

DP05

Business Communication

13 OCTOBER 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:

Communication experts view the Internet, at the crossroads of telecommunications, information technology and the multimedia industries as a medium to resolve problems of communication between people. The Internet, according to popular perception, cuts back on the journeys people have to make to stay connected and, therefore, is a boon even for business.

Many people dream of it becoming the medium for new and better human relations where people can keep in communication, but herein lies the problem. There is no direct link between these **“two types of communication”**. Human and social communication is much more difficult and is time-consuming. It requires a sharing of common languages and values, a sharing of common ideals and, at least a common project. For example, it would not have been enough to put more computers into Kosovo and Serbia to avert civil war. We have also seen that the Internet could be used as great a medium of information the same way that it can be used for rumours or propaganda.

While the world is a “global village” technically-speaking, the Internet will have great difficulty transcending social and cultural boundaries. In fact, the opposite challenge is presented. The more **“distances”** are removed, the more easily we see what divides cultures, civilizations, political and philosophical systems. Hence, we need to work more at fostering mutual tolerance. The more the Internet removes the frontiers of time and space, the more visible the difficulties of mutual understanding become, thus making it more difficult to resolve issues connected with them.

In other words, the Internet is a technical revolution awaiting a social and cultural plan. For the time being, above and beyond the dreams of electronic democracy and access for all to databases, databanks and interactive links, the Internet appears to be more suited to e-commerce activities. It is seen as being vital in providing information for every aspect of the economy, education and services, but can it ever resolve human and social differences? The world regards the Internet as representing a unique opportunity to promote the free movement of ideas, equal opportunities for all in education, and the dissemination of knowledge. Communication providers boast of its ability to offer easy access to information for all.

In reality, the benefits of the information superhighways today, are enjoyed only by a certain class of people who know how to access the Internet. The numbers of those belonging to this class will be higher in industrialised countries. On a global-scale, the connected (about 2% of the world’s population) are separated from the unconnected. All things considered, will the Internet widen gaps between people or foster conciliation?

Adapted from “Label France” January 2000

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

- (a) Why do people regard the Internet as a medium to resolve communication problems between people? [1]
- (b) What are the **“two types of communication”** referred to in paragraph 2? [1]
- (c) Why is human communication seen as being so difficult? [2]
- (d) (i) Explain in your own words what the word **“distances”** in paragraph 3, means to you. [1]
- (ii) In your opinion, what causes people living in this world to be intolerant of one another? State **three** causes. [3]
- (e) Name **two** advantages and **two** disadvantages of the Internet today. [2]
- (f) Summarise the passage on page 1 in **120** words. [10]

(Total:20 marks)

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

Maimunah bte Ali
457 Jalan Puchong Permai
56780 Kuala Lumpur

21 / 09 / 2000

The Manager
Public Affairs Section
Business Development Bank Bhd
1, Jalan Hang Tuah
56100 Kuala Lumpur

Poor Customer Services

The above matter refers.

On Monday morning, I went to your Taman Indah branch with my aged and sickly mother to buy a bank draft. After the counter staff accepted the application form and the money, we were told to come back the next day to collect the bank draft. I inquired whether my mother had to come personally since she had problems walking and was informed that her identity card and the customer's copy of the application form would suffice.

On Tuesday morning, I was at your bank again but was made to wait for 35 minutes. The counter staff insisted that the acknowledgement receipt had to be signed only by my mother. I explained what her colleague had told us the day before. She replied that rules were rules and she had to follow procedures. It is inconceivable in this day and age of competitive banking, how you can operate with such ill-mannered and badly-trained frontliners. She was adamant I could not get the bank draft. It is about time you made them aware that without satisfied customers they will be without a job. I asked to see the manager of the bank and after waiting for 25 minutes, I was told that he was unavailable. At this moment of writing, the draft hasn't been collected yet.

You have to train your staff to streamline dissemination of information too. Today, with improved telecommunications technology I can't understand why your bank needs one whole day to process bank drafts. Aren't we regressing? Please be more customer-friendly. Our time is money too!

I am waiting for you or the bank manager to respond immediately and to give me an apology, failing which I shall go to the press and highlight this issue.

Sincerely
Maimunah Ali

- (a) (i) Analyse the letter on page 3 by listing and describing **four** different aspects of poor communication. [10]
- (ii) Rewrite the letter using effective communication principles. [10]
- (b) You have to make a presentation of your organisation's new product to a prospective client. List the steps you would take in planning for the presentation. [5]
(Total:25 marks)
3. (a) Effective communication is based on giving and receiving feedback. How does feedback help:
- (i) the receiver? [1½]
- (ii) the sender? [1½]
- (b) Name **five** interpersonal characteristics which will be seen when there is effective feedback within the workplace. [5]

- (c) Erin is into her second day at XYZ organisation. When she asked a colleague where she could find Mary, the Human Resource officer, she received this reply, "Sorry, I've a deadline. She could be anywhere around I'm sure".

Then she asked another colleague where she could find the training room. Erin received this reply, "Sorry, I'm not in charge of showing new workers around. Look along the corridors and you should see the name on the door".

- (i) Name **two** emotional effects the **two** statements above had on Erin. [2]
- (ii) Name **three** causes of communication barriers as a result of the **two** statements above and identify their outcomes. [3]
- (iii) Re-state the **two** statements above to show sensitivity towards Erin's feelings. [2]
(Total:15 marks)

4. (a) You are attached to the Human Resource division in your organisation. A training programme "Management by Objectives" is to be offered to all staff on **two** separate dates. You decide to write a memo to all staff.

- (i) List **three** advantages of using a memo in the above situation. [3]
- (ii) Write this memo (incorporating the standard parts of a memo) to all staff in your organisation. [5]

- (b) (i) List the **four**-point writing strategy for a bad news letter. [4]
- (ii) Using the **four**-point writing strategy above, write a letter of rejection to an applicant who came for an interview, but was not offered the advertised position in your organisation. [8]
(Total:20 marks)

5. (a) The following conversation took place at **one** of the meetings you attended.

Megat: OK, for the next agenda item, Milla has the details. Do you mind going through this with us?
(Chairperson)

Milla: Sure. OK. A couple of weeks ago, we saw that our uptime was about 10% below our goal. At our team meeting, I made this diagram (showing the members the diagram) and put some red circles on it to show possible trouble spots.

Norman: (interrupting) You know, I was thinking I could contact some people over at Bailey's plant. I don't know if they had the same situation, but they use the same equipment. They might have your answer.

Liza: That's a good idea, Norman. I could check with the engineering people over there too.

- (i) What role did the meeting chairperson not perform? [1]
- (ii) What action could you take as a member to ensure an effective meeting? [2]
- (iii) State the words you would use to help move the meeting in the right direction. [2]
- (b) Identify **five** duties of a secretary of a meeting. [5]
(Total:10 marks)

6. (a) Name **five** examples of non-verbal communication that can cause communication barriers when you are serving a customer. [5]

- (b) List **five** steps you would follow when you receive an enquiry over the telephone. [5]
(Total:10 marks)

OUTLINE ANSWERS

Question 1

As in the previous sitting, candidates performed the best in the comprehension passage. In one of the questions, candidates were asked to state three causes why people living in this world were intolerant of one another. Most candidates unhesitatingly stated “difference in culture, philosophy, lifestyles, religion, etc.” These differences are there, but, are not causes. It only becomes a cause when people allow these differences to become barriers in understanding one another.

1. (a) The Internet is regarded as a medium to resolve problems of communication because it has cut back on the journey people make to stay connected.
- (b) The two types are human/social/face-to-face communication and communication through the Internet.
- (c) Human relations are difficult because it requires a sharing of a common language, common values and ideals. It is also very time-consuming to establish trust or a relationship.
- (d) (i) “Distances” refers to barriers of time, space and understanding.
- (ii) People are intolerant because they allow the following to be barriers in understanding one another:
- cultural practices
 - religious beliefs
 - prejudices or biases
 - colour or ethnicity
 - language
 - social standing
 - pride
 - politics.
- (e) Advantages:
- it promotes free movement of ideas
 - it gives equal opportunity in education/disseminating of knowledge
 - it provides the quickest and cheapest form of mail.
- Disadvantages:
- it can be misused for rumours and propaganda
 - it is only available for the computer literate and those who can afford computers
 - it may widen the gap between the uninformed and the informed.
- (f) Many people hope that the Internet can be the medium to resolve the problems of communication between people. Unfortunately, there is no direct link between technological communications and social relations. The latter requires a sharing of common languages, ideals, values and objectives. Even though ‘distances’ are removed by technology, it cannot remove cultural, political and philosophical biases which bring about difficulties of mutual understanding between peoples in the world. Presently the Internet appears more beneficial to people engaged in e-commerce activities. Although it promotes free movement of ideas, knowledge and opportunities for education and trade, it is only enjoyed by a certain class of people who have the means to own computers and who can access the Internet.

(119 words)

Question 2

The question on letter writing was not well attempted. When candidates were required to re-write the letter using effective communication principles, they ended up copying out the situation quoted without giving any feedback for improvement. Most of them were as directive and patronising as the example given. Candidates need to learn how to use “tentative language” to give suggestions and feedback in letters of complaint.

2. (a) (i) Candidates have to list four aspects of poor communication and describe them too.
- date not written in full (may be confused with American form)
 - no salutation
 - the first paragraph is redundant
 - ideas are disorganised and not structured in a logical way.

(ii) Maimunah bte Ali
457 Jalan Puchong Permai
56780 Kuala Lumpur

21 September 2000

The Manager
Public Affairs Section
Business Development Bank Bhd
1, Jalan Hang Tuah
56100 Kuala Lumpur

Dear Sir / Madam

Poor Customer Services

On Monday morning, I went to your Taman Indah branch with my aged and sickly mother to buy a bank draft. After the counter staff accepted the forms and the money, we were told to come back the next day to collect it. I inquired whether my mother had to come personally since she had problems walking and was informed that her identity card and the customer's copy of the application form would suffice.

On Tuesday morning, after a 35-minute wait, the counter staff insisted that the acknowledgement receipt had to be signed only by my mother. I explained what her colleague had told us the day before that rules were rules and had to be followed. As a result, I could not get the bank draft. I asked to see the manager of the bank and after waiting for 25 minutes, I was told that he was unavailable.

I am writing this letter as feedback in the hope that your bank can evaluate your customer services with a view to improving it. In this age of competitive banking, perhaps frontliners should be made aware that they need to disseminate correct information to clients. In addition to this, workshops on what to do in such instances could be very helpful because the bank has to depend on doing business with satisfied customers.

I would appreciate it if you or the bank manager could explain why it takes a whole day to process bank drafts in this day of advanced telecommunication technology. I look forward to an early reply.

Yours faithfully
MaimunahAli

- (b) Steps to follow in planning a presentation:
- define the purpose or goal
 - analyse the audience
 - consider the content and setting
 - identify the main points and supporting materials
 - plan and organise the presentation

Question 3

This was the worst attempted question. Part (a) and (b) was a question testing candidates knowledge on feedback in communication. Many candidates had not studied this area in depth because a question like this has not been set before, although it is in the syllabus. Part (c) was badly attempted too, because this was another application question. The candidates were prompted to analyse the situation and write out words they would use to reply to a query. Sadly, many failed to respond correctly.

3. (a) (i) Feedback helps the receiver:
- check understanding of what has been said;
 - to be informed of being on track, progressing or having to take remedial action; and
 - to be encouraged or motivated to repeat good or excellent work or behaviour.
- (ii) Feedback helps the sender:
- by letting the speaker know how accurately the message has been heard;
 - check the impact of the message on others; and
 - to keep on course.
- (b) Interpersonal characteristics present in the workplace are:
- trust
 - acceptance
 - openness
 - empathy
 - support
 - positiveness
 - equality
 - concern for the needs of others
- (c) (i) She would feel unwelcome, lost, uncomfortable, rejected and unaccepted. She might feel that she has made a mistake joining this organisation.
- (ii) Withholding information - operating on incomplete information, mistakes result, makes receiver feel small.
Difference in perception - people interpret events in a different way, this may cause receiver to feel ostracised, unimportant, rejected.
Dismissing concerns of others - receiver may withdraw, may not become team player later.
Showing indifference - receiver forms a bad image of firm, perceives staff as having poor attitudes.
- (iii) “She’s on the second floor, at the far corner. Her extension number is 222.”
“Turn right at the end of this block and you’ll see the training rooms on your left.”

Question 4

Candidates performed well for this two-part question on memo writing and four-point writing strategy for a “bad-news” letter. A few candidates managed to score above 70% of the allocated marks. Although many could list the four-point writing strategy, they could not apply it when they had to practice writing the rejection letter. Many had the rejection written on the subject line, in the 1st and 2nd paragraphs instead of the 3rd paragraph.

4. (a) (i) The advantages are:
- It reaches a large number of people at the same time.
 - It provides a written record for reference on file at any time or place.
 - It allows difficult and detailed information to be accurately and logically relayed.
 - It indicates that the information contained is part of the organisation procedure.

(ii) MEMORANDUM

To: All Staff
From: Shireen Moya (Administrative Executive)
Date: 21 September 2000
Subject: Training Programme – Management by Objectives

The Human Resource Management (HRM) Department has planned to have two one-day sessions of the above programme for all staff. The sessions are on October 11, 2000 and October 27, 2000. HRM has e-mailed the form to be filled by everyone.

This course has been organised to help staff manage their day-to-day operations in a more efficient manner as well as to improve schedules between departments.

To help us plan these in a manner that suits everybody's busy schedule, please indicate which session you are able to attend by filling in the form and mailing to us latest by this Friday, September 25, 2000.

Shireen Moya

- (b) (i) Writing strategy for a bad news letter:
1. Open with a neutral buffer.
 2. Explain the situation.
 3. Give the refusal or negative news.
 4. Close with a positive paragraph.

(ii) Master & Origo Berhad
227, 2nd Floor Wisma Constant
75600 Kuala Lumpur

15 September 2000

Ms Jenny Jonas
157 Jalan Stone
34500 Seremban

Dear Jenny

Thank you for the time you gave to attend an interview with Bernard Lim at our office recently. Mr Lim enjoyed meeting with you and hopes you found the discussion informative.

During our meetings with the candidates, we evaluate their suitability for the position based on a number of criteria. The difference between those selected and those who miss out is sometimes marginal. However, with a set number of positions available we hope you will understand the difficulty in making final decisions.

While your application has been given serious consideration, we regret that on this occasion, we will not be offering you a position in our organisation.

We appreciate your interest in our firm and wish you every success in your job search. We do have vacancies every now and then and we hope you will contact us should you see a position that fits your area of expertise.

Yours sincerely

Junidah Ali
Personnel Officer

Question 5

Candidates performed poorly in this question as a whole. A situation was given and they had to analyse what had not been put into practice by the chairperson. Most candidates could not relate their knowledge to the situation or put themselves into the meeting environment. Hence, their answers were totally unrelated to the question.

5. (a) (i) The chairperson did not perform the maintenance role to ensure that every member had a chance to be heard.
- (ii) I would raise my hand to get the chairperson's attention. When the chairperson has given permission to speak, I would say that I would like to hear what Milla has prepared.
- (iii) Excuse me Mr Chairperson. Can we go back to the point where Milla left off before she was interrupted by Norman? I feel that she has put in time to think around the problem and come up with a diagram. I would like to hear what she has prepared.
- (b)
- Prepare the agenda in consultation with the chairperson.
 - Record and write the minutes of the last meeting.
 - Send out the notice of meeting, together with the agenda and minutes at least one week before the next meeting.
 - Call on members especially those with duties to follow-up and find out whether they would be attending the meeting to present the results of the action.
 - Prepare enough copies of documentation for members besides bringing along documents like the constitution if a need arises to refer to it.

Question 6

Another question which was poorly attempted by candidates was this two-part question on communication barriers and steps to follow when receiving an enquiry over the telephone. Many candidates gave one-word answers for communication barriers, such as, eye contact, bored or artifacts. They failed to answer how these non-verbal communications could cause communication barriers.

6. (a) Nonverbal communication that can cause barriers are:
- folding of arms
 - not establishing eye contact
 - frowning while saying positive things
 - moving away from the customer
 - listening to customer while doing paperwork
 - yawning
 - sighing
- (b) The five steps are:
- If you have the information, provide accurate information promptly and give clear feedback.
 - If you don't have the information, explain to the caller that you are moving away from the telephone to get the information. It is important to keep the caller informed of what you are doing so that they don't get frustrated waiting.
 - If you have to ask another person, let the caller know this and explain that it may take some time. Ask if they prefer to wait or have you ring them back.
 - If you have to transfer them to another number in the organisation, give them the name of the person and the direct line of that person so that should the call get lost in the transfer, the caller can ring the person concerned directly.
 - Once you make a commitment to return the call, always ring back promptly.