

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE
CAMBRIDGE CAREER AWARD – STANDARD LEVEL

BUSINESS

5162/1

Effective Business Communication
Core module

OCTOBER 2002

Additional materials:
Answer paper

TIME 2 hours plus 15 minutes reading time

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces provided on the answer paper/booklet.

Attempt all tasks.

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided.

If you use more than one sheet of paper, fasten the sheets together.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each task or part task.

You may use a calculator.

This question paper consists of 5 printed pages and 3 blank pages.

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You must read the case study below and answer all the tasks which follow.

(The following case study is purely fictitious.)

Robert White – Manufacturer of Exquisite Shirts

'Robert White' is a company, which was founded in 1986 and it is reasonably successful in the manufacture and sales of classic clothing for men. Essam Bakr is the Managing Director of the company and he manages over 200 employees (which includes, amongst others, machinists and administration, marketing, sales, and packaging staff). The company boasts that it has become the largest company selling quality shirts by mail order in Europe. However, the company has customers throughout the world and telesales centres in London, Dusseldorf and Tokyo. 5

The company prides itself on the quality of its products, and its philosophy is to create a quality product at an attractive price. The company has one retail outlet in a very fashionable area of London. However, its main channel of distribution is via direct mail.

The product range includes a wide range of shirts, trousers, cashmere sweaters, pullovers, neck ties, cuff-links, scarves, boxer shorts and belts. The company states that its shirts are different from mass produced garments because of the quality of materials used, and this is promoted in the company's sales literature. The shirts can be ordered in a range of different cottons, colours and sizes. If required, the shirts can be gift packed at an extra cost. Otherwise the products are despatched in a basic brown box. 10 15

The main method of promotion is via advertising in the quality press and via mailshots to the database of customers. The company produces a range of high quality small catalogues, (in English and German languages), which are mailed directly to potential and current customers on a regular basis. There is also a web site which is very well designed, allowing customers to obtain information about the products, the company and to order on-line. 20

Customers can order the products through five methods: by telephone to a team of telesales personnel; by fax; via a freepost envelope; by visiting the shop in London and via the world-wide web site. This web site includes a 'fast shop' which allows customers to 'look around' and purchase products on-line. Orders are despatched within 24 hours of the order receipt and are sent by first class post or 24-hour carrier for UK customers, or by Airmail (which takes 2-5 days) for orders in Europe and (5-7 days) for the rest of the world destinations. 25

Recently there has been a large number of customer complaints and this has resulted in a higher number of returns of stock than normal (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Customer Complaints and Returns for 2001

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Number of written complaints	124	145	231	221
Number of emailed complaints	34	56	45	57
Number of telephone complaints	25	34	45	56
Returns of stock because of faults (individual items)	324	401	502	545

Essam is concerned that there is a problem within the quality control and distribution department, which is why there are so many complaints. He is also worried that because sales have increased due to more customers using the on-line ordering system, the current staff are not able to cope with the increased demand. He is reluctant to recruit new staff as he believes that Europe is about to face a recession and this could have a negative impact on sales next year. However, the Human Resources Director has persuaded Essam that new staff on temporary contracts should be recruited to help with the current situation.

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This problem of increased customer returns and complaints has led to low morale within the staff and, unfortunately, this is resulting in an increase in staff absenteeism. However, this absenteeism within the staff means that the remaining staff are under even more pressure. Essam is very concerned that this internal problem is resolved quickly.

You must attempt ALL of the following tasks.

- 1 Essam is very concerned about the level of complaints and so is considering the best method to respond to each customer complaint.
- (a) State the effectiveness of using the following methods:
- (i) email to the customer [3]
- (ii) telephone call to the customer from the customer complaints department [3]
- (b) Essam also wants to tell the staff within the organisation about the levels of complaints and returns. Identify the most appropriate method(s) of communication he should use to do this and give reasons for your choice. [6]
- (c) List **two** reasons why it is important that Essam uses the most appropriate methods of communication for **both** internal and external communications. [8]
- [Total: 20]**
- 2 Essam has finally decided that he is going to advertise for temporary staff.
- (a) Write a memo from Essam to the Human Resources Director, explaining that it will be necessary to recruit four new members of staff on a temporary contract. [8]
- (b) The company has received fifty applications for the four new temporary posts and has decided to short-list eight people for interview. Write a letter to invite one of the shortlisted candidates for interview. You can 'create' any details that you think are necessary. [12]
- [Total: 20]**
- 3 The problems of low morale and high levels of absenteeism are a major worry to Essam. He has decided to form a group of staff to consider these problems.
- (a) Identify and briefly explain **three** advantages of using a group to try to solve problems like this. [6]
- (b) Essam decides to hold meetings for this group every month. Identify **four** characteristics of successful meetings which Essam will need to consider. [8]
- (c) Explain the importance of **both** verbal and non-verbal communication in a group meeting. [6]
- [Total: 20]**
- 4 Interviews have been arranged for the applicants for the new positions within the company.
- (a) Describe the type of interview structure which Essam is likely to use for these recruitment interviews and explain why you have selected this structure. [10]
- (b) Identify **three** purposes of selection interviews. [6]
- (c) Briefly explain open and closed questions which could be used at these interviews and give one example of each. [4]
- [Total: 20]**

5 Essam is preparing a report on the key problems within the organisation for the Board of directors to consider.

(a) Prepare the data in Table 1 and present it as a bar chart, showing customer complaints only, to be included within the report. **[10]**

(b) Explain the following types of visual aids which Essam could use to present the data:

(i) pie chart

(ii) line graph **[4]**

(c) Essam is going to include an organisation chart within the report. Explain what can be shown on an organisational chart. **[6]**

[Total: 20]

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