Professional Certificate in Marketing

Stakeholder Marketing

Senior Examiner Assessment Review Report
June and September 2010

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UNIT NAME: Stakeholder Marketing
AWARD NAME: Professional Certificate in Marketing
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- **Background to the paper:**

Candidates had a choice of two project briefs, Option One related to community relations and candidates were required to produce an audit of community groups and how they influenced the candidate’s organisation. Candidates were required to explain the concept of relationship marketing and how it can be used to develop trust, commitment and cooperation with community groups. Candidates were required to explain, with examples, the difference between sectional and causal pressure groups and evaluate how they impact on the organisation. Finally, candidates were required to suggest a coordinated communications mix to add value to the relationship and suggest a range of methods to evaluate the communications mix.

Option Two related to international marketing and candidates were required to conduct an audit, which identified the key stakeholders and their level of influence and impact on international marketing decisions and an assessment of the current marketing mix. Candidates were required to justify a product/brand/service and market entry method by including the selection criteria. Candidates were required to explain the concept of relationship marketing in the context of the challenges posed by communicating with international stakeholders. Candidates were required to explain how the coordinated extended marketing mix might need to be changed to ensure competitive advantage in the selected international market and suggest a range of methods to evaluate the marketing mix. Finally, candidates had to recommend an appropriate approach for devising a budget for the proposed international expansion.

- **Comments on how the marking scheme was applied in terms of:**
  - Concept, Application and Evaluation
  - Syllabus coverage
  - Use of command words and the extent to which answers reflected what was required
  - The relative weighting of each part of a question/task and an indication of what aspects of the question/task required most care and attention
  - What differentiated the A, B, C, or D grades

The breakdown of the magic formula for this paper is as below:

Concept 40% Application 30% Evaluation 20% Format 10%

The two options provided comprehensive syllabus coverage and the examining team were looking for evidence of an understanding and application of 85% of the syllabus.

The understanding and application of command words was mixed. Many candidates failed to summarise their audit findings and did not develop marketing or communications mix for their identified community group or international marketing. Many candidates identified measurement methods but did not evaluate in the context.
of their mixes. Candidates did explain the models as required but many did not discuss how to develop trust, commitment and cooperation or international challenges.

Differentiation between allocated grades is of crucial importance to the examiner and candidate alike. Considerable effort and double marking goes into the process of ensuring that critical grade boundaries are identified. The factors that differentiate different examination scripts include:

- the degree to which the candidate has understood the question
- the overall feel of the paper based on past experience and relative to other scripts marked in the standardisation meeting and during the session
- the degree of grasp of the facts or conceptual knowledge
- the look of the paper in terms of format, specified context and layout
- whether the points made are applied where required and set in the necessary context
- the quality of the examples given and their relevance/appropriateness
- has the candidate focussed on the command words in the question
- has evaluation been provided and justification of necessary points made
- have three questions been fully answered

A grades, which were in the minority, demonstrated excellent theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply this to the candidate’s organisation thus illustrating good transferable skills and the ability to recommend innovative, relevant marketing or communications mixes.

B grades demonstrated good theoretical knowledge and candidates were able to apply this, though less effectively than the A grade answers.

C grade answers demonstrated good theoretical knowledge but limited ability to apply this knowledge to the contexts.

D, E, and F grades lacked theoretical underpinning to their answers and relevant application and context. Moreover, in some instances answers were very brief and tasks omitted.

- A general overview of how the assessment was tackled, including a statistical analysis on the assessment as a whole

The overall pass rate for June 2010 was 75.45%
The grade profile for June 2010 was as follows:

![Stakeholder Marketing](image)

The overall pass rate for September 2010 was 74.81%

The grade profile for September 2010 was as follows:

![Stakeholder Marketing](image)

**Summary**

Option One – Community Groups. Audit material was on the whole well researched and presented, good use of stakeholder models. There was some confusion amongst candidates of what constitutes a community group with many referencing customers as community groups. Summaries of relationship marketing were largely theoretical with little contextualisation. Disappointing basic communications mix – textbook explanations with little creative thought.

Option Two – International Marketing. Audit developments were on two extreme scales; generally either very limited with no detail and few if any models referenced or very detailed. Many candidates lost sight of the purpose of the assignment, referencing very little stakeholder marketing theory or context, and instead producing a
comprehensive international marketing assignment. The extended marketing mix section confused some candidates with them failing to reference all mix elements and instead referencing only the three extended mix elements. On the whole justification of product/service/brand was well detailed and developed. Many candidates simply identified measurement methods that either bore no relation to their coordinated communications mix and/or failed to evaluate the methods they had identified.

**Detailed Analysis**

**Option One - Community Groups**

**Question One**  
The first task did produce many acceptable explanations of relationship marketing including the ladder of loyalty with most candidates adequately explaining how to develop trust, commitment and co-operation.

**Question Two**  
This actually covers a lot of material, but due to the word count answers needed to be concise. Some candidates were unsure how many words to dedicate to this answer. (Some too few – some far too many.) Strong answers referenced material covered in the appendix and summarised the key and relevant material, often in a table or in a focused way. The audits undertaken were in many instances excellent using a variety of concepts [eg Mendelow’s Matrix], theories [eg product life cycle] and frameworks [eg PESTEL] to generate a report to help identify two new community groups. Not all the audits were placed in the appendix, while some audits were simply reproduced in totality in the main assignment. A worrying number of candidates produced very poor summaries that did not reflect the key findings or the amount of valuable research undertaken. Finally, candidates did not always consider the impact and influence of key community groups, while the majority of candidates failed to differentiate between impact and influence. For example, a local residents group may influence the time large trucks can deliver and load with the impact of 5% on the cost of distribution.

**Question Three**  
Nearly all candidates were able to distinguish between sectional and causal pressure groups providing some excellent examples. The evaluation of their level of influence and impact had the same weaknesses as experienced with key community groups.

**Question Four**  
Every candidate seemed to select two new community groups although some were perhaps not quite the sort this assignment was expected to reveal, although many could be better described as ‘customer groups’. Such selections were not penalised. Encouragingly, candidates did describe the selection criteria – often the secondary part of a task can be ignored.

**Question Five**  
The communication mix task produced some excellent responses. Occasionally one plan was produced to tackle both groups. It would have been a better strategy to produce individualised plans for each community group.

**Question Six**  
Nearly every candidate listed a number of methods to measure the success of the communication mix but regrettably few evaluated the options listed. Some comments on strengths of the suggestions and the limitations would have been refreshing.
Option Two – International Marketing

Question One
The audits included were generally to a good standard. Not all the audits were placed in the appendix, while some audits were simply reproduced in totality in the main assignment. A worrying number of candidates produced very poor summaries that did not reflect the key findings or the amount of valuable research undertaken. All aspects of the task were included in most responses. Weaker answers overloaded this question with too much general and irrelevant material making it too long and cumbersome. This question was only 10 marks so needed a structured and concise approach.

Question Two
Nearly all submissions included a product/service/brand international expansion programme. However, a disappointing number failed to mention their preferred market entry strategy.

Question Three
Generally, the explanations of relationship marketing were adequate with perhaps too few mentioning the ‘ladder of loyalty’. However, not enough assignments addressed the question of how to communicate with stakeholders in international markets. Failure to include an adequate response to this element of the task meant submissions appeared to be more about international marketing rather than the role of stakeholder marketing in an international context.

Question Four
This question calls for specific recommendations and weaker candidates included general/textbook comments and did not relate them to the business environment. Furthermore, strong candidates clearly articulated their recommendations and focused them in respect of achieving competitive advantage. The development of an extended marketing mix was mostly well executed although a noticeable number of international centres only referred to the basic marketing mix. Not enough candidates considered how the extended marketing mix would generate competitive advantage.

Question Five
Virtually every candidate recommended a method of establishing a budget – most recommended the objective and task approach. It would have been better if candidates had mentioned and discussed other options available to establish a budget. Some were commendably detailed with actual costs calculated.

Question Six
By this point weaker papers were seriously running out of steam/inspiration. If the preceding two questions were disjointed, this lack of alignment showed on the final question. Some papers scarcely had a marketing communications mix to evaluate and merely offered some generic/brief theoretical constructs that looked like an afterthought. Strong papers finished with a flourish and included a range of quant/qual measures, tightly linked to the specific company goals in an accountable way. However, these were quite rare. Overall, this question was difficult for most candidates and received lower than average marks.

- Feedback on the academic quality of the cohort(s) that has just been examined and the quality of the teaching, as judged by the results

Some candidates had clearly studied and understood the underlying theory in relation to Stakeholder Marketing and candidates were able to answer some of the questions for both sections. Better marks were awarded to those who went beyond the theory and showed their understanding of how the subjects work in practice by applying it to their organisation and quoting examples to support their answers. Generally, the marks
gained were from across the required criteria. The theory tended to be quite strong and well supported. In some instances the practical application was also very good.

Generally, the UK centres had obviously put time into helping the candidates understand the nature of the task and most responded very well to the requirements of their chosen option.

A key weakness was not systematically and directly addressing each element of the task. A number of candidates simply missed elements of the task out. Others treated elements in a very superficial manner. A number of candidates seemed to lack some of the basic skills, for example, reflecting the balance of the marking criteria within their work.

In addition, some candidates misunderstood the purpose of the audit. This was to provide underpinning analysis to task two and should have been included in the appendices and a summary highlighting the key points of their analysis in the main body of their report. Candidates may refer to the audit in the main body of their report but it should not be treated as a substitute for analysis in the main body of the report.

Generally, the marks were gained from the earlier parts of the required criteria. The latter parts, involving a need for a demonstration of knowledge of marketing communications and measurement of the recommended communication activities, appeared to have been far less well-understood and applied to the given contexts.

There were a number of instances of plagiarism and candidates should ensure that they comply with the plagiarism and collusion guidelines at the front of the assignment brief as the CIM takes this matter extremely seriously.

Overall, this assignment indicates that the parts of the syllabus being are being taught but some centres and candidates have not quite grasped the assessment methodology and consequently there were a number of poor assignments.

- **Commentary as to whether recommendations made in previous years have been properly followed up**

On the whole, there was a marked improvement in the assignments that the Stakeholder Marketing team marked. Centres and candidates are becoming more familiar with the Stakeholder Marketing syllabus and assessment methodology.

Audits have improved and are addressing the specific questions set. However, a number of candidates are producing lengthy audits with no specific reference to the task and using stakeholder maps, SWOT and PEST analysis when they are not relevant.

A key area of concern was inappropriate selection of community groups although the examining team took a broad interpretation and did not penalise candidates. A number of candidates who selected this option failed to grasp an understanding of community groups and selected broad groups such as new customers, partner and retail.

The following example demonstrates good practice:-

More specific groups such as local, named schools and ‘Friends of the Moor’ is the name given to a group of people in the town of Knutsford in Cheshire who have volunteered to work together to promote the use of The Moor for leisure and recreation. The group provides a link between the local community and the Outdoor Leisure Section of Cheshire East Council.
An area, which still continues to be problematic, is the lack of application to the given context and this is impacting on the final grade awarded and the coherence of the assignments.

- **Comments and examples of:**
  - strengths and good practice
  - common mistakes when tackling this type of question/task

Most candidates seemed able to manage to answer every section of their chosen option, understood the nature of the task and were able to make a reasonable to good mix of theory, examples, discussion and evaluation, as necessary.

Using appropriate models or frameworks. Higher grade answers showed a good understanding of the theory by incorporating key models, underpinning frameworks into their answers eg Morgan and Hunt’s Key Mediating Variables Model.

On the whole, candidates demonstrated good knowledge of pressure groups and better candidates explained their level of influence and impact for example:

‘Causal pressure groups focus on a specific issue. Group action revolves around advancing a particular cause or protecting a common interest. Business Advisors LLP has already been subject to the influence of a causal pressure group through dealings with the Community Heritage Group. The Group’s sole objective is to preserve the cultural heritage, historical buildings and tourist attractions. Their opposition to the firm’s acquisition of new premises generated media attention which marred the launch of the local branch.’

Many candidates began to show a good understanding of the concepts and theories but it soon became clear that much of this was textbook derived as their attempt to apply this to an organisation was quite mixed. There were some outstanding examples but many answers were simply replication of theory with no application.

One candidate identified the ‘local community’ of Asda, which was quite broad but clarified this community group in their justification.

‘Local residents have expressed concerns about public drinking of alcohol in the children’s park on the YYY store complex which has been rendered unusable. Proactive management is needed because local resident opposition could have a negative impact should residents collaborate with the local media. Many local residents are also employees and customers therefore it is essential to develop better relationships with this cross stakeholder group’.

Candidates showed a clear understanding of the marketing mix by contextualising their mix to the organisation and community group for Option One. For example Bauer Media –Your Horse Magazine.

‘By developing a relationship with the British Dressage Society we are creating a brand association for our readers with a well recognised and established trademark, which itself created a competitive advantage within the industry.

‘Your Horse can offer the BDS members a 20p off coupon which can be sent to the members or redeemed on the members only section of the website in order to promote the magazine and offer an incentive. Public Relations could be key. Your Horse can invite the BDS to sponsor the Your Horse event, therefore building a relationship and adding value to the brand by associating it with an established society. Moreover it allows the BDS to get in front of a new audience and gain additional membership from the show.’
For Option Two where Belden was launching their range of broadcast products into Italy and France:

‘XXXXXX have local employees in both countries. They will need to be trained on the product set so they are able to provide a service and respond to customers needs. Our external sales team could shadow colleagues in other countries as well as attending our company wide training programme.’

But in some cases candidates had obviously used details of the organisations existing mix instead of developing it to respond to their identified community group or international customers.

For Option Two most candidates were able to select a brand or product but either failed to explain why the market had been chosen or completed a fairly superficial analysis. A good example was for the Carbon Trust:

‘China and the USA were short listed because on the CT’s established relationship with government bodies. A STEEPLE (appendix 3) revealed that socially, technologically and politically, the USA would be the most relevant country to expand internationally. However China had a number of key pull factors in other areas. China shows great economic potential. It is a large exporter of goods and services to Western companies, who are exerting pressure on China to demonstrate a reduction in their carbon emissions to improve the overall footprint of the supply chain and CT should exploit this.’

Some candidates were able to articulate methods for devising budgets and explained the pros and cons of a range of accepted methods and justified their choice for example:

‘An objective and task method for devising a budget for the proposed international expansion is recommended, whereby the marketing objectives are set and then the tasks needed to accomplish them are identified. Estimating the cost of these tasks will then set the budget. Although this method is the most complicated and time consuming it is the most scientific thus taking into account a number of factors.’

A key weakness of the cohort was not systematically and directly addressing each element of the task. A number of candidates simply missed elements of the task out. Others treated elements in a very superficial manner. A number of candidates seemed to lack some of the basic skills – for example reflecting the balance of the marking criteria within their work.

Audit findings were consistently presented albeit many interpreted this as a requirement to detail everything about the organisation from its GDP to detail of each product it sold. The general weaknesses were the inability to get much beyond listing of facts in the relevant frameworks, or the simple drawing of diagrams for theories like STEP, Porter’s 5 Forces and SWOT frameworks. Also, too many of the answers had sections that largely or wholly consisted of bullet point lists; very few managed to demonstrate skills in analysis and explanation, meaning that the majority of papers that passed only just passed, with scores in the 50s.

Not all candidates supplied their total word count. Some were clearly above the accepted maximum word count. In some instances, their source material was not included within a Bibliography, or Reference Notes, or, if included, was fairly minimal. Reports which exceed the word count are sent to the Awarding Body for review.
There seemed to be no middle ground between presenting an organisation led report and the use of theory to back up suggestions and findings. For example, candidates with a good in depth understanding of their organisation tended to fail in presenting any theoretical content in their report, and where candidates had limited understanding of their organisation, reports were heavily loaded with theory and lacked a clear business/organisational focus.

For Option Two the majority of candidates failed to produce satisfactory evaluation methods for the communications mix. They identified measures but did not evaluate them and or relate back to their communications mixes.

Presentation and format was in some instances disappointing. There was generally no use of a simple report template for the presentation of the assignments and reading material quoted in the bibliography seemed particularly limited given the level of the assignment. However, it should be noted that there has been an improvement in this area of the assignments.

It was very noticeable how the majority of the candidates could not properly reference according to the recommended Harvard system, and all of the colleges in my sample should be reminded of both the need for this and how it should look, both for in-text citations and the bibliography.

- **Guidance about how candidates can avoid making similar errors and strategies for improving performance**

Candidates should practise the following:

Identify the broad topic or subject areas that underlie the question. Candidates should ensure that they conduct an audit that addresses the tasks in this section. For example, develop a set of criteria to assess their customers. The guidance notes suggest that candidates may wish to utilise stakeholder maps but they should use their judgement as to when they should be produced in the context of the tasks. I felt that many candidates had either not read or ignored the guidance notes.

Identify the required emphasis of the question eg how the community groups impact on the organisation, adapting the marketing mix for international customers so that it secures competitive advantage.

Candidates should observe the command word. This was a particular problem for the audit findings, evaluation of mixes and the marketing and communications mixes, that tended not to address the specified target groups.

Ensure that the correct format is used eg report as marks are awarded for format. On the whole most candidates responded very well to this issue.

Identify the context that is required and frame their answer accordingly.

- **Suggestions of possible alternative approaches to tackling a question/task or parts of a question/task while making it clear that it is not the only way**

Where candidates are asked to make recommendations or suggestions there is never a definitive answer. Candidates will be rewarded for recommendations, that are suitable to their organisation, reflect the context of the question and indicate industry relevance and creativity. Moreover, answers that indicate a good grasp of key theory and the ability to apply this to their organisation in accordance with the assessment criteria.
Recommendations for how performance can be improved in future assessments

Tutors and candidates are encouraged to read the Senior Examiners report to ensure that the pitfalls are avoided. These reports provide a good insight into the areas of good practice and the pitfalls and I would recommend that these are used to underpin the teaching and assessment of Stakeholder Marketing.

Asking candidates to prepare answers to questions either for homework or during class discussions will improve their familiarity with the type of questions on this assignment for example asking them to prepare an audit of customers, stakeholder maps, analysing their organisation’s marketing and communications mix and how it can be amended to improve stakeholder relationships.

It is recommended that candidates should consult the CIM reading list and read from core texts and trade publications.

It is recommended that tutors should encourage candidates to engage in deeper learning rather than surface learning, apply theory to context and develop abilities to evaluate a given topic in depth. It is essential that candidates are able to demonstrate not only their knowledge but also their ability and skills to apply and evaluate in a given context.

Clarification about any syllabus or assessment changes

None

Possible future assessment themes

The structure used to frame this paper will continue. The nature of the questions, the way they are presented and contextualised will remain the same. Assignments will be set so that a substantial proportion of the syllabus will be covered. This means that candidates need to widen their range of knowledge and not just concentrate on a few prime areas of the syllabus.

There was a significant improvement in the June and September 2010 assignments. This was encouraging, and with this in mind, it is important that tutors and candidates recognise the need to study the syllabus in its entirety. Contexts and scenarios will continue to be across the whole range or organisational stakeholders.