their engineering careers, specifically the high-pressure, multi-stakeholder meetings where technical, aesthetic, environmental, and business concerns must be balanced. In this sense, the role play was presented as a practical application of the professional English skills that students have been developing throughout the course, allowing them to integrate vocabulary, functional language, and communicative strategies in a realistic context. Secondly, it was designed because the scenario addresses professional challenges that are highly relevant in contemporary engineering practice: sustainable product development, cross-departmental collaboration, negotiation under resource constraints, and consensus-building in diverse teams.

The scenario centers on EcoForm Design, a fictional company developing a new sustainable household appliance that must combine aesthetic appeal, technical efficiency, and low environmental impact. The project is behind schedule, the budget is tightening, and there is disagreement among departments about priorities. Students are told they are about to hold an emergency cross-functional team meeting to find solutions and move forward. This scenario was deliberately constructed to create authentic communicative pressure: the time constraints mirror real professional deadlines, the budget limitations force prioritization and compromise, and the departmental conflicts require negotiation and diplomatic language use. The combination of sustainability requirements with aesthetic and technical demands reflects current industry trends toward green engineering and circular economy principles, making the scenario both pedagogically valuable and professionally relevant.

#### **Task instructions:**

##### **1. Scenario**

Your company, EcoForm Design, has been developing a new sustainable household appliance that must combine aesthetic appeal, technical efficiency, and low environmental impact. The project is behind schedule, the budget is tightening, and there is disagreement among departments about priorities. You are about to hold an emergency cross-functional team meeting to find solutions and move forward.

The objectives are the following:

- Demonstrate leadership and collaboration skills in English.
- Negotiate realistic solutions under pressure.
- Use professional, diplomatic, and persuasive language.
- Practice team communication strategies (summarizing, mediating, giving feedback).

## 2. Roles

Create groups of 4-6 people. Each person will be assigned one role:

### 1. Project Leader (Chairperson)

- Responsible for facilitating the discussion.
- Must ensure that all voices are heard.
- Summarizes decisions at the end.
- Focus: diplomacy, time management, prioritizing action steps.

### 2. Design Team Representative

- Argues that aesthetics and user experience are key for market success.
- Concerned that too many compromises will harm the brand identity.
- Suggests design-thinking approaches.

### 3. Engineering Team Representative

- Focuses on functionality, manufacturability, and cost.
- Argues that some design features are impractical or too expensive.
- Proposes technical alternatives.

### 4. Sustainability Consultant

- Emphasizes environmental impact and ethical production.
- Advocates for recycled materials and reduced energy use.
- Challenges others to justify non-sustainable choices.

### 5. (Optional) Marketing Manager

- Concerned about the product's launch deadline and customer expectations.
- Wants a marketable prototype as soon as possible.
- Often mediates between innovation and practicality.

#### 6. *(Optional)* Client Representative / Investor

- Wants a quick, cost-effective solution.
- May pressure the team but can be persuaded by clear arguments.

### 3. Preparation (10-15 minutes)

Each student reads their role description, prepares 3-4 key arguments to defend their perspective, thinks of two possible compromises, and notes useful phrases for negotiation and leadership.

### 4. During the role play

The project Leader opens the meeting and states the problem: “We need to deliver a sustainable, market-ready product on time — but we’re facing design, cost, and production conflicts”. Each participant presents their viewpoint (1–2 minutes). The group negotiates to reach a compromise and create an action plan. The leader closes by summarizing the key decisions made, who is responsible for what, and the next steps to follow.