



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2007

MANAGEMENT FOR MARKETERS Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

As with previous years there was a small number of candidates taking the August examination any statistical analysis is meaningless therefore I will focus on the questions asked and the type of answer required. Readers will see a constant theme running through these comments. Students answered the theoretical aspects of the questions very well but had difficulty in applying the concepts. This is surprising considering the focus of the course is on the application of theory. I would emphasise for future students that they spend some time on the practical assignments to facilitate the answering of the 'part B' of the questions.

Section A

CRH Case study

The questions posed related directly to the case and did not require additional knowledge of the company. The first question referred to the strategic vision of CRH. An adequate answer referred only to the text but a good answer involved the student rewriting the vision. Those students who achieved higher marks were able to integrate the theory studied with the examples from the case. Students achieving lower marks merely repeated the paragraphs in the text without using any other material from the course. For example the second question asked students to write a set of A-SMART objectives. Most students struggle with this. A similar question has been asked each year of the course to date and each year students struggle to write a set of objectives. It is the opinion of the examiner that this is a very basic business skill that needs to be achieved by anyone undertaking a business course.

The third question on the benefit of retaining employees was well answered generally.

Section B

Question 2

This question required students to write a brief note on the functions that managers carry out in an organisation. This was a very basic question and I would have expected good answers. Overall students could discuss planning, leading, organizing, and controlling at the level required. The difficulty for students was in applying the functions to their own experience. This was a surprise given the focus of the course is on the application of the concepts and not on the theory. I would suggest that students in future

Question 3

This question required students to apply the area of competitive advantage to their organisation. Students should have been able to list the direct competitors of their organisation. They should then have been able to list their own company's strengths and weaknesses and the competitor's strengths and weaknesses. Having done this they should have compared and contrasted the two lists to arrive at an overall discussion of the impact of the issues raised. Part (b) required

students to go further and put themselves in the shoes of the manager and outline some areas of change they would undertake. Changes varied from very basic operational changes to some strategic changes. The overall comment would be that the question was poorly answered.

Question 4

The question asked students to describe the business planning process an organisation can use when setting out its future strategy. The process used is as follows;

1. Determining the Organisation’s mission and goals (Define the business)

A .Define the business:

B. ESTABLISHING MAJOR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

2. Strategy formulation (Analyse current situation and develop strategies)

3. Strategy Implementation (Allocate resources and responsibilities to achieve strategies)

The second part of the question asked candidates to design some SMART objectives. These are discussed in chapter 1 of the manual and are as follows;

S	Specific	Objectives should be clear and deal with one issue.
M	Measurable	It must be possible to measure the achievement of the objectives in either quality or quantity terms
A	Achievable	Objectives must be achievable and realistic
R	Relevant	They must be relevant to the overall purpose of the organisation
T	Timed	A time by which the objective must be attained should be stated, otherwise control is impossible.

Students should revise this aspect for future reference as once again the application of the concepts was poor in comparison to the discussion on the theory. A student who had studied this element could use the information given in section A again!

Question 5

Candidates were asked to discuss the difference between important and urgent and the importance of prioritising activities. This is given a lot of coverage in the manual in the section dealing with Time Management. I was therefore surprised that very few students attempted the question.

“So what is the difference between important and urgent. Well important activities are those that provide a desired result or achieve a meaningful purpose. Urgent activities are those that demand immediate attention. They are usually related to someone else’s needs and can be distractions which prevent the important issues from being tackled effectively. A ringing telephone, emails, an unexpected meeting might be examples of urgent activities but potentially unimportant. Planning, researching new markets, developing new products or services are all important but usually non-urgent activities. Non-important and non-urgent activities are little escapes and routines that are unproductive from the company’s point of view; activities such as personal emails or phone calls would be in this category. Issues that are important and urgent would include dealing with customer complaints, a crisis on the production line, staff taken ill, or a supplier failing to make a delivery.

Urgent tasks can often be delegated to others if they are unimportant.”

The above is taken from the manual. Again Time Management is an important skill and students should be more familiar with the concept than they showed in this examination.