



## **EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**MAY 2004**

### **PRACTICE OF SELLING**

#### **General Comments**

Once again we have a pleasing set of results which is a tribute to the work put in by the students and their lecturers. The marks are at the higher end and show evidence of candidates engaging with the course material, essential text and recommended articles. Equally, students were good at bringing in their own experiences to illustrate the theory and take ownership of the answer. This is always welcomed by the examiner. It was also good to see each candidate attempting all five questions as required, this does have a positive effect on the overall marks. The marketplace that the candidates work in is a dynamic one, bursting with evidence of effective (and some ineffective) selling – candidates should always stay tuned in to both Irish and international business throughout the course as reflection on the stories deepens the understanding and learning of the theory. Examination technique was much improved this year and contributes in part to the good results.

#### **Question 1**

The vast majority of the candidates did this question, highlighting the need for communication, cooperation and coordination between the two. Strong answers used the theoretical framework of Strahle and Spiro (p.27 of the text) to illustrate the necessity to have these two functions and then went on to suggest possible organizational possibilities. Most students gave personal experience examples as well. These illustrated the increasing use of the concept of brand teams in the fmcg market to ensure integration.

#### **Question 2**

This was the question with the highest mean score, the candidates were extremely current in their knowledge, giving tangible figures for the new markets. All knew the theory very well and discussed the direct and indirect options fluently, remembering to opt for a particular state with regard to picking the most appropriate approaches.

#### **Question 3**

This question was based on the content of the essential article by Millman and Wilson, and is also dealt with in the text pp150-153. It did not prove difficult for most candidates, a number of whom used diagrammatic representations of the stages. Some students took the opportunity to drive in personal experience to illustrate the theory.

**Question 4**

This answer came directly from the essential text (Chapter 3, pp 77-84). Fisher proposes 3 elements to organizational buying behaviour: structure, process and content. While the answer would outline the three elements, it was required to pay particular attention to the process as illustrated on p.79. Some students failed to read the question correctly and wrote at length about the consumer decision process. Some candidates took an example of a selling situation and worked it right through the buy phases which illustrated their understanding admirably.

**Question 5**

Students here generally opted to be either a sales manager or a sales representative in terms of the perspective of what constitutes good territory management practice. Each was equally valid. From a management perspective it is about appropriate sales structures, optimum number of salespeople, equalizing workload, routing and the like. From a salesperson's perspective it is about customer relationship building, effective use of time, journey planning, knowing competitors' schedules etc. A small number of students failed to adopt the scenario posed and their mark suffered as a result.

**Question 6**

This was a popular question which was well handled by and large. It is covered in the text (pp.255-257) but it was heartening to see the number of references to the knowledge acquired in the first year Marketing subject in this answer. This is evidence of information being turned in to knowledge through experience and further learning.

**Question 7**

This question allowed candidates to deal with the bigger picture of performance appraisal which is always a favoured exam answer area before moving in to the specifics of the debate. Overall most candidates argued that given the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative measures the wise choice is to opt for a blend of qualitative and quantitative to get the best evaluation outcome.

**Question 8**

The least popular question on the paper yet it is the area that the book opens with and, if reflected on, is very easy to do once the role of the salesperson is understood by the candidates. This question delivered some excellent examples of how corporate objectives are actually achieved via the sales force in the candidates' employing organizations.