

DP05

Business Communication

7 APRIL 2006

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 and answer the questions that follow in **full sentences**:

There has always been a strong historical and geographical basis for Southeast Asia countries to be linked closer economically. But due to daunting political obstacles, there has not been a strong incentive to integrate the ten economies – until now. In the face of mounting competition for trade and investment and the rise of China, it is imperative that ASEAN unifies as one economic unit. Much of the region's growth was fuelled by the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI). But countries in Southeast Asia now only dimly register on the radar screens of international investors. China drew USD60billion in FDI last year, more than twice the amount that trickled into the whole of ASEAN. Moreover, at a time when trade between ASEAN and China has been surging, intra-ASEAN trade has been growing at a slower pace.

While the attention that China and India are attracting threatens to turn ASEAN into a backwater, it also provides a spur for ASEAN to accelerate its own scheme for regional economic integration, which was put in place at the Bali Summit two years ago. A rough consensus already exists on moving towards a single economic entity, where a combined market of 500million people with enough resources and capital would survive and remain competitive in the global economy. While a broad level of agreement seems to have been reached on creating an ASEAN Economic Community, many of the technicalities have still to be resolved. The further liberalising of intra-ASEAN trade under the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) is a sign that the regional grouping is edging closer towards economic integration. However, there is still much to be done before ASEAN tycoons can think of the whole region as their "natural home market and investment destination" as Datuk Seri Najib Razak says they should.

There is a need for bold moves by ASEAN countries to further open up their markets, dismantle their internal barriers, and harmonise their rules and procedures before goods, services, investment and labour can flow productively. The European Union (EU) began with coal and steel. What will it take **to get the ball rolling** for ASEAN? ASEAN will also have to change its slow-moving decision-making structures and processes if it wants to be an EU-style single economic entity. The challenge for the leaders gathered in Kuala Lumpur for the 11th ASEAN Summit is to translate words into action, which would bring home to the people in the region the practical benefits of belonging to a single community.

Adapted from "The New Straits Times", 13 December 2005

- (a) Why is it important for ASEAN to be linked closer economically? [2]
- (b) How much foreign direct investment did China attract last year? [1]
- (c) What evidence is there to support that ASEAN is moving closer towards economic integration? [2]
- (d) What are some concrete steps that have to be undertaken before ASEAN becomes a single economic entity like the European Union? [4]
- (e) What does "**to get the ball rolling**" in paragraph 3, line 4 mean? [1]
- (f) Summarise the passage in about 120 words using your own words. [10]

(Total:20 marks)

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

Joseph Tan
19 Jalan Limau
Taman Perling
81200 Johor Bahru

23-3-06

Bank Maju Berhad
66 Jalan Cahaya
Taman Tampoi
81200 Johor Bahru

The Manager

I am an old man. Last week, I went to your bank to open a joint savings account with my son. I was directed to the Customer Service Officer, a young lady by the name of Jennifer Goh. On seeing us, she simply walked away. My son and I waited. 20 minutes later, she reappeared.

Then I produced both our MyKad. The sour-faced Ms Goh just threw an application form on the desk and asked us to fill it. Before I could start filling it in, she asked for our driving licences and birth certs. I asked her politely why she needed the other two documents. She got angry and said that if we really wanted a savings account with the bank, we needed to show the two documents. She even said that the MyKad is not reliable.

I then asked to see you for clarification. She stormed out of the Customer Service Desk. I had no choice but to leave the bank. I didn't know where to hide my face! Shocked by your bank's attitude, we went to another bank nearby and opened a savings account easily. No problem at all.

Can you explain why your bank does not recognise MyKad as a legal document? Is your bank as progressive as its name? Just what is going on?

Joseph Tan

- (i) Analyse the letter above by listing and describing **six** different aspects of poor communication. [12]
- (ii) Rewrite the letter using effective communication principles. [10]
- (b) The most popular form of layout for business letters is the full block layout.
List **three** features of the full block layout. [3]
(Total:25 marks)
3. (a) Non-verbal communication can be classified into seven main areas.
Briefly describe any **two** of these areas of non-verbal communication. [4]
- (b) Listening is an active process.
(i) Give **two** purposes of listening in the process of talking to others. [4]
(ii) State **two** barriers to listening in the communication process. [4]
- (c) Different approaches to public speaking are used depending on the occasion and the purpose of the speech.
List **three** approaches to public speaking. [3]
(Total:15 marks)

4. (a) The Secretary convenes all meetings and prepares the agenda in consultation with the Chairperson.
Name and explain the **four** main elements of an agenda. [4]
- (b) Explain the purpose of the following:
- (i) Annual general meeting [2]
 - (ii) Extraordinary general meeting [2]
 - (iii) Board meeting [2]
- (Total:10 marks)
5. (a) (i) List **three** advantages of a memo as a written form of communication. [6]
- (ii) You are the Office Manager of a trading company. Recently, your company bought a new photocopier.
Write an instruction memo to your staff to inform them of the new photocopier and that they are welcome to use it. State also the basic procedures to follow to ensure that the photocopier would provide reliable service for a long time. [10]
- (b) Describe the writing plan in responding to a letter of complaint. [4]
(Total:20 marks)
6. (a) The workplace challenge is to provide service of a consistently high quality in the shortest time possible.
List **four** communication skills that add to the quality of customer service. [4]
- (b) Justified customer complaints should be acknowledged and resolved promptly.
State **four** steps to be taken when handling a customer complaint. [4]
- (c) What can you do if a telephone caller asks for information that you do not have at hand? [2]
(Total:10 marks)

- END OF QUESTION PAPER -

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

- Lack of language proficiency impeded the answering of the questions. All answers were lifted from the text and some were pieced together in an incoherent manner, reflecting a “cut and paste” manner.
- At least 2 candidates misunderstood ASEAN for South Asia.
- Candidates need to answer to the point. For example, ‘China attracted USD60billion in FDI’. Candidates do not need to mention ‘twice the amount of ASEAN’.
- Do not use bulleted list if the answer has two or more points. Write in continuous prose.
- Try to use own words. Do not lift chunks from the passage.

1.
 - (a) It is important for ASEAN to be linked closer economically because of the increasing competition for trade and investment and also the rise of China and India.
 - (b) China attracted USD60billion in foreign direct investment last year.
 - (c) The further liberalising of intra-ASEAN trade under AFTA is evidence to support that ASEAN is moving towards closer economic integration.
 - (d) ASEAN countries have to open up their markets more, remove internal barriers and harmonise their rules and procedures before they can become a single entity like the European Union. Furthermore, ASEAN has to change its cumbersome decision-making structures and processes.
 - (e) “To get the ball rolling” means to make something start happening.
 - (f) With increasing competition for trade and investment and the rise of China, it is important that ASEAN unify as one economic entity, putting aside political hindrances. Unlike China and India, ASEAN has been slow in attracting foreign investment. However, this should push ASEAN to quicken its own scheme for regional economic integration which was formulated at the Bali Summit. The liberalising of trade under AFTA is a positive step but much needs to be done before ASEAN can be an EU-style single economic unit. ASEAN countries have to open up their markets more, remove internal barriers and cumbersome bureaucratic practices besides harmonising rules and procedures for trade and investment. The challenge for the 11th ASEAN Summit is to make this a reality.

Question 2

- Rewritten letters were too long.
- Candidates lacked language proficiency with no control of structure and grammar.
- Candidates were unable to express the answers in a coherent manner.
- Answers were far too short. There was no description or elaboration.
- Write letters which are concise and clear.
- Do not use contractions (e.g. wasn't) and arrange points in logical sequence in paragraphs.
- Provide elaboration when answering 'aspects of poor communication'. E.g. 'The date is wrong' should be written as 'The date is wrongly written. It should be written in full as 7 April 2006'.

2. (a) (i) Aspects of poor communication in the letter (choose any six, with descriptions):
- No salutation
 - Date is not written in full
 - No subject line
 - Inappropriate opening sentence
 - No complimentary close
 - Use of contractions – not appropriate (e.g. I'm, didn't, birth certs)
 - Sarcastic tone used (e.g. "Is your bank as progressive as its name?")

(ii)

19 Jalan Limau
Taman Perling
81200 Johor Bahru

23 March 2006

The Manager
Maju Bank Berhad
66 Jalan Cahaya
Taman Tampoi
81200 Johor Bahru

Dear Sir

Problem in Opening Savings Account

I am writing to complain about the problem I encountered when trying to open a savings account at your bank.

On 18 March, I went with my son to your bank to open a joint savings account. I was directed to Ms Jennifer Goh, the Customer Service Officer. She left her table as we were approaching her and only attended to us more than 20 minutes later. Ms Goh rudely threw an application form on the desk for us to fill. When I produced both our MyKad, she asked for our driving licences and birth certificates. I asked her politely why the two documents were necessary. She was adamant that we had to show the two documents and even remarked on the lack of reliability of the MyKad.

I then asked to see you for clarification. Ms Goh stormed out of the Customer Service Desk. Shocked by your staff's attitude, I had no choice but to leave your bank. Fortunately, I was able to open a savings account easily at another bank nearby.

I would appreciate if you could look into the matter and provide me with an explanation as to why your bank does not recognise MyKad as a legal document.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully

Joseph Tan

- (b) Three features of the full block layout (any three):
- The sender's address, the date, the inside address and the greeting are placed against the left margin.
 - Each paragraph starts against the left margin.
 - The complimentary close and the signature block are also against the left margin.
 - Extra parts such as enclosures, file numbers and copy notations are also against the left margin.

Question 3

- Answers were too vague, incoherent and lacked depth.
- Candidates were confused between the barriers to listening in the communication process and the barriers to communication in general.
- Candidates need to know the subject matter, concepts and principles.
- Give more depth to answers, with clearer explanations. There should not be any one-word answers.

3. (a) Areas of non-verbal communication (any two):
- Body movement – movements of the hands, head, feet and legs, posture, eye movements and facial expressions
 - Physical characteristics – body shape, general attractiveness, body and breath odours, weight, hair, skin colour
 - Touching behaviour – stroking, hitting, holding or guiding the movements of another person
 - Vocal quality – pitch range, pitch control, rhythm control, tempo, articulation control, resonance
 - Space (proximity) – spatial distance between two persons
 - Artefacts – clothes, accessories, perfume project the style of the wearer
 - Environment – office space, sales area, etc. must be comfortable.
- (b) (i) Two purposes of listening in the process of talking to others:
- As the sender of the message, listening to your receiver's answers tells you how the other person has interpreted your message.
 - As the receiver of a message, listening to the other person allows you to understand the meaning.
- (ii) Barriers to listening in the communication process (choose any two):
- Boredom or lack of interest
 - The listener's dislike of the speaker's personality or physical appearance
 - A desire to change rather than accept the speaker
 - The intrusion of the listener's own values or attitudes.
- (c) Approaches to public speaking (choose any three):
- Prepared speeches
 - Impromptu speeches
 - Manuscript speeches
 - Memorised speeches
 - Briefings
 - Team briefings.

Question 4

- Candidates did not understand the terminology for agenda. They confused agenda with the business of meetings such as "motion", "casting vote" and "standing orders".
- Answers were too sketchy for Question 4(b) which asked specifically for the 'purpose' of various meetings.
- Answers were too general and lacked substance. Read text/study manual for clear understanding of concepts so that good and clear explanations can be made.

4. (a) The main elements in an agenda:
- time, date, place and purpose of meeting
 - order of business items for meeting

- items requiring decisions
 - items to be discussed
- (b) (i) to inform interested parties of the year's progress and the plans for the next year.
- (ii) to inform members of unusual circumstances and any potential advantages and disadvantages to shareholders, other interested parties and the company.
- (iii) to provide a forum for management and the board of directors.

Question 5

- Some candidates were confused with the memo format as they included salutation and complimentary close.
- In Question 5(a)(i), some candidates wrote about reasons for memo and not advantages.
- In Question 5(a)(ii), many candidates did not state basic procedures to follow in using photocopier. They referred staff to operation manual.
- Write clear sentences and pay attention to grammar as memos are brief and concise. E.g. 'switch on photocopier' instead of 'on photocopier'.
- Put ideas in paragraphs. Bulleting points should only be used for giving instructions.
- Writing plan in responding to letter of complaint is NOT AIDA formula.

5. (a) (i) Advantages of a memo as a written form of communication (choose any three):
- It reaches a large number of people at the same time
 - It provides a written record for filing and reference
 - It allows the writer to convey detailed or difficult information logically and accurately
 - It can indicate, by a company letterhead, that its information is part of the organisation's procedure.
- (ii)

MEMORANDUM

To : All Staff

From : Kassim Ahmad, Office Manager

Date : 8 April 2006

Subject : Operating Instructions for New Photocopier

A new photocopier has been installed in the main office. All staff are welcome to use it.

To ensure that the machine gives long and reliable service, it is important to keep the following procedures in mind:

- Use the machine for no longer than 30 minutes at a time.
- After use, allow the machine to cool for at least 5 minutes.
- Make sure the switch is turned off after use.

Please ask me if you have any questions about the machine.

- (b) Writing plan used in response to a letter of complaint:
- Start with the action you have taken as a result of the complaint
 - Acknowledge the complaint clearly
 - Give an apology and acknowledge any inconvenience caused
 - Close with a goodwill statement.

Question 6

- Candidates were weak in the spelling and use of certain words of the PAIR concept like “placate” and “empathise”. There was poor communication of meaning.
- Candidates did not list communication skills in customer service but gave irrelevant points about ways to deal with customers.
- Read questions carefully in order to answer them correctly.
- Question 6(c) involves two marks only, and does not warrant an answer of more than 50 words.

6. (a) Four communication skills that add to the quality of customer service:
- Greet the customer and show empathy
 - Listen and provide feedback
 - Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour
 - Problem-solve and consult customers.
- (b) Four steps required for handling a customer complaint:
- Placate: listen, empathise, respond with concern
 - Attend to the complaint
 - Investigate circumstances, details of the incident
 - Resolve: decide on action to take.
- (c) If a telephone caller asks for information you do not have, explain to the caller that you (any one):
- are moving away from the telephone to get it,
 - have to make further inquiries and will contact the person later, or
 - have to transfer the call to another person.