



The Association of Business Executives

NQF

**Introduction to Business
Communication**

Mark Scheme

Unit Title: Introduction to Business Communication

Unit Code: IBC

Session: June 2015

Question 1

(a) A customer has emailed your company to complain politely that one of your products is not as good a quality as they would expect. Consider the benefits and drawbacks of replying to the customer:

- (i) By email
- (ii) By telephone
- (iii) By letter

(13 marks)

(b) Explain what is meant by **any three** of the following communications terms:

- (i) App
- (ii) Interface
- (iii) Diagonal communication
- (iv) A pyramid structure
- (v) AOB

(12 marks)

Suggested Answer:

(a) *Up to 5 for each part (but total must not exceed 13):*

- (i) A reply by email is fast, and it can include as much detail as I would need to include. I can attach photographs or other relevant documents. I can revise what I have written, and check it for accuracy and to ensure that I have used an appropriate, helpful tone. Although this email would be personal, it is less personal than a phone call, and I may have no absolute proof that the customer has received it, even if I set an “opened email” alert.
- (ii) This is the most personal approach by far, and will allow me to create a rapport with the customer. Since the customer has not been abusive in making the complaint, I should not be worried about making the call, as I will not expect a hostile reaction. The telephone has an immediate feedback that written communication lacks, and I can judge by the tone of the other person’s voice how my call is being received. However, the telephone does not allow me to check what I am saying, and it is possible to miss out important information, or even to say something that I ought not to say.
- (iii) A letter would show that I am taking the customer’s complaint very seriously, and respecting the customer. It takes time and effort to compose a letter, and I would hope that this would be appreciated. However, it might be too formal for a minor complaint, and risks escalating the matter beyond where it should go. Letters are also slow, and the customer could imagine that I am ignoring the matter. A customer who sends an email will expect a very prompt reply.

Maximum Marks for (a)

13 marks

(b) *Up to 4 marks each for the first 3 answers.*

4= full, complete understanding;

3= well understood, but not completely convincing;

2= shows a basic understanding;

1= shows very limited understanding, doesn’t know the meaning or is guessing;

0= completely wrong.

- (i) An app is an application, a programme that can be downloaded on to a smartphone in order to perform a specific function, e.g. *WhatsApp*. Apps allow fast browsing.
- (ii) An interface is any connection between two or more devices, e.g. a computer and a digital camera. An interface allows the devices to “talk” to each other, and to exchange data. The word can also be used to describe a communication between (usually two) people.
- (iii) Diagonal communication, also sometimes called indirect horizontal communication, occurs when a person communicates with someone who is both in a different department or company, and at a different level, e.g. a Production Team Leader asking for product feedback from a Salesperson. It almost never exists with more than two people at the same time.

- (iv) A pyramid structure describes a typical command structure in a company. There is one individual at the very top, and on each level below there is an increasing number of people, until we reach the unskilled employees who are the most numerous, at the bottom of the pyramid. It is so called because when it is illustrated it takes the shape of a pyramid. (can also accept a correct definition of pyramid selling)
- (v) AOB refers to Any Other Business, and is an item included on the agenda of a formal meeting after the specific business is concluded. AOB allows an opportunity for any member of the meeting to introduce a matter that is relevant to the meeting, but does not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

Maximum Marks for (b) **12 marks**
Total Maximum Marks for Q1 **25 marks**

Question 2

You are the owner of a new office supplies business, called Offisup, and you have decided to write a formal letter to companies in your area. The letter that you send will be the same to all of the companies, and its twin purposes will be to introduce your business and look for new clients. This is the first time you will have contacted any of these companies. Inventing details as you wish, write the letter. **(25 marks)**

Suggested Answer:

There are three parts to the mark of 25. They are: (A) Top & Tail; (B) Content; (C) Style. Record marks as A+B+C.

*Up to 5 for Top & Tail:
Offisup name & address;
Sensible date, in the correct place;
Recipient title [NOT name] or company name & address;
Dear Sir or Madam;
Yours faithfully.*

CONTENT: up to 10.

9-10: Yes, please, I must know more! Complete and persuasive; this is a person you would want to do business with. Letter goes beyond mere selling of a product.

7-8: I'm likely to give you a call. A decent case is made, although there will be unanswered questions, (e.g. delivery options). Nothing in the content puts me off, however.

5-6: I might call. There isn't enough detail to convince me, but perhaps I'll ring to find out more, as the deal seems attractive.

3-4: No, I'm not convinced. There isn't much sense of sales, & I might even be left slightly confused by some of the statements.

0,1,2: This letter will probably be shredded. It contains nothing that is of interest to me. It may well be irrelevant to the task required.

STYLE: up to 10.

9-10: lucid, lively, stylish, great selling technique, sense of rapport achieved. Neatly set out.

7-8; Well written if lacking in spark. Structure will be logical, and paragraphing will be clear and consistent. Letter will be neat & technically accurate. The tone will be business-like.

5-6: This is the mark range for a letter that is written in paras but they tend to be very short, or else the sentences ramble a bit. If a letter is worthy but dull and overlong it should not score higher than this. Poor handwriting or presentation should be taken into account here.

3-4: There will be many technical mistakes, and there will be little sense of purpose in the letter.

The presentation will be untidy or casual. The letter may be much too long and irrelevant, or too short to fulfil its purpose. At this level there will be only one or two paragraphs, and vocabulary will be largely monosyllabic.

0,1,2: Very poor style with little to commend it. It will be technically weak and written using very simple words. Presentation will be very poor, and there may be issues of legibility. Paragraphing will be random or non-existent.

Offisup Ltd
PO Box 62238
Lobatse

1 June 2014

The Manager
Dolly Company
PO Box 62249
Lobatse

Dear Sir or Madam

Offer to provide Office Supplies

First of all, please allow me to introduce myself to you.

My name is Jonah Whale, and I am the owner of Offisup, a new company in Lobatse, which provides office supplies to all companies, big or small.

We can provide, at a moment's notice, everything you need from a pencil sharpener to a manager's chair, and we are proud to say that although we are new to the area, our prices are among the most competitive that you will find anywhere. We offer genuine products from some of the biggest international companies – check our website to see our full range.

We back up our low prices with guaranteed SAME DAY FREE delivery of all orders above 1000 pula placed before midday, and next day FREE delivery for all other orders. We guarantee that if we fail to meet our delivery targets, the order will be free as well. I regret that at the moment we deliver only within a ten kilometre radius of the town centre.

No order is too small, no order is too much trouble. We understand the frustration one can feel when we need something but don't have it – and that is where Offisup can help. Give us a call, and we will solve your problem. Guaranteed.

For more information please visit our website, www.offisup.org.bw or call us free on the number at the foot of this letter.

We wait to hear from you, and we are looking forward to doing business with you for many years.

Yours faithfully
Jonah Whale

Total Maximum Marks for Q2 25 marks

Question 3

You have been invited to give a speech and presentation to an invited group of business people. The topic of the speech will be the introduction of a new product that your company has developed.

(a) Describe how you will prepare yourself beforehand, in order to make sure that your speech and presentation will be as effective as possible. **(12 marks)**

(b) Describe what you will do while making the speech and presentation, to ensure that you will have maximum impact on your audience. **(13 marks)**

Suggested Answer:

(a) 1 mark per point plus 1 or 2 marks for development in each case. Ensure that marks are given only for preparation, not delivery or content.

I will plan my speech by writing down everything that I want to say, and redrafting it until I am satisfied.

I will try to learn most of it off by heart, so that I can deliver it without continually looking at my notes. This will allow me to keep more eye contact with the audience.

I will ensure that it follows a logical thought process, so that the audience will find the presentation easy to follow, and I will use vocabulary appropriate to the age and education of my audience.

I will perhaps ask a friend to hear my speech, so that my friend can give me guidance on what I am doing well, and what I could do better.

I will prepare visual aids to stimulate the understanding that the audience will have. This will be a series of PowerPoint slides relevant to the product, showing how it works and how it can benefit them to buy it from me. These slides will appear in a variety of ways (e.g. fade out/fade in; merge from below, etc.) to keep the audience alert. I will prepare a brief and interesting commentary to accompany each slide.

I will choose my attire carefully, in order that the audience will concentrate on my message rather than being distracted by my clothes or jewellery.

I will prepare the venue, and check the seating, temperature and refreshments, to ensure that my audience will be comfortable.

Maximum Marks for (a) 12 marks

(b) 1 mark per point plus 1 or 2 marks for development in each case. Marks may be given for any relevant aspect of delivering a speech or presentation.

First of all I will greet them warmly and introduce myself and my topic. A light-hearted comment, or a suitable joke, at the outset will relax them. I need to make them anticipate my presentation, to look forward to hearing what I have to say, and seeing what I have to show them. It is important to have variety in my tone so that the audience will not become bored, and to use a language that will both convey my authority and knowledge while being readily understandable to them.

I will use eye contact with various members of the audience at different times, to make them feel involved, and I will move around a little, and use hand gestures to illustrate my points, but not enough to distract the audience. I may occasionally ask an easy question, or even an open question to stimulate a little discussion – but I must always remain in control of it.

Visual aids will be interesting – even intriguing – and varied, to keep their attention. My topic will focus on how this product will directly benefit them. This is because their self-interest will make them want to hear as much as possible.

Above all I will be enthusiastic about the product, and use my own energy to stimulate their interest.

Maximum Marks for (b) 13 marks
Total Maximum Marks for Q3 25 marks

Question 4

(a) Compose a memo in the form of an email that will inform colleagues about a meeting that will soon be taking place. **(8 marks)**

(b) Describe the advantages and disadvantages of displaying a notice on the company notice board. **(7 marks)**

(c) Explain what is meant by passive listening. State three examples of body language, which can show that a person is listening passively and in each case say what it shows about the person's attention. **(10 marks)**

Suggested Answer:

(a) STYLE: up to 4. 1 mark each for: recipient; a CC line; subject line; informal sign off.
CONTENT: up to 4. 1 mark each for: time of meeting; place; topic; any good development.

To: steve95@gto.bt

Cc: doryk@gto.bt; dev444@gto.bt

Subject: meeting

Hi guys

Short meeting today at 16.30 in staff office. Manager wants a quick word re targets. Will assume you'll be there unless you tell me different.

Regards

Weem

Maximum Marks for (a) 8 marks

(b) 1 mark each for any advantages or disadvantages, plus 1 mark for good development in all cases. An answer that deals only with one side or the other, max 5.

Advantages: It needs to be written only once; it can use eye-catching printing, colours and images; it can be written on coloured paper so that it stands out; people check the board every day, so it is likely to be seen.

Disadvantages: People who don't check the board will miss the message; there is no easy way to check that everyone has seen it; a notice can be overlooked on a cluttered notice board; it can become torn or otherwise damaged.

Maximum Marks for (b) 7 marks

(c) Up to 4 marks for definition of passive listening (e.g. not engaged; opposite of active; distracted; not focused).

1 mark per example + 1 mark per development. Ensure that the same development is not credited more than once. Candidates with a broader vocabulary or sharper thinking process will be rewarded. Max available is 9.

Passive listening occurs when a person is not engaged in an oral communication, but is distracted. They may appear to be listening, but they are not.

Three examples of body language are: if a person looks out of the window their mind is elsewhere; a person who fidgets is probably bored; someone who plays with their phone has more important things to do than listen.

Maximum Marks for (c) 10 marks

Total Maximum Marks for Q4 25 marks

Question 5

(a) Explain, using three examples, how differences of culture between two people can become a barrier to communication. In each case suggest a way in which that barrier can be overcome.

(9 marks)

(b) Define the word 'preconception' and give two examples of how preconceptions can affect good communication.

(7 marks)

(c) Explain three ways in which time can become a barrier to successful communication. **(9 marks)**

Suggested Answer:

FINAL VERSION: TO BE USED FOR MARKING

(a) 1 mark per difference + 1 mark per development + 1 mark per resultant problem + 1 mark per solution. Do not credit the same vocabulary more than once. Be generous in allowing what constitutes a cultural difference.

People who speak different languages will not easily understand each other. The solution is to use a common language, or find an interpreter.

People who have different customs can misunderstand each other. For example, in Japan a person who clears their dinner plate is suggesting that they have not been given enough food, whereas in Western Europe a clear plate means that someone liked the meal. This can be overcome by visitors learning about the customs of the country they are visiting.

People who dress in particular ways can cause offence by dressing inappropriately for a particular occasion. For example, in some cultures it is proper to wear white garments when going to a funeral; in other cultures black is traditionally worn, and the wearing of white could be considered disrespectful. This can be overcome simply by asking someone what is the correct colour to wear.

Maximum Marks for (a) 9 marks

(b) Up to 3 marks for a definition of the term. Then 1 + 1 for each of two examples.

A preconception is an idea that is fixed in someone's mind, usually about another person or culture, without knowing much about them. Preconceptions can be hard to change, and are usually wrong. For example, a person who believes that everyone from the north is stupid, will treat all people from the north as if they are stupid. This will cause offence. Another example is if someone believes that all members of that tribe are liars, that person will never engage in business with them because the person will never trust them.

Maximum Marks for (b) 7 marks

(c) 1 mark per definition of time + 1 mark per development + 1 mark per solution. Do not credit the same vocabulary more than once.

A message that is delivered when the recipient is busy will be at the wrong time, and the recipient will not be able to concentrate on the message.

Person who makes a phone call to another country with a big time difference might be calling in the middle of the night, and the call will not be answered.

A person who demands an immediate answer to a question does not give the recipient enough time to think about the right answer, and will probably not receive as helpful a response. If the receiver is given more time, the answer is likely to be more satisfying.

Maximum Marks for (c) 9 marks
Total Maximum Marks for Q6 25 marks

Question 6

(a) Describe the functions of a pager, and explain why it has become less popular in recent years as a means of communication. **(8 marks)**

(b) Explain what is meant by 'skyping' and describe how it makes communication more efficient. **(8 marks)**

(c) Identify three potential threats to data stored on a computer, and in each case state what measure you will take to keep data secure against that particular threat. **(9 marks)**

Suggested Answer:

(a) Up to 5 marks for describing the functions of a pager, and up to 5 marks for reasons for its demise. Max 8.

A pager is used to alert someone, to let them know that they are needed. It is commonly used by doctors on call. When the pager beeps, the doctor will respond to it, by telephone, or by going to a pre-arranged place, e.g. a hospital ward. The problem with pagers is that they cannot make outgoing calls, and if the person who is paged is not near a phone, it can be a real problem getting in touch with the people who need them. Mobile phones have now replaced pagers for many people, although they can have the problem of poor network coverage, which does not happen with a pager.

Maximum Marks for (a) 8 marks

(b) *Up to 5 marks for describing what Skype is, and up to 5 marks for advantages including developments. Max 8.*

Skyping is a type of videoconferencing for individuals, done on the computer. Any computer with a webcam can be linked to Skype so that each party can both hear and see the other. It has many important benefits. Firstly, Skype calls are free, so they save people money. The advantages for business of being able to see the other person and perhaps their product are that no time is wasted travelling to meet the other person. It makes business much more efficient, and can even be set up for conference calls, still free of charge. Its coverage is worldwide.

Maximum Marks for (b) 8 marks

(c) *1 mark per threat + 1 mark per resultant problem + 1 mark per solution. Ensure that both the problem and the solution are correct (e.g. a firewall does not defend against viruses). Do not credit the same vocabulary more than once.*

A hacker might steal data by breaking into a computer, and the best defence is to have a complex password and/or a secure firewall to prevent unauthorised access.

A virus can enter the computer and corrupt its data. By installing antivirus protection (e.g. Norton) the computer will continually scan for viruses and block unknown programmes. Since viruses are often hidden in email attachments, people should never open attachments from an unknown source.

Data can be lost if the computer is damaged, and by copying data on to an external hard drive and storing it separately, the data will always be safe even if the computer is not.

Maximum Marks for (c) 9 marks
Total Maximum Marks for Q6 25 marks

Question 7

(a) Describe how an open plan layout in an office can both benefit and hinder communication. **(9 marks)**

(b) Proper storage of documents is vital for business. Describe how you can ensure that documents stored in hard copy are kept safe and how they can be easily found by anyone who needs them. **(8 marks)**

(c) Explain how the functions of a scanner and a photocopier in an office differ from each other. **(8 marks)**

Suggested Answer:

(a) *Up to 5 marks for describing the benefits, and up to 5 marks for describing the hindrances. Correct answers may refer to either staff or managers or both. Max 9.*

An open plan layout, where the office area is not divided into separate cubicles, can create a sense of teamwork in the shared space. Communication is easy, because staff can see each other and can even go quickly to a colleague's desk if help is needed. Most open plan offices share a LAN, and have photocopiers available to all staff.

However, open plan offices can be noisy, and there are many potential distractions, e.g. people talking, phones ringing, etc. Colleagues are more likely to spend time chatting than if they were isolated, and privacy is very limited. A manager who works in an open plan office will be very accessible, and end up wasting time dealing with trivial matters that staff bring to him or her. Managers can often lose the respect of the staff if seen as being on the same level.

Maximum Marks for (a) 9 marks

(b) *Up to 5 marks for describing the storage process, and up to 5 marks for describing the retrieval process. Max 8.*

To keep hard copy documents safe they should be stored in a fireproof cabinet, locked, ideally in a lockable room to which access is restricted. They should be handled with care, and kept away from liquids in case of spillages. It is preferable, although costly, to make photocopies so that a backup copy is always available. For staff to find documents easily, the storage cabinet should be clearly marked with the contents, and the files should be kept in strict alphabetical or chronological order, whichever is relevant. Staff must be trained in the handling of files, and must always put them back in exactly the correct place. Documents within files should also be kept in strict order.

Maximum Marks for (b) 8 marks

(c) *Up to 4 for each. Credit both the correct explanation of functions and benefits. For 7 or 8 there must be a clear and correct contrast drawn in the answer.*

A scanner is used to turn a hard copy into a soft copy, for storage on a computer. The scanned document remains as a hard copy which can be filed as described above. The soft copy can be titled and stored in the computer, or sent as an email attachment. A scanner cannot be used without a computer.

A photocopier turns a hard copy into other hard copies. The document is simply reproduced exactly on another sheet of paper. Whereas a scanner can deal with only one copy at a time, some photocopiers can deal with multiple sheets and will even sort and staple them for use, e.g. at a meeting. Photocopiers can be linked to computers, but they do not require a computer connection in order to function.

Maximum Marks for (c) 8 marks
Total Maximum Marks for Q7 25 marks

Question 8

You have been part of a team carrying out research into car parking at your office building. A colleague has passed the following document to you, as a rough draft of the research.

Summarise the content and present it in the form of a report for your board of directors. Complete your report in no more than 150 words, excluding headings.

‘The car park has been a problem area for a number of years now, and we have been asked to look at the problem and to offer some solutions as to how the situation can be improved. We have spent several hours in the car park area, measuring distances and discussing various options. The area that we use for car parking is in front of the office building, and the surface is just compacted earth and sand, so it is very uneven in the dry season, and almost impossible to use in wet weather. One obvious recommendation is that this area should be properly drained and surfaced with tarmac. We think that it will be worth the expense of installing a drain to take away excess water when it rains. The parking area itself is used for only six cars at the moment, and since there are twelve people in the office who drive to work, six of the staff always have to park their cars somewhere else in the neighbourhood. This has led to a “first come first served” attitude, and staff are now having to turn up for work about forty minutes early if they want to be sure of a safe place

to leave their car. The parking area is big enough to hold twelve cars if we park sensibly, remove some of the bushes, and relocate the storage hut to the western corner behind the building, where there is enough space. It will also be secure there because it can be seen from most of the office windows. The big tree in the middle of the car park will stay, of course, because that creates necessary shade to keep the cars cool while they are parked. At the moment, staff park their cars around the tree, sideways on to it. The bushes make it impossible to park any other way. Only four cars can be parked here because of this; the other two spaces are along the north wall. If staff parked facing the tree, all around it, there would be space, we estimate, for eight cars, and with the removal of the storage hut, another three spaces would become available. That will create thirteen spaces altogether. We also recommend that the car parking bays are clearly marked with paint, so that no-one parks outside these bays. If people park just anywhere, it can leave no room for other cars to turn. We also think that one bay near the door should be reserved for the use of visitors; this will help to give a good impression to customers. Please note that we have not yet costed these suggestions in detail, but we believe that all of the work could be completed for less than 30,000 pula.'

(461 words)

Suggested Answer:

HEADINGS: Up to 5 marks, 1 per correct heading (synonyms are acceptable, e.g. Task for Brief or Methods for Procedure)

CONTENT: Up to 16 for relevant points (as noted in model answer) made within the word limit. Do not count anything beyond the phrase in which the 150th word appears. Do not count headings in this total. For an answer that is largely copied, max for this section is 8. For an answer that is completely copied, max is 0.

STYLE: 4 if task completed within word limit, along with good selection of material & original vocabulary.

3: Within the word limit but including more than one piece of irrelevant information.

2: an honest attempt, but not achieving its purpose. Over word limit or too short.

1: slight signs of a basic competence. Poor selection of material, heavy reliance on passage. Much is copied.

0: has no idea how to tackle this task.

Record marks as H+C+S.

BRIEF: To improve office car parking facilities¹.

PROCEDURE: Personal investigation².

FINDINGS: The surface is poor³. It can bake hard⁴ or become extremely muddy⁵. Small bushes⁶ take up usable space. Staff cannot park in the most efficient way⁷. The storage hut occupies usable space⁸. Only 6 spaces are available⁹, while 12 are needed¹⁰.

CONCLUSION: The car park needs to be resurfaced¹¹, and more space created¹². With sensible management¹³, there is space for 13 bays¹⁴.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Resurface the car park with tarmac¹⁵, and install a drain¹⁶; remove the small bushes¹⁷ but retain the central tree, for shade¹⁸; relocate the storage hut to the back of the building¹⁹; paint lines for parking bays²⁰ to encourage efficient parking²¹. Reserve a space for visitors²². The cost should be less than 30,000 pula²³.

Total Maximum Marks for Q8 25 marks