



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2001

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

General Comments

The pass rate was fifty-five per cent. The fact that a high proportion of the grades rest in the lower categories is perhaps explained by the fact that virtually all of the candidates had failed in the May examinations and therefore fall into the lower quartile.

The case study once again was the main reason why so many of the candidates struggled to pass this examination. In addition, poor examination technique was also a major contributory factor.

Specific Comments

Section A: Case Study

A basic lack of knowledge of the material covered in the case was the main reason why the weaker students struggled in this section. Candidates compounded this problem by simply describing material from the case without addressing the issues raised in the questions. There is a big difference between describing and analysing something. Section C – the recommendations were woefully weak in some cases; consisting of nothing more than a few rambling and unstructured lines. The better answers by contrast revealed that candidates had studied the case and were in a strong position to present an effective assessment of the options open to Ohmeda.

Section B

Question 2

Weaker answers “skirted around” the specific proposition that was contained in the question. Instead they concentrated on a discourse on the nature of relationship management and marketing. While this is partially relevant to the question, it ignores recent developments in e-procurement such as intranets, extranets, portal sites, and market-places. Cost efficiencies also should have been considered.

Question 3

Again, weaker answers failed to address the specific issues. They either described the nested approach to segmentation, micro and macro variables and so on. They ignored the possibilities that have arisen with regard to mass customisation and tailored customised products. The fact remains that in many cases, such as aspects of the financial services sector, customers are looking for tailored solutions to specific problems, not an “off-the-peg” general package. Therefore candidates should have

emphasised that solutions provision is at the heart of many B2B companies and that “segments of one” are achievable.

Question 4

Generally this was well handled by candidates. It encouraged individuals to relate some aspects of B2B marketing concepts and frameworks to a given situation. Most candidates correctly related their discussion to the management of relationships. The better answers considered the positive and negative elements associated with the strategy. For example, a few candidates raised the question of ethics.

Question 5

While many candidates understood the Dell direct model, not many related discussion to the second part of the question. Clearly the focus should be on the roles and responsibilities that have to be performed in the supply chain. The following maxim needs to be stressed. You can eliminate the middleman but not the functions that have to be performed. Much depends on the level of complexity and service that surrounds the product. It then becomes a question of whether or not these activities should be performed in-house or left to external parties.

Question 6

Many students articulated the theoretical underpinnings surrounding control procedures. The stronger answers focused the discussion on the specific characteristics of many small firms: lack of formality, lack of structure, lacks of systems and procedures and so on. Weaker answers ignored this second dimension of the question.