

MARK SCHEME for the October 2005 question paper

5172 BUSINESS

5172

Effective Business Communication, maximum mark 100

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1 Hande is the product manager for Kleggs' cereal bars. She has been considering how to communicate to customers and retailers that a new range of cereal bar, which contains no sugar, is being introduced.

(a) Explain the following methods of communication which could be used to inform customers about the new cereal bars:

- (i) press releases.
- (ii) letters.
- (iii) written reports.

[6]

- (i) Press releases – written to enhance reputation of the organisation. Written to submit to journalists in the press or trade and special interest magazines – one-way communication.
- (ii) Letters – formal one-way communication, on headed company paper, used in mail shots. Can include sample of cereal bar in letter or vouchers – so can be very persuasive.
- (iii) Written reports – more formal communication method often used to communicate complex information – one-way method.

Accept other valid alternative answers including direct mail.

[2 marks per explanation up to total of 6 marks]

(b) Suggest, with reasons, three methods of communication which Kleggs could use to communicate the new cereal bars to retail shops.

[6]

Kleggs could use the following methods to communicate the new cereal bars to retail shops:

- Formal letter – can include examples of bar and packaging, can be very informative (one way communication so may be limited in impact).
- Sales reps or Key Account Manager visits – one-to-one meetings (two-way communication) with retail shop buyers, this will allow the message to be tailored to the retail requirements and orders could be taken at the same time.
- Email – informal, maybe appropriate as a first communication for general awareness, but not very effective at being persuasive.
- Conference or open meeting – two-way communication. Could be used to gather a number of retailers together and give out samples and merchandising information. Quite persuasive.
- Advert in trade press/brochures – one-way, only good for raising limited awareness – not really the most appropriate method but joined with other methods such as Key Account Managers visits could be effective.
- Website – not very effective one way method, required the retailer to seek out the information.
- Costs and benefits of human contact.

[up to 2 marks per method which is explained and justified up to 6 marks in total]

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- (c) Hande needs to ensure that all Kleggs' sales staff who sell to retailers are aware of the role of non-verbal and meta communications when discussing the new cereal bars. Explain each of these terms and how each could be used effectively.

[8]

Non-verbal communications:

Kinesics, body language, dress, facial expression, posture etc.

Example: Sales staff must ensure that they are dressed appropriately for this role. There should be good consideration of facial expression and body language, i.e. an open and friendly, smiling approach should be considered.

[2 marks for explanation and 2 marks for example up to 4 marks]

Meta communications:

Meta communication - comes from the Greek meaning beyond. The sense that humans have in feeling that there is more to what a person says than just the words – i.e. beyond the words.

Example: An example would be when the sales reps are talking to the retailers, they must ensure that the message they give is convincing. There is a danger that the retailers may think that the sales reps are just trying to increase their commission – i.e. more of what the sales reps say.

[2 marks for explanation and 2 marks for example up to 4 marks]

[Total 20]

- 2 Hande knows that she needs to communicate the benefits of the cereal bar to the general public.

- (a) Write a press release for a women's magazine, promoting the benefits of the new cereal bars which Kleggs are just about to launch.

[8]

Press release:

Title: New cereal bar.

Embargo date:

Contact Name:

Body of the press release:

Punchy piece about the benefits of the cereal bar and where they can be purchased.

Layout - spacing – double lined.

Level 1: very short, not presented correctly

1-3 marks

Level 2: reasonable approach, presented correctly

4-6 marks

Level 3: very persuasive and punch/piece presented well

7-8 marks

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- (b) Hande has been able to gather a number of email addresses on the customer database and is considering sending this press release to the customers via email. Identify three benefits of using this type of communication channel.

[6]

Database of email addresses:

- The database should provide contact details which could be used to send out mailshots.
- The database could be used to build a loyalty scheme.
- The information on the database could be used to target similar customers with similar characteristics.
- Email is quick and available 24/7.
- Can attach hotlink to website or example of packaging etc.
- Email can reach international customers more effectively.
- No printing costs.

Level 1 – 1-2 marks if only list of points given.

Level 2 – 3-4 marks for some brief explanations.

Level 3 – 5-6 for good depth of explanation.

- (c) Hande has been asked to write a report for the rest of Kleggs' marketing department, detailing the research on the consumption of cereal bars. Suggest and describe the most appropriate structure for this report.

[6]

Most appropriate report is a formal report.

Report structure:

- Report heading.
- To/from.
- Date.
- Terms of reference/introduction.
- Body of the report – research data on consumption.
- Conclusion.
- Recommendations.

Level 1: some identification of structure.

1-3 marks

Level 2: good descriptions of structure and type of report.

4-6 marks

[Total 20]

- 3 Hande is determined to develop staff communications to help to build teamwork within the marketing department.

- (a) List five characteristics of effective groups and teamwork.

[5]

Characteristics of effective groups and teamwork could include:

- Group structure.
- Group culture.
- Mutual trust and support from both parties.
- Consultation.
- Involvement in decision-making.
- Think more creatively and innovatively as a group.

[1 mark per point up to 5 marks]

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(b) List three barriers to good group communication.

[5]

Barriers to good group communication include:

- Lack of information or poor communication system.
- NVC - poor body language and distortion of message.
- Inappropriate language.
- Poor listening and feedback.
- Pre-judgement.
- Poor relationships.
- Emotional responses.
- Autocratic leader.
- Aims for the group have not been set.
- Lack of success for the group.

[1-2 mark per point up to 5 marks]

(c) Identify five main methods of ensuring effective group meetings.

[10]

Could consider:

- Decide on the nature of the meeting – i.e. is it solely to give or to receive information or both? Is a facilitation of a discussion important?
- Who should be invited to the meeting and what is to be each individual's role or relative contribution?
- A notice of the meeting must be issued.
- An agenda must be prepared.
- An approximate time-scale for the duration of the meeting should be decided – a guillotine approach to agenda items may need to be undertaken.
- Minutes should be taken, produced and circulated after the meeting has taken place.
- Action points must be detailed in the minutes which must be referred to in the following meeting.
- Prioritising of agenda items.
- A chair for the meeting must be appointed and his/her agenda drawn up – is the chair to rotate? Personality of the Chairperson.
- A suitable room/location must be prepared and ready to receive the participants.
- Preparation of appropriate information must be ready for each meeting.
- The date of the next meeting should be decided at the end of each meeting.
- The timing of the meeting in terms of the time of day should be decided.
- The mix within the group.

[2 marks per point up to 10 marks]

[Total 20]

4 It seems that the timing of communications, for the launch of this new cereal bar, is very important and so the use of technology is being considered.

(a) Explain how the following technology could be used and give one advantage for each.

- (i) Intranet for employee communication.**
- (ii) Extranet for communication with retail customers.**
- (iii) Email for sending press releases to the national press.**

[3x4]

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New technology – explanation of each method and one advantage:

- (i) Intranet – holds information which is accessible for all employees in all sections/offices/locations of the organisation.

Advantage: easy for staff to access a large range of information. Quick for staff to access information.

- (ii) Extranet – password protected area of the Intranet which retailers can access, which allows them privileged information about the cereal bars such as stock availability.

Advantage: builds trust and support for buyers, relationship building therefore, more reliability and service.

- (iii) Email – electronic form of communication via www to external stakeholders – i.e. local/national press, where pictures, press releases can be attached.

Advantage: quick, easy, reliable. 24/7 for international press - speed is important in these situations and email offers this.

[2 marks for explanation and 2 marks for advantage each methods = 12 marks]

- (b) Kleggs' sales team has been asked to gather data about competitors' products by interviewing the trade buyers. Suggest four types of questions, with examples, which they should use during the interviews.

[8]

Types of questions which could be used:

- closed questions for factual information – e.g. Do you buy from Klegg's competitors?
- open questions – to enable interviewees to open up and allow maximum freedom to answer and respond – e.g. Why do you buy competitor's products?
- hypothetical questions – setting scenarios in which the interviewee has to assume what they would do if the scenario situation prevailed – e.g. If Kleggs were to offer more discount on bulk purchases, what would you do?
- probing questions – to develop an answer previously given – e.g. You said you would buy more products from Kleggs in the summer – why?
- leading questions – to lead candidates into giving a particular answer wanted by the interviewee, or even to create bias in a response.

[1 mark per type and 1 mark for justification applied to case up to 8 marks]

[Total 20]

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5 The new cereal bar has now been launched and the sales figures are now available for Hande.

(a) Using examples where appropriate, explain each of the following methods of presenting complex sales data and describe one disadvantage of each.

- (i) tables.
- (ii) bar charts.
- (iii) pie charts.
- (iv) line graphs.

[4 x 4]

- (i) Explanation of tables – good for tabulating complex information, limited immediate visual impact and difficult to interpret readily.
- (ii) Explanation of bar charts – good for indicating trends, wide range of bar charts available, difficult to present complex information.
- (iii) Explanation of pie charts – total value of items must be known, use of colours to enhance impact, limited to the amount of in-depth information that can be conveyed using a pie chart, need to work out in terms of 360%.
- (iv) Explanation of line graphs – good for showing trends, cannot readily or clearly be interpreted if too many plotted lines of information, therefore not helpful for complex information.

[1 mark per disadvantage and up to 3 marks for each explanation - up to 4 marks each]

(b) Explain one other type of visual chart which Hande could use when planning the activities for the sales of the new cereal bar.

[4]

Explanation of another type of chart:

- Explanation of Gantt Chart and explanation of uses – to plan projects etc.
- Explanation of flow charts and explanation of uses – to identify relationships, links.

[1 mark per explanation and 2-3 marks if expanded up to 4 marks]

[Total 20]