TEXT 2

1 Before you read the article on the opposite page, think about the title and try to predict some of the 'pitfalls' the writer will mention. Then quickly scan the article to see how accurate your predictions were.

2 Read the article and note the key points under the following headings:
- recent trends in international meetings
- reasons for holding international meetings
- typical problems at international meetings
- avoiding the pitfalls of international meetings

DISCUSSION

What advice could you give an international conference organiser about the specific cultural needs of business people from your country and any other countries you know well? Work in small groups and outline your recommendations on paper.

SKILLS PRACTICE

Until three years ago, Eastern Architects and Designers Ltd. (EAD) was a highly profitable business with more work than it could comfortably handle. But then the property market collapsed and, like many architectural firms, EAD found itself struggling to survive.

EAD boss, Barry Jones, had always been on excellent terms with the architects who worked for him. A close-knit group, everyone at EAD got on well with everyone else. They worked hard in the office – and socialised a great deal after work. However, Barry was beginning to wonder how long the friendly atmosphere could last. Losses for two years running meant EAD could no longer afford to keep everyone on – there simply wasn't enough work to go round. He had to get rid of some of his staff to survive. The question was which of his architects should be made redundant? And how could he say to them, 'Thanks very much, but goodbye.'?

Barry thought about the problem and identified four possible approaches to reaching a fair decision:

1   **Last in – first out (LIFO):** those architects with the shortest periods of service in the company should go first.

2   **Voluntary redundancy:** a generous severance package would be offered to anyone willing to take early retirement.

3   **Selection on merit:** Barry would decide which employees were least useful to the company and make them redundant.

4   **Peer selection:** the employees would meet to decide which of them should leave.