

DP05

Business Communication

12 MAY 2000

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.

ANSWER ALL SIX (6) QUESTIONS

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

The events leading to and following the Asian economic meltdown in July 1997 provide important lessons. We have to be realistic in our expectations for a responsible financial superstructure given the reluctance of developed countries to rein in speculators and given their deep-seated adulation of the free market. In short, we have to continue to seek economic progress within a fast-changing, market-driven, technology-determined, globalised, and “**deregulated environment**” while achieving greater technological content and economic efficiency in the new millennium. This calls for a mindset change, identification and reduction of our weaknesses while seizing opportunities and challenges.

Excessive economic growth rates over an extended period cannot be sustained. Malaysia underwent a period of near frantic growth as seen in the savings-investment gap, balance of payments deficits and excessive borrowings by the private sector in the years preceding 1997. Excessive growth also led to compromises over environmental considerations (leading to degradation in air and water quality), extensive squatter areas (brought on by unskilled immigrant labour) and infrastructural bottlenecks.

Infrastructural project costs should be minimised through careful planning, open tenders and strict supervision. Private investments should be subjected to strict commercial scrutiny and critical evaluative analysis. Experienced, competent and capable businessmen and their organisations should always be considered before awarding them with new investment and business opportunities.

One major weakness of Southeast Asian countries was over-investment, resulting in low return rates and poor cash flows. All significant-sized projects, public or private, must be scrutinised to ensure that these yield positive discounted cash flows.

Short-term capital inflows and outflows must also be closely watched. The effects of short-term funds in equity markets must be closely monitored to prevent domestic asset inflation, principally of real estate and shares. Excessive increases in the price of real estate and shares will lead to excessive borrowings followed by bank failures and corporate insolvency besides the attendant risks to borrowers and social problems for lower-income groups.

In highly developed countries, tight regulations are strictly adhered to curb wrongdoings such as money laundering, insider dealing and market rigging. Tight regulation is required due to the high level of trusteeship involved. Government servants are dishing out larger contracts while company directors of public companies are managing billions of ringgit of “trust properties” not belonging to themselves or close associates. The same is true of bankers, stockbrokers, lawyers and fund managers. Anyone handling other peoples’ money, whether public or private, must adhere to tight regulations.

Foreign reserves are still the criteria by which our economic performance and credibility will be judged. A healthy foreign exchange balance needs to be kept but challenges may come when domestic demand begins to increase and, with it, the desire to import. Projects involving heavy import content may cause extra exchange burdens. Overdependence on foreign consultants and suppliers too yield a negative effect on our foreign exchange.

It is also crucial to sustain per capita GDP growth by curbing population growth. In the pursuit of economic growth, Southeast Asian countries overlooked curbing population increase. Growth rates exceeding 2.0% a year are too high to sustain per capita GDP growth. It is essential to keep population growth rates low, considering the high costs of training citizens for knowledge industries.

Given Malaysia’s tradition of successfully tackling its previous challenges, we can justifiably face the new millennium with a measure of optimism and confidence.


Adapted from “The Edge” December 1999

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

- (a) Why is there a need for a Malaysian mindset change in order to remain a global economic player? [2]
- (b) Give **four** reasons why it is essential to keep population growth rates low. [2]
- (c) How can Malaysia prevent future infrastructural bottlenecks from recurring? [3]
- (d) What happens if short-term funds in equity markets are left unmonitored? [2]

- (e) What is meant by “**deregulated environment**” in paragraph 1? [1]
- (f) Summarise in **130 words**, the measures that can be taken by Malaysia to ensure continued economic development. [10]
- (Total:20 marks)

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

 **Oriental Carpeting Sdn Bhd**
626-7 Jalan Emas
54100 Kuala Lumpur

3 January 2000

Mr Alan Tan
Manager
National Commercial Bank
124 Jalan Abdul Jalil
Cheras Perdana
59100 Kuala Lumpur

Dear Sir

Your enquiry of 30 December 1999 is to hand and its contents duly noted.


Whether or not we agree to permit you a discount will depend on the size or coverage area of the carpets you wish to order. Until we receive your order we shall not be in a position to arrive at a figure.

Please be advised that our current prices are as per the catalogue herewith enclosed.

Kindly note that our current prices are likely to be raised due to the prevailing economic situation and we cannot guarantee that the prices quoted will remain constant. Please be advised to place an early order.

Awaiting your order and assuring you of our best attention always.

Yours sincerely
(for Oriental Carpeting Sdn Bhd)



Senior Sales Executive
W.K. Leong

- Analyse the above letter by listing and describing **four** different aspects of poor communication. [10]
- (b) Rewrite the letter using effective communication principles. [10]
- (c) List **five** communication barriers caused by poor writing style. [5]
- (Total:25 marks)

3. (a) (i) Name **two** purposes served by listening. [1]
- (ii) List **four** benefits of using active listening skills. [4]
- (b) Your committee has come up with some proposals to amend the existing but outdated constitution of your sports club. You decide to e-mail these amendments as a Microsoft Word document attachment, so that this can be an agenda item for discussion in the next meeting.
- In **five** sequenced steps, state the procedure you will follow to ensure that every committee member receives this attachment on their e-mail. [5]
- (c) (i) When are impromptu speeches made? [1]
- (ii) State the order of presentation of an impromptu speech. [4]
- (Total:15 marks)
4. (a) (i) What is the main purpose of writing a letter of acknowledgement? [1]
- (ii) What are the **four** steps in the writing strategy of a letter of acknowledgement? [4]
- (iii) You have been invited by a Ladies' Club to present a talk on good nutritional habits. Following the writing strategy above, write a letter of acknowledgement to inform them that you are accepting their invitation to present the talk. [10]
- (b) State the order of information in a progress report. [5]
- (Total:20 marks)
5. (a) Briefly explain the meaning and purpose of:
- (i) a quorum [2]
- (ii) minutes of the meeting [3]
- (b) Name **three** seating arrangements used at meetings. Which is the most ideal seating arrangement and state why. [5]
- (Total:10 marks)
6. (a) State the characteristics of an "assertive" person and an "aggressive" person. Suggest **two** ways in which a person can show aggressive behaviour to another. [5]
- (b) An elderly client walks into your bank and says, "Excuse me, can you tell me how I can send a telegraphic transfer (T/T) to Australia?" He adds that he has very poor eyesight and requests for help in filling the form for the transaction. Then he rattles on about his brother in Australia and before long, reveals his whole family history.
- In **five** steps, state what you would do to meet your client's needs. [5]
- (Total:10 marks)

OUTLINE ANSWERS

Question 1

As in the previous sitting, candidates performed the best in the comprehension passage. The summary writing, however, posed a problem to some. Here, candidates were required to state the measures that Malaysia could take to ensure economic development. The students who fared poorly, mistakenly wrote about the economic meltdown. Instead of listing down the different measures, they wasted time going into the history of the economic meltdown.

1. (a) A mindset change is needed to maintain economic progress and the competitive edge in a world that is fast-changing, market-driven, technologically determined, globalised and having a free-market environment.
- (b) Excessively large populations can cause:
 - environmental degradation in air, land and water quality.
 - extensive squatter areas with its resultant social problems.
 - greater demand for more infrastructure.
 - higher costs for educating and training in the knowledge industries.
- (c) It can adopt the following measures:
 - careful planning.
 - strict supervision.
 - strict commercial and viability scrutiny.
 - critical evaluative analysis.
 - experience, competence and capability considered before award of contracts.
- (d) When short-term funds in equity markets are left unmonitored, this will lead to domestic asset inflation. This domestic asset inflation will further lead to excessive borrowings, followed by bank failures, corporate insolvency risks to borrowers and resultant social problems.
- (e) A “deregulated environment” means a market free from a control system.
- (f) Malaysia has to closely monitor its economic development, foreign reserves balance as well as its population growth. Infrastructure project costs can be minimised through careful planning, supervision, open tenders and critical evaluative analysis. Contracts awarded should be based on experience and proven track records. Short-term capital inflows and outflows need close monitoring to prevent asset inflation and resultant failures to banks and borrowers. Investment managers have to maintain transparency by adhering strictly to regulations as they manage trust projects worth billions of ringgit. To ensure a healthy foreign exchange balance, Malaysia has to depend on its local consultants and suppliers for its projects. It is essential to keep population rates low in order not to compromise on the environment or impose extra burdens on infrastructure and costly training needs.


Question 2

The question on letter writing was the most poorly attempted question by candidates. The majority of candidates did not give examples to support the different aspects of poor communication listed in the letter. Furthermore, they failed to quote instances to support their answers when referring to aspects of poor communication. In addition, when they were required to re-write the letter, they used the same outdated English terms with disorganised paragraphs, very similar to the actual letter in the question.

2. (a) Candidates could list any **four** of the following aspects of poor communication but these have to be accompanied by descriptions.
 - (i) Wrong salutation.
 - (ii) No subject line.
 - (iii) Outdated English usage.

- (iv) Order of information is wrong.
- (v) Enquiry acknowledgement is imprecise.
- (vi) Language in second paragraph is patronising. Frightens prospective customer away.
- (vii) Redundancy of last paragraph

(b) Rewriting the letter using effective communication principles:



Oriental Carpeting Sdn Bhd
626-7 Jalan Emas
54100 Kuala Lumpur

3 January 2000

Mr Alan Tan
Manager
National Commercial Bank
124 Jalan Abdul Jalil
Cheras Perdana
59100 Kuala Lumpur

Dear Mr Tan


Thank you for your letter of 30 December 1999 enquiring about our prices for carpeting your banks. I am enclosing our current catalogue with the price list included.

I need to point out, however, that we may need to raise our prices soon. If you could place your order early, it would be more advantageous to your bank.

As discounts vary according to size of order, we shall be able to offer you a discount only when we know the extent of your order.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely



W.K. Leong
Senior Sales Executive

- (c) Negative language
- creates a negative climate.
 - gives a poor image of your organisation.

Wordiness

- makes it difficult for the reader to understand the meaning.
- frustrates the reader who has to look for answers to query.

Obscure writing

- long introductions take away emphasis from main purpose of the letter.
- clichés confuse reader's interpretation of the writer's meaning.
- parts of letter left out frustrates reader looking for answers.
- poor planning makes it difficult to follow train of thought.
- repetition causes boredom.

Question 3

The question on impromptu speeches and order of presentation of an impromptu speech were not well attempted. These were knowledge questions and yet candidates were unable to provide satisfactory answers. This clearly showed that many candidates did not study this section and were, therefore, unable to answer accordingly.

3. (a) (i) As a sender, listening to your receiver's answers provides feedback on how the receiver has interpreted your message.

As a receiver, listening to the information from the sender allows you to understand the meaning.

Listening helps one interact with a work group.

(ii) Active listening focuses attention to whole messages, content and feeling. Thus, it helps to:

- confirm feedback.
- correct feedback.
- match perceived message and intended message.
- find solutions or resolution to the problem.
- demonstrate genuine understanding, acceptance and empathy for other person.
- give speaker feeling of being accepted, acknowledged and understood.
- communication results as listener responds more positively.

(b) 1. Ensure that proposal of amendments are saved in a file/document within a directory.
2. List recipients and their e-mail addresses in the "To" section.
3. Give subject heading and compose any message or instructions.
4. Attach file by invoking the file or document within the directory.
5. Click the "send" button and follow up to ensure there is no returned mail or recipients who have not received mail.

(c) (i) On special occasions to welcome guests, to introduce special guests, friends and colleagues, to make acknowledgements or to show appreciation and express thanks.

(ii) The steps are:

1. Clearly indicate the reason for the speech.
2. Say why it is important to the organisation or audience.
3. Conclude with some of the characteristics of the person or organisation receiving the recognition.
4. Restate the main reason for the speech.

Or

- PREP
- main point
 - reason
 - example
 - restating the main point

Question 4

Another poorly attempted question was on writing a letter for acknowledgement. Many candidates did not list the writing strategies for an acknowledgement letter, although the question specifically states that they have to do so. In addition, the letter of acknowledgement to accept the invitation to present the talk had such a “cold” tone with no enthusiasm.

4. (a) (i) Acknowledges requests for information, confirms orders, supplies information and thanks the reader.

- (ii) Steps in the writing strategy:
1. Start with the acknowledgement.
 2. Clearly say ‘yes’ when relevant.
 3. Supply any information or necessary details.
 4. Close courteously to maintain goodwill.

(iii) Dr Gerry Young
Young & Healthy Associates
A-27-30 Plaza Ampang
57800 Kuala Lumpur

5 January 2000

Ms Jenny Saw
Cheras Ladies’ Club
333 Jalan Laman Razak
59100 Kuala Lumpur

Dear Ms Saw

Good Nutritional Habits Talk

Thank you for your invitation to give a presentation on good nutritional habits to your club members on Tuesday, 29 February 2000.

Yes, I would be delighted to share my knowledge on the topic that you have chosen. I am really pleased that so many of you are taking positive steps toward adopting a healthy lifestyle.

I have a number of slides I would like to show your members during the presentation. It would greatly help, if you could provide a slide projector together with the usual whiteboard and overhead projector. I welcome questions from the floor after the talk.

If you have any queries, please contact me by phone soon because I will be out of town for the next two weeks. I look forward to meeting all of you at your club premises.

Yours sincerely



Dr Gerry Young

- (b) 1. Purpose of Statement
- identify the report’s purpose with a subject line.
 - open the report with the current status, work or goals achieved.

2. Body of Information
 - positive features of the operation.
 - present any problems.
 - state how they were resolved/will be resolved.
 - include the schedule.
 - include the cost.
3. Conclusion
 - point to the future.

Question 5

The two-part theory question was poorly attempted by most candidates. Only a few candidates scored above 60% of the total marks allocated for this question. The first part required candidates to state the “meaning” and “purpose” of a quorum and minutes of the meeting. Many candidates did not read the question carefully and only gave the meaning and failed to state the purpose of these meeting terms. In the second part of the question, candidates again repeated the error by “jumping” into the question. They reproduced pictures/diagrams of seating arrangements used at meeting when the question specifically asked for the ideal seating arrangement and the reasons why it was ideal.

5. (a) (i) A quorum is the minimum number of people that must be at a meeting in order for business to be conducted. A quorum has to be present during voting to make decisions. The size of the quorum is identified in the constitution.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting is a record of what happened during the meeting. It contains records of members present, motions and amendments passed, decisions taken, action decided on, persons responsible for implementing actions/decisions and any matters deferred. Minutes provide an accurate record for review by members or for reference in the future.
- (b) (i)
 - Circular or Oval seating.
 - Long – Rectangular seating.
 - U-Shaped seating.
- (ii) The ideal is the Circular or Oval seating arrangement because:
 - it lets everyone see everybody else.
 - very democratic.
 - results in better communication between members.
 - effective control by chairperson.
 - better participation between members and chairperson.
 - lessens possibility of domination by some members.
 - lessens losing of interest by members - too far from the chairperson.

Question 6

Candidates had problems differentiating between the assertiveness and aggressiveness. Many thought that the latter was better in organisational environment. The second part of the question required candidates to apply their knowledge to answer the question according to the needs of an elderly client. Candidates would have to performed better if they had put themselves in the shoes of the elderly client, in order to be able to understand the client’s insecurities and needs.

6. (a) Assertiveness: Assertive people want to be heard and acknowledged, to be accepted and treated as equals, respect other people’s rights and the right to have a different opinion, feel comfortable with themselves and with others. They are independent workers and can negotiate and compromise with others.

Aggressiveness: Aggressive persons will try to win at all costs, dominate at meetings and functions and are constantly at conflict with others.

Manipulate others for personal gain, humiliate others to make themselves feel better, ignore suggestions from others who provide solutions, talk loudly or raise voices to get attention, bang tables to reinforce their point.

- (b)
 - (i) Wait for a pause and then ask him to state his needs – whom he wants to send the telegraphic transfer to, the address or the destination.
 - (ii) Repeat the customer's order or request until he understands the procedure.
 - (iii) Find out the exchange rate for the day from Ringgit to Australian dollars. Show it to him as you convert the rate.
 - (iv) Request payment while filling the form. Then ask him to sign it.
 - (v) Explain the process again telling him the duration it will take and reassure him that his expectations can be met.