



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2005

B2B MARKETING MANAGEMENT

General Comments

The pass rate was slightly lower than last year. This is disappointing and highlights that some students do not fully prepare for examinations like these. In particular, a number of candidates did not focus their attention on the specific issues raised in the examination questions.

Four students achieved an A grade this year and it is clear that at the top end of the scale, students are well prepared, address the issues and more importantly bring their own opinions and experiences into their answers. More time needs to be spent on proper examination techniques before students arrive at the examination centre.

Question 1

There was quite a degree of variation in the answers to this question. The biggest criticism is that weaker answers did not reflect the weighting of forty per cent that is allocated to this question. In a three hour examination, this question should be allocated forty per cent of the available time. It is designed to encourage students to “read around” the topic by way of preparation and expand on the basic material that is covered in the text-book. It was not sufficient to rehash the basic components of relationship marketing.

Many of the stronger answers drew upon work experience and articles on the topic of B2B selling and this was reflected in the marks awarded.

Question 2

This question forced candidates to consider the issues that arise when designing a research project in a B2B market and specifically to focus on the particular proposition that it is more difficult. Weaker answers simply went through the data collection methods and completely avoided any discussion on the specific issues. By contrast, stronger answers developed some useful discussion on issues such as response rates, the challenges of getting information from the “right” persons in the organisation and so on

Question 3

Confusion surrounded some of the answers to this question. The focus was on the challenge of implementing segmentation procedures NOT a simple description of how you segment B2B markets. Stronger answers correctly discussed the difficulties of driving change in a company and overcoming resistance to such change. Issues such as budgets and time constraints were also relevant.

Question 4

This required some specific comment on mechanisms for evaluating the supply base. Stronger answers focused on this and drew upon some illustrative examples. Weaker answers demonstrated to me that some students did not read the question properly and interpreted the question as one that focused on supply chain issues. While this is important, it should not have formed the only centrepiece of the answer. Clearly this error reduced the opportunity for me to award higher marks.

Question 5

This answer was addressed in a competent manner by most of the candidates. Weaker answers focused exclusively on the internet as a channel and ignored other low cost options such as call centres. Strong answers advocated the need for an integrated channel strategy and made useful references to the level of touch and interaction required by different segments. Other answers also provided some examples of typical B2B products and related the nature of the product/service being offered, to the ability of the channel to satisfy the demands of the customer.

Question 6

This topic has appeared on most of the previous examination papers. Weaker answers simply regurgitated the different control systems and did not focus on the specific issues raised by the question. The practical implications of putting such systems into practice, were ignored by many candidates. Focus should have been given to the fact that most control systems are reactive, are dependent on the quality of the information and so on.