

Managing for Results

EXAMINER'S REPORT

November 2007



Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Professional Development Scheme

Leadership and Management

Managing for Results

November 2007

7 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. "Strategic Management means that managers are looking ahead at what they need to achieve in the middle or relatively distant future" (Armstrong and Stephens 2005). Moss-Kanter expresses the purpose of strategic management as being to "elicit present actions for the future".

Drawing on your knowledge of research and wider organisational practice outline and explain the benefits of strategic management for organisations.

What single piece of advice would you offer to senior management in your own organisation that would enhance strategic management and why?

2. When it comes to excellent customer service it has been said that flexible working practices are the key to building efficiency and competitiveness. They can increase productivity and reduce costs, enhance quality of service, improve employee relations and ensure a better alignment of skills to market needs.

Incorporating your knowledge of research and organisational good practice give an example of effective flexible working in an organisation, other than your own, that supports this view.

Identify and justify to your own organisation any flexible solution that might bring enhanced results.

3. As Chief Executive Officer of a national laundry and linen hire service, you have concerns that staff don't care about quality. You wish to address that theme with middle and senior managers at their regular meeting next week and have a working title of "How to get people committed to quality".

Draft your speech, which should be no longer than 200 words, and explain the rationale for the content.

4. "Change management is the process of ensuring that an organisation is ready for change and takes action to ensure that change is accepted and implemented smoothly" (Armstrong & Stephens 2005).

Drawing on one published model of change, critically evaluate the extent to which it facilitates change management as described in the quotation.

What would you add to the model to enhance its effectiveness and why?

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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.

1. A colleague is about to begin a Masters in Business Administration and sees that it draws heavily on the use of action learning. He asks what this term means, how the process works and how effective you would consider it to be in these circumstances. What will be your considered reply?
2. A friend who is on secondment in a large local authority emails you to say she has been asked to participate in running internal focus groups for the organisation. She wants you to explain to her what the term "internal focus groups" means and outline the potential benefits and pitfalls. Draft the reply you will send to her.
3. You are currently working as adviser to the owner of a small chain of convenience shops. At your last meeting he began to outline plans for a major expansion. He suggests that a mission statement might help towards the organisation's success. Outline and justify the advice you will give him at your next meeting.
4. You have an experienced assistant buyer in your team who is efficient in the basic task of placing and processing orders with suppliers. You would like to delegate to her the re-negotiation of some standard contracts. Outline and justify the steps you will take to effectively achieve this delegation.
5. "Why are we spending so much money on customer relations?" asks the finance manager. "We have an excellent range of superior products and services at competitive prices. People would be mad not to buy from this company". What will you say in response to convince him that continued expenditure on customer relations is vital?
6. Outline and justify the main points you will make in a presentation to local business owners entitled "Making the business case for change".
7. Drawing on your knowledge of research and wider organisational practice, explain how power is used in your own organisation to achieve results.

PLEASE TURN OVER

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8. "EFQM, TQM, ISO 9000, all of these letters and numbers" mutters the chairman, "I have yet to be convinced that any of these can foster improvement in an organisation". Using evidence based arguments, persuade him of the organisational benefits of quality standards.

9. A fellow CIPD student asks you to explain intra-personal communication and say why it is important to your personal development as a manager. What will you tell him and why?

10. You have been asked to write an article for your local CIPD branch newsletter entitled "The keys to effective speaking". Draft and justify the main points you will make together with any further sources of information for readers who would like to know more.

END OF EXAMINATION

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Introduction

A total number of 177 candidates at 30 centres sat the examination for Managing for Results, of whom 81 reached the pass mark or above. This gives a pre-moderation pass rate of 45%. This is 1% up on November 2006 and 10 % down on May 2007. The percentage of distinctions remains the same but the percentage of merits has dropped by 2% on May 2007. It is the high percentage of fails that is most disappointing, especially as many candidates may be retaking the examination at this time.

Two candidates failed because they did not attempt seven questions in section B. Eight candidates failed because they did not get at least 40% in both sections.

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Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	2	1
Merit	15	8
Pass	64	36
Marginal fail	24	14
Fail	72	41
Total	177	100.0

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.

General comments

One of the reasons that candidates do not maximise marks in this examination is that they persist in answering questions from what might be described as the HR perspective. Instead of thinking like pragmatic line managers they offer wish list solutions that fail to consider any resources other than human resources. This results in the operational, quality and customer dimensions of the standard being ignored and was especially noticeable in answer to Section A, Question 2 of the November 2007 paper. The reasons may be several and varied but it is important that candidates and centres begin to correct this weakness and to embrace the manager's perspective. The set texts for this standard are excellent in this regard, but candidates need especially to widen their reading to journals that are written for managers, in addition to those for HR specialists. When it comes to discussing topics with fellow students then perhaps centres could engage with students from MBA or CMI programmes.

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Candidates have really improved their knowledge and understanding of life outside of their own organisation – perhaps there should now be a greater effort to understand life outside the HR department. For those who feel there is too much similarity between Managing for Results and Managing and Leading People this suggested approach would show that there are in fact very considerable differences.

Section A

Candidates are required to answer two from four questions in this section.

Question 1

The research and wider organisational practice dimension to this answer could have come from texts, journals, research papers, case studies and the candidate's own experiences. It was essential that they demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of strategic management by showing where and how it has been effectively used. In 'explaining' strategic management candidates referred to some or all of the following:

- Strategy is about what the organisation wants to become
- It is developed to provide realisation of the vision
- A shared vision will be inspirational
- It gives a sense of direction
- It assists in problem solving
- Everyone should be involved
- Needs a stakeholder approach

Most of the candidates who answered this question were strong on this first part. Weaker candidates let themselves down because they offered little advice, or none at all, or they did not justify that advice.

Question 2

Answers here could draw on a wide range of solutions but should have focussed on service to the customer first and foremost. One obvious approach is hot desking, underpinned by a sound telecoms network meaning office space costs are reduced and customers can always reach key staff when they call. Team working and multi tasking were among the other suggestions. Of course many candidates pointed out that some organisations were not always able to work in this way – but that was not what the question was about. It is so important for candidates to use examples that match the needs of the question.

This question also prompted the demonstration of a vast amount of knowledge of flexible working hours. These have an important place in this flexible working practices arena – but they are not the only solution. Furthermore where candidates did write at length about flexible hours they totally forgot about customer service, reduced costs, and competitiveness.

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Too many of the answers did little more than describe what happened in their own organisation and thus did not attract many marks.

Question 3

The answers to this question were disappointing, generally speaking. This message is an important one for middle and senior managers and they will be expected to pass it on to their staff. There should be authority behind this message, made by a powerful figure to a captive audience. The answer needed to demonstrate understanding of the key benefits of quality, such as competitive advantage, reduced costs and increased profits, customer satisfaction, job security and enhanced motivation. To secure commitment the organisation needs the right attitudes and behaviours, communication and total ownership by all employees. Some candidates suggested a change of rewards/benefits aligned to key performance targets. This should all have been part of the rationale – and how to get this over in the speech?

The question tested the candidate's ability to draft a persuasive argument.

Better answers really stressed the need for buy-in first by the managers and then, through them, of their staff and demonstrated the power of enhanced quality whatever the sector or market place.

Question 4

Most candidates read this question carefully and restricted themselves to just one model. If they did offer several they diluted their chance to maximise marks as an in depth analysis was what was wanted. On the whole this question was well answered – most candidates chose Lewin's model, showed a good level of understanding and could pick out and suggest how it could be improved. Most of the suggestions for improvement focussed on communication and were reasonably well justified. There are other considerations of course. To take Lewin, as this was the most popular, his model relies on changing behaviours, which Beer suggests will not make any difference if circumstances do not change. Just a note to those who chose the Kubler Ross model. This is really focussed on individual not organisational change and so made it harder to deal with the second part of the question. Fortunately those candidates coped adequately in spite of this.

Section B

Question 1

Action learning, as developed by Revans, is a method of helping managers to develop their talents by exposing them to real problems. It accords with the belief that managers learn best by doing, rather than being taught. A group or 'set' will come together to solve a problem and are required to analyse it, formulate recommendations and then take action. The colleague may find this will last for several months and the variety of backgrounds of the group members together with the guidance of a 'set adviser' will add to the learning. If candidates knew all this they would have got a good mark.

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Weaker candidates knew that this was something that required activity rather than study but did not indicate that they really were familiar with this well known approach.

An excellent answer would have made reference to the fact that action learning involves change embedded in a web of relationships. This web comprises three separate networks- power, information and motivation. The adviser to the set will point out the dynamics of this system as the work of diagnosis and implementation progresses.

Question 2

This reply needed to give a full definition and explain how focus groups work and why organisations use them. In general answers were very disappointing. Better candidates realised that this technique was commonly used in customer relations to gauge customer satisfaction. Some also considered it would be useful for a staff attitude survey. Focus groups are designed to get direct responses from individuals, but also to get members of the group to discuss issues and so offer a more considered response. . As a facilitator the friend must encourage but not dominate the discussion. Her role is crucial in eliciting genuine views. It would be helpful to understand something of group dynamics, but those candidates who confined their answer to Belbin and Tuckman did not attract many marks. Focus groups are widely used and to maximise marks candidates were also asked about the pitfalls of the technique. This might have identified that they are subjective, that it is hard to record all the comments and views, and that often people are asked to volunteer to participate so may not comprise a representative sample.

Question 3

A mission statement sets out, in broad terms, why an organisation exists and should therefore be the driving force of all activity. If the owner is about to embark on expansion it would seem very timely. It was surprising how many candidates attempted this question did not seem to know or understand what a mission statement is or does. Candidates must be careful in their selection of questions. Too many answers here went on at considerable length about objectives and targets; few offered any kind of real justification. An example might have been useful.

The Blood Transfusion service (BTS) has a good mission statement that highlights the process for a positive outcome. This process includes:

Determination of the mission by representatives at all levels and areas

Communication and buy in

Monitoring and evaluation of impact. The way in which the BTS process is enacted forms a major part of the evaluation.

Question 4

The focus here should be on how to delegate, not why or what. Everyone who answered this question knew about delegation but too many candidates ignored the information given in the question and simply gave a definition. Others reeled off what they had learned about it, for example – decide what to delegate - when the question

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had already given this information and more. Candidates must read questions carefully if they are to maximise their marks. It really is a case of more haste less speed (or marks). Better candidates used the scenario to showcase their knowledge of the delegation process, some to very good effect. Questions require candidates to apply their knowledge not just recite it.

Question 5

A successful answer to this question required knowledge and understanding of the importance of customer relations to any organisation. This should have been couched in response to the statement possibly with warnings about complacency and resting on laurels. Better candidates saw this as a question about CRM (customer relationship management) and included points in the argument about ever changing markets, changing customer needs and so on. Most candidates highlighted the benefits of this expenditure and activity as being repeat business, increased business and the potential discovery of new and improved products and services. Wiser candidates also pointed out that many customers don't always look at price but seek value for money – a point that might appeal to a finance manager who had one eye on profit margins.

Question 6

A disappointing number of answers here described the process of change and thought that they would reach the pass mark – not so. A business case sets out the reasons for doing something and the resulting benefits. Where possible the latter should be expressed in quantitative terms such as improvements in profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction or sales turnover. Most candidates completely ignored the fact that this question asked for the main points for a presentation. A listing of four or five main points with a rationale for their inclusion and possibly an illustrative example to prove the point would have been the ideal format. It may be that centres when students are working in groups, or individuals when revising, should spend more time on the application of knowledge and understanding – not simply on its recital.

Question 7

Organisations exist to get things done and in the process of doing this people or groups exercise power. Power is important in driving performance and achieving results. Candidates were asked to demonstrate this through an example from their own organisation. Answers were generally poor, showing a lack of understanding of power from research and organisational practice perspectives. (Where were the references to Handy, Jay, Kotter and others? Where were examples from any sector?). Too many answers were generalised and descriptive. To answer this question well, candidates needed to show that they understood what power is and how it might manifest itself. Reference to the links between power and authority would have been useful too. The sources of power are well documented: leadership; expertise managerial authority; rewards for compliance; punishment for non-compliance. Any of these might have been illustrated with an organisational example to get a reasonable mark.

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Question 8

Quality control and assurance techniques are often seen to be adding to cost and in efficiency, rather than aiding improvement. Candidates here were asked to defend quality measures and those who did so got a good mark. Most candidates understood the premise and could justify the use of quality control and assurance. What they were not so good at was the evidence-based argument. This argument need only have been an example from their own, or another, organisation. Alternatively it could have been research evidence showing, for example, that EFQM or ISO will attract new business because it indicates that the organisation can be trusted to take its products, services and customers seriously. Some larger organisations will not entertain suppliers who do not have these safeguards.

Question 9

There were very many disappointing marks here, because candidates either misread the question or did not understand the term intra-personal communication. Intra and inter are not the same thing. Some credit was given to candidates for their knowledge of the latter – but not enough marks to pass. Intra-personal communication is the key to self-reflective practice, a technique much endorsed in the development of the thinking performer and for the managers own self-development.

Watson and Gallagher (2005) define the concept well:

Conscious or unconscious, mainly (though not exclusively) through non-verbal media
'Inner voice'

Asking questions of oneself, often in retrospect to learn for the future

Imagining scenarios or outcomes to decide the best way forward

Question 10

The first part of this question was pretty well answered but the request for further sources was ignored by most and very limited at best. There are many perspectives offered on this topic. Watson and Gallagher suggest the key lies in:

Thorough planning and preparation

Good delivery

Overcoming nerves

Any variation on this would meet the needs of the first part of the question. To gain a good mark, though, candidates were asked to recommend further sources of information. Did they not see/forget this part of the question? Did they not know of any further sources? The CIPD website is likely to give information about most things related to HR and management and a sweeping reference saying "look at the CIPD website" is not really enough here.

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A trawl on Amazon will reveal a host of titles but how to judge effectiveness? Ernest Gower's 'The Complete Plain Words' (1954) is a classic and still used by many. Most management skills texts will offer advice and there are plenty of self help audiovisual packs on the market. How did candidates pick up these skills themselves? Candidates should remember the context of this question too, and offer main points with justification not simply narrative.

Tina Stephens

Examiner