



2009 Administration

Advanced Higher

Finalised Marking Instructions

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PART A – CASE STUDY

Question 1

Training is most effective when it meets your staff’s individual needs as well as those of the company. Explore the benefits of 2 external training methods for your Administrative staff and the company.

10

Type	Staff	Company
Distance/ On-line Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose own place and time • Learn at own pace • Obtain recognised qualifications/certificates • Attractive/interactive training materials • Opportunity to develop IT skills in addition to subject of training • Opportunity of self assessment with feedback before actual test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee remains at work while being trained • Available for a wide range of business topics • Cheaper than externally provided course • Regular progress reports available • Staff with recognised qualifications enhancing company quality standards and image
Colleges/ Training Centres/ Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less intrusion from workplace, therefore better response • Support of colleagues on same course • Opportunity to network with other people and exchange ideas • Increased motivation due to being in the same boat as the others on the course • Improved learning because of charismatic/specialist trainer • Obtain recognised qualifications/certificates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialists offering more in-depth training • Skilled trainers • Brings company up to speed with current best practice and new ideas • Interaction with counterparts in other companies • Large number of colleges/training providers available offering a range of delivery modes • Staff with recognised qualifications enhancing company quality standards and image • Possible group discount • Training time limited

Question 2

As Administrative Manager, you must choose your team members wisely. Examine the different personalities and personal skills required to ensure that your Administration team is well balanced and performing effectively.

10

Effective groups need a mix of roles and personal skills to perform well

Belbin's team roles – should be present in any group, one member may have to take on more than one role.

Personal skills necessary for effective team collaboration: problem solving, planning, facilitating, negotiating (listening, co-ordinating, facilitating, organising, encouraging, supporting, developing, coaching/mentoring, communicating, motivating, creative thinking, criticism, resolving, etc).

- Technical expertise – finance, IT, HR
- Problem solving skills – coming up with ideas
- Decision making skills – decide on action plan
- Interpersonal skills – coaching, mentoring, supporting
- Organising skills – co-ordinating resources
- Communicating skills – listen, motivate, delegate

PERSONALITY	ROLE	PERSONAL SKILLS
The Leader (Co-ordinator)	Creates common purpose and makes decisions. A good listener and judge of people who can get the best out of people.	Good at organising, co-ordinating, making decisions, communicating, listening, motivating.
The Thinker (Plant)	Source of original and innovative ideas but not keen on detail.	Good at collecting and analysing data, anticipating problems, proposing solutions and resolving issues.
The Action-man (Implementer)	Eager to get results and succeed. Focused on actions and not easily distracted.	Good at turning ideas into actions, encouraging others and getting things done with enthusiasm.
The Carer (Team worker)	Works to develop team spirit, contributes humour and eases tension. Very popular, promoting harmony within the team.	Good at supporting, coaching/ mentoring, negotiating and interpersonal skills.
The Doer (Completer-finisher)	Concentrates on detail and finishing the tasks. Very thorough, not allowing any errors or omissions and paying attention to the smallest details.	Good at planning, highly committed and working hard to finish task.
The Trendsetter (Resource investigator)	Develops the ideas of the group, bringing new contacts to assist as required. Brings information into the team, explores options and finds new resources.	Good at investigating and co-ordinating new contacts/resources in order to keep up with current trends.
The Perfectionist (Shaper)	Has the drive to get the task started and does not easily give up. Challenges the team to improve and move forward despite any obstacles.	Good at motivating and encouraging team to do better, shaking things up.
The Observer (Monitor-evaluator)	Checking things have been done properly and not making quick decisions.	Good at critical thinking, analysing and sharing ideas.
The Expert (Specialist)	Has the specialist competence required for the task in hand. Possesses knowledge and skills to overcome obstacles, ie IT expert.	Good at solving special issues, ie technical or related to H&S.

Question 3

Describe possible areas of the employment process where discrimination can occur and examine strategies the Administrative Manager could introduce to avoid this.

10

The purpose of equality law is to eliminate discrimination. Discrimination in employment whether full-time or part-time and disregarding length of service is unlawful on the following grounds (subject to certain specific exceptions): age, disability, race, religion and belief, nationality, ethnic group, gender, marital status and sexual orientation.

Possible areas of discrimination in the Administration team:

Recruiting and selecting staff	Job advertisement, job description, person specification, application forms, during interviews, in tests, or in short listings
Dealing with harassment and bullying	During initial interviews, formal complaints and appeals procedure
Dealing with grievances and disciplinary procedures	During initial interviews, formal complaints and appeals procedure
Training and promotion	Access to training and career development
Dismissal	Apply company rules and employment legislation
Conducting appraisals	Same standards applied to everybody
Storing information about staff	In accordance with DP principles
Working arrangements and the physical environment	Flexible working, hours and days of work, dress codes, culture, holidays, office facilities/resources
Pregnancy and maternity leave	Time off for pregnancy-related reasons, access to training and promotion, job transfer
Pay and conditions of service	Basic wage plus full range of benefits, such as bonus payments, company cars, company health insurance, meal vouchers, season ticket loans, pensions, maternity pay, club memberships

The laws relating to equality are:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

PART B – EXTENDED RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 1

Conflict is inevitable in a highly competitive workplace.

- (a) **Conflict can be both positive and negative. Assess the consequences of different causes of conflict within a team.**

10

1 mark for each stage.

Max 2 marks for diagram.

1 mark for explanation of how Hierarchy works.

1 mark per development point.

Cause	Positive Consequence	Negative Consequence
Personal chemistry	Helps release emotion and anxiety, brings hidden issues to the surface, releases stress.	Hostility, resentment among team members, poor communication, irresponsible behaviour, discipline problems, hampers productivity, causes more and continued conflict.
Limited resources	Prioritises work activities, consider alternative options/work practices, leads to innovation, improves communication and co-ordination.	Competition, stress, reluctance to co-operate, time wasted, hampers productivity.
Poor leadership	Increases empowerment of team, boosts trust and support between members.	Lack of motivation, negligence/carelessness, disagreement on what has to be achieved, ambiguity of roles, disrespect, slow decision making, slow/lack of conflict resolution, lack of quality control.
Authority/power	Boosts ambition and competitiveness of people in authority, leads to focus on important issues, striving for success.	Excessive supervision lowers commitment, resentment against company, increases absenteeism.
Different values/perspectives	Source of creativity, brainstorming, builds co-operation through learning from/about each other, helps individuals develop understanding; helps to address problems.	Polarizes team members/groups reducing co-operation, incompatible goals, splitting relationships, querying group norms, leading to personal clashes.
Inappropriate Communication	Grapevine increases informal information flow, leads to evaluation of existing communication systems, information overload resulting in confusion.	Inefficient information flow, unclear role/responsibilities, bias, selective reporting, information distortion.
Interdependence of work activities in the company	Feeling part of whole company, helps people recognize and benefit from each other; increases motivation, involvement and participation.	Delays in productivity/outcomes, sharing of limited resources, different perspectives/goals, dissatisfaction with others' contribution.
Rewards/money	Motivates to 'do as good as/better', enhances performance and productivity.	Hostility towards colleagues and management, resentment, lack of co-operation, grievance procedures.

(b) Competitive companies thrive on good information.

(i) Examine barriers which affect the flow of information between the Administrative Manager and his team members.

4

NOISE

Noise refers to anything that interferes with the reception of a message, eg:

- Physical noise, eg talking to someone on the phone when they are busy in the office.
- The problems associated with too many people trying to talk at once, for example in a staff meeting.
- Background and experience of the receiver could cause them to misinterpret the message – instead of hearing what is said, the receiver hears what their mind tells them and this could be different.

JARGON

Jargon is a word or phrase that has technical or specialist meaning and is usually only understood by a certain group of people. To those who do not have this specialist knowledge, the message that contains the jargon will not be fully understood and will confuse the recipient.

PERCEPTION (and Attitudes)

How people perceive other people can affect how important the receiver feels the message is. If the sender is perceived in a negative light, if they have a bad reputation, or are seen as unreliable then the message they send will either be ignored or treated with caution. If the person sending the message is viewed favourably, then the message they are communicating will be listened to intently, have an increased probability of being understood and more likely to be acted upon instantly. If the content of the communication is viewed as trivial, the receiver will have a negative attitude and is less likely to be focused or interested. Perception can lead to quick decisions and judgements, without paying full attention.

Emotions, interpersonal problems and conflict, lack of motivation, dissatisfaction and insufficient training will also create attitudinal barriers.

LACK OF INTEREST

If the sender or receiver lack interest in the communication being sent or received then there will be lower concentration and increased potential of sending inaccurate information or in misinterpreting the information.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Pre-conceived ideas about a subject matter may lead the receiver to jump to conclusions even before the communication has been fully sent, or without concentrating fully on what has really been sent.

Taking things for granted, eg that the other person either has or has not the required information, will also cause barriers.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

With the increase in communications technology people are being bombarded with an overwhelming increase of information. Often the message being sent can become lost amongst this mountain of information. In addition, the manager/supervisor may pass on too much information to their staff in any one session so that staff forget and/or are confused.

DISTORTION

Information distortion happens when the correct information is passed on to one person who mistakenly passes it on to others wrongly, eg “Chinese whispers”. When information is passed on it is very easy for the message to be unintentionally changed, causing problems.

Information is also easily distorted and ignored when there is conflict between sender and receiver.

BIAS AND SELECTIVITY

Bias is often unintentional, but sometimes people will expect the information to include something that is not really there. They assume that the news will be either good or bad and they may not pay full attention to what is actually said.

Sometimes the sender may deliberately pass on incorrect or incomplete information in order to disadvantage the other and/or enhance one’s standing.

- (ii) **Suggest strategies which the Administrative Manager can adopt in order to ensure communication is effective within the team.**

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

Select the right time	Consider whether the meeting will be more productive at the beginning or end of the day. Give advance warning of communication. Not too early or too late.
Select the right place	Will the location be convenient for everyone and reasonably free of distractions? Consider the needs of the business and of the employees. Keeping people away from their jobs unnecessarily will interfere with getting their work done. Choose perfect setting and use busy room only when immediate action is required.
Select the right people	Decide on who “needs to know” and should therefore be included in the communications. If the information is needed for the person to perform the job, that person must be included in any communication. But not everyone needs to know everything all the time.
Select the right medium	The right medium can enhance the message. The wrong medium can result in missing the point altogether. Decide for each situation the best method of communicating.
Select the right communicator	“The best way to bring operating and management people to their senses is to put them in contact with someone they will believe.” For most situations, the supervisor should be this person, but occasionally the message may call for delivery by a higher authority (eg major change) or from a person with a special expertise (eg H& S rep).
Keep it simple	Speak to people at their level of understanding without talking down to them. Avoid using technical or “job” terms. It is a serious mistake to think that everyone knows the jargon of your business. Use the everyday language with which everyone is familiar. Cover only the amount of information that can be absorbed by the audience. Be alert to the dangers of trying to communicate too much at any one time.
Know your people	The supervisor is knowledgeable of the people and is in daily contact with them. However, the audience often have a different perspective than the supervisor does. These differences in points of view affect how we see events. If the supervisor wants to reach a better understanding, then s/he must communicate with others by putting things in a context that they can relate to. Consideration must be given to personal prejudices which if ignored may lead to controversy, not communication.
Select the right approach to the communication	Allow for individual differences, but encourage input, understanding and consensus. Take into account that the subject will be of different order of importance to your employees, eg change, safety, and may therefore be of less interest. Adjust your approach from autocratic to laissez-faire depending on the subject.

Set up formal and informal systems to improve communications	Hold regular official team meetings, but also provide for informal discussions/suggestions and exchanging of ideas/concerns during break times, away days, team building activities etc. These will increase respect, trust and understanding between team members which will improve communication.
Prepare thoroughly	In addition to above, organise any supportive documentation and other resources required, paying attention to the smallest detail.

Question 2

As firms fight in competitive markets, the need for strong leadership and training has never been greater.

- (a) Examine the qualities of a leader that comes from their own character rather than their skill.

10

1 mark for each quality described and explained.

Honesty	Leaders must display sincerity, integrity and condor in all their actions. Deceptive and back handed behaviour will not inspire trust. Employees must trust and believe what leadership says.
Charisma	A charismatic person has great enthusiasm and joy for work life. They make the workplace colourful. Charismatic leadership will create a trickle-down effect and employees will become inspired.
Integrity	'Integrity' means both personal wholeness and adherence to values outside yourself – especially goodness and truth. This quality will mean that employees are more likely to trust what the leader says.
Fairness	Good leadership will value everyone equally. They may treat individuals differently but equally, no favourites. Impartial in giving rewards and penalties for performances or people will lose trust and dislike leader.
Warmth	A good leader will have a warm character. They will be approachable people. This will mean employees will value the leader more and be able to work with them better.
Humility	Good leaders will be relatively humble people. They will not have a proud arrogant character. Arrogant leaders will find it difficult to get employees on board.
Toughness	Good leaders will have a character that pushes people positively. They will not be feeble and 'walk overs'. If they are such people they will not be able to lead others. Employees will be leading them.
Confidence	Good leaders must have confidence but not arrogance. They must have a character that employees have confidence in. If they are weak or shy people, employees will not have faith in their ability and not be committed to the leaders decisions.
Caring	Leaders need to have a genuine concern for others. This increases loyalty to leader. Employees will work harder and be much more committed and co-operative.
Courage	Leaders must have persevering and enduring character. They must have a character that seeks to accomplish a goal, regardless of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles. A confident calming personality when under stress will be the gel that keeps a team together in the midst of the storm.

- (b) **Evaluating a training course is essential. Explain the problems that can arise when evaluating training courses and suggest ways in which these could be overcome.**

6

1 mark for each problem explained and 1 for each suggestion offered.

Problem	Suggested Solution
When training involves social or managerial skill it can be difficult for a third party to truly evaluate the success of learning there and then eg. Improving communication skills, or interpersonal skills, or time management skills.	After a period of time give trainees a review of the training and a questionnaire about how the training has, if at all, impacted on their performance. This can be completed at a time suitable for them and should therefore not be rushed. They have also had time to reflect on the longer term impact of the development of their skills on their job.
Evaluation at the end means it is completed when trainees are tired and drained and so may not give it the time it requires for truthful feedback.	Have a mid-day and end of day evaluation. Provide tea, coffee and cakes at the end to encourage people not to rush away.
Some training of skills have no concrete, measurable outcomes eg becoming more assertive.	Compare the review of an employee at their staff appraisal before the training with the review from their appraisal after training. Ask other members of staff who work with the employee to appraise them in the areas that the training sought to develop – a specific questionnaire or evidence could be obtained from a 360 or 180 degree appraisal.
The training may break an employee's daily routine and this may give them a more positive attitude to the training – they are less objective.	Send the questionnaire away with the trainees to fill in when they have left the course and are back to work.
Trainees often comment about the delivery and surroundings of the training rather than the actual learning eg comment on the trainers ability, the room, the food etc.	Ask trainees to complete a short questionnaire at the start of the training to focus their mind on where they are and what they hope to achieve from training. Give out another questionnaire at the end of the training that asks questions focused on the learning and what could be applied back at the office rather than a lot of questions about the food rooms etc.

(c) **Justify the use of presentation software in the delivery of training.**

4

1mark for each valid justification

- Visual display provides reinforcement for the verbal communication.
- Different types of learning styles are catered for increasing the effectiveness of the training.
- Holds the attention longer – more exciting when training uses animation, sound, video etc.
- The trainer has less “work” to do as they deliver therefore helping them to assess the understanding, interest, boredom or confusion of the audience and make appropriate adjustments to the pace and structure of the training session.
- It helps the trainer to master the material and stay on task. A professional presentation can boost an otherwise nervous trainer’s confidence when delivering to an audience. They have a support – something for the audience to focus their attention on rather than just the trainer.

Question 3

A large organisation has a formal employee appraisal system in place, however employee motivation is still very low.

- (a) **Using Elton Mayo's research, examine how an Administrative Manager could improve the motivation and production of their employees.**

8

1 mark for each valid point

- Elton discovered that people are more motivated by the context in which they work and by the relationships which evolve in work rather than money.
- Admin Manager needs to manipulate the social environment – create a good social atmosphere.
- Set up teams – establish positive group norms.
- Create a positive informal culture using the informal social network.
- Open and frequent communication with the line manager – part of the social network.
- An approachable, concerned, friendly, democratic line manager.
- Involves employees in every stage of making changes and decisions – they feel they are part of the process and not just worthless robots.
- More individual freedom over how jobs are performed.
- Too fine a division of labour does not motivate – employment positions need to be designed to provide employees scope for initiative, discretion and creativity.
- Praise and rewards employees/teams for good work.

- (b) **Examine the responsibilities of the appraiser and the appraisee to ensure each stage of the appraisal process is effective.**

8

1 mark for each valid responsibility

Min of 2 responsibilities for appraisee and appraiser

Appraisee

- Prepare before the appraisal by looking at their last appraisal records, checking their performance against targets set, considering areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- Complete an Employee Appraisal Form with as much detail from the self-analysis as possible.
- Treat the appraisal as a constructive exercise – as a tool to aid their professional development. If attitude is not positive the appraisal will be pointless.
- Work collaboratively with the Appraiser during the interview to establish realistic yet challenging targets.

Appraiser

- To plan the logistics of the interview eg when and where and inform the appraisee.
- To allocate adequate time to the interview.
- To ensure the appraisee is clear about the aims of the appraisal.
- Prepare before hand. Look at the past Appraisal records, and any records kept on the employees performance since. The Appraiser must be prepared or the appraisal will look unimportant and the appraisee will not understand its value.
- To relax the appraisee during the interview – ease the appraisee into the interview, listen and start taking notes gradually.
- Be completely focused on the appraisee – do not go off on a tangent or appear careless in the approach or the appraisal will lose its credibility.
- The appraiser should control and manage the conversation to ensure the maximum discussion occurs about the appropriate work areas. Appraisers may need to probe, reflect, lead and even give the appraisee hypothetical situations to extract the correct information and at an appropriate depth.
- Work with the appraisee to establish any useful training programmes and to set targets. The appraiser needs to match the needs of the appraisee with the needs of the organisation.
- After the appraisal the appraiser will complete the Appraisal Report Form to be signed by both the appraisee and the appraiser and filed with HR.

(c) Evaluate an autocratic leadership style as a means of motivating employees.

4

1 mark for each valid point

- Autocratic leaders tell employees what to do – they dictate – they make decisions with no input from employees therefore it will demotivate employees who like to be involved. Some will feel devalued and discouraged.
- Some employees could become very stubborn and not comply or work very slowly or take a very long time to accept changes that such a manager would introduce. They may easily resist changes.
- Some people will be motivated by this style. People who are inexperienced and unknowledgeable about what they are doing will be more motivated by a person who has the experience – they trust their decisions and know they need them – they are happy for them to dictate.
- It is also highly motivational in times of crisis eg a bomb or when there is a very short time period for decisions to be made and implemented eg inspectors coming.

Question 4

After years of intensive rivalry, two leading competitors have decided to merge. This will create fundamental change.

(a) **Effective change must be handled carefully.**

(i) **Describe the possible negative effects of change on employees.**

7

- Job losses
- Change in jobs leading to retraining
- New management, manager or work team
- Re-deployment in another branch
- Conflict with new work colleagues
- Stress and fear
- Mis-trust with management if change is not handled properly or sensitively
- Change in culture

(ii) **Using Lewin's 3-step process, examine the strategies that management could undertake to implement change effectively.**

9

1 mark per valid point

All 3 stages must be mentioned for full marks

Unfreezing (Preparation)

- Breaking down beliefs and assumptions which currently exist and introducing the need and reasons for change to staff.
- Developing good relationships and trust and giving reassurance.
- Advise on the programme for change and involve staff on the planning and timing of the change to reduce resistance.

Changing (Implementation)

- Implementing the process of change to achieve the desired outcome.
- Giving leadership, direction and support throughout the change period.
- Reinforce newly learned behaviours eg reward staff for learning and changing.
- Let employees express their opinions during the change stage and take their thoughts on board.

Refreezing (Consolidation)

- Creating an atmosphere/culture that takes the changes and new behaviours as the norm.
- Additional resource support and positive reinforcement will stabilise the changes.

- (b) Compare the role of the team leader in the “forming” and “adjourning” stages of team development.

5

1 mark for each comparison made.

Max 3 marks if no direct comparison made

Forming

- Team leaders should play an active role in facilitating the team members in getting to know each other through:
 - Running team building exercises
 - Create relaxed and friendly atmosphere to ease anxieties
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities of members
 - Give guidance and direction to the group
 - Set the goals of the team
 - They are involved in the group

However in “adjoining”

- Team leader should play a more external role – one of praising the team. They:
 - Recognise team and individual success – feedback
- Distribute rewards eg praise, promotion, ‘employee of the month’, ‘star team player’, bonuses etc.

Question 5

Communication problems are hindering the performance of the Administration Department of a large organisation.

- (a) **Assess the role of Performance Appraisals as a means of improving communication between management and staff.**

8

1 mark for each valid point

- Provides a formal, recognised and documented communication channel between subordinates and managers.
- Provides a specific dedicated time where the needs of the subordinated are personally listened to on a one to one – in a busy department this may be the only occasion.
- Provides a formal feedback channel for the employee to hear how the manager feels they are performing.
- Provides the manager with a formal means of communicating any under-performance or unacceptable behaviour.
- Allows any problems or concerns to be raised in a more private, confidential situation – employees may feel more comfortable in this environment.
- Allows good behaviour and achievement to be rewarded. Using this means of assessment sends out the message that rewards are fair.
- An excellent channel for ensuring that subordinates are clear on what their targets are and exactly what is expected of them.

However:

- If conducted poorly or unprofessionally it can seriously damage the relationship between manager and subordinate – the communication could break down.
- If rushed or not given the required care and attention by both the manager and subordinate the potential for effective communication will be lost.
- If the manager and subordinate have a poor relationship this will not be a great communication channel.

- (b) **Discuss how informal communication can impact on a department's performance.**

7

1 mark for each valid point made

Informal Communication

- Channels of communication established through friendship groups – grapevine

Benefit/Use – of managed and manipulated **properly**:

- Managers can 'leak' ideas and proposals to gauge staff's reaction before making a final decision – this will improve the implementation of decisions and improve departmental performance.
- It is a very fast method of communication – often spreads faster than formal communication allowing decisions and actions to be implemented quicker.
- Satisfies the human need for social interaction – Elton Mayo, Malsow Social meaning employees should be happier and therefore more productive.
- Management can use it to ease employee worry about organisational decisions/ activities – people often believe the grapevine more than the formal channel therefore this should be used by management to their advantage.
- Can be used to create a common organisation culture which can positively enhance departmental productivity.
- Can help work groups, departments and inter-departmental relationships to become more cohesive.
- Can be used to support and reinforce formal statements – if reinforced; gives formal statements more credibility and more commitment from the department.

However if not handled properly

- Grapevine can create unnecessary stress as it often becomes distorted and is based on half truths – this can seriously negatively impact on the performance of staff and the department.
- Can be used to back stab and create hostility between staff. Conflict within the department will seriously affect departmental performance. Division and ill-feeling will break down communication and unity.

- (c) **Suggest possible strategies an employer could undertake to help ensure employees abide by the requirements of the Computer Misuse Act 1990.**

5

1 mark for each valid strategy

- Write a Computer Use Policy and ensure all staff are aware of its contents – place in Staff Handbook.
- Ensure the regulations and guidelines for using computers, accessing files and passwords are included in Induction Training to ensure that every new member of staff is fully aware.
- Include in the Disciplinary Policy or provide details of the disciplinary action that would be taken for different breaches of the legislation.
- Follow through on the disciplinary action when there is an instance of infringing on the legislation.
- Display posters in the offices of the guidelines of proper computer use.
- Protect files and network areas with security measures.
- Closely monitor the activity of employees on the network to identify any breaches or bad practice.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]