

**DP05**

# **Business Communication**

**8 OCTOBER 2004**

1. Time allowed : Three (3) hours
2. Total number of questions : Six (6) questions
3. Number of questions to be answered : All six (6) questions
4. Begin each answer to a new question on a fresh page.
5. A blank page is provided at the end of the question paper for rough work.

## ANSWER ALL SIX (6) QUESTIONS

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow:

Voters in 25 nations, with concerns ranging from national sovereignty to Europe's role in Iraq, yesterday began to elect representatives to a European Parliament that is bigger and more powerful than ever before. The four-day elections are for 732 seats in the newly enlarged European Union's (EU) legislative assembly, but they are also seen as a test of popularity of each country's governing party.

Some of the political parties involved expect poor support – like Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government, which took Britain into an unpopular war against Iraq. Others hope for approval – like Spain's new Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, who withdrew troops from Iraq, as he has promised during his elections.

When the EU expanded on 1 May 2004, its population increased to 450million. The voters from the 10 new member countries will be personally endorsing the unity of the European continent and taking their first opportunity to be represented in an assembly that is becoming more powerful across the continent.

But even with the unity that comes with an expanded EU, there is still plenty of scope for dissent. Eastern European nationalist parties that once campaigned against giving up powers to join the EU are taking their message into the bloc by running for seats in the assembly. Dissenters in Western Europe, too, are expressing their strongly-held opposition to the EU's expanding involvement in their daily lives – and in some cases, disapproval of their countries being members of the EU. Therefore, these elections will not only determine which parties will be in the legislative assembly, but will also set the stage for the running of the EU from this point onward.

Although no single issue has dominated the election campaign, many parties see that the European Parliament as a threat to their countries losing their national identity and is moving the continent to becoming a European super-state. These parties will be seeking to put their representatives in place to ensure that any move towards a super-state is kept in check.

For instance, the British Independence Party, which **advocates** immediate withdrawal from the EU, has received a lot of support from many British who are sceptical of the Euro constituency and is expected to be a big winner in the elections.

*Adapted from "The Star", 11 June 2004*

Answer the following questions in **full sentences**:

- (a) What are the major concerns of voters as they proceed to cast their votes in the European Parliamentary elections? [2]
- (b) How is Britain's Labour Party expected to fare in the elections and why? [3]
- (c) In paragraph 4, the author observed that "there is still plenty of scope for dissent."  
Explain, in your own words, what the author meant. [2]
- (d) Why do some parties view an EU constitution with great caution? [2]
- (e) Give another word or phrase that can replace the word "**advocates**" in paragraph 6 line 1. [1]
- (f) Summarise the passage in 120 words using your own words. [10]

(Total:20 marks)

2. (a) Read the letter below and answer the questions that follow:

Sharon Tan  
12 Jalan Setia  
Taman Perdana  
69990 Kuala Lumpur

1 October 2004

Strong Bank Berhad  
100 Jalan Pasar  
49490 Klang  
Selangor Darul Ehsan

The Manager

On 29 August 2004, I went to your bank and it was my bad luck to have to deal with your insensitive staff who clearly has no concept of good customer service.

I was a victim of a snatch thief earlier that day. I lost my purse which contained my identity card, credit cards, ATM cards and all my cash. I immediately went to your bank to report the loss of my cards and also to withdraw some cash for my immediate needs, such as taxi fare. Your teller said that I could only come back after I got a new identity card, as they needed a valid identification document to verify my identity.

I explained my situation and why I needed some cash straight away but they would not listen! Even though they could verify my signature against your records, your staff insisted to follow by their ancient rules which left me without any way to get home! Luckily, I also have an account with Flexi Bank Berhad. They were much more reasonable and it was thanks to their help that I was able to get home.

I demand a satisfactory reply by next week for the stress your staff has caused me. Otherwise, I will close all my accounts and also tell all my friends and relatives to do the same!

*Sharon Tan*

- (i) Analyse the letter above by listing and describing **four** different aspects of poor communication. [10]
- (ii) Rewrite the letter using effective communication principles. [10]
- (b) List and briefly describe **five** types of memos used in the workplace. [5]  
(Total:25 marks)
3. (a) You are a Marketing Executive and you are leading a project with the support of your colleague, Tom, from the IT department. The project has fallen behind schedule and you decide that it is time to talk to Tom and get things back on track.
- You : You are falling behind schedule! We are never going to get this project completed on time! When are you going to get the changes required in place?
- Tom : You only gave me the user requirements yesterday! It took you two weeks to come up with the requirements and you expect me to have all the programming done in one day?
- You : Hey! You are supposed to be the IT whiz! That's why you were assigned to this project.
- Tom : Well, if you don't like my work, you can always get someone else to do it!
- (i) Based on the above conversation, list and briefly explain **three** factors that could have contributed to the communication breakdown between Tom and you. [6]
- (ii) (aa) Perception plays a very important part in the communication process.  
Briefly explain the term "perception". [3]
- (bb) What was likely to have been Tom's perception of the situation? [2]

- (b) List and briefly explain **four** techniques you can use in reflective listening. [4]  
(Total:15 marks)
4. (a) What are the usual **four** stages in a collection letter process? [4]
- (b) List the **five**-step plan for a short report. [6]
- (c) You are a customer relationship manager and your bank has just launched a new credit card for its high-end customers.
- Write a letter using the AIDA formula to one of your high net worth customers to cross-sell this card to the person. [10]  
(Total:20 marks)
5. (a) Meetings are essential to ensure that an organisation achieves its goals and objectives.
- Briefly explain the purpose of the following meetings:
- (i) Annual general meeting [2]
- (ii) Extraordinary general meeting [2]
- (iii) Board meeting [2]
- (iv) Briefing [2]
- (b) Briefly explain the term “minutes of meeting”. [2]  
(Total:10 marks)
6. (a) With advances in transportation and technology, it is becoming more common for us to meet and deal with people from other countries and cultural backgrounds.
- (i) Give an example of a cultural difference. [1]
- (ii) Explain why it is important that we handle cultural differences well. [3]
- (b) When dealing with customers and colleagues, we sometimes have to be forceful. It is important to know and understand the different levels of forcefulness so that we can respond appropriately in a situation.
- Briefly explain each of the following levels of forcefulness:
- (i) Assertiveness [2]
- (ii) Aggressiveness [2]
- (iii) Submissiveness [2]  
(Total:10 marks)

## **OUTLINE ANSWERS**

The comments given in the boxes below indicate the areas of weaknesses the examiners have identified and their advice to future candidates.

### **Question 1**

- Candidates could not decide on the salient points for the summary as too much focus was put on the statistics instead of the general theme of the passage.
- Candidates should practice identifying main points in a passage and be more careful not to make mistakes in the spelling of words that could be found in the passage.

1. (a) As the enlarged European Union proceeds to elect its Parliamentary representatives, voters' concerns range from national sovereignty to Europe's role in Iraq.
- (b) Britain's Labour Party is not expected to fare well in the EU elections as voters will take the opportunity to punish Prime Minister Tony Blair for his decision to involve Britain in the Iraq war.
- (c) Eastern European Nationalists parties who were opposed to their respective nation's entry into the EU will try to get their representatives elected to the EU Parliament so that they can have a say about how the EU is run. At the same time, there are dissenters in Western Europe who will use the elections as an avenue to express their unhappiness both with the growing involvement of the EU in their everyday lives as well as with membership in the EU.
- (d) The formulation of an EU constitution is both a threat to national sovereignty as well as a stepping-stone for a European super-state.
- (e) Promotes, supports, campaigns for, is in favour of.
- (f) Voters from 25 European Union nations are voting for their representatives to be in the EU Parliament in elections which will also test the governing parties' popularity. Parties that made unpopular decisions expect poor support but those who fulfilled electoral promises hope for approval. The votes will reflect the endorsement of member nations to a union of the European nations. However, dissent can still arise as EU opponents also want their representatives elected. Many oppose to EU's growing influence over their lives and their country's membership to the bloc. They view an EU constitution as a threat to national sovereignty and a move to a European super-state. Hence, Euro-sceptic parties may win the elections. (115 words)

### **Question 2**

- Candidates could not present the letter in the correct format or phrase sentences correctly.
- Candidates were unfamiliar with types of memos used in the workplace.
- Candidates need to read up on technical aspects so that they could answer theoretical questions.

2. (a) (i) Candidates could list any four of the following aspects of poor communication but these have to be accompanied by descriptions:
- Letter format lacks salutation
  - Letter opens in a negative manner
  - No subject matter
  - Ideas/paragraphs are not organised in sequence
  - Tone throughout the letter is rude and sarcastic
  - Letter lacks closure

2. (a) (ii)

Sharon Tan  
12 Jalan Setia  
Taman Perdana  
69990 Kuala Lumpur

1 October 2004

The Manager  
Strong Bank Berhad  
100 Jalan Pasar  
49490 Klang  
Selangor

Dear Sir

**Difficulty in Making Cash Withdrawal**

I am writing to provide you with feedback with regard to the difficulty I experienced recently when trying to withdraw cash at your branch.

On 29 August 2004, I was a victim of a snatch theft. The snatch thief got away with my purse, which contained my identity card, credit cards, ATM cards and cash. Since I was near your branch, I went there immediately to report the loss of my cards as well as to withdraw some cash.

Your teller refused to allow me to withdraw any cash as I did not have any documents against which he could positively identify me. I tried to explain my predicament but to no avail. Even though he could verify my signature against your records, he insisted that he had to follow procedures.

I would have been left stranded if it were not for the fact that I also have an account at Flexi Bank Berhad. I went to the nearest Flexi Bank branch, where they were far more understanding and accommodating. Thanks to their good customer service, I was able to get hold of some cash to get home.

My encounter with the snatch thief was a bad experience that was made worse by your staff's attitude. I am very disappointed that your bank was unwilling to assist me in such an emergency.

I hope that you can provide me with a satisfactory explanation as I am now contemplating closing my accounts with your bank.

Yours faithfully

**Sharon Tan**

- (b) Five types of memos are:
- **Instruction memos**, which give receivers all the information they need to carry out the instructions.
  - **Request memos**, which ask the receiver for certain information or action.
  - **Announcement memos**, which provide information.
  - **Transmittal memos**, which act as cover notes for more formal or lengthy messages.
  - **Authorisation memos**, which give someone permission or authority to do something.

### Question 3

- Candidates could not answer the questions pertaining to technical terms in relation to perception.
- Candidates need to know the technical terms and understand the underlying concepts.

3. (a) (i) Candidates could list any **three** of the following factors and include brief explanations for each factor:
- Inappropriate choice of words
  - Inappropriate message
  - Lack of courtesy by the sender or receiver
  - Non-verbal communication that does not support the words
  - Different cultural backgrounds
  - Inappropriate timing
- (ii) (aa) Perception is the way people understand or give meaning to their environment. An individual's interpretation of the same message varies according to how the individual's perception is influenced by past experience, attitudes and beliefs and a range of acquired skills or expectations.
- (bb) Tom's perception is that you are trying to blame the delay on him even though you have been slow in delivering your part of the project.
- (b) The techniques that can be used in reflecting listening are:
- Paraphrasing – focusing on the contents rather than the words and rephrasing the essential parts of the message in your own words.
  - Reflective statements – expressing briefly the essential feelings that you receive from the message and helping the speaker to focus on them.
  - Clarifying – establishing with the speaker that your understanding is correct. Clarifying remarks should be made in terms of your feelings and not as criticisms of the speaker.
  - Summarising – gathering up and condensing the most important points made in a long conversation, to conclude it and give it shape or direction.

### Question 4

- Candidates did not know the stages in a collection letter process or the five-step plan for writing a short report.
- Candidates were unable to write a good cross-selling letter due to poor grammar.

4. (a) The four stages involved in the collection letter process are:
- Reminder stage
  - Strong reminder stage
  - Inquiry stage
  - Urgency stage
- (b) The five steps to planning and writing a short report are:
- Taking time to identify your task precisely.
  - Considering your readers' needs, knowledge level and familiarity with technical terms.
  - Identifying and listing your information and requirements. Create ideas by brainstorming, consulting co-workers or considering previously successful examples.
  - Gathering your information purposefully, and avoiding being side-tracked.
  - Sorting your information and discarding anything irrelevant. Organise your material into sections under suitable headings in a logical sequence.

(c)

Progressive Bank Berhad  
1 Jalan Kemajuan  
55550 Kuala Lumpur

3 June 2004

En Helmy Rahman  
88 Millionaires Row  
Prosperity Park  
54320 Kuala Lumpur

Dear En Helmy

**Platinum Prestige**

It is my great pleasure to invite you to join an elite group at Progressive Bank's Platinum Prestige.

Platinum Prestige is Progressive Bank's newly launched credit card for discerning high net worth individuals. Accepted at over 1,000,000 outlets throughout Malaysia and around the world, Platinum Prestige offers you all the usual convenience of other credit cards.

But that is where the similarity ends. Membership of Platinum Prestige is by invitation only and therefore accords you the recognition that you so rightfully deserve. Of course, there is no pre-set credit limit – your limit will simply expand with your needs.

You will soon be enjoying the freedom, prestige and attention that come with Platinum Prestige. All you have to do is fill out the enclosed acceptance form and have your personal assistant call me at 018-228 3228. I will then personally deliver your Platinum Prestige card to you and answer any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely

*Susan Wong*  
Relationship Manager

**Question 5**

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5. (a) (i) Annual general meeting – to inform interested parties of the year's progress and the plans for the next year
- (ii) Extraordinary general meeting – to inform members of unusual circumstances and any potential advantages and disadvantages to shareholders, other interested parties and the company
- (iii) Board meeting – to provide a forum for management and the board of directors
- (iv) Briefing – to pass information along the organisation's channels in an efficient manner
- (b) Minutes of meeting are a record of what happens during the meeting: this includes who was present, motions and amendments passed, decisions taken, action decided on, people responsible for carrying out the decisions, and any matters that have been adjourned.

**Question 6**

6. (a) (i) Candidates can give any example of cultural difference, such as concepts of punctuality, wearing of shoes inside people's homes, finishing all the food on one's plate, etc.
- (ii) Different cultural groups respond to situations in different ways. Their perceptions and interpretations may differ considerably from our own. Their social values, roles and status, concepts of time and personal space, body language and the way in which they make decisions may be significantly different. Hence, it is important to learn the value systems of different cultures to avoid costly misunderstandings. We should realise that something which is considered right and valid in one culture may be frowned upon in another.
- (b) (i) Assertiveness – the assertive person wants to be heard and acknowledged. This does not necessarily mean winning but being accepted and treated as an equal – respecting the rights of others and being respected in return. Assertive people can accept that others have different opinions and therefore, can negotiate and collaborate without feeling uncomfortable.
- (ii) Aggressiveness – the aggressive person may have to win at all costs. This means dominating and sometimes humiliating others, even to the point of ignoring a suggestion that provided the best solution simply because it is someone else's suggestion. An aggressive person is often in conflict with others.
- (iii) Submissiveness – the submissive person is unable to assert or promote a point of view and finds it difficult to lead others because his/her style of relating means submitting to other people's point of view, even to the extent of ignoring his/her own rights. Submissive people tend to avoid unpleasant situations.