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Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

**Professional Development Scheme**

**Leadership and Management**

**Managing and Leading People**

**November 2007**

**12 November 2007      09:50-12:00 hrs**

**Time allowed - Two hours and ten minutes**  
(including ten minutes' reading time).

**Answer TWO questions in Section A and SEVEN of the ten questions in Section B.**

**Please write clearly and legibly.**

**Questions may be answered in any order.**

**Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.**  
**Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.**

**If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.**

**You will fail the examination if:**

- **you fail to answer seven questions in Section B and/or**
- **you achieve less than 40 per cent in any section.**

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### SECTION A

Answer ANY TWO questions in this section.

1. **Read the following material, adapted from *The Business General* by Deborah Tom and Brigadier Richard Barrons (Vermilion, 2006), and answer questions (a) and (b) below.**

The authors argue in this book that the managerial and leadership approaches of the modern armed forces have a lot to offer the corporate world. According to Tom, "Some of the intractable problems that even the best businesses still face are things like respect, commitment and engagement, and the armed forces have got that right. The biggest lesson from the armed forces is that the character, the soul, the engagement, the morale are just as important as the formal assets."

In more detail, the book offers seven "military secrets of success" which it claims can be beneficial in any organisation:

- i. Synchronised thinking
- ii. Soul matters – so build real engagement
- iii. Right team, right stuff – the optimal mixture of structure, technology, people and training
- iv. Dynamic manoeuvre – find the fastest way to achieve decisive advantage at lowest cost
- v. Mission management – the art of delegation and empowerment
- vi. Command the campaign – create a meaningful strategy
- vii. Ride the tiger – seize the moment and exploit opportunities when they arise

**(a) Using evidence to justify your views, how far do you agree with Deborah Tom when she suggests that non-military organisations have much to learn from the armed forces, with particular reference to the seven "military secrets of success"?**

**(b) To what extent does your own organisation exemplify these seven principles?**

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2. **Read the following material, adapted from “‘Not another meeting!’ Are meeting time demands related to employee well-being?” by Steven G. Rogelberg et al (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 91, No. 1, 2006, pp. 83-96) and answer questions (a) and (b) below.**

According to this study (based on the responses of 980 workers), people like meetings more than they are prepared to admit: “People claim that they hate meetings ... but [their] private sentiments are much more positive.”

Drilling down into the study’s results in more detail, it becomes apparent that whether people like meetings depends greatly on their levels of “accomplishment striving”.

- If it is high, they are likely to be “negatively impacted” by meetings. In other words, conscientious people don’t like meetings very much because they want to get things done.
- If it is low, they are “positively impacted” by meetings: “They view meetings as a way to structure their day or a way to network and socialise.”

- (a) **Comment on the findings of Rogelberg and his team, as summarised here, with particular reference to the suggestion that a person’s level of “accomplishment striving” is a key determinant of their satisfaction with meetings.**
- (b) **Analyse the effectiveness (or otherwise) of meetings in your own organisation. To what extent, if at all, does the Rogelberg study resonate with your observations and experiences?**

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3. **Read the following material, adapted/extracted from Charles Handy's recent book, *Myself and Other More Important Matters* (William Heinemann, 2006), and answer questions (a) and (b) below.**

In the book, Handy objects to what he sees as the effort in management circles to treat organisations as machines and workers as interchangeable bits therein. He writes:

"Organisations ... are living communities of individuals. To describe them, we need to use the language of communities and the language of individuals. That means a mix of words we use in politics and in everyday life. The essential task of leadership is to combine the aspirations and needs of individuals with the purposes of the larger community to which they all belong."

- (a) **Using evidence to reinforce your arguments, examine the extent to which you agree with Handy's suggestion that managers often view organisations as machines and workers as interchangeable 'parts'.**
- (b) **Comment critically on Handy's definition of "the essential task of leadership" and contrast this with other views about leadership with which you are familiar.**

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4. Read the following material, adapted from *Juicing the Orange* by Pat Fallon and Fred Senn (Harvard Business School Press, 2006), and answer questions (a) and (b) below.

The authors claim that creativity in organisations can be not just harnessed, but also leveraged. They offer seven steps for doing so:

- i. Always start from scratch.
- ii. "Demand a ruthlessly simple definition of the business problem."
- iii. Find a "proprietary emotion" you can appeal to. Innovators "who favour reason over emotion will find themselves quite literally forgotten."
- iv. Think big – don't be limited by the budget or the initial challenge.
- v. Take calculated risks.
- vi. Collaborate with others both inside and outside your organisation to solve the problem.
- vii. "Listen hard to your customers. (Then listen some more.)"

- (a) **Critically evaluate the above 'recipe' for corporate creativity. How far do you believe that the application of these principles would enable organisations to become more innovative?**
- (b) **Outline a "business problem" in your own organisation where the application of these principles could be relevant and show how they could be made to work.**

*In each of the questions, you should allocate approximately equal amounts of time to sub-questions (a) and (b).*

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### SECTION B

Answer SEVEN of the ten questions in this section. To communicate your answers more clearly you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

As part of your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme to sharpen your Thinking Performer' capabilities, you have collected the following situational scenarios that could happen to you at work. Select any seven of these scenarios, and indicate your Thinking Performer' response.

1. Recent research from the Institute of Employment Studies (Marie Strebler, "Why motivation holds the key to an engaged, age-diverse workforce", *People Management*, 23 November 2006) suggests that the factors which drive employee 'engagement' are different for older workers than for younger workers. In what ways do these factors differ, in your view, and why do they do so?
2. "All this focus on absence management is mistaken," says one of the speakers at a conference you've just attended. "First of all, there are some employees whose contribution is so negative that the organisation is better off when they're not present; and, second, the real problem is 'presence management', namely, trying to get productivity out of the staff who have turned up."  
  
Critically evaluate these sentiments, in relation to your own organisation.
3. In their recent article, "The lizard kings" (*People Management*, 26 January 2006), Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones write, "When we ask people in organisations which set of competences they would most like to develop, they all say the same: help us to become more effective leaders." Using evidence-based argument to substantiate your judgment, outline what you believe to be the "competences" linked to leadership, and briefly comment on the extent to which the cry, "help us to become more effective leaders", is a meaningful request.
4. Given that 'engagement' is nowadays thought to be so important and even essential as an employee attribute, by what methods can organisations seek to predict which of today's job applicants will be tomorrow's engaged workers? Give reasons for your response.

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5. A recent article in the *People Management* 'how to' series (12 January 2006) listed the 'musts' of effective performance management. If you were asked to produce a similar checklist for your local CIPD branch newsletter, what 'musts' would you specify, and why?
6. A well-known shoe repair business says that they practise "upside-down management" – a style that is both hands-on and also empowers staff to generate innovative ideas and deliver customer service in the ways they think best. Their approach reflects the belief that "pedestrian middle managers who stifle the enthusiasm of inventive juniors are the biggest block to bright ideas." (Jane Simms, "In their shoes", *People Management*, 20 April 2006) What are the motivation principles being applied here, and how far can "upside-down management" be applied in your own organisation?
7. A recent job advertisement in *People Management* sought applicants for the post of 'Director of Workforce and Organisational Development' for a large public-sector business. Part of the text said that the successful candidate would be expected to deliver policies, systems and processes to make the organisation "a model employer". You have applied for the position, and must now generate pre-interview responses to these two questions: (a) What does it mean to be a 'model employer'? (b) Why should an organisation think it desirable to be viewed as a 'model employer'?
8. In a recent article for the *Sloan Management Review*, Lynda Gratton and Sumantra Ghoshal write, "Our research into high performing companies shows that, while the search for and adoption of best practice is necessary, it's not sufficient." How far do you agree? In particular, to what extent would you subscribe to the view that 'best practice' in people management is nothing more than 'what the majority of organisations do' and that the application of 'best practice' may even be mistaken in some instances?
9. Advocating support for the view that 'talent management' is about finding and developing the organisation's 'core competents', Dean Keith Simonton writes: "Wherever you look, the same story can be told. Identify the 10% who have contributed the most to some endeavour.... Now tally the achievements of the remaining 90%. The first tally will equal or surpass the second." For example, 16 composers have produced about 50% of the classical music that is performed today. How far do you agree with this interpretation of what 'talent management' should be about, both for organisations generally and your own organisation in particular?

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10. Douglas Adams (author of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) once said that "Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so." How far do you agree, and what, if anything, could be done to make human beings and organisations more receptive to learning from the experience of others?

**END OF EXAMINATION**



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### Introduction

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Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	10	7.1%
Merit	17	12.1%
Pass	49	34.8%
Marginal fail	12	8.4%
Fail	53	37.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100%</b>

*The figures shown are simply calculations based on the number of candidates sitting the examination in November 2007, whether for the first or a subsequent time, and are for interest only. They are not to be confused with the statistics produced by CIPD headquarters, which are based on the performance of candidates sitting the examination for the first time. It is from these figures that the national average pass rates are calculated.*

A pass rate of 54% is scarcely a cause for excitement, even if final moderation of the scripts is likely to push the proportion up to approximately 55%. True, the candidates earning a Distinction have increased to 7%, and the number with a Merit grade has become a respectable 12% – which means that virtually a fifth of the total cohort managed to pass this subject with flying colours. We must be thankful for small mercies.

Yet at the other extreme well over a third have failed outright, and 46% altogether have produced marks of below 50% – even if some of them will ultimately be condoned into the Pass group (provided they have achieved at least a Merit mark for their assignments and provided, too, that a review of their scripts produces a more positive response to the ‘killer’ question: *Can we justify sending this person out into the world armed with the imprimatur of the CIPD?*).

Because we continue to be faced by an outright fail rate of nearly 40%, I think it necessary to re-emphasise the criteria used by the examiners when evaluating the scripts presented to them. These criteria form themselves into a ‘2+5+10+M’ framework of mutually-reinforcing factors:

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- ***The 2 – the big picture elements***
  - The CIPD vision of the HR professional as a ‘business partner’
  - The PDS strategic vision of the ‘Thinking Performer’
  
- **The 5 – the BACKUP competencies**
  - Business orientation – adherence to a businesslike view of the organisations within which the HR function operates
  - Application capability – the willingness to devise and present practical, convincing and implementable solutions to problems
  - Knowledge of the subject – familiarity not just with the Indicative Content but also with emergent ‘hot topics’
  - Understanding in depth – the ability to analyse, evaluate and challenge, using evidence drawn from authoritative sources (literature, research, corporate exemplars, personal experience and ‘own organisation’ scenarios)
  - Presentation and persuasion skills – answers that are organised systematically and efficiently so that material is reader-friendly and, as a result, more persuasive
  
- **The 10 – the professional competencies contained within the PDS model**
  - Personal drive and effectiveness
  - People management and leadership
  - Business understanding
  - Professional and ethical behaviour
  - Added-value result achievement
  - Continuing learning
  - Analytical and intuitive/creative thinking
  - ‘Customer’ focus
  - Strategic thinking
  - Communication, persuasion and interpersonal skills
  
- **The M – the obligations of a post-graduate assessment process**
  - Evidence-based argument
  - Capacity for critical thinking
  - Broad understanding of the field
  - Values that go beyond legal/ethical compliance

Of course there is a good deal of repetition within the above criteria, but this merely reinforces the importance attached to the criteria. What is significant, too, is the way in which all the criteria reinforce each other.

I have already made it plain, in earlier reports, that in view of the importance attached to evidence-based argument, no script will be given a Pass grade if its content, however acceptable in other ways, totally lacks any references to or citations from suitable third-party sources. It is difficult to specify in detail what kinds of sources

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are 'suitable', but the sources classified as unsuitable broadly embrace the popular (tabloid) press, mass-market TV programmes, low-level HR periodicals and other equivalent publications, some websites, and anecdotal, single-sector work-related experiences. This is not to say that such sources should never be used, but rather that they should be used sparingly, and that they should take second place to more authoritative, sophisticated and erudite material from, say, the key CIPD textbooks, the repertoire of CIPD research reports, the better articles in *People Management*, and research-based knowledge appearing in refereed journals (conceivably mediated through tutors). At this point in their professional careers, putative HR practitioners should begin to demonstrate the capacity to discriminate between statements of 'fact' which have no basis other than their plausibility, and statements of 'fact' that are meaningful because they are derived from solid, unimpeachable research. What nobody should do – whether a putative HR practitioner or not – is simply accept what they are told, especially if what they are being told is likely to influence their decisions and actions.

In addition, the Leadership and Management Standards as a whole, and the 'Managing and Leading People' standard in particular, place great emphasis on two dimensions:

- (1) The distinction between 'Infrastructure' and 'Differentiator' factors in promoting individual and organisational performance. The 'Infrastructure' factors comprise the basic enablers for corporate efficiency (legal and ethical compliance, policies, procedures and systems), whereas the 'Differentiators' are the 'Critical Success Factors' which help to deliver superior effectiveness for the organisation (a focus on outputs, adding value, continuous improvement, people engagement, and so forth).
- (2) The focus on High Performance Working (HPW), drawing from the achievements of 'world-class' organisations and the models for High Performance Working advanced by Pfeffer, Johnston and Purcell.

Although the pass rate – just under 54% – is within the limits of acceptability, it is not, as I have said above, impressive. And the numbers succeeding in November could easily have been significantly greater, had the examiners not encountered several scripts which exhibited some crucial weaknesses which may not in themselves have determined the final outcome for any given candidate, but which served cumulatively to create a negative impression – ultimately leading to a negative response for the core question applied to each individual's answer book: *Can we see this person going out into the world armed with the CIPD's imprimatur?*

In what follows I have summarised some of the weaknesses that the examiners unearthed from the November entry.

- A very small minority failed to fulfil the instructions on the front page of the examination paper, and attempted three questions in Section A or eight questions in Section B, thereby wasting some time that could have been put to more productive use.

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- Many more continue to believe, despite explicit guidance to the contrary, that they can achieve a Pass grade in this subject without incorporating any worthwhile third-party evidence into their answers.
- Alternatively, they rely on third-party evidence which isn't really worthwhile; that is, half-remembered extracts from mass-audience TV programmes, simplistic news items from tabloid newspapers, and the results of 'surveys' whose methodologies and samples are suspect.
- Linked to the above weaknesses is the tendency to produce confident statements of 'fact' which are unsupported by any credible reinforcement whatsoever. For example, one student's treatment of Question 3 in Section B began: "The competencies linked to leadership are:
  - Personality – enthusiasm and passion
  - Professional or technical knowledge
  - Ability to influence others
  - Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses
  - Creativity and innovation
  - Commercially astute
  - People skills"

No indication of the basis to this list is supplied, probably because none could ever be produced. Nor was it explained how "ability to influence others" had become a specific competency, as opposed to a broad-brush definition of leadership itself.

- Some have concluded that they can add credibility to their scripts by the periodic insertion of "I feel" or "I believe" into their answers. In one treatment of Question 4 in Section A, the phrase "I feel" appeared eight times.
- The standard of evaluative analysis applied to any 'own organisation' review is often poor, relying on superficial levels of description and demonstrating little attempt to relate people-management strategies and practices in the candidate's organisation to the 'world-class' models found elsewhere in those enterprises which have been conspicuously successful at inspiring and engaging their workforces.
- Moreover, some commentaries are contradictory within the same script. Covering Question 1 (Section A), one person wrote that his/her organisation does not value motivation ("Motivation is not encouraged greatly"), but then also claims, as part of coverage for Question 2 (Section B) that "In my financial services organisation we frequently support good performers through difficult periods of absence to return to the organisation to make excellent contributions."

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### Section A

Throughout Section A, answers are only given pass marks or above if

- (a) they clearly address each of the required questions,
- and
- (b) the answer material is presented in accordance with any specific instructions in the brief.

Each question is marked out of 50, with approximately 25 marks available for each of the two sub-questions that constitute the typical Section A approach.

As made clear above, too, answers cannot earn pass marks if they don't contain any references to or citations from meaningful third-party sources. And where recommendations are presented, they should be sufficiently explicit to enable the visualised addressee – in this instance the relevant examiner – to know what actions are being advocated, and why.

### Question 1

With sub-question (a) there were many alternative positions which could have been regarded as acceptable. Certainly several of the seven principles advanced by Tom and Barrons have their echoes in the 'recipes' for HPW, especially the work by Purcell in his 'black box' studies for CIPD. Sub-question (b) invited candidates to consider the extent to which the Tom/Barrons seven principles are found in their own organisations, and draw appropriate conclusions about what this says for their organisation's processes and performance.

In practice Question 1 produced responses of widely differing levels of quality. A few wrote sensibly and sensitively about the contrasts and similarities between the world of the armed forces and the world of business. By contrast, too many simply repeated misleading stereotypes, either about business or about the armed forces. Leadership in the army these days is not based solely or principally on fear and blind obedience, and most commercial organisations (whatever they may claim) are not engaged in the single-minded pursuit of monetary gain. One student wrote that with commercial organisations, "their main goals are to be the best, to make sure they always stay ahead of their competitors and to increase their profits as much as possible." These are absurd claims which do not stand up for a moment against the scrutiny of empirical observation. The truth is that if the aims of all commercial businesses were to be the best, to stay ahead of competitors and maximise profit, then the majority don't do a very good job.

### Question 2

An article by Kevan Hall ("Less waste, more speed", *People Management*, 25 January 2007) had a lot to say that could have been useful and pertinent about the issues raised in this question.

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- A 2004 survey in the UK suggested that the average figure for attendance at meetings was 1.5 days per week. Hall mentions a company where people spent 30% of their time at meetings – that's more than a day in each Monday-Friday period.
- Hall argued that when companies grow they become more complex, and eventually “complexity undermines what made the company successful in the first place. The old, entrepreneurial spirit breaks down, bureaucracy increases and progress slows.” In making this comment Hall merely echoes similar observations from Burns and Stalker in their seminal book, *The Management of Innovation* (Tavistock, 1961).
- According to Hall's admittedly somewhat unscientific research, managers “tell us they spend 36% of their time in meetings and that 50 per cent of the time the content is not relevant to them.” [One has to make allowances here for the tendency of managers to exaggerate, especially when responding in collective groups.]
- Hall also writes: “A common problem is that many team meetings and conference calls include activity reviews. Everyone tells their colleagues what they did last week. In a typical team of 13 people, this can take at least an hour per week and is largely irrelevant to everyone except the manager and the individual talking at the time.” This process, if required at all (and its efficacy is very problematic), could be accomplished more efficiently through a series of one-to-one meetings/calls with the manager, which need take no more time (for the manager) yet which would avoid the wasted time of others.
- Hall's observations about meetings and team-building are especially worthwhile: “Why is teamwork a value when teams are merely a tool, not an article of faith? What's more, teamwork is an expensive and inefficient way of getting things done in complex, multi-site companies.” And, one might add, in complex, public-sector organisations as well.

Some of those selecting Question 2 made the mistake of misinterpreting its subject-matter, and simply produced platitudes about meetings. For example, “A well managed meeting, with the right people attending and relevant information available, can be extremely beneficial, and by attending, a person with high levels of accomplishment striving could leave the meeting well on their way to achieving their ‘accomplishment’.”

A few more generated virtually identical platitudes, but this time about the experience of meetings in their organisations: “It gives us as a team [an opportunity to] reflect on our work and experiences and come up with ideas of how to change, improve our service to customers and how to continually improve offering new products/services ... In the [name of organisation] I feel [sic] that all employees want meetings as it is a time to meet and discuss.” So that's all right then: meetings are justified because they provide an opportunity to meet.

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Yet another source of misunderstanding was exhibited by the belief that marks could be earned by writing about the administrative arrangements behind meetings within their own organisations. "Rooms are very difficult to find in our college," complained one student, "and even when a room is booked via the electronic system invariably [really? Always?] the people attending are turned out as it has been double booked." Yet Question 2 was about the psychological preferences of the people who attend meetings, enthusiastically or otherwise, not about the problems of finding a room where meetings can be held, fascinating though such problems might be.

### Question 3

It was expected that responses to sub-question (a) should provide a balanced, sober and clinical perspective, rather than an emotionally-driven harangue. There is evidence both to support and refute Handy's view of organisations as machines and employees as interchangeable 'parts'. Some of the thoughts that could have been brought out in competent answers might have included the following:

- The continued existence of scripted employment and highly-controlled, low-discretion tasks in some organisations and sectors, notably contact centres, fast-food businesses, retailing and financial services.
- The maintenance of hierarchical ladders in organisations, and strong preferences for a 'command-and-control' culture as opposed to the 'facilitate-and-empower' model favoured in much of the HRM literature.
- The merits of 'organic' organisations – though typically these advantages decline as organisations grow in size.
- Multi-skilling and multi-tasking support Handy's argument that workers can be seen as interchangeable.

Treatments of sub-question (b) were only given marks of 12 or more (out of 25) if they included some discussion of at least one alternative view about leadership; for example, Goffee/Jones or Jim Collins. Including frameworks and schematic diagrams of leadership styles received no credit unless it could be shown that such models tell us something about "the essential task of leadership" – which, by and large, they don't.

### Question 4

With sub-question (a), a critical review of the seven-step 'recipe' for creativity provided by Fallon and Senn was required, and this in turn called for some discussion about each of the seven steps and an explanation for those steps whose role and existence were not self-evident. Candidates were also expected to indicate whether the implementation of these seven steps would automatically make an organisation more innovative, and here alternative views were acceptable to the examiners (provided, of course, such views were always reinforced by plausible argument and evidence). In my view, however, the answer should have been negative on the grounds that the seven steps, to be fully effective, needed to be

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supplemented by some other elements:

- The presence of reward and recognition programmes to celebrate examples of successful innovation in action.
- Dissemination of benchmark examples of corporate and individual innovation from elsewhere, to show what can be done and to set challenges.
- Creation of BHAGs (Bold, Hairy, Audacious Goals) to force individuals and groups to become creative simply because the goal is so stretching that it can't be attained merely through incremental efficiency improvements.
- Recruitment and selection processes designed deliberately to seek out individuals who appear creative and who have a track record of personal innovation behind them.

Marks of 12 or more for sub-question (b) were only awarded for students who presented and described a meaningful 'problem' in their own organisation for which innovative and creative thinking could be an appropriate way forward. They then had to show how the Fallon/Senn seven-step sequence could be made to work, with or without further aids to its successful implementation.

Some of these 'problems' were clearly suitable for the application of creative thinking (for example, the need to find imaginative ways to reduce employee absenteeism). One in particular concerned the recruitment of suitable staff for a newly-opening luxury hotel in the Cayman Islands and the need for these staff to operate in a High Performance Working culture despite the fact that the indigenous population is not used to such high standards and the obligation to put the customer first.

The examiners were much less impressed by the contention from one person that "I don't see how being emotional will help people become innovative. My personal belief [sic] is to take away the emotional barriers present within an organisation in order to innovate." Naturally enough, no guidance was given on how these "emotional barriers" could be removed, and no authoritative evidence was furnished to justify the candidate's "personal belief" that emotions are a hindrance to innovative change.

### Section B

I have now made the point several times before, in previous Examiner reports, but it is clear (from a review of the scripts presented in November 2007) that the argument needs to be reiterated yet again, namely, that a 'good' Section B answer will contain at least some of the following ingredients:

- a demonstration of 'knowledge' of the subject-matter related to the question's topic;
- some evaluation and critical analysis of that 'knowledge';



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- explicit adherence to the values underpinning the 'Managing and Leading People' domain (as summarised earlier in this report);
- conspicuous familiarity with people leadership and people management in a variety of sectoral settings;
- at least one reference to or citation from a worthwhile third-party source;
- reinforcing evidence from elsewhere – from a named organisation, or from the candidate's own work experience;
- brief yet clear-cut and explicit proposals for action (if required);
- the coherent exposition of the argument as the answer unfolds, so that it is reader-friendly.

I appreciate that not all Section B questions lend themselves to this apparently rigid formula, but the majority do, and certainly this is the basis against which all Section B treatments are measured.

It follows that a 'poor' Section B answer will be one that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

- significant factual errors;
- an absence of knowledge about key themes and issues;
- an exclusive focus on description and narrative rather than critique, evaluation and analysis;
- values that are antithetical to the 'Thinking Performer' and 'business partner' paradigms, and the principles of High Performance Working;
- an insular, narrow and incestuous orientation, showing no awareness of people management and people leadership in other organisations or other sectors (sometimes this ignorance being reflected through the reproduction of misleading, oversimplified and inaccurate stereotypes and prejudices);
- no evidence-based argument; that is, no acknowledgment of meaningful third-party sources;
- the complacent reproduction of so-called 'facts' and assumptions about leadership and management which are either simplistic or incorrect;
- a reluctance to concentrate on the precise requirements of the question;
- for questions where proposals for action are expected, a failure to generate any, or a tendency to offer recommendations that are too generalised to be capable of implementation;
- an answer construction which is confusing, inarticulate or even illegible.

### Question 1

The Institute of Employment Studies research referred to in the question (and sourced from Marie Strebler, "Why motivation holds the key to an engaged, age-diverse workforce", *People Management*, 23 November 2006) suggests the following conclusions about 'engagement' for employees in different age groups, and about the factors that drive 'engagement' for older workers:

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- Older workers in all sectors feel less valued and involved in their organisations than under-30s. Older workers often seem to join their new employers already feeling less valued, and this is an emotion that frequently becomes more firmly embedded as their employment continues.
- At the same time, older workers are generally happier in their work than their younger counterparts.
- Engaged younger workers seem to be more 'fired up' by job satisfaction, the challenges and interest their jobs give them, the social impact of working for their organisation, and the pace of change.
- Engaged older workers are often more passionate about being involved in decision-making, have a wider business perspective, welcome feedback and are keen to develop, provided the rewards for doing so are perceived to be fair.
- Engaged older workers, moreover, are well able to take change in their stride – perhaps because they are more grateful for their continued employment, and don't want to reflect pre-existing stereotypes about the resistance to change conventionally thought to be a characteristic of older employees.

Unfortunately Question 1 lent itself to the advancement of some dangerously misleading and over-simplified generalisations, many of them derived from a complete failure to acknowledge that the apparent straightforwardness of Maslow's hierarchy and Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory actually disguises a very complicated reality about the factors which motivate individuals at work. One script mingled both Maslow and Herzberg into a single mish-mash ("Maslow's Hygiene factors for older workers ..."), and others made ridiculous claims ("Maslow's hierarchy of needs for motivation can be used to identify what needs are used [sic] for what individual"). Many more offered generalisations about older and younger workers that could only have been based on guesswork, some of it inspired but most of it mundane.

- "Younger workforces in my view [sic] are more driven by money ... Many younger people do not see promotion as an incentive only as a possible pay increase". Where is the evidence for these claims?
- "Younger workers are motivated more by: money, other extrinsic rewards [such as?], recognition/promotion, perceived status." Where is the evidence for these claims?
- "Older workers are engaged by having a job for life offering security. They may have families they need to provide for and therefore need a secure role. These workers may also be engaged by a good work-life balance, therefore the company may offer flexible working patterns, the choice to work from home or have time off to care for relatives." Where is the evidence for these claims?

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### Question 2

Clearly there are some organisations where employee absence is a genuine problem and should be addressed (whether it is genuinely confronted is another issue in the present context). At the same time, the quotation in the 'stem' for Question 2 does suggest some worthwhile themes for analysis:

- Are there some employees who, when present, add nothing to the organisation's performance or even detract from it? If so, these people should be encouraged to change their behaviour or to depart, not merely allowed to remain.
- As an illustration of this phenomenon, a recent *People Management* article ("Honesty is the best engaging policy" by James Brockett, 28 December 2006) cited the 2005 discovery in B&Q that 26 per cent of the workforce was 'disengaged'. According to the company's HR director, "I said to the Board: 'We must be a charity, because out of a £450 million wage bill, we're spending £120 million on people who don't want to be here. We're paying them to destroy our organisation and make life miserable for all the good, engaged employees'."
- For many employees, the fact that they are physically present in the workplace is a poor proxy for their productivity. True, some have to be there – factory production workers, checkout operators – but others could achieve more elsewhere.
- It is surely unarguable that in some organisations more attention is given to absence control than to encouraging commitment among the people who do turn up for work. This is indicative of the tendency in business to focus on 'doing things right' rather than 'doing the right things', when in practice the effective employer concentrates on both.

### Question 3

There were two aspects to Question 3, with up to 10 marks for each. It

(a) sought an evaluation of the competencies linked to leadership  
and

(b) invited discussion about whether it is possible to help people to become effective leaders (or, indeed, leaders at all).

Marks of six or more for each sub-question were only awarded if the answer material was reinforced by at least one citation from or reference to a worthwhile source.

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With (a), candidates could have drawn on the list of ten competencies incorporated within the CIPD's professional standards (they are reproduced in bullet-point form earlier in this report). Not all ten are relevant to leadership, but most of them are, and at least they provide a framework for analysis.

Approaches to (b) were often dependent on assumptions about whether the capacity to lead is intrinsic to an individual's capabilities, or whether it can be taught and learned. Alternative views were given credit, provided of course that whatever was claimed had been supported by suitable evidence. However, it seems sensible to believe that although the principles of leadership, and some of the techniques of leadership can be taught, the application of these principles and techniques is so situation-specific that the 'false' leader can be quickly identified and his/her actions accordingly discredited. On the other hand, some observers suggest that because leadership is about behaviour, and behaviour can be learned, then anyone can become a leader provided they learn the appropriate behaviours and apply them with conviction.

Frankly, the examiners are tired of the presentation of stories about notorious 'leaders' as if such anecdotes constituted genuine evidence about the nature of leadership. Greg Dyke, Anita Roddick and Richard Branson frequently feature in such answers. Here is a representative instance: "One time, when Dyke's house went on fire he had to attend a conference, organisers announced he was not attending, but he did, when asked why? He said (i) they came a long way and are entitled to it (ii) when they leave this conference they will say 'he's all right, he turned up despite the fire' that earns respect from followers as that's the stories that they say." [Please note that this quotation has been copied verbatim from the candidate's text.] The over-whelming impression created by this story is that Dyke was engaged in the deliberate manufacturing of a leadership persona for himself – and nobody seems to have considered the possibility that at least some of those in his audience might have thought Dyke was crazy to spend time at a conference when he might have had more pressing things to do.

### Question 4

This question was inspired by Lucy McGree's article, "How to interview for engagement" (*People Management*, 27 July 2006), and possible responses could have included a majority of the following considerations:

- Identify clearly what you're looking for, and ensure that all those responsible for selection are equally committed to a 'Thinking Performer' aspirational vision.
- Screen all applicants for 'engagement' propensity. DDI research involving almost 4000 employees in a variety of jobs has revealed six personal characteristics that predict the likelihood of individuals becoming 'engaged' employees:
  - Adaptability and resilience
  - Passion about work (adherence to a 'work ethic')
  - Emotional maturity

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- A positive (can-do) disposition
- Self-efficacy and self-reliance
- A strong achievement orientation
- Check for 'job fit' – ask candidates to describe their 'ideal job', and match against existing job-holders' descriptions about what turns them on or off about work in general and their jobs in particular.
- Chart your company's culture, and describe it to applicants to see if they find it attractive or otherwise.
- Use a consistent hiring process and apply it rigorously, resisting all pressures to hire people merely because of their availability rather than because they are suitable culturally, attitudinally and otherwise.
- Predict passion – highly engaged individuals are 33% less likely than less-engaged employees to leave the organisation within the first 12 months.
- Assess adaptability, by asking questions about openness to new ideas and experiences (the questions should be situational).
- Explore emotional maturity – because maturity is linked to customer service skills and the absence of negative work behaviours like time-wasting or theft.

#### Question 5

According to Cuneen ("How to improve performance management", *People Management*, 12 January 2006), there are seven 'musts' for an effective performance management system (presented here in no particular order).

- There must be a continuous process of coaching and feedback.
- Managers must be skilled in, and held accountable for, managing performance effectively for their immediate teams.
- The focus must be on improving performance and developing talent rather than on merely ticking boxes.
- There has to be a clear definition of what constitutes 'performance', and preferably one which embraces both operational output and continuous-improvement contribution.
- The process has to be customised to the organisation and its business needs.
- It has to become a fundamental part of the business planning process.
- It must begin at, and be prominently role-modelled by, top management.

Of course, candidates tackling Question 5 were not necessarily expected to reproduce these seven principles, or even to create any predetermined number. In practice the examiners used their discretion to establish

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(a) whether all the key and essential elements had been identified

(b) whether any crucial elements had been omitted

and

(c) whether some peripheral aspects had been given undue emphasis.

As always, a few relied on a succession of unelaborated bullet points for their treatment of this subject. One listed the 'musts' of performance management as: Empowerment, Motivation, Involvement, Communication, Variety, Progression and Responsibility. None of these was explained or justified, and it's worth noting that the list doesn't even include any reference to the wider corporate purposes behind performance management.

#### Question 6

Many students addressing Question 6 recognised (gratifyingly) that the company referred to anonymously is Timpsons. Yet 'upside-down' management is only one of the factors that has contributed to the very high levels of staff satisfaction in this business: nearly 800 employees have been with the firm for five or more years. The majority of Timpsons shops have lists of people who want to join, and according to the *Sunday Times* '100 Best Companies to Work For', 74 per cent of Timpson's workers say they "love" their work.

The psychological principles at work in Timpsons can be linked closely to Herzberg's motivators and Hackman's principles of job design. Both should have been cited in answers judged to be authoritative, and where this occurred then generous credit was given.

Upside-down management was a notion enthusiastically embraced by one candidate who works for a luxury hotel that already deploys empowerment and autonomy throughout its workforce. Others were more cautious, sometimes paradoxically so. "Upside-down management could be applied to a certain extent in my organisation", began one treatment, "but not entirely, as a manufacturing company the ground floor staff need structure and leadership, but with the office staff upside-down management could be beneficial, allowing the staff to take responsibility for their own work." Apart from these patronising assumptions about the limitations of the company's "ground floor staff", it was also interesting that the same candidate, answering Question 2 in Section A, had admitted that "The lower levels of staff [whether office-based or production-focused] ... just want to come to work, do their job without interference and go home." So what we have here, in short, is an enterprise characterised (allegedly) by lower-level staff whose motivation to work is no more than instrumental, and also by production employees who need "structure and leadership" whereas their office-based counterparts don't. This has to be an organisation which is not yet ready for upside-down management, and it would have better for the candidate in question to have recognised this fact.

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### Question 7

Responses for Question 7 should have embraced both the 'infrastructure' and 'differentiators' elements in the philosophy that underpins 'Managing and Leading People'. A 'model employer' will 'do things right' (that is, provide an efficient legalistic and ethical infrastructure) as well as 'do the right things' (that is, focus on performance, accountabilities rather than mere task completion, continuous improvement, change management, and so forth).

### Question 8

There were two dimensions to Question 8. First, candidates were required to assess the accuracy or otherwise of the Gratton/Ghoshal quotation supplied in the 'stem'; second, they were expected to discuss what is meant by 'best practice' and whether it merely refers to 'what the majority of organisations do' (or to be more accurate, what the majority of organisations claim they do, which is a quite different thing).

The philosophy for 'Managing and Leading People' is based on the belief that 'best practice' is not enough, since it is largely focused on the achievement and maintenance of an efficient corporate infrastructure. Moreover, it implicitly encourages mass conformity and therefore militates against experimental innovation and a 'what works' mentality. The important criterion is 'next practice', and students were given generous credit if they emphasised the differentiating benefits of creative continuity, continuous improvement and transformational change.

'Best practice' seems likely to be more than 'what the majority of organisations do'. It often has an ethical/moral dimension – something thought to be desirable, an aspiration rather than a reality.

### Question 9

Some persuasive arguments were presented in the 'stem' for Question 9, reflecting in broad terms the 80/20 rule (80% of progress is initiated by 20% of the people involved). If sixteen composers have produced about 50% of the classical music that is performed or recorded today, two hundred and thirty five others have written the remaining half. At the same time, there were some doubts about this line of argument which could have been explored by competent candidates:

- It is doubtful whether the 'stars' of classical music today were identified as 'stars' in their own lifetimes. Organisations seeking 'talent' are only interested in the live talent within their workforce, not individuals who may be identified after their deaths as 'talented'.

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- Not only does 'talent' have to be identified reliably whilst it can still be utilised and exploited, but it also has to be identified early on in the talented individual's career, so that he or she can be placed in positions where they have the opportunity to make a difference.
- Judgments about performance and ability depend on the standards used to evaluate what is 'good' and what is 'bad', and values change over time in this regard. There is an immediate parallel with the CIPD's own professional standards, because what we now regard as 'good' is different from the IPM believed to be 'good' in the days of 'personnel management' about twenty years ago. For Bach to be viewed as a great musician and composer, standards of music had to change to embrace the qualities his compositions possessed. Equally the criteria for people performance in organisations have evolved from F.W. Taylor's day ("simple jobs for simple people") into our current concerns about 'engagement' and HPW.
- One of the greatest dangers inherent in the 'core competent' view about 'talent' is that it ignores or even denigrates the contribution of others in the organisation, who are implicitly condemned for their assumed deficiencies.

### Question 10

It should have been possible for those tackling Question 10 to identify relevant examples showing that human beings are reluctant to learn from the experiences of others: in performance appraisal (where it is thought that self-assessment is more productive than managerial evaluation) and in the shift away from conventional 'training' and towards self-managed learning. Similarly, organisations often appear largely incapable of learning from their own experiences and even from the experiences of other organisations. Like individuals, so companies continue to make the same mistakes serially. For example, by over-optimistic expansion during periods of economic growth, during the upward curves in the business cycle, and also by over-zealous retrenchment during periods of economic reversal.

The point might have been made that 'learning from the experience of others' may not always be desirable anyway, because the situation of 'others' is seldom identical to the situation in which the supposed 'learner' finds himself or herself. Although the experience of others may provide some valuable insights, it can never entirely supplant the individual's preferences, desires, perceptions and emotional inclinations. It is unlikely that these 'others' – from whom I am expected to learn so that the quality of my own existence will be enhanced – will have the same view of the world as I do, the same attitudes and beliefs, or the same goals. Comparable situations, in other words, may appear superficially similar, but are nothing more than that.



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### **Conclusion**

I am very grateful for the contribution made by Sadie Reynolds to the marking of scripts for this subject throughout the November 2007 diet. We have both absorbed the philosophical assumptions, the values and the performance criteria which underpin our assessment process, and I am confident that in everything we do we are upholding the CIPD's professional standards.

**Ted Johns**

Examiner