



## **EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**AUGUST 2000**

### **PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL SELLING**

#### **General Comments**

With only seven candidates taking the examination it is difficult to draw significant conclusions from the results. In general however one can suggest that overall it was a poor examination performance.

This poor exam performance is rooted for the most part in candidates ignoring all the basic examination techniques that this and other examiners have encouraged the use of in Examiners' Reports over the years. These techniques include reading the question, responding to the context in which the question is set, incorporating personal experience and knowledge, and so on.

#### **Question 1**

In part A it was important to explain why the negative image still lingers today rather than simply describing it. The question gave candidates the opportunity to integrate their knowledge of both selling and marketing by introducing the various business orientations. Equally candidates could incorporate their knowledge of the modern media's stereotypical portrayal of sales people. Candidates who offered sometimes lengthy accounts of the myths of personal selling or the functions of the seller rather than answering the question asked received few marks.

#### **Question 2**

As Buskirk and Buskirk say in opening their account on handling customer complaints "Here is a situation calling for real sales expertise". Although this question was the best answered overall it would be an exaggeration to suggest that "real sales expertise" was demonstrated. The importance of specifying the industrial market in the question is that by the nature of this market the complaint will typically be made directly to the salesperson. Some candidates overlooked this point. Other candidates confused customer complaints with objections and consequently received few marks for their efforts.

#### **Question 3**

This question required common sense as much as formal learning. Candidates showed limited evidence of being aware of the "Celtic Tiger" or of the characteristics of the current economic situation in Ireland. Some of the implications that might be discussed include: consumers have more money to spend and they will spend it; a wealthier market means more competition; where disposable income allows quality becomes more important than price; consumers are more likely to know exactly what they want; consumers have higher

expectations; more selling jobs; better remuneration; the list is practically endless. It was unnecessary to complicate the answer with descriptions of the range of human needs or of consultative selling. If these were relevant at all it was purely on a tangential basis.

#### **Question 4**

Candidates who attempted this question, and most did, largely ignored the requirement in Part A to discuss the perception of risk as it applies to the self-concept theory and simply outlined the self-concept theory. In attempting Part B most candidates failed to identify guarantees, reference selling, demonstrations, and trial orders as the most common strategies employed in attempting to overcome perceived risk.

#### **Question 5**

This was the most popular question on the paper and one of the best answered. However a number of problems were experienced. The obvious implication in the question is that in advising the salesperson the advice should relate to overcoming nervousness, particularly in relation to two specific situations. It did not offer an opportunity to offer advice on issues in general or on candidates favourite parts of the syllabus. It should also be noted that 'rejection' and 'objections' are not the same thing. Better answers included such topics as: nerves are good if used positively; nerves show you are not over-confident or complacent, two undesirable qualities in salespeople; nerves show you care for the customer and the sale; prior planning and knowledge is power; an appointment means the prospect wants to see you; the prospect has the NAME; you are not rejected, your product is; you cannot sell to every prospect, there are laws against monopolies; use rejection positively, find out why; and so on.

#### **Question 6**

This was the least popular question on the paper and also achieved the lowest average mark. The reason for this low mark is that, having chosen the question, no attempt was made to answer it as it was asked.

#### **Question 7**

A popular question and very poorly answered. In personal selling an important differentiation is usually made between non-verbal communication (body language) and visual aids, demonstrations or samples. This differentiation was not always made in the attempted answers. In this question it was important to examine non-verbal communication in relation to closing the sale and not simply to examine the two concepts separately. It was also important to note that non-verbal communication is a two-way process. The salesperson both receives and sends messages by non-verbal means. Emphases would usefully have been placed on examining non-verbal communications as a means of recognising buying signals.

#### **Question 8**

The primary problem in attempted answers to this question was that better candidates discussed the stimulus-response method of sales presentation but failed to do it from the prospect's decision making viewpoint. Lesser candidates were not familiar with the S-R method.