



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2005

STAGE 3 PROJECT

General Comments

This year's stage 3 project firstly required candidates to present an overview of the DIY/gardening market in Ireland, highlighting the major players involved. Candidates were then asked to advise on a promotional strategy that could be used by a new DIY/gardening retailer in the Irish market. In addition, they were asked to comment on the importance of store personnel to both the retailer and the customer and to discuss the importance of store personnel motivation and evaluation. Finally, candidates were required to compare the Irish DIY market to other European countries.

As in previous projects, candidates were required to reference fully the theory they were studying, integrating it with the practical situation outlined in the project. The purpose of the project was to encourage candidates to use and apply the theoretical concepts of marketing in general, and marketing communications, sales management and international marketing in particular. In order to obtain a good grade, candidates were expected to exhibit an understanding of how marketing theory applied to the practical nature of the project. Candidates were also expected to provide a comprehensive account of the DIY/gardening market, showing evidence that they had researched this topic extensively.

The overall quality of this year's projects was considerably better than in previous years, with 59% of candidates obtaining a grade C or better. In addition, the failure rate was much improved. Less than 5% of candidates failed the project this year, compared to 10% in the previous year.

Projects awarded a low grade showed little evidence of extensive research on the Irish and European DIY markets. In some cases, students took a far too generic approach to the project, failing to apply the theory used to the DIY/gardening sector. A number of students failed to answer all parts of the questions being asked. Most questions had a number of sub-sections that needed to be addressed, and failure to do so led to a loss of marks. In addition, students also need to pay attention to the weighting of marks. Students often dwelled too much on parts of the project which had a lower weighting of marks. Some students used their marketing communications and sales management notes wholesale, or copied material directly from textbooks in these areas. The majority of projects also failed to identify the assumptions on which their recommended promotional strategy was based. Weaker projects took a very narrow view of the promotional strategy, just focusing on the promotional tools a DIY/gardening retailer could use. When comparing the Irish DIY market to the European market, weaker candidates focused only on one or two European countries and failed to look any further than this.

It is expected that the projects would be proof read in advance and that spelling and grammar mistakes are non-existent. There were a number of projects poorly presented and inadequately referenced. Where material has been sourced and used, it is important that the source of the information is acknowledged and referenced correctly.

On a positive note, the examiner was impressed with the better projects, as there was evidence that extensive effort, research and thought went into these projects. These projects were well presented and candidates showed a great ability to marry theory and practice and to reference material correctly. These reports also included numerous innovative and creative ideas in advising on an appropriate promotional strategy for a DIY/gardening retailer.