

DP05

Business Communication

15 APRIL 2005

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 passage below and answer the questions that follow:

Over the years, India has shown both the good and the bad in democracy. Its long-held philosophy of economic autarky – an ultimately vain attempt at self-sufficiency by closing its doors to the outside world – must surely rank among the latter. However, that has now changed. Since the early 1990s, India has been liberalising and shaping itself up for the rigours and rewards of globalisation. The question is when, not if, the planet's second most populous country will step forward as the next big thing in the world economy.

Indeed, too much time has already been wasted away. Malaysia's trade with India, though at record levels, is still insignificant and remains frustratingly restricted to a handful of commodities. Business relationships have been confined to the limited exchange of goods, despite the best intentions of Kuala Lumpur and New Delhi. In the past, the two governments had tried to make special deals, in contract sharing and barter, for example, to enhance economic ties. These left the initiative to a precious few and yielded predictably poor results. Mindful of the lack of enterprise, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has proposed to his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh that the two countries negotiate a free trade agreement (FTA). A wide-ranging economic pact would transfer decision-making from the politicians and bureaucrats to those who know it best – the businessmen and entrepreneurs.

There are other reasons for both governments to pool their business communities under an FTA. Malaysia's trade position, until now handicapped by its heavy export surplus, has been enhanced by ASEAN, a combined market of some 540million people with a total GDP of USD686billion, roughly at par with India's. More significantly, India has finally shed its habitual slow rate of growth and is projected to catch up with China's in the coming years. Opportunities have been diversified, and Malaysian businesses should not keep their eyes trained exclusively on getting contracts in the country's expected infrastructure boom. Indians have plenty to teach them, too – in biotechnology, for example, or white-collar outsourcing, a specialisation that Malaysia is keen to follow.

The good news for bilateral relations, however, lies not only in the expected ringing of cash registers but in the similarities between Abdullah and Manmohan. Both are sincere and serious **proponents** of multilateralism, reform and development. Both are eager to proclaim their countries open for business. And both are eager for partnership in a developing world that has long been lacking in shining examples.

Adapted from the "New Straits Times", 22 December 2004

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

- (a) What unfavourable aspect of democracy has India shown over the years? [2]
- (b) What has been the nature of Malaysia's trade with India? [3]
- (c) How would the negotiations of an FTA affect trade between Malaysia and India? [2]
- (d) Apart from infrastructure, what sectors is Malaysia likely to benefit from in trade with India? [2]
- (e) Give another word or phrase that can replace the word "**proponents**" in paragraph 4 line 3. [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:

25 Jalan BU1/13
Bandar Utama
Petaling Jaya

2/4/05

First Bank Berhad
88 Jalan Murni
Kuala Lumpur

To Manager

Your bank is one of Malaysia's leading banks but believe me, your customer service is horrible! Let me narrate my unfortunate experience with your bank.

Last week, I needed to deposit USD2,000 into my savings account. I was at the bank at 9.30am. The teller who served me, Ms Goon, is unfit for her job. You see, first of all, she informed me that the US currency had to be converted to Ringgit and that only USD1,000 was allowed to be transacted per customer in a day. She asked me to deposit the remaining money another day.

Well, I called my wife to come to the bank to deposit the other USD1,000 into her savings account. She arrived at the bank within 10 minutes and filled in the necessary form for the deposit. Then, Ms Goon dropped a bombshell. We had to wait till 11.00am for the forex rates for the day. I told her that the USD had been pegged at RM3.80 since 1998 but she didn't want to listen to me. She insisted that it was the bank's policy to wait for confirmation from the HQ.

I asked to see the Manager but she barked that you were on leave. Exasperated, I left the bank. I must express my anger with your bank. Why don't you hire tellers who are not so dumb and rude? What is happening?

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Yours,
Peter Wang

- (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) A business letter layout has seven essential parts, each with a specific purpose.
List any **five** essential parts of a business letter. [5]
(Total:25 marks)
3. (a) Sandra, a sales assistant, is talking on the telephone. Her manager, Nasir, thinks, "There she goes again, talk, talk, talk. Doesn't she have work to do? Women are all the same." Nasir signals that he wants to speak to Sandra. Sandra nods, but continues with her call for another three minutes. Nasir leaves, fuming.
- Actually, Sandra is talking to a potential customer; she sees the call as part of her job since it may eventually lead to a sale. She cannot understand why Nasir does not think she is serious about her career.
- (i) Perception is a barrier to effective communication between Nasir and Sandra.
Explain the meaning of perception. [2]
- (ii) What is Nasir's perception of Sandra? [2]

- (b) (i) What are the **six** essential steps in the preparation stage of a presentation? [6]
(ii) A good presenter needs to connect with the audience.
State **three** ways to establish rapport with the audience. [3]
- (c) Name **two** uses of the Internet for business. [2]
(Total:15 marks)
4. (a) (i) What is the difference between a formal meeting and an informal meeting? [2]
(ii) State **two** examples of formal meetings. [2]
- (b) The ideal seating arrangement for a meeting is the circular or oval shape.
Give **two** reasons why this is so. [2]
- (c) List any **four** duties of a chairperson at a meeting. [4]
(Total:10 marks)
5. (a) You are the Personnel Officer of Bank Cemerlang. One of your staff, Devi Chandran, has gained a place at Monash University, Malaysian Campus. The bank has granted her study leave for two days a week when her course commences in June 2005.
She can arrange the days to suit her timetable but prior notice must be given to her supervisor. The bank will not be liable for her tuition fees but some form of financial aid can be arranged if there is a need. Continuation of the leave for next year depends on her passing all the course units.
Using an appropriate format, write a memorandum to Devi Chandran to inform her of the above. [10]
- (b) It is always good practice to use plain English in workplace documents.
What are **three** advantages of using plain English? [3]
- (c) (i) List **three** examples of persuasive letters. [3]
(ii) Briefly describe the writing plan for a persuasive letter using the AIDA formula. [4]
(Total:20 marks)
6. (a) You are the Customer Service Manager of a leading hypermarket. A customer has just called to complain about your cashiers who do not return the correct change to customers.
Develop a four-point plan using the PAIR approval strategy to handle this complaint. [4]
- (b) (i) List **two** categories of difficult customers. [2]
(ii) Identify **two** ways in which cultural differences may cause difficulties in customer service. [2]
- (c) Give **one** reason why it is important to give a positive first impression when answering the telephone. [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 lifted sentences from the text and pieced them together in an incoherent manner, as evident in the summary question.
 - Candidates should take note that questions normally follow the sequence of the passage, i.e. answer to the first question is found at the beginning of the passage. Also, candidates should try to use their own words in answering questions and not exceed the word limit for the summary.
1. (a) Over the years, India has held on to its philosophy of economic autarky, that of attaining self-sufficiency by closing its doors to the world.
- (b) Malaysia's trade with India, though at record levels, is insignificant and limited to the exchange of a few commodities. Both governments have tried to enhance economic ties with special deals in contract sharing and barter, but with limited success. There has been a lack of enterprise as decision-making was in the hands of the politicians and bureaucrats.
- (c) Negotiations of a free trade agreement would boost trade between Malaysia and India, transferring decision-making from bureaucrats and politicians to businessmen and entrepreneurs.
- (d) Malaysia is likely to benefit from sectors such as biotechnology and white-collar outsourcing.
- (e) Supporters, advocates, people who support an idea or course of action.
- (f) Since the early 1990s, India has been opening its doors to external trade. However, Malaysia's trade with India has been dismal, limited to the exchange of a few commodities and bogged down by bureaucracy. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has proposed to his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, the negotiation of a free trade agreement. This would transfer decision-making appropriately to businessmen. Also, Malaysia's trade position, long hampered by its big export surplus, could well be enhanced by trade with India, a market force as significant as ASEAN. Besides the expected infrastructure contracts, Malaysia could learn from India about biotechnology and white-collar outsourcing. Both Prime Ministers, advocates of multilateralism, are keen to forge a partnership in business.
(113 words)

Question 2

The rewritten letters were too long, with little or no control of structure and grammar. Candidates should write letters which are concise and to the point and not use contractions (e.g. didn't, wasn't) in a formal letter. In stating the aspects of poor communication, do not write on specific error, e.g. "'To Manager' is wrong". Instead, write "The salutation or greeting 'To Manager' is wrong".

2. (a) (i) Aspects of poor communication (choose any **four**):
- Date is not written in full
 - Inappropriate salutation or greeting
 - No subject line
 - Addresses of sender and recipient have no postcode
 - Opening paragraph – too uncomplimentary
 - Tone of letter – too casual ("Well", "bombshell")
 - Tone of letter – rude and sarcastic ("...so dumb and rude.")
 - Abbreviation/short form used – e.g. HQ, forex
 - Inappropriate complimentary close

(a) (ii)

5 Jalan BU 1/13
Bandar Utama
47800 Petaling Jaya

2 April 2005

The Manager
First Bank
88 Jalan Murni
50000 Kuala Lumpur

Dear Sir

Difficulty in Depositing Foreign Currency

I am writing to complain about the difficulty I encountered recently when trying to deposit foreign currency at your bank.

On 28 March, I was at your bank at 9.30am to deposit USD2,000 into my savings account. The teller who attended to me, Ms Goon, informed me that the US currency had to be converted to Ringgit first and that only USD1,000 could be transacted in a day. The remaining USD1,000 had to be cashed another day.

To expedite matters, I called my wife who arrived at the bank promptly. She agreed to deposit the remaining USD1,000 in her savings account. Just then, Ms Goon informed me that I had to wait until 11am for confirmation of the foreign exchange rates for the day. Despite my telling her that the USD has been pegged at RM3.80 since 1998, she was adamant that I had to comply with your bank's policy.

When I asked to see the manager, she rudely told me that you were on leave. As a result, I left the bank without depositing the money.

I hope you can enlighten me about your bank's procedure for deposit of foreign currency and also do something about the poor customer service.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully
Peter Wang

(b) Essential parts of a business letter layout (choose any **five**):

- Writer's address
- Date
- Intended reader's (recipient's) name and address
- Greeting or salutation
- Body of letter
- Complimentary close
- Writer's signature and job title

Question 3

- Candidates could not construct proper sentences to explain the concept of perception.
- Candidate did not organise the steps in the preparation stage of presentation logically. Some candidates confused the preparation stage with the actual presentation/delivery.
- Candidates' answers on ways to establish rapport with audience were too brief.
- Candidates should give more depth to the answer, with clearer explanation. E.g. for part (b)(ii), writing "pose questions" is incomplete. A better answer would be as given below.

3. (a) (i) Perception is the way people understand or give meaning to their environment. A message may be interpreted differently by two people. An individual's perception is influenced by experience, attitudes, beliefs and a range of acquired skills or expectations.
- (ii) Nasir's perception of Sandra is he thinks she is not serious about her career and that she is spending her time in idle talk and not doing her work.
- (b) (i) Six essential steps in the preparation stage of a presentation:
- Define the purpose of the presentation
 - Analyse the audience
 - Consider the context and setting
 - Identify the main ideas
 - Research supporting material
 - Plan and organise the material
- (ii) Ways to establish rapport with the audience (choose any **three**):
- Involve the audience, ask questions
 - Invite the audience to sum up during the session
 - Step forward and move around
 - Add humour in speech
 - Maintain eye contact with audience
 - Do not hide behind barriers, e.g. chairs and tables
- (c) Uses of the Internet in business (choose any **two**):
- Communication, e.g. e-mail
 - Electronic trading
 - Information gathering

Question 4

Candidates should note that questions that start with "List" or "State" do not require lengthy answers. Refer to the mark allocation at the end of each question to get a clue as to the depth of the answer required.

4. (a) (i) A formal meeting has rules and regulations which provide a framework for the business or purpose of the meeting. An informal meeting is less structured than a formal meeting.
- (ii) Two examples of formal meetings are Annual General Meeting and board meetings. (Other appropriate examples are accepted)
- (b) **Two** reasons circular or oval shape seating arrangement is ideal for a meeting:
- Better communication between members as it allows everyone to see everyone else
 - Enables better control and participation by the chairperson
- (c) **Four** duties of the chairperson (choose any **four**):
- Checks that a quorum is present
 - Declares the meeting open
 - Welcomes the members
 - States the aims of the meeting

- Indicates the time limit for each item
- Gives priority to the most important items
- Signs the minutes when they are confirmed as correct
- Guides the meeting through the business on the agenda
- Allows each item to be discussed fully
- Controls the moving and seconding of all motions and amendments
- Delegates when necessary
- Briefs members
- Gives feedback
- Encourages everyone's participation
- Plans the action required by decisions reached

Question 5

- Candidates included the salutation and complimentary close in the memorandum, which were unnecessary.
- Candidates should check their answers to avoid common errors in grammar or spelling.

5. (a)

MEMORANDUM	
To	: Devi Chandran, Customer Service Assistant
From	: Misha Ali, Personnel Officer
Date	: 10 April 2005
Subject	: Study Leave
<p>Congratulations on your success in gaining a place at Monash University, Malaysian Campus!</p> <p>Your request for study leave has been granted for two days a week when your course commences in June 2005. Once you know your timetable, please consult your supervisor to arrange the days you will take leave. Continuation of the leave for the next year will depend on your passing all the units in your exam.</p> <p>Our bank will not be liable for the tuition fees incurred for the course. However, if there is a need, we can arrange for some form of financial aid.</p> <p>We wish you every success in your studies.</p> <p>Misha A.</p>	

- (b) **Three** advantages of using plain English in workplace documents:
- Efficiency: it is easier to read and understand
 - Equity: gives easy access to information
 - Effectiveness: suits the needs of the recipient
- (c) (i) Examples of persuasive letters:
- Collection letters
 - Sales letters
 - Job applications

- (ii) Writing plan for a persuasive letter using the AIDA formula:
- Use attention-getting devices in the first sentence/paragraph
 - Appeal to the reader's self-interest in next paragraph
 - Encourage the reader to respond or take action
 - State what action is to be taken in concluding paragraph

Question 6

Candidates lacked understanding of the PAIR approval strategy as seen in the poorly structured and clumsy sentences. Also, many did not understand the meaning of "Placate". Candidates do not need to write out the conversation with the customer, just incorporate the strategies/actions one would take within the plan.

6. (a) To handle the customer's complaint, a four-point plan following the PAIR approval strategy would be:
- Placate the customer by listening, empathising and responding with concern
 - Attend to the complaint
 - Investigate the circumstances and details of the incident
 - Resolve the complaint by deciding on the action to take
- (b) (i) Categories of difficult customers (any **two**):
- Impatient and frustrated customers
 - Customers who are never satisfied
 - Rude and boring customers
- (ii) Ways in which cultural differences may cause difficulties in customer service (choose any **two**):
- Different perceptions and interpretations
 - Social values
 - Concept of time and space
 - Different roles and status
- (c) It is important to give a positive first impression when answering the telephone because it demonstrates an organisation's professionalism, maintains and enhances goodwill.