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Principal Examiner Feedback

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Principal Learning

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MP302 Paper 01

Customer Needs and Market
Requirements in Manufacturing

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Unit MP302_01

Customer Needs and Market Requirements in Manufacturing

In this series, the majority of candidates were able to provide a response to nearly all of the questions. Only Q1(a) proved to be challenging for all candidates, suggesting a lack of understanding of the terminology associated with surveys and data collection.

Many of the questions in this paper are intended to allow less able candidates to gain marks by demonstrating limited knowledge/understanding, whilst allowing more able candidates to provide more detail and comprehension to achieve higher marks. This is demonstrated somewhat, with a spread of marks in evidence, although few were able to achieve high marks consistently across the paper.

It is apparent that individual candidates have a broad base of understanding across the learning outcomes. The type of detailed response required in some of the questions, was not often seen.

One mark questions require candidates to identify a specific feature, whereas two mark questions often require them to provide an outline. An outline requires candidates to state or make a specific point then elaborate upon it. Much of this elaboration was missing from candidate responses; consequently the second available mark was often not achieved. Centres might consider this and the mark schemes from previous papers, when preparing candidates for these externally assessed elements.

Question 1

This question required candidates to explain specific terms and features related to questionnaires as well as considering the advantages of face to face discussions when undertaking research.

The vast majority of candidates did not demonstrate understanding of the specific terms population, sample and respondent. Many confused "population" with the sample size and assumed "sample" referred to a physical product. The second part of the question elicited responses that reflected on the nature of open and closed questions, with many candidates relating this to qualitative and quantitative data and achieving full marks. A spread of marks was noted for the final element of the question, although candidates did not always manage four responses when considering the advantages of face-to-face discussions.

Question 2

This question required candidates to describe the ways in which a manufacturer would use data from questionnaires to inform product development

Although the majority of candidates were able to provide responses the link between data and product development was often missing. Many responses only detailed how data can be presented, gathered or used by other functions such as sales and marketing.

Question 3

This question required candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the term "market saturation" and factors that suggest a product has saturated the market.

This question proved challenging with only the more able candidates being able to provide substantial responses. Many candidates confused this terminology with segmentation of the market and how manufacturers address gaps in the market, rather than considering key indicators such as obsolescence, lack of demand, growth, range of promotions etc.

Question 4

This question required candidates to consider the "cradle to grave" philosophy and brand loyalty.

Candidates were able to provide limited responses to the first part of this question, not necessarily understanding the terminology and often referring to relationships with suppliers and the supply chain.

Brand loyalty seemed to be a term that proved more familiar, with all candidates being able to access at least some marks and some achieving all four marks available.

Question 5

This question required knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act and the elimination of unsafe working practices.

Candidates were able to give comprehensive responses although many of the features attributed to the Disability Discrimination Act actually related to more general legislation. Candidates were able to highlight actions that manufacturers can take to eliminate unsafe practices, with most able to provide a range of appropriate responses.

Question 6

This question required candidates to describe how an iPod meets customer needs and market requirements with a focus on innovative and iconic features. The second part of the question focuses on marketing strategies for innovative products.

Although the majority of candidates started to address the requirements of the question, many confused this with a question about sales and how the iPod is marketed to potential customers. Although this approach allowed some marks to be awarded the features of the product were not sufficiently in evidence. Few candidates were able to go beyond discussing a limited range of sales and advertising techniques, with few able to discuss the strategic approach to marketing products including the use of data and marketing plans.

Question 7

This question required candidates to consider how energy usage can affect the price of products.

Many candidates focused on the amount of packaging used when producing products. Whilst this did connect somewhat with the requirements of the question, it limited the number of marks awardable with few considering in sufficient depth, the use of energy in transport and the manufacturing processes.

Question 8

This question required candidates to discuss methods a manufacturer might use to reduce its carbon footprint, and why this is an ethical responsibility.

Candidates were able to give a range of techniques that companies use to reduce their carbon footprint and showed an understanding of carbon reduction activities throughout the production and supply process. The explanation of why this is an ethical responsibility proved more challenging with few candidates able to relate ethics and business practices. Most assumed that manufacturers improve their environmental credibility purely to improve sales and brand loyalty.

Question 9

This question required candidates to discuss ways a manufacturer can use statistical data to market its products.

As this question is towards the end of the paper it is anticipated that there is scope for a more detailed discussion. A few candidates did provide this element of detail and consequently achieved significant marks. Most responses focused on listing the data and did not focus on how manufacturers selectively use data to enhance favourable features and compare these with other vehicles, whilst downplaying the less favourable data that relates to their brand.

Conclusions

The majority of the candidates attempted a wide range of questions across the paper. However, there was often a misunderstanding of the specific requirements of a question, with a key word being missed or misinterpreted. This frequently led to very generic responses or answers

that missed the point of the question somewhat, resulting in a loss of marks.

As in previous series it is apparent that some of the questions resulted in responses that would be considered general knowledge and consequently achieved fewer marks than had they given the specific responses required.

Very few candidates left questions unanswered with mostly substantial responses in evidence. Nonetheless candidates should be encouraged to at least attempt every question on the paper.

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