

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOURAL STUDIES

The subject of Business Communication & Behavioral Studies requires intensive study and precise understanding of the various concepts and their application in business. Students who have only general awareness of the concepts but lack in-depth knowledge of the specific topics would not be able to achieve satisfactory grades. This phenomenon was observed in the replies to a number of questions which were set to assess the clarity of the concepts among the candidates. Moreover, most of the answer scripts indicated that the student had resorted to selective studying. In many cases the answers to few of the questions were really good but in the same copy, some of the questions were very poorly answered. Comments on the individual questions are given below:

Q.1 In this Question, the Barriers to Communication were required to be identified specifically in the context of their hindrance to smooth flow of communication between departments and as obstacles to individual co-ordination. A number of students were able to identify these Barriers under the following broad classifications:

- General faults in communication process
- Work related difficulties
- Differences in social, racial or educational background
- Differences in personality

Since this Question required point-wise replies, a sizeable number of the students were able to score reasonably high marks.

Q.2 This Question related to writing of a letter to customers with a view to announce the launching of new products by the Bank. Generally, the students adhered to the correct format of the business letter. However, the closure of the letters were rather ambiguous and lacked the right type of sales pitch. A number of students emphasized that the Bank's interest rates were significantly lower than the other competitors. This is not sustainable for any bank. A few students incorrectly stated that the Bank would provide the facilities without any documentation. This is technically incorrect as it would be in violation of the SBP regulations and also undermine the security concerns of the bank. The overall performance of the students was satisfactory.

Q.3 (a) This part of the question sought comments on the power of money as a tool to motivate employees in labour intensive manufacturing companies and whether an increase in pay always leads to improved productivity and performance. Those students whose replies were on the following lines were able to obtain high marks:

- Value of money to the individuals is high
- Employees immediate need for money is high and hence they are motivated to perform better and be rewarded accordingly
- In jobs which have limited intrinsic interest, monetary reward offers considerable satisfaction

Similarly, a number of the students stated correctly that monetary incentives would not yield optimum results in situations where:

- i) value of money is less to an individual
- ii) working environment is not conducive
- iii) intrinsic motivation is more important
- iv) incentives are subject to difficult targets

- (b) This Question was regarding definition of intrinsic motivation and identification of factors which create intrinsic motivation. Most of the definitions lacked clarity of the basic concept and mentioned the hygiene factor of money in relation to the performance of the employees. However, some of the students rightly mentioned that work itself is a source of motivation and an interesting job creates internal positive urge to work that is independent from external rewards.

Only a few replies to the identification of factors which create motivation covered all of the following relevant points:

- Task Significance
- Autonomy
- Feedback
- Clarity of Task to be performed
- Skill variety and
- Task Identity

- Q.4 (a) A number of replies to the Question regarding the difference between the Objectives and Mission of an organization fetched high marks as they covered the following main points:

- Objectives are formal and in writing, whereas Mission is mainly cultural
- Objectives are time-bound but Mission has no such constraint
- Objectives are stated in quantifiable terms, whereas a Mission does not have any such requirement.

- (b) Students who had done serious preparations were able to respond satisfactorily to the Question relating to the inherent conflicts between the various goals in an organization by stating the following relevant points:

Bargaining: Managers with different goals compete and form alliances with other managers to achieve common goals

Overall Satisfaction: Organizations do not seek to achieve optimal results in any one area if it adversely affects performance in any other area. The over-riding goal is to achieve satisfactory performance in most of the areas

Sequential Attention: goals are dealt with one by one in the order of their sequence

Priority Setting: Certain goals are accorded priority over others by the top management.

Q.5 Concepts and Principles of Ethical Communication. The overall performance was not satisfactory as a number of the students were not familiar with the core concept of Ethical Communication and its application in the context of a business organization. Most of the students responded to this Question with reference to the 7C's of Communication with emphasis on the concept of 'correctness'. A well-formulated reply to this Question should have covered the following main points:

Disclosure of Information: Exercise of a high level of discretion to maintain confidentiality of secret information including trade secrets and abstaining from sharing it with customers, suppliers and competitors.

Honesty: Truth in communication should not only cover accurate and precise reporting of facts and figures but also providing information to relevant persons which would have impact on their expectations, decisions and judgments, including their work and careers. Honesty should be considered as a basic standard of lateral and upward communication.

Refraining from causing harm: Organizations should communicate facts about the inherent dangers of their products. Failure to do so would be in violation of this rule.

Fairness and justice to all the stakeholders: The organization must be fair to both its internal and external stakeholders and also to its other constituents.

Q.6 This Question regarding how to avoid being discourteous while communicating one's disagreement or protest was simple and of a general nature. The replies were quite satisfactory as quite a number of the students mentioned that one should avoid being blunt and also be appreciative of the viewpoint of the recipients. However, a number of the examples were vague as they lacked both absolute clarity of the concept and expression skills.

Q.7 Significance of the Role of a Leader or Chairperson for a Constructive Discussion. The replies to this Question were out of context as a number of the students mentioned the generally accepted Qualities of Leadership. However, those students who were able to correctly list the following communication leadership skills scored high marks:

- Decision on appropriate location and conduct of discussion according to the nature of the subject and personalities of the participants. The style of the meeting may be formal or informal depending on the circumstances.
- The aims and terms of reference of the meeting should be clear to all the participants.
- The discussions should be relevant and should be steered away from side issues and disputes.
- The discussions should progress towards more profitable aspects after consideration of a specific issue.
- The leader should recognize feedback signals of indifference, frustration or rising tempers and change track smoothly.
- Encouraging participation from quiet members and exercising control on forceful and talkative members.
- Keeping order firmly but courteously and checking any attempt to set meetings within meetings.
- Screening the conclusions and drawing the discussions to a satisfying close.

- Q.8 The concept of “Psychological Contract” was not clearly understood by a large number of the students. The core point that a Psychological Contract is an implied mutual understanding between the employer and the employee was missed by a number of the students. These students incorrectly mentioned that the level of pay and other perquisites were the essential ingredients of a Psychological Contract. The point-wise replies relating to the individual and organizational expectations in an employer-employee relationship were quite satisfactory and afforded mark scoring opportunities to the students.
- Q.9 Replies to the Question relating to the drafting of Minutes of the Executive Committee were quite good as most of the students were aware of the format and presentation of the Minutes of a Meeting. However, inappropriate vocabulary and grammatical mistakes were noticeable in most of the replies. A number of the students were unaware of the “Action Format” of the Minutes in which the name and designation of the individual entrusted with the responsibility of taking further required action on the issue is specifically mentioned.
- Q.10 This Question regarding Report Writing provided an opportunity to the students to score valuable marks. Lack of coherence in presentation, flaws in the construction of sentences and grammatical errors were observed in some of the reports. The efforts in the preparation of this topic were apparent as most of students mentioned the salient points of the Report according to the following stated format:
- Title of the Report
 - Introduction and Terms of Reference of the assignment
 - Methodology/procedure of conducting the investigation, collection of data, interviews with key personnel and distributors
 - Findings: Coverage of critical points to determine reason for failure of the strategy
 - Conclusions and Recommendations

(THE END)