



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2004

B2B MARKETING MANAGEMENT

General Comments

The breakdown of the grades is as follows.

A – 0.93%, B – 7.5%, C – 29.9%, D – 34.6%, E – 10.3%, F – 16.8%

This represents a pass rate of 73%.

Overall, the pass rate is satisfactory and is slightly higher than in previous years. It reflects the fact that students are preparing more carefully for the compulsory question in section A. This is worth 40% of the overall marks and a reasonable effort here can make it relatively easy to pick up the necessary marks in section B.

Of more concern is the very low numbers of students that are achieving grades of A and B. Quite simply, candidates are not reading around the subject content. I appreciate that most people study for this qualification on a part-time basis and thus have limited time to make use of the Internet or the library facilities. However even a cursory reading of the business pages of the newspapers or business magazines will generate a useful fund of examples and extra information.

Question 1

I expected students to engage more closely with the sentiments expressed in the question: that buyers are becoming more proactive in their pricing negotiations with sellers. The stronger scripts made good play of e-procurement initiatives that have facilitated this trend e.g. auctions, extranets and so on. Such answers made effective use of examples to support the line of argument. By contrast, weaker scripts delivered a “prepared” answer on the dimensions of pricing. This did not address the specific issues raised by the question and was marked down accordingly. Some candidates also used consumer product examples. This is not acceptable, given the obvious nature of this subject.

Question 2

The quotation contained in the question allowed students to focus on the importance of capturing accurate and up-to-date information on customer demand patterns. They could link this point to developments in information technology which act as a facilitator in this respect. The quote also allows students to explore the validity of relying on historical information which is unlikely to reflect dynamic patterns occurring in an industry such as the high-technology sector.

Generally, the stronger answers covered these points to varying degrees of detail. Weaker answers focused on a general summary of the various forecasting techniques; clearly not addressing the question.

Question 3

Candidates who attempted this question generally recognised that personal selling is a subset of relationship marketing. They explored the changing role of the sales representative, particularly in the context of taking on greater responsibility for managing the customer's experience. Weaker students focused on the role of personal selling without linking the discussion to the strategic relevance of customer relationship marketing.

Question 4

Greater customisation and "segments of one" have emerged as strategic imperatives for many B2B companies in recent years. This question was designed to allow students to explore these issues and ground their discussion in the context of the conventional macro and micro segmentation variables identified in the core text for this course. Weaker scripts simply took the reader through these various variables, without properly addressing the proposition contained in the question. By contrast, the stronger scripts utilised examples to support their line of argument.

Question 5

Not many students attempted this question. Quite a number of candidates failed to adequately address the issue of what is meant by the "extended enterprise". This was a serious omission. The stronger answers grappled with the automotive industry and related their analysis to this sector. The point needs to be made strongly that companies do not compete on a brand versus brand basis anymore. Instead, they compete on supply chain versus supply chain. You are only as strong as your weakest link in the chain.

Question 6

Too many candidates looked at the various control mechanisms and did not address the issue of performance indicators. It is one thing to set up a control process, it is quite another to identify and utilise performance indicators. Some made reference to the balanced scorecard. This is acceptable as companies can make use of this framework to assess how well the plan is being implemented. Others also made reference to basic indicators that smaller companies might use.