

MARK SCHEME for the October 2006 question paper

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS

5172 Effective Business Communication
Maximum mark 100

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The following are not model answers, but are nevertheless to be regarded as persuasive. Candidates may offer other relevant and appropriate material and arguments.

1 Peter Brian is worried that there have been some staff problems which have been caused because of poor communication.

(a) Identify four key causes of poor internal communications. [4]

Causes could include:

- No clear aim or purpose of communication
- Use of inappropriate language such as 'management' speak
- Staff unable to understand the message due to education/experience levels
- Use of inappropriate medium such as informal chats or slips in wage packages
- Lack of regular communication

[1 mark per point up to 4 marks]

(b) Explain five two-way methods of communication which could be used within the company. [10]

5 two-way methods of communication:

- Team meetings – gathering of team on regular basis to discuss issues in a formal way and receive feedback
- Joint consultations – discussions to discuss key issues of mutual interest such as the launch of a new product
- Quality Circles – these are used to develop and implement improvements within the workplace. Select their own leaders and are seen as a practical way of devolving responsibility or empowering staff to enable total participation of the organisation. Develops motivation and confidence
- Seminars – these are usually presentation of information which leads to a discussion, often used for training purposes or proposals
- Briefings – this is where management brief staff often on a regular basis, about the key issues and current problems. This is often more one-way communication than two-way communication
- Telephone communications – informal, instant feedback, quick method – but now often talking to voice mail rather than person concerned which loses some of the value of the communication

[1 mark per method + 1 mark per explanation each]

(c) Explain why a business needs to understand the communications process. [6]

Explanations could include:

- The need for communication – the need leads to objectives of communication
- The translation of internal thoughts into external means of transmitting them as a message (encoding)
- The transmission of message – (spoken, pictorial, written, body language, inflection, tone, timing etc) (transmitting)
- The reception of the message – how and why people listen (receiving)
- The translation of the message to internal thoughts and feeling on the part of the receiver (decoding)
- The need or desire to respond to the message – thinking, feeling, planning – (responding)

Level 1 – considers some of the elements of the cycle

[1-2 marks]

Level 2 – some explanation of some of the elements

[3-4 marks]

Level 3 – full explanation of the cycle

[5-6 marks]

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2 You have been asked to help to improve the communications with customers.

- (a) **Write a letter to the company’s trade customers about the new product called “Relaxing Plant Juice”. The letter should detail the other products and the award which the company has won. You should try to ensure that there is some response from the customer. You can ‘create’ any information to help.**

[12]

Letter should illustrate the different audiences’ needs:

The letter should conform to the following format:

- Letter heading of the company
- Date
- Reference number
- Appropriate salutation – Dear Mr/Mrs
- Letter Heading – New Product
- The body/content of letter
- Promoting the new product/range of products and business award
- Appropriate closure
- Signature and position
- Response mechanism

[layout up to 6 marks]

Tone and content of letter to the customers:

The content and tone should be persuasive and express the power of the new product and should state the uniqueness of the product and the celebrated success via the award. This letter should also include a response mechanism.

[content up to 6 marks]

- (b) **Briefly explain to Peter Brian the benefits of the following types of communications which could be used with different customers or investors:**

- (i) **electronic mail**
- (ii) **website**
- (iii) **presentations**
- (iv) **press releases**

[8]

(i) **Email:**

- Speed of communication – fast
- International
- Can check if received
- Can attach e-files
- Ease of response by customer
- Can be accessed remotely by receiver
- 24 hour access

[1 mark per point up to 2 marks]

(ii) **Website**

- Channel for promotional information
- Could be used for on-line booking
- Opportunity to offer virtual presentation of the museum
- 24 hour access

[1 mark per point up to 2 marks]

(iii) **presentations**

- Non-verbal communication can be used
- Two-way communication – can tailor message
- More opportunity to illustrate or demonstrate products

[1 mark per point up to 2 marks]

(iv) **press releases**

- Sent to appropriate media for publication
- Can be used wide scale to target range of publications
- Can include embargo
- Have to be short and precise – easy to read

[1 mark per point up to 2 marks]

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3 The company needs to secure a new investor to inject more capital into the company.

(a) Peter has called an internal meeting to discuss the issues about potential investors, and has asked you chair this meeting. As chair:

(i) Explain your role in planning the meeting.

(ii) Explain your role during the meeting.

[10]

(i) Chair's role before the meeting could include:

- Decide who should be invited to the meeting and what is to be each individual's role or relative contribution?
- Issue a notice of the meeting
- Prepare and arrange for circulation of the agenda
- Decide an approximate time-scale for the duration of the meeting – a guillotine approach to agenda items may need to be undertaken
- Arrange for a suitable room/location to be prepared and ready to receive the participants
- Preparation of appropriate information must be ready for each meeting

[1 mark per point up to 5 marks]

(ii) Chair's role during the meeting could include:

- Keeping to and following the agenda
- Keeping control of the discussion
- Keeping control of the time scale
- Ensure that people are given the opportunity to contribute appropriately
- Arrange for minutes to be taken, produced and circulated after the meeting has taken place
- Decide on the action points and people to complete these actions (which must be detailed in the minutes and must be referred to in the following meeting)
- The date of the next meeting should be decided at the end of each meeting

[1 mark per point up to 5 marks]

(b) Explain to Peter Brian, one advantage and one disadvantage of meetings.

[4]

Advantage: good notes kept, opportunity to discuss at length, two-way communication, effective at getting staff/customers on board.

[1/2 marks per point up to 2 marks]

Disadvantage: if not recorded properly information can be lost, requires all participants to be available at the same time which might not be possible with an international company, some members may not attend, control could be lost during the meeting, etc.

[1/2 marks per point up to 2 marks]

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(c) During the meeting with potential investors, it appears that there is a problem with the following types of communication. Explain each of the following and give one example for each.

- (i) **paralanguage.**
- (ii) **metacommunications.**
- (iii) **non-verbal communications.**

[6]

(i) **Paralanguage**

The intonation used to emphasise what the real meaning of the words are. It is not what is said, but the way in which it is said.

Example

An example would be when in some cases, when the staff tried to engage investors in conversation and casually asking questions about funding in a haphazard way – making them think they are being quizzed and they consequently feel insecure in the expertise of the company.

[2 marks]

(ii) **Metacommunications**

Meta Communication – description

Comes from the Greek meaning beyond. The sense that humans have in feeling that there is more to what a person says than just the words – i.e. beyond the words.

Example

An example would be when the investors may stated that they are interested in the company, when in fact they want to leave.

[2 marks]

(iii) **Non-verbal communications**

kinetics, body language, dress, facial expression, posture etc.

Example

Staff may be standing with folded arms or hands in their pockets which communicates boredom to the investors and they may not feel that they are respected.

[2 marks]

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4 During a full staff meeting, it appears that many of the staff are really concerned that they have not received a performance appraisal interview during their employment within the company.

(a) Prepare six guidance points for the aspects of performance which should be discussed during a performance appraisal interview.

[8]

Guidance points for areas to be discussed during performance appraisal interviews:

- Plan for the future
- Discuss individual performance
- Discuss and plan training and development needs
- Contribution to company career planning, salary planning and job progression
- Evaluate the efficiency of past targets and goals
- Establish priorities for the appraisee and the manager
- Identify, assess and resolve any problems
- Look at resourcing needs
- Motivate or re-motivate both the team member and the manager

[1 mark per point up to 6 marks + up to 2 marks for good explanations]

(b) Identify four features of a general business interview.

[4]

Explanation of a business interview:

- A planned controlled communication between two or more people
- Enables both parties to speak and listen
- Should be arranged at a mutually convenient time
- Should have an outcome which may be followed up in writing

[1 mark per point up to 4 marks]

(c) Peter Brian has asked you to explain and give an example of two types of questions you may use for:

- (i) an appraisal interview**
(ii) a selection interview.

[8]

Type of questions used at an appraisal interview:

- Open-ended – to allow the appraisee to open up and discuss issues
- Closed questions – to identify specific information i.e. were the previously set targets achieved?
- Restatement questions – to check that the appraisee has informed this person of key information correctly

[1 marks per type of question + 1 mark per appropriate reason up to 4 marks]

Types of questions used in a selection interview

- Open/closed questions for factual information
- Open questions – to enable interviewees to open up and allow maximum freedom to answer and respond
- Hypothetical questions – setting scenarios in which the interviewee has to assume what they would do if the scenario situation prevailed
- Probing questions – to develop an answer previously given

[1 marks per type of question + 1 mark per appropriate reason up to 4 marks]

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5 Peter is going to prepare some figures for you to analyse on sales for each country for the past two years. This analysis will be included in a report for potential investors.

- (a) Suggest and justify four different types of graph, which could be used to present sales information for the potential investors.** [8]

Pie charts – explanation of pie charts – total value of items must be known, use of colours to enhance impact, limited to the amount of in-depth information that can be conveyed using a pie chart, need to work out in terms of 360%

Line graphs – explanation of line graphs – good for showing trends, cannot readily or clearly be interpreted as there are too many plotted lines of information, therefore not helpful for complex information.

Bar charts – explanation of bar charts – good for indicating trends, wide range of bar charts available, difficult to present complex information.

Tables – explanation of tables – good for tabulating complex information, limited immediate visual impact and difficult to interpret readily.

[1 mark per advantage and disadvantage and an explanation for each method up to 2 marks each]

- (b) Identify the structure and briefly indicate the content of the report for the Investors' meeting.** [6]

Most appropriate report is a formal report, as this is for the Directors:
Report should conform to the following format:

- Report heading } [1 mark]
- To/from } [1 mark]
- Date } [1 mark]
- Terms of reference – aims to } [1 mark]
- discuss the distribution channel performance
- Body of the report – analysis of each } [2 marks]
- country and sales figures }
- Conclusion – needs to consider next step } [2 marks]
- Recommendations – need to consider investment etc.
- Appendix – graph of figures }

- (c) Explain three ways a computer software package could improve the presentation of this graph in the report.** [6]

- Models can be produced – 3D to visualise more effectively
- Full colour can be used
- Integration with other IT packages for an effective presentation such as PowerPoint
- Integration with other multimedia aids such as talking heads etc.
- Information can be produced as progressive information

[2 marks per point up to 6 marks]