

English for Business

Level 3

Past Papers 2005

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There was no Series 1 in 2005

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SERIES 2 EXAMINATION 2005

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

MONDAY 11 APRIL

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) *The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
 - (b) *Answer **all 4** questions.*
 - (c) *All questions carry equal marks.*
 - (d) *All answers must be clearly and correctly numbered but need not be in numerical order.*
 - (e) *While formal accuracy is expected, adequate and appropriate communication is essential and candidates must judge the length of their answers in this light.*
 - (f) *When you finish, check your work carefully.*
 - (g) *The use of standard English dictionaries and cordless non-programmable calculators is permitted. Candidates whose first language is not English may use a bilingual dictionary.*
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QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed in the Sales Department of Combined Components, a specialist company that produces components for motorcycle manufacturers in many parts of the world. The Sales Manager, Mr Lionel Perez, has asked you to investigate a complaint he has just received from a manufacturer in the United Kingdom, Conqueror Cycles of Millennium Way, Coventry CV6 9PB.

Mr Perez shows you a letter from this company and says this to you:

“The Manager of Conqueror Cycles, Graham Williams, has written to us again. You might remember that last year this company claimed that they hadn’t received a delivery from us when all our records indicated that we had sent it. Well, we gave them the benefit of the doubt then because we couldn’t prove it either way. But now they are saying that they haven’t received another order – they say it is their order number CC 445 / c / i dated 27 March. Would you investigate this, please?”

Mr Perez gives you a copy of the order but when you make investigations, you can find no record of the order ever being received. You can, however, see that a confirmation of the order was sent to Conqueror Cycles on 29 March – 2 days after they claim the order was sent. You realise that the order could have been received just as the new computerised record-keeping system was being installed.

You contact your Production Department who advise you that all the components required by Conqueror Cycles are currently in stock with the exception of the wheel trims (catalogue reference WT / 49 / 3 / i –c). These cannot be supplied for about three weeks.

You explain this to Mr Perez who says the following:

“Well, it looks as if the fault is ours this time, so could you please write to Graham Williams and apologise. I’m glad we can send him the order now – you’d better get this off to him by special delivery as quickly as possible. This is a very competitive market now and you can also let him have our latest catalogue and a leaflet about our new on-line ordering systems. You’d better try to reassure him that this won’t happen again. You know, I’m still not sure about that order that was supposed to go astray last year, but this is a different matter and we should keep the two issues separate.”

Task

Write a letter to Mr Graham Williams at Conqueror Cycles as requested. You can assume that the company’s headed notepaper will be used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed as an administrative assistant by a medium-sized company, Hondswoods Products. The company provides a restaurant for its staff but there have been many complaints about the food and service of the restaurant in recent months.

The Company Manager, Ms Barbara Ksiazek, has asked you to investigate the possible cause of complaints, and produce a report on restaurant usage, and make any necessary recommendations on how improvements can be made. Ms Ksiazek advises you that the company does not have the budget to finance major developments but it would be prepared to pay for any small-scale improvements.

You carry out a survey of restaurant usage, speak to members of staff and interview the Restaurant Manager, Mr Herbert Hwenje. The results of your investigations appear in the boxes below.

Survey of restaurant usage over one week 28 March to 1 April.

60% of staff now use restaurant – survey in 2004 indicated 75% used it.

Those who used restaurant were asked their opinions on range of issues – percentage of responses given.

	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor
Quality of food	4%	37%	43%	16%
Variety of food	0%	10%	38%	52%
Quality of service	28%	24%	30%	18%
Speed of service	7%	15%	31%	47%

Heavy congestion at peak times – but most staff take breaks at same time (eg morning break 10.00, afternoon break 15.00). Two lunch sittings – but 75% of staff take first sitting (12.00 to 13.00) only 25% take second (13.00 to 14.00).

Interview with Restaurant Manager

Has only been in post for 3 months – is trying to introduce a greater range of food (now provides vegetarian and low-fat “healthy” options) – not always appreciated by staff who seem to go for more traditional dishes.

Employs 3 assistants – all have been employed for many years – little recent training – would enjoy learning about different methods of preparing foods.

Has requested new equipment – an updated microwave could speed up cooking process.

Comments from staff.

“I stopped using the restaurant some time ago and I now bring my own food and refreshments. The queues were just too long and too much time was wasted.”

“I must say things have improved recently, but the menu is not very imaginative. I’d like to see a wider variety of cold food, for example.”

“Service is slow and when queues build up the staff get a bit frustrated. And they are not always very polite.”

“To be fair, the staff do their best and are usually quite cheerful. I think they know that the range of food provided could be greater.”

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

“OK, the restaurant isn’t perfect, but most staff like to get out of the office or factory at lunchtimes or break times. Perhaps an area could be provided where staff can eat their own food – they would usually buy a drink so the restaurant will benefit.”

Ms Ksiazek has asked you to produce your report for the forthcoming Operations Committee to be held on 20 April. Members of this committee will expect the main issues to be identified rather than the production of statistics.

Task

Write the report as requested.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed in the Human Resources Department of a chain of shops selling compact discs (CDs) of all types of music. As the company has expanded, staff have been recruited to work in different sections and you are now about to train a group of recently appointed staff who are to work on the sales desks of the stores.

All new staff will be issued with a copy of the company's purchasing procedure. Your copy of this appears below with your notes on how this procedure is applied. You feel you must read this again carefully so you will be able to answer any of the new staff's questions.

Purchasing Procedure	
Procedure	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet customer • Take CD case from customer • Find the CD • Place CD in case • Scan the barcode into the till using scanner • Press 'enter' button on till • Price will be displayed on till • Make sure price displayed on till agrees with price on CD case • If correct, ask customer for amount to be paid • If customer pays in CASH, take money from customer, enter amount in till, press cash button; the cash drawer will open – the change to be given to customer appears on screen – give customer change • If customer pays by CREDIT or DEBIT card, enter amount in till, press sale button, and 'swipe' the card. The till will generate a slip which the customer must sign, Check signature on card and expiry date. If all is satisfactory, press credit / debit card button on till. The transaction is complete so give card and customer copy of slip to customer 	<p>Be polite – but don't take too much time!</p> <p>All CD boxes in shop are empty – for security purposes. The CDs are stacked on shelves behind the tills. Hold by the edge – don't leave any finger marks on surface of CD</p> <p>Occasionally customers change / remove price stickers on CDs. Always charge the price indicated on till. Allow customers to cancel purchase if not satisfied. Say this very clearly.</p> <p>Always hold on to cash given by customer until you have given change so there can be no doubt what money was tendered originally. To be safe say aloud how much the customer has given you and how much change you are giving.</p> <p>Be very careful. This is a major area of fraud. Make sure the signature on card and slip are identical. Be wary if customer asks for the return of the card before transaction is complete – he / she may wish to copy the signature. Any problems – take card to supervisor.</p>

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If customer pays by CHEQUE ask for a guarantee card – cheque not acceptable without one. Ask customer to sign cheque, press cheque button on till. You will then be asked to place card and cheque in machine part of the till, and the card details will be printed on the cheque. Check the signatures on card and cheque agree and hand card back to customer.• At the end of each transaction press “enter” on till and a receipt will be produced – now place cheques in back of till drawer.• Ask customer if he / she wishes to have CD sealed.• Place CD in a bag with receipt, give to customer, smile and say Thank You.	<p>Again take care – make sure the customer signs the cheque while you look on (don’t accept any with signatures already signed)</p> <p>Make sure receipt is clearly printed (ie till has not run out of paper or ink)</p> <p>If the CD is in a sealed bag the store will give a refund or exchange if it is returned, as long as receipt is produced.</p> <p>As you give the bag to customer, use the customer’s name if you have found this out, eg “Thank you Mr Smith”.</p>
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Task

Using the information above, answer the following questions in your own words as far as possible to show your understanding of the purchasing procedure.

- (a) Why should politeness be balanced with the time taken to greet a customer? (2 marks)
- (b) Why do you think that CDs are **not** kept in the CD cases on display in the shop? (2 marks)
- (c) What should a sales person do if the price displayed on the till does not agree with the price on the CD case? (3 marks)
- (d) Say, giving your reasons, which method of payment is likely to be the quickest and easiest from the sales staff’s point of view. (3 marks)
- (e) What is the main difference in the operation of the till between a customer paying by cash and by cheque? (3 marks)
- (f) Why should you not place the cash given by the customer into the till before you have given change? (3 marks)
- (g) Why do you think sales staff should not return credit or debit card to a customer until he or she has signed the slip generated by the till? (3 marks)

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

(h) Why might a customer wish to return a CD in a sealed bag to obtain a refund? (3 marks)

(i) Why do you feel customers might appreciate being addressed by name, and why might this be good for the store's business? (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed in the Public Relations Department of a large company, Athena International. Staff have been asked to promote the company at every opportunity and many press releases have been sent to the local and national press. Whilst company managers are pleased by this, as favourable publicity can enhance the company's profile, they are concerned that few members of staff are familiar with the correct layout of the features of a press release.

You have been asked to seek advice on producing these documents so you can then advise the staff how best to produce them. Your notes of the results of your investigation are as follows.

From Interview with Athena International Company Secretary

Press releases welcomed – good publicity welcomed – but releases should be properly structured (NB: I have been asked to speak to editor of local newspapers about this – his interview notes appear elsewhere). Also any press releases should be vetted by our legal section – just in case something is said which shouldn't be! – so send them to legal section in good time.

From Interview with Public Relations Director

Said he would prefer if all press releases were sent out by his Department – but accepts company policy that anyone can send them out. However, must be properly laid out – should be on company headed paper - give date of document – also publication date (there might be an embargo on release). Should have interesting title – be concise – give contact name and details so newspapers can get more information if required.

From Interview with Editor of Local Paper.

Papers welcome press releases – can't publish them all – sometimes no room in paper – best stories will interest readers – not just give publicity. Should always send them to most suitable paper – purely local story won't interest national press etc – make it readable – not too technical – any photographs must be of good quality – information in logical order – emphasise highlights. Whatever anyone says – don't worry about headlines. Papers will produce their own – just give simple title.

You decide to send a memo to all Departmental Heads to give guidelines on how to produce a press release, but you also decide to produce a draft press release form containing the appropriate headings which staff could then complete when they wish to issue a press release.

Task

(a) Write the memo to all Departmental Heads. (17 marks)

(b) Produce a draft press release form that staff could complete when a press release is to be issued. (8 marks)

(Total 25 marks)



SERIES 3 EXAMINATION 2005

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

MONDAY 13 JUNE

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) *The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
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QUESTION 1

Situation

You are employed in the Customer Services Department of Wiseline Railways, a company providing passenger services on its modern electric trains.

Yesterday there were major problems on the Wiseline route. The trains are powered by means of overhead cables; one section of these cables collapsed near the town of Byford. The overhead system and the railway tracks are not owned by Wiseline but by another organisation, National Tracks, so the damage and repair was beyond the control of Wiseline. Unfortunately these difficulties caused severe delays and cancellations to services yesterday.

Wiseline has a Customers' Charter which allows passengers who suffer from delays to receive a refund of the ticket price. The Customer Service Manager, Mr Zahir Abbas, spoke to you this morning and said:

"Well, it's good news. I've heard from National Tracks that services can be back to normal today as the overhead wires have been repaired. They still haven't a clue why the wires collapsed but they say they are carrying out a full investigation.

"But it's bad news as well, of course. Within the next few days we're going to get a lot of letters from irate passengers and many of them will be demanding refunds or compensation. Well, strictly speaking, they're not entitled to anything. The Customers' Charter makes this clear. I forget which section says this, but somewhere in it there's a bit about the delays having to be our fault before we pay any refunds. Could you check this for me?

"However, this could be a public relations disaster for us if we do nothing, so the Directors have agreed that tickets for trains that we cancelled can be used anytime during the next 28 days and passengers who suffered delays can claim a refund of 10% of the ticket price in the form of vouchers for future journeys.

"My personal view is that this is very generous; we'll be claiming compensation from National Tracks, I suppose, but we shouldn't make this public in case our passengers feel they should get a bigger refund!

"It would be very helpful if you could prepare a standard letter that we could send out to all passengers who claim a refund. Would you do this for me please? I'll sign it; try to be as apologetic as possible, without admitting too much of the blame, of course!"

The relevant section of the Customers' Charter is as follows:

SECTION 4.2 **Refunds for Delays**

The company will refund all or part of the ticket price paid by a passenger in the event of delays of more than 50 minutes to a passenger journey. **The delay must be attributable to the company and will not apply in circumstances where the delay is beyond the control of the company.**

For delays of more than 50 minutes passengers entitled to a refund will receive 30% of the cost of the ticket. For delays of over 90 minutes this will be 60% and for delays of more than 2 hours a full refund will be made.

Task

Write the letter as requested. You can assume that the company's headed notepaper is used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

You are employed in the Administration Department of a large company, *EBF Products*. The offices are located in a five-storey building where over 200 members of staff are employed.

On the 11 June there was a small fire in the building. Fortunately there was little damage and no-one was injured, but there were a number of problems that arose. The local fire department is investigating the cause of the fire, which was believed to be an electrical fault but the manager of the company has asked you to investigate how well staff handled the situation once the fire was reported, and to make recommendations on how improvements could be made in future. You have been asked to write a report on the results of your investigations.

Your notes on the incident appear below.

From Interview with Fire Officer from local fire station who attended the fire.

“We received a notification that there was a fire at EBF Products at 14.15 on the 11 June. The fire engine and crew arrived at the EBF Products site at 14.19 but we had been directed to the factory. The fire engine was then diverted to the office block and arrived at 14.23. Access to the building was slow because cars were parked in the no-parking areas along the main drive. The fire crew identified the fire at 14.25, in a paper storage area on the 4th floor. By 14.29 it was extinguished. The crew left the building at 15.00 when it was clear that the fire was not going to re-occur.”

From Interview with Ms Tehreem Shahid, the member of staff who discovered the fire.

“I’ve only been working for EBF Products for two weeks and I haven’t had my induction training yet. At about 13.45 on the 11 June my supervisor, Mrs Storelli, asked me to get 2 reams of paper from the store room on the 4th floor. When I went into the room it was full of smoke and there seemed to be flames coming from the piles of paper under the window. I didn’t know what to do so I rushed downstairs to tell Mrs Storelli. She set off the fire alarm.”

From Interview with Company Safety Office, Mr Gerhard Frings.

“At 13.58 I was alerted to the fact that the fire alarm on the 3rd floor of the offices had been activated. I made my way to the 3rd floor and there was some confusion as to whether there was a real fire or if someone had set off the alarm maliciously. Eventually I was approached by an office supervisor, Mrs Storelli, who told me that the fire was in Room 419 on the 4th floor. The fire appeared to be contained in this room, so we awaited the fire brigade. At 14.14 Mrs Storelli advised me that she had not contacted the fire brigade as she believed, incorrectly, that setting off the alarm automatically summoned the fire brigade. I contacted the local fire brigade who arrived at the office by 14.23. When the fire alarm was sounded, staff slowly started to evacuate the building. I noted some staff on the upper floors used the lift, which is strictly against fire regulations. The evacuation was completed by 14.21. It is recommended in the company’s safety certificate that in the event of a major incident, the building should be evacuated in 7 minutes.

Task

Write a report on the fire incident. The Manager of EBF Products, Mr Frank Graham, would wish to know the timetable of the major events of the incident, and how any problems could be addressed.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You are employed in the Human Resources Department of a large company. The company spends a large amount on staff training but senior managers are concerned that the company is not getting good value for its budget.

You have been told that a specialist agency, *Cedar Training*, will offer an advisory service on how to make the most of training budgets. Before your company decides to employ *Cedar Training*, you have been asked to investigate how they operate. You visit their website where they publish their **10 Point Plan** which will form the basis of their advice.

The 10 point plan is given below. You should read this and ensure you understand what it means.

A 10 Point Plan for making the most of your training budget.

- 1 The training budget is not a welfare fund or a reward fund. Always check that there is clear financial benefit for any training carried out and that training is not given for any other purpose than as a revenue-generating tool. If it is, it is not likely to be cost-effective.
- 2 Do not train purely for today. Your employees must be ready to face the challenges of the future as a result of industrial and economic changes.
- 3 Involve your staff in training. Let them identify their training needs, decide how to work towards them, and assist them in achieving these. There is much more motivation by the employee when training is their choice.
- 4 Make sure that those who are trained have the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned. Performance pre and post training should be reviewed. This ensures that the training has not been wasted.
- 5 Remember, training is not a once-and-for-all experience. Training should be continuous to follow changes and development to working practices and ideas.
- 6 Do not carry out training piecemeal. To increase efficiency make a long term training plan so you can, for example, plan for staff absence if this is involved in training.
- 7 If you have large numbers of staff requiring similar training, consider whether you should use in-house training, possibly bringing in an external trainer, or send your staff to off-site training elsewhere. Both have financial benefits.
- 8 When your staff are trained as trainers, more training in the future can be in-house. This is sometimes termed 'the cascade effect'.
- 9 Develop efficient mechanisms for evaluating each training experience to ensure that they are effective and, in particular, bring genuine financial benefits.
- 10 Review your training programme budget regularly and, if possible, compare your situation with that of other companies, particularly successful ones. A great deal of information about other companies is in the public domain through company reports, websites, and the financial press.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

Task

Using the information given answer the following questions **in your own words as far as possible** to show your understanding of the issues raised in the 10 Point Plan.

- (a) What is the main problem in organising training purely for 'today'? (3 marks)
- (b) Why should a company not offer training to its staff as a reward for doing something beneficial? (2 marks)
- (c) What is effective in motivating staff to be successful in their training? (3 marks)
- (d) How can a company ensure that staff actually carry out what they have learnt in training? (4 marks)
- (e) What is meant by the sentence "Training should be continuous to follow changes and development to working practices and ideas"? (Point 5) (3 marks)
- (f) What is meant by 'the cascade effect'? (2 marks)
- (g) What is the main purpose of evaluating each training experience? (2 marks)
- (h) Why is it quite easy to compare your company's training programme with that of rival companies? (3 marks)
- (i) Say, with your reasons, what Cedar Training believes is the main purpose of a company's training programme, from the ideas of the whole 10 Point Plan. (3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

Situation

You are employed by Bloomfield Products, a manufacturing company. The company will soon be visited by a representative of a government department, Mr Dilowar Sahota, who will spend the day meeting members of the company's Senior Management Team to explain the implications of the health and safety legislation that will come into force in 2006 and how this affects manufacturing companies.

You have been asked to liaise with the company's Events Manager, Ms Sylvia O'Carroll, who will make the arrangements for Mr Sahota's visit. Ms O'Carroll will need to know all the details of the meeting in order to make the appropriate arrangements but she will not be attending the meeting and does not need to know of the content.

The Managing Director of Bloomfield Products, Ms Olivia Suarez, said this to you:

"Look, although Mr Sahota has requested this visit, it is important that we create a good impression. He is a senior civil servant with a lot of influence. Basically you can suggest to Ms O'Carroll that the usual budgetary constraints don't apply! She'll be happy to hear this as we normally tell her to be as economical as possible, but don't quote me on that."

The company's Health and Safety Officer says this to you:

"I would like the usual members of the Senior Management Team to attend - that is the heads of our six sections. But I'd like all members of my team to be there - so that's another four. I know the Managing Director will want to be there; I believe she went to University with Dilowar Sahota, although that was some time ago now!"

An email from Mr Sahota's department includes the following request:

"Mr Sahota will arrive at your premises at 10.00 am. We will make the arrangements for his transport and overnight stay but we would be grateful if you could reserve a car parking space near the main entrance and advise us as to where we should report.

"Mr Sahota's party will include two others, who are his personal assistant and another senior official who is particularly involved in manufacturing industries.

"We will need a meetings room equipped with an electric power point. We will provide a laptop and PowerPoint presentation. It is government policy that all meetings and presentations are held in a strict non-smoking environment. We expect the presentation will last until 4.00 pm. Please feel free to arrange lunch for us; Mr Sahota is a vegetarian.

"We would not expect the press to attend as separate briefings have been provided for them."

You know that smoking is not permitted in all your company's premises and that Ms O'Carroll will need to know the numbers of people attending rather than their specific roles. Normally with such an important visitor, Ms O'Carroll prepares a press release; she usually invites representatives of the local paper, of which her husband is editor.

Task

Write a memo to be sent to Ms O'Carroll giving her appropriate information and instructions.

(25 marks)

SERIES 4 EXAMINATION 2005

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 3

(Code No: 3041)

TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) *The time allowed for this examination is 3 hours.*
 - (b) *Answer **all 4** questions.*
 - (c) *All questions carry equal marks.*
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QUESTION 1

Situation

You work in the offices of a theatre, *The Grand Gala Theatre*, in your area. The theatre offers a wide range of plays and shows which often feature internationally known actors, musicians and singers.

This week a famous musical show, "Bride Before the Fall" has been showing to capacity audiences. There have been some minor problems but the audiences have been very appreciative. This morning, the Theatre Manager, Ms Sarah Peters, passes to you the following letter, and says this:

"I'm surprised we haven't had more complaints this week, but this is the first one. Mr Knutson has complained several times before, over the years, but he is a very influential customer, and unless we satisfy him he's likely to make more of a fuss, like writing to the newspapers. We could do without any bad publicity.

"I can understand his main point about Francesca Pezzuto. She's very well known all over the world through her appearances on television. But her understudy, Karen Melvyn, did a wonderful job. Be careful how you say this but Karen is much younger than Ms Pezzuto and many people think she is better in this role. In any case, we can never guarantee that any performer will appear in a show. We can't just cancel when one person is indisposed (which is the word we had better use, although I can think of a better one!). Most of the audience were quite happy to see Karen.

"Please look in to his other complaints and write a letter for me to sign, as Manager. I know you're very good at writing tactful letters!"

Flat 7
Mandela Court
Central Avenue
Deepville
DV1 6JA

21 November 2005

Dear Ms Peters

Last Saturday, 19th November I visited your theatre to see the production of "Bride Before the Fall". I had booked the tickets for my family some time ago and we were all looking forward to seeing one of our favourite performers, Francesca Pezzuto. Just before the show we were told that Ms Pezzuto was not going to appear. I tried to exchange the tickets for another performance but we were told that this was not possible as all performances were sold out.

Unfortunately this was not the only problem. I tried to find a programme seller before the show but there did not seem to be one in the main Gallery area. Then, in the first half of the show, the air-conditioning did not work properly and we were uncomfortably hot. To make matters worse, the traffic was dreadful and I was unable to get out of the car-park for nearly an hour after the show.

What should have been a very enjoyable experience was very disappointing and I hope this is never repeated.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Knutson (Mr)

Andrew Knutson

QUESTION 1 CONTINUED

You speak to the Deputy Manager who is responsible for the administration of the theatre and he says this to you:

“Oh dear. Is he complaining again? He might have a point about the understudy, but I don’t understand his other problems. There were programme sellers all over the theatre that evening. But send him a programme please. There’s no shortage.

“To be fair, we were caught a little by surprise as the temperature rose very quickly on Saturday. We did put the air conditioning on at full strength, but it did take a little time to be effective. But as to the traffic jam, well everyone knows there was a serious accident outside the theatre and the road was closed for some time. We can’t really be blamed for that, can we?”

Ms Peters has suggested that you can offer Mr Knutson something appropriate to make up for his disappointment.

Task

Write a letter in reply to Mr Knutson’s complaint as directed by Ms Peters. You can assume the theatre’s headed paper will be used.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

The organisation for which you work is a large company with a complex management and administration structure. Many members of staff spend a great deal of time at meetings arranged for a variety of purposes but there is a growing suspicion amongst staff that some meetings are unnecessary whilst others are badly organised and run. The Director of Administration, Ms Katia Rampini, has asked you to investigate this issue and make specific recommendations on how the company can make better use of meetings.

You held a survey amongst all staff members to select at least 3 problems concerned with the way meetings have been organised and held; some staff selected more than three. You then summarised the types of problem and a list of the issues, with the percentage of staff who identified this as a problem, is given below.

You then approached a management consultant to seek advice on how the problems could be addressed and his comments also appear below.

Ms Rampini would now like a concise description of the extent of the problems over meetings with specific recommendations for improvement identified for each difficulty. She would like you to present your results in a report using any appropriate report layout.

Your notes for the report are as follows:

Issues	% of staff reporting this as major problem
Holding meetings for the sake of it – meetings not seen as vital	68%
Lack of effective Chair	63%
Members not sticking to topics of agenda	54%
Problems with meetings room - no natural light, too hot / cold etc	42%
Interruption from mobile phones / pagers	35%
Poor food / refreshments	31%
Members having personal feuds / arguments with others	28%
Equipment (slides / powerpoint etc) not working	23%
Badly produced minutes	14%
Meetings arranged at short notice	5%

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

Notes of meeting with management consultant

He reassures us – many major companies have problems with meetings.

Up to us to decide if we're holding too many – many organisations now reducing numbers of formal meetings – staff concerned meet informally when necessary.

Crucial role of chair – not everyone can chair meetings – needs training – must make sure everyone sticks to agenda – but it appears that minutes are OK and normally sufficient notice given. Chair should also impose rules on mobile phones – interruptions are irritating and inefficient - chair should also keep discipline – not allow personal feelings to intrude – make sure everyone sticks to point, etc.

Venue also important – people at meetings don't operate efficiently unless they are in comfortable, well-lit, well ventilated rooms – need to be refreshed (drinks, snacks, meals, etc). All equipment should be checked – can be disruptive if it doesn't work.

Task

Write the report as requested.

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3

Situation

You work for a small but growing manufacturing company, *Caudra Products*. The company makes use of various computerised systems but some managers feel that they might not be making full use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Because of this you were recently asked to attend a conference on this topic, where you heard a speech by an expert, Mr Arturs Strelka, on the use of ICT in business. You found the speech very helpful and a transcript of it appears below. You will now be expected to advise your colleagues about the subject.

IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE WITH ITC **by Mr Arturs Strelka**

Good morning everyone. The fact that you are here today listening to me indicates that you feel the performance of your businesses can be improved by making greater use of ICT. Well, in my experience you are probably correct. I doubt if any business does not use some aspect of ICT whether it is for calculating salaries and wages or for stock control, but very few businesses make full use of ICT. Take it from me, whether your business is small, medium or large, whether it is manufacturing, a service or a retail business or whether it is local, national or multi-national, ICT is there to make it better.

But before I give you my ideas on how this can be done, I should say that you should clearly identify your organisation's business strategy. You can then commission ICT professionals to identify where ICT can be used to promote your strategy and create a real and lasting competitive advantage.

In order to assist you to decide upon your strategy, let me highlight the 5 key areas where ICT has the potential to add value to your business.

1 Information – Information – Information: A major feature of ICT is that it allows you to gather and store masses of information and have it available literally at your fingertips. However, few businesses know what to do with this information. What you should do is identify your Key Performance Indicators, that is the information that you feel would assist you to judge whether you are achieving your targets. These could be concerned with market penetration, profit levels, productivity – anything. But once you have identified what you need to know, this information can assist you to monitor performance. If you don't do this, it's like working with your eyes closed.

2 Customer Satisfaction: "What?", I hear you say. "Customer Service is all about providing a good product or service. How can ICT help?" The answer is – it can help a lot. With your customer records fully maintained you can track the state of the relationship with your customer to see where you are doing well or badly. And let's not forget your website. You can add value to your customer service by allowing customers to download information, upload orders and perform countless other functions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

3 Working together: I'm sure it comes as no surprise to you when I say that ICT has the capacity to improve the quality and effectiveness of your internal and external communications. Can you imagine life without email? Well, this is a continuous process and you should not sit back and ignore new developments. Over the next few years, mobile computing will develop enormously. Each generation of mobile phones has a vast range of new features. If your staff are properly trained, they can work faster, better and smarter to increase their productivity immensely.

4 Reducing costs: The scope for reducing costs and saving money by using ICT is endless. You will almost certainly have to spend to save, but this is hardly a new concept in business. We've always called this "investment". You've invested in machines, staff training, new premises and the like before; invest in ICT now and you can use it to improve your production systems, keep your accounts, control stock levels and purchases, prepare accounts – the list goes on.

QUESTION 3 CONTINUED

5 Be Safe: I am sure some of you are now thinking “all this sounds fine – but what if a virus or a mechanical fault brings down the ICT system?” Of course this has been a risk, just as a fire or theft could damage low-tech systems. But, in fact, if you get the right advice your ICT systems will be far more secure than any other systems. You can use back-up and restore systems, disaster recovery, anti-virus software, firewall systems and many other means to provide a safe, secure and uninterrupted infrastructure.

I hope I have convinced you. There will always be those who are cautious by nature – no doubt hundreds of thousands of years ago some of your ancestors were very dubious about the value of the wheel when it was invented. But I can assure you that there are very few businesses that could not make better use of ICT.

Thank you for your attention.

Task

Using this information, answer the following questions, in your own words as far as possible.

- (a) As most businesses represented at Mr Strelka’s talk use ICT already, what does he think is the main reason that people have come to listen to him?
(2 marks)
- (b) Why is it important that you should identify your company’s business strategy before you increase the use of ICT?
(3 marks)
- (c) Why do you think Mr Strelka uses the word *Information* 3 times in his introduction to the first of the five key areas?
(2 marks)
- (d) Why is Mr Strelka’s phrase “literally at your fingertips” very apt when he describes the availability for information held by means of ICT?
(3 marks)
- (e) Why does Mr Strelka say that if you do not identify what you need to know before you attempt to use information stored by means of ICT “it’s like working with your eyes closed”?
(2 marks)
- (f) Why do you think that a website is a particularly good way of providing customer service? (Give your own views on this.)
(3 marks)
- (g) What does Mr Strelka mean by the term “investment” and how does this apply to reducing costs by the use of ICT?
(5 marks)
- (h) Why does Mr Strelka feel that using ICT poses no greater risk to security than using old “low-tech” systems?
(2 marks)
- (i) Mr Strelka asks the audience to “imagine life without email”. Say why you think email is of great value to a business and give the advantages you think it has over more traditional communication systems.
(3 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 4

You are employed by Cedar Training, a new organisation that trains people who have just left school. Such young people take various courses so they can develop appropriate skills before they go into full-time employment.

Many courses are now nearing completion and so many trainees will be taking up employment soon. For most of them this will be their first job. The Manager of Cedar Training, Mr Ting Jiang, has asked you to help them to prepare for this new experience and said this to you:

“I’d like you to send a memo to all our trainees about to start a new job. I don’t want to alarm them or put them off, but there are things they can do to prevent problems arising, particularly on their first day. I remember my first job when I left college, for example. I turned up to the office looking very smart in my best suit with a shirt and tie, and found everyone dressed very casually. I realise now I should have checked on the dress code before I started. If you speak to a few of our trainees who have taken new jobs recently, I’m sure they’ll give you other “tips”. It would be a good idea to summarise these main points in the memo, but try not to be too serious about it.”

When you speak to ex-trainees who started work recently many reported that there were no problems, but some other responses were as follows:

When I started work I met a lot of new people on the first day. By the end of the day I’d forgotten all their names. I’d strongly recommend that you try hard to remember all the names, or, even better, make a note of them. People like you to remember their names.

My first day was a nightmare! I work for a government department so there are very high levels of security. When I arrived at the main gate the security staff wouldn’t let me in because I’d forgotten to bring any identification with me! By the time I did get through security all the other new staff were being taken on a tour of the building and I couldn’t find them! I nearly gave up there and then!

I would say always be honest. When I started, I was asked if I could use an industrial stapling machine. I’d never seen one before, but I said “Yes” thinking I would look stupid if I said “No”. I then stapled my finger to the desk and had to be taken to hospital for treatment. I really did look stupid then, and it was very painful!

Yes, starting work can be daunting. When I started my new job, I remembered that when I started school I was able to come home and tell my parents all about it. So when I started work I arranged to meet my friends after my first day. I was able to get a lot of emotional support, which made me feel much better.

My main advice would be “stay calm and don’t worry”. I was really terrified but my new boss reminded me that I’d done the hard part – I’d got through the recruitment interview, so I should relax. Most people at work are very sympathetic – they remember their first day! So ask if there’s anything you’re not sure about.

I would certainly recommend that you don’t do as I did. A few of my friends were starting new jobs on the same day as me so we all went out the night before. On the day I was very tired and not at my best. This created a very bad impression.

Task

Write the memo as requested.

(25 marks)