



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2007

SELLING SKILLS Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

"It should be noted that in general the answers presented were too short. Some students attempted to answer questions by means of a single paragraph, or indeed in some cases by means of a single sentence. Neither of course can ever be sufficient to gain marks in a professional exam. In addition, many students failed to explore the variety of possible issues presented in the examination questions."

The above quotation is extracted from the examiner's report of August 2006. It appears however, that students did not pay attention to it as the exact same criticism can be levelled at this set of scripts. In addition it is important to note the appalling standard of spelling and sentence construction evidenced in the scripts.

Question 1

- (a) Most students were in a position to identify one or two values of objections but very few were in a position to outline the full range of them. The value of objections to the salesperson are: they show how the prospect is reacting to the information received, they show how the prospect is reacting to the presentation method, they indicate the obstacles to be overcome if a sale is to be made, they show the areas where more information is required and they present a chance to close the sale.
- (b) In evaluating John's performance it was important that students gave him credit for all the things he did well while being critical of his weaknesses. The case study mentions that John *asked all the right questions*. Many students interpreted this as a weakness. They inferred that John was unprepared for his presentation, that he didn't understand his prospect and that was why he had to ask questions. This was an incorrect interpretation. The ability to ask the right questions is an invaluable asset for a salesperson.

A particularly important criticism to make was that John missed a clear buying signal. In relation to writing up an order the prospect specifically said; *No, not just yet*. Use of the word *yet* clearly indicated a readiness to buy but for one small issue. Obviously insulting the customer and walking out is not an appropriate way to handle a minor objection.

- (c) In handling the situation students were only expected to handle the prospect's objection, it wasn't necessary to go through the full selling process. It was important that the situation was identified as a price objection and handled accordingly. One unfortunate

aspect of the answers given to this part of the question was that the first option for so many students was to give the customer a discount.

Question 2

This area of the syllabus has been on all exams in this subject to date. One would therefore expect that students would be well-prepared for it. However the evidence of the scripts suggests that many weren't. The answers to each of the five parts of the question were: 50%, €66.67, €40, €66.67, and €26.66 respectively.

For future years students are again invited to pay particular attention to this vital part of the syllabus.

Question 3

The purchase of a car is a high-involvement decision, therefore the likely decision-making process would be Problem recognition, Search, Alternative evaluation, Choice and Outcome. It was disappointing that so many students were not able to reproduce this process or anything like it. Many didn't even seem to be aware of its existence. In outlining the role of the salesperson students should have been in a position to identify that the salesperson has a role to play at each stage of the consumer's decision-making process.

Question 4

This was the least popular of the questions on the paper though of the few students who attempted it some scored particularly well. It was the only question on the paper that didn't require the application of knowledge. Students only had to reproduce their knowledge of the Consumer Information Act and the *nemo dat quod habet* rule.

Question 5

This question required the students to demonstrate their knowledge of Trade Show participation but it was particularly important that this knowledge was applied to the specified company and the specified exhibition. Most students who attempted the question performed reasonably well.