Reading:

http://it.toolbox.com/blogs/managing-infosec/risk-management-in-information-security-unreasonable-project-schedules-12897

Week 4 Discussion: Project Schedules
Why do you think schedule issues often cause the most conflicts on projects?

Everything hinges on the project schedule. This is where it all comes together, where all the responsibilities are lined up and executed in a complex chain (permitting some slack time in places). Mandatory dependencies, like waiting on a team member to complete the database architecture so that the presentation layer can be finalized, or external dependencies, waiting for a SME at an office in another time zone with completely different priorities to get back to you with an explanation of a crucial requirement, complicates things further. If a milestone gets missed, the whole schedule gets impacted. A resource that was ready to start working on their part of the project next week might not be available if the project pushes their part past that week.

Slack time worked into parts of the project could help mitigate this chain of events, but then Parkinson's Law comes into effect, work has the properties of a gas, expanding to fill the available space… or schedule. So adhering to the critical path becomes the way to overcome this phenomenon. Slack time could provide the flexibility to overcome slipped milestones, but the critical path prevents developers from filling up that slack time with more work. It puts the PM between a rock and a hard place.

In a global marketplace, we have the additional complication of different cultural priorities. I remember an anecdote I heard from a manager, where he was supervising a team of European programmers on a project that had slipped by a month. The new deadline happened to fall at the end of August, and the whole team of developers had put in leave slips for that month, as this is a summer tradition in France and other countries and as the expectation was that the project would be finished. The manager offered to double their pay for the month if they would work through it, but they all refused, the life experiences were more important to them than any amount of money.