Important notes for candidates regarding the pre-issued case study

The case study is designed to assess knowledge and understanding of the People in Organisations syllabus in the context of the relevant case study. The examiners will be marking candidates’ scripts on the basis of the questions set. Candidates are advised to pay particular attention to the mark allocation on the examination paper and to plan their time accordingly.

Candidates should acquaint themselves thoroughly with the case study and be prepared to follow closely the instructions given to them on the examination day. Candidates are advised not to waste valuable time collecting unnecessary data. The cases are based upon real-life situations and all the information about the chosen organisation is contained within the case study.

As this case represents a real-life situation, anomalies may be found in the information you have before you. Therefore, please state any assumptions you make that are reasonable when answering the questions. Remember, you are going to be tested on your overall understanding of the case issues and your ability to answer the questions that are set in the examination.

In order to prepare for the examination, candidates will need to carry out a detailed analysis of the case material ahead of the examination. Candidates have sufficient time during the examination to answer all the questions, but this means that detailed analysis has taken place before commencing the examination. The examiners are looking for clear evidence that candidates have a good understanding of the case and can use the relevant course ideas from the syllabus to answer the questions.

The copying of pre-prepared ‘group’ answers, including those written by other third parties, is strictly forbidden and will be penalised. Thus, questions will demand analysis in the examination itself and individually composed answers are required in order to pass.

Candidates are only allowed to take up to two pages (four sides) of A4 notes into the examination room. These notes should be attached to the script at the end of the examination and returned.

A copy of the pre-issued case study material will be available in the examination. Candidates are NOT permitted to take into the exam the downloaded case study or any other notes. Candidates should not attach any other additional information in any format to their answer book. Any attempt to introduce such additional material will result in the candidate’s paper being declared null and void.

The examination will be for THREE HOURS and will consist of TWO parts.

Part A comprises FOUR compulsory short answer general questions and is worth 40% of the final mark. These questions are not specifically related to the case study. It is recommended that you spend approximately ONE HOUR on Part A.

Part B comprises THREE compulsory questions related to the pre-issued case study that you will have analysed before entering the examination room. This part is worth 60% of the final mark. It is recommended that you spend approximately TWO HOURS on Part B, which includes planning and checking your answers.
Bryant Ltd install and service computer equipment in wholesaling businesses. Bryant owns the equipment, and through a leasing arrangement, maintains the equipment for the customers. The firm has 300 field repair people who install and service equipment. These individuals are all graduates of Bryant's technical training programme. Lately the repair people have been complaining about the many features of the job. The Director of Field Services is concerned because the average number of monthly calls made by repair people has been steadily dropping. Turnover has also increased and several key customers have cancelled leases in favour of new arrangements with Bryant's competitors.

A job design expert has been retained by Bryant to study the problems in the design of the repair person's job. The Director of Field Services told the expert that Bryant's repair people are the best in the industry because they undergo 40 hours of training each year to update them on the latest repair techniques. After some prompting, he did have several observations about the repair people. These are noted below.

1. The company assigns each repair person weekend duty once every two months. Frequently the repair people will not show up for repair calls.
2. The salary level, fringe benefits and holiday benefits for repair people are consistent with the industry.
3. The repair people get along quite well although most of their work is done alone.
4. Instructors in the company's training programme have noted that the repair people are describing their jobs in increasingly negative terms.
5. Customer dissatisfaction with some leasing and service contracts has been growing.
6. The company is experiencing a decline in the number of applications to the training school.

The job design expert decided to interview some of the repair people. He talked with 50 employees from all of the field territories. A summary of their comments follows.

* 'We can't order parts. Management does the ordering, and it's often too infrequent and the parts come late.'
* 'We aren't able to carry non-routine parts. Management prefer to special-order these parts which further delay us in making the repair.'
* 'We have to go through management when we encounter a repair problem and we cannot contact engineering directly.'
* 'Management fixes our work schedules and determines the sequence of our customer calls.'
* All customer complaints must be routed through the sales manager. This delays our response further.'
* 'Management determines the maintenance schedule for our vans and equipment. Often these schedules do not match our equipment needs and the schedules become outdated as we get new repair equipment.'

The repair people had other important reactions to the job. They enjoyed the training sessions because they were able to learn new repair methods. Most said they found their work to be challenging and full of variety, yet many expressed frustration over their inability to provide timely customer service. They felt some of the company’s work rules prevented them from delivering the best service and they felt this reflected badly on them as individual employees. They felt satisfied with employee benefits and the pay system. Many repair people indicated that they were looking for employment elsewhere.

The job design expert organised a series of meetings attended in each instance by supervisors and four repair people. These 'job expert' groups were challenged to come up with job changes for the repair person position. After each group generated its lists, it was asked to screen the suggestions for feasibility, specificity and applicability to the repair person job. Ten of these meetings were conducted in the London territory.

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Below is a partial list of the suggestions created by the group.

1. Repair people should have full authority to order routine and non-routine parts.
2. Repair people should go directly to engineering for technical assistance.
3. Repair people should handle their own vehicle and equipment maintenance up to £600 in annual repair costs.
4. They should design their own territory coverage and be able to work from their homes. Each repair person would have an electronic signalling device which would keep them in touch with their territory’s office.
5. Repair people should process customer accounts up to £1,000 in repair work.
6. They should maintain their own quality control reports.
7. They should help to select new applicants and take turns at instructing in the annual training seminars.

Based on these suggestions, the expert implemented his plan for improved job design. Fifty repair people and their supervisors from the London territory were selected to participate in a small pilot programme. In this programme, work attitudes, (job satisfaction, job involvement), performance, job motivation, absenteeism, customer satisfaction, job response times and vehicle maintenance costs were all monitored. All seven of the suggested job changes were made in the jobs of the London repair people. Similar measures were made for fifty repair people in Birmingham and Liverpool. However, no job changes were implemented in their jobs.

After eight months, the measurements noted above were retaken for repair people in the three territories. The job design expert and the Director of Field Services had good reason to be pleased. Little change was noted in Liverpool and Birmingham. However, the London repair people showed significant progress in several key areas. These are summarised below.

1. Absenteeism had dropped by 10%.
2. Job satisfaction and job involvement were up 25%.
3. Vehicle maintenance costs had not risen during the period, the repair people reported less lost in vehicle time.
4. Job response times had improved by 8% and customer satisfaction with service calls was up by 18%. Customer complaints showed a drop of 27%.