

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Principal Learning

Manufacturing & Product Design
MP302 Paper 01

Customer Needs and Market
Requirements in Manufacturing

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Customer Needs and Market Requirements in Manufacturing

General comments

Several of the questions in this paper are designed to allow less able candidates to demonstrate limited knowledge/understanding, whilst allowing more able candidates to provide more detail and understanding to achieve higher marks. This is demonstrated somewhat, with a spread of marks in evidence. Although few were able to achieve high marks consistently across the paper there is evidence that more able candidates are beginning to develop responses that allow full marks to be awarded for individual questions.

Often two mark questions require candidates to provide an outline, whereas one-mark questions often require them to identify a specific feature. An outline usually requires candidates to state or make a specific point then elaborate upon it. Some of this extension was missing from candidate responses; consequently the second available mark was sometimes not achieved. Centres might consider this and the mark schemes from previous papers, when preparing candidates for these externally assessed elements.

Question 1

This question required candidates to consider data collection, specifically 'like for like' sales data, focus groups and market data.

Perhaps surprisingly many candidates struggled with these principles, not always understanding the comparative aspect of 'like for like' sales for example. When referring to focus groups candidates were often able to describe what a focus group is, however to achieve full marks they would need to indicate how the data collected is used by the manufacturer. Similarly being able to explain what market data is allows some marks to be awarded although full marks could be achieved if candidates explained the use of this data in the development of new products. Some candidates missed the use of data element of this question.

Question 2

This question required candidates to describe methods, other than focus groups, used to gather market research data and then explain how a sports equipment manufacturer would use this data.

Candidates were able to suggest methods of market research, although not always linked to the manufacture of sporting goods. Responses were somewhat limited when explaining how this data is used although links to product development and meeting customer needs often allowed marks to be achieved.

Question 3

This question required candidates to explain why marketing, sales and product development departments work together in an integrated manner.

Candidates seem to find this question challenging, perhaps not understanding the term integrated in a business sense. Responses often briefly described the function of each department and how information from one department is passed to another, rather than how they work together to achieve common goals. Many responses did not link customer needs and marketing requirements and instead discussed teamwork and more general departmental co-operation.

Question 4

This question required candidates to consider the sale of goods act and the obligations of a retailer, if goods are faulty, and manufacturer responsibility – if a product recall is required.

The vast majority of candidates were able to give useful responses and all parts of this question prompted broadly appropriate responses. In some cases however, for parts (b) and (c) a little confusion led to points being repeated, albeit being phrased slightly differently, consequently limiting marks awardable.

Question 5

This question requires an outline of how manufacturers can encourage customers to recycle, an explanation of why product packaging is an environmental responsibility for a manufacturer and the effects on a manufacturer of competitors using illegal labour.

The first part of this question was generally well answered with candidates understanding the use of recycling symbols, promotions and incentives. The second part of the question proved a little more challenging with candidates able to discuss environmental issues but not necessarily why it is a responsibility for a manufacturer. Many candidates focussed on the marketing benefits rather than the responsibility. Responses to part (c) of the question often contrasted between the detrimental effect of the competition or the positive effect of acting legally. When appropriately discussed both approaches were rewarded with marks.

Question 6

This question required candidates to explain the benefits of celebrity endorsement and why manufacturers offer selected products free of charge.

Candidates were able to link celebrity status with perceived quality and recognised the links promoting brand awareness. The second part of the question anticipated responses based around food promotions and introduction/promotion of new products however many candidates confused this with over production,

issues with the quality of the food and the consequences of unsold produce – in many cases missing the point that the stem of the question focuses on sales strategies.

Question 7

This question required candidates to consider the implications for a manufacturer of using the Internet to sell products, the use of search engines when marketing products and the use of specialist magazines.

Most candidates were able to provide substantial responses to this question. A wide range of valid responses were noted for part (a) allowing the majority of candidates to achieve marks, part (b) proved more challenging with some candidates not recognising the importance of search engines to locating the manufacturer in order to promote sales, confusing the use of search engines with more general internet use. Responses to the use of specialist magazines were mostly comprehensive however candidates frequently repeated themselves, limiting the marks awardable.

Question 8

This question required candidates to consider employment law, economic policies and the supply of strategic materials.

Although candidates were able to provide responses, often related to minimum wages, they did not always link these to conditions in the marketplace. Similarly although candidates showed some understanding of government economic policies and the supply of strategic materials, the links to the stem of the question reflecting on how conditions in the marketplace are affected was not often sufficiently obvious. Some candidates were evidently unsure of the term 'strategic materials'.

Question 9

This question required candidates to discuss how manufacturers can use published reports.

As this question is towards the end of the paper it is anticipated that there is scope for a more detailed discussion and a few candidates did provide this element of detail and consequently achieved significant marks. Most responses however, focussed on the types of data available without clearly indicating how manufacturers can use this data.

Conclusions

The majority of the candidates attempted a wide range of questions across the paper. Responses generally showed understanding, allowing candidates to achieve a spread of marks. In order to achieve full marks, on individual questions, it is important that candidates link their responses appropriately to

the specific requirements of that question. For example when the stem of a question might refer to a manufacturer or a principle, a response in that particular context is expected.

As in previous series it is apparent that some of the questions resulted in responses that would be considered general knowledge and consequently achieved fewer marks than the specific responses required.

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