



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2003

PRACTICE OF SELLING

General Comments

The results achieved on this paper were quite pleasing and reflect well on both the students and their lecturers. There was evidence of better integration of material from other subjects studied to date. This is to be welcomed as no subject is so stand-alone as not to benefit from this. Students had a good grasp of the core material though few referenced the source of their knowledge, which more often than not comes from the essential text "Selling and Sales Management" by Jobber and Lancaster.

Criticisms arising from the answers are the same as in previous reports: answers too short thus limiting one's ability to show knowledge; answers dropped on to the page without introductory paragraphs giving the context of the area; students walking away from an answer without any attempt being made at concluding or summarizing with reference back to the question asked. Some students still choose to ignore the given scenario or context where stated in a question and this results in less marks for their answer.

Overall the spread of marks is good, with some students scoring As for excellent understanding and knowledge.

Question 1

This was a popular question with well over three-quarters of the cohort attempting it. It posed little difficulty as the vast majority scored a C or higher. It is drawn straight from the essential text but welcome cross-references to other subjects were evident, in particular the M.I.A II text, Malhotra and Birks, which was the source of some of the examples given to illustrate difficulties selling in international markets.

Question 2

Almost every candidate attempted this applied question on key account management and some did it extremely competently. A first-person-singular approach was required and evidence of persuading a board of directors was also sought. Some candidates suffered due to over-emphasis of the Relational Development Model to the detriment of explanation of the concept, its advantages and disadvantages and why it would benefit the company.

Question 3

Only a third of candidates pitched for this question which was again an application of the theory studied. The scenario looked for suitable performance measures for a fmcg sales force with a long-established record in the marketplace and most candidates proposed the need for both quantitative and qualitative measures, particularly those that included measures for relationship strength. Some candidates shared the approaches used in their companies, including the Hay Review which picks up both types. Additionally some candidates included the evaluation matrix illustrated in Chapter 16 of the essential text. However, as in all diagrams, correct labeling of axes is essential for clarity of explanation.

Question 4

This question required addressing the material of Chapter 4 and indeed material met in the Stage 1 syllabus of Principles of Selling. Some candidates, to their own detriment, chose to ignore the applied nature of the question and failed to place themselves in the role of sales director addressing undergraduate business students. Other candidates obviously enjoyed the opportunity to “sell selling” and gave very winning presentations.

Question 5

This question was drawn straight from Chapter 2 and was very well answered by some. There were two parts to it: the economic choice criteria and the emotional criteria. Most had little difficulty applying the theory to the purchase of a commercial car fleet and some gave very realistic examples of possible criteria. A small number of students concentrated almost exclusively on the decision-making unit and process to the exclusion of the criteria and thus scored poorly.

Question 6

This was the most unpopular question on the paper, yet it was probably the most straightforward and easiest to score well on as it came verbatim from an essential article and had no hidden extras.

Question 7

The answers to this question were sometimes quite limited and low on pragmatic ideas for greater integration. Students should have used the material from Chapter 1, in particular the work of Strahle et al to illustrate the possibilities. Some candidates drew on their marketing syllabus knowledge and also on their own experience of working in the field, all of which are welcome.

Question 8

Chapter 14 deals with the material around this question: allocation of salespeople, routing, scheduling, workload, sales potential, territory revision and self-management. Some candidates also drew on material from one of the recommended texts by Donaldson, who goes into this area in greater depth. The main criticism of some of the answers is that they were far too short, leaving issues unexplored and not even mentioned in some instances. However, some students gave excellent examples of potential issues based on their own experiences of working with companies. This answer also gave candidates the opportunity to illustrate possible routing approaches, the vast majority illustrating how a sales manager might divide and schedule the greater Dublin region.