



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2003

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

General Comments

It should be borne in mind that the comments in this report refer in the main to candidates who failed the May examination in this subject and therefore would in all likelihood represent the lower quartile in terms of ability. However this group also includes some candidates who did not present for the May examination and who would be taking this paper as a first attempt. Overall, the standard of answers was poor. The common mistakes highlighted in the May report were made here: poor time management, not addressing the issues raised by the question, superficial use of examples and so on. This militated against the award of higher marks.

Question 1

There was a clear demarcation between strong and weak answers to this compulsory question. The better answers demonstrated that the students had "read around" the topic, brought in some examples and addressed the specific issues raised in the question. Weaker answers, by contrast, focused on describing the characteristics of consumer brands, with little reference to the B2B sector. Other students had clearly prepared a standard answer to this topic and delivered it without referring to the specific focus of the question. This led to a "rambling" and disjointed answer that bore little relevance to the question. It is clear to me as the examiner for this subject, that those who are prepared to work on this topic can achieve high marks, relatively easily.

Question 2

Weaker answers focused almost exclusively on describing the new product development process, with scant reference to the B2B sector. Factors such as external collaboration with universities and independent innovation centres were noticeably absent from the discussion. Not much mention was made of the kind of corporate culture that stimulates innovation and R&D in companies either.

Question 3

Generally, this was well handled by candidates. Most understood the two approaches and related their discussion to the benefits that can derive from implementing both approaches. Quite simply, the weaker answers did not demonstrate a coherent understanding of the characteristics of each approach.

Question 4

This produced a disappointing set of answers. Many did not have an understanding of the competitive bidding process, its characteristics or indeed the steps involved. Clearly, it was difficult in these circumstances to award a higher mark. The stronger answers however, demonstrated a clear grasp of

the issues involved and indeed the better ones linked the discussion to some examples or real life experiences.

Question 5

Many candidates missed the important issue of how customers can be more strategically integrated into the process of innovation and research and development. This was the kernel of the question. There was a good opportunity to introduce some discussion on the “voice of the customer” for instance. Also, candidates could have related discussion to the way in which auto manufacturers involve customers at an early stage in design.

Question 6

Sharp discrepancies occurred in this answer. Weaker scripts showed little understanding of the concept of profitability control or indeed its features. Many scripts instead listed the various control mechanisms without any discussion.