

**THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF PAKISTAN**

**EXAMINERS' COMMENTS**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>SESSION</b>
Business Communication and Behavioural Studies	Intermediate Examination – Spring 2014

**General:**

The result this time was quite encouraging. It was a very pleasant change from previous terms and was quite welcome. This trend, all hope, would continue.

Question-wise comments are as under:

**Question 1**

This question required the candidates to explain the meaning of third party negotiations and the role of a mediator, arbitrator, consultant and a conciliator in such negotiations. Most of the candidates defined the terms correctly but could not clearly distinguish between the roles of the four types of third parties specified in the question. Most of them gave general answers and almost the same answer was given under each head. Discussing the role of conciliator proved the most difficult as most candidates did not seem to have any idea thereof.

**Question 2**

This question required listing of steps which are to be taken in a major change initiative. Change Management is one of the core topics in Management Sciences but somehow many students did not attempt this question altogether. There were 7-8 steps which had to be listed; all of them were quite logical and could have been answered by using logic and common sense. However, many students discussed irrelevant stuff such as:

- Methods of coping with change.
- Lewins model of change encompassing the process of Unfreeze-Change-Refreeze.
- Need for undergoing change with respect to technology, work processes and culture etc.
- Action and strategies for changing the behaviour of employees.

Some students did not take care of sequence of steps and rather mixed up the steps in utter confusion.

**Question 3(a)**

In this part the students were asked to define a Business report and list down the general elements that are part of the various sections of the report. Although most students were able to list down a good number of elements, hardly anyone could properly define a business report. Even at this stage, many students confused it with Annual Report which was quite discouraging. Many students mentioned the types and sub-types of reports, which was not the requirement of the question.

**Question 3(b)**

In this part the candidates were required to explain the information that they would include in their CVs to attract the prospective employer. Majority of the candidates gained good marks. Only a few candidates produced incomplete answers in which they mostly focused on the layout or gave one or two points only.

**Question 4(a)**

Definition of Non-verbal Communication was given by most of the students correctly. However, some of the students mentioned “unspoken stimuli” which is half of the definition. Non-verbal communication is not just unspoken but unwritten as well. Had they just written “without the use of words” it would have sufficed.

**Question 4(b)**

In this part the candidates were required to explain why a transmitter of message uses non-verbal communication. In this part, mostly two points were given out of the possible 4-5 points i.e. universality of non-verbals and advantage of time-saving.

**Question 5(a)**

In this part the candidates were required to explain the concepts of Consideration and Courtesy in effective business communication and most of them gave quite satisfactory replies. However, while explaining courtesy a few students missed the important points of being tactful, thoughtful and appreciative.

**Question 5(b)**

In this part the candidates were required to state the benefits of active listening in the organizational setup. Most of the replies were satisfactory. However, a number of candidates failed to understand the question and included the requirements of attentive listening in their answers. An important benefit that was missing from most answers was “overcoming resistance”.

**Question 5(c)**

In this part the students were asked to list the potential problems in the communication process. Majority of the candidates performed fairly well and secured good marks. Some students identified far less than the required number of potential problems. Some of the students repeated the same points with variation in emphasis and usage of words.

**Question 6**

A very important and practical aspect of business communication is letter writing. The students were given a scenario and were required to write a letter to a store manager asking for a refund/replacement of a product.

In a letter, two aspects are considered (i) the general template/layout and (ii) the text of the letter. Since a question on letter is almost a compulsory feature of every paper, it is expected that the students would be well versed at least as regards the layout of the letter. However, a significant number of candidates lost marks due to some basic mistakes such as:

- The designation store manager was mentioned after the name of the organization.
- In the complimentary close, the name of the writer was written after the signature.

As regards the text, the students are required to be creative whereas most candidates tried to reproduce the words from the question. Moreover, the ideas were not presented logically and cohesively. Further, important references like invoice or receipt number and date of purchase of the item were missing. Some of the candidates even failed to mention as to what they finally wanted i.e. replacement/compensation/refund. Finally, grammar, spellings and vocabulary were very weak.

### **Question 7**

In this question the candidates were required to explain the terms 'Group communication' and 'Virtual team' and to give three factors which differentiate a Virtual team from a face-to-face team.

Question was not popular and majority of the candidates did not attempt it. Even those who did attempt performed poorly. Hardly any student could go beyond the statement that group communication is the communication between group members. The definitions of 'Virtual team' were mostly incomplete as most of the candidates took a clue from the wording of the question but did not know much else. While narrating the differences, most students wrote the same points that they had already given in the explanation.

### **Question 8**

It was a straightforward and popular question attempted by almost all the students. Here the candidates were asked to state the meaning of downward communication, the circumstances because of which management fails in communicating downwards and steps needed for improvement.

Most of the students explained downward communication correctly. Answers related to reasons for failure in downward communication were average as most of the students could mention 2-3 points only. Some candidates mentioned incorrect points like flaws in organizational structure, leadership styles, employees' behaviour and cultural barriers etc. While discussing steps for improvement, many students gave vague answers like "an effective system of communication should be developed", without explaining how it has to be achieved. Some students included steps that had no relevance such as subordinates training and motivation etc.

### **Question 9(a)**

Buffer statement is a topic which is repeatedly included due to its frequent usage and immense importance in the business world. The question was answered quite appropriately as far as its definition is concerned but the students were generally unaware of the types of buffers or misunderstood them completely. Some of the students listed the types of buffers correctly but gave inappropriate examples.

**Question 9(b)**

The main steps involved in communication planning had to be stated and most of the students gave correct answers.

**Question 10(a)**

This part of the question was a very novel and interesting one; in which a jumbled up memo was given and the students were required to put it in order. A significant number of replies were found quite up to the mark with logical rearrangement of observations and decisions including correct placement of elements of the memorandum. However, in many instances observations and instructions were mixed up. Some of the candidates even made spelling mistakes despite the fact that they were only required to re-arrange the words.

**Question 10(b)**

This part of the question required brief explanation of the concepts of “Code of Ethics” and “Total Quality Management”. Majority of the students offered quite comprehensive description of Code of Ethics; however, a significant number of students incorrectly mentioned rules, policies and regulation for effective and efficient running of business. Very few students knew about Total Quality Management and resorted to guesswork with little success.

**Question 11**

In this question the students were asked to explain the basic elements of a ‘Request for Proposal’. Only a small number of candidates were successful in highlighting all the basic elements as most of them gave incomplete answers. Many students listed the elements but could not explain them properly. Many candidates listed the elements of a ‘Proposal’ instead of ‘Request for Proposal’.

**Question 12(a)**

The four types of behaviours exhibited by employees when they are dissatisfied with their jobs were asked in this part of the question. Though it was mentioned in the question that response to dissatisfaction may be constructive as well as destructive, yet very few students could think of a constructive behaviour/response. Even while discussing destructive behaviour, the majority had very little idea and offered generalized replies like aggressive behaviour and lack of interest in work. Interestingly, some of them listed very absurd things like smoking, indulgence in drugs, loss of appetite and sleep disorders etc.

**Question 12(b)**

This part required five advantages of Management by Objectives (MBO). An average performance was seen as most of the students could list only 2-3 real advantages and tried to reach the total of five by repeating the same points in different ways.

**THE END**