

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Advanced Level Qualification
**Leading, Managing and Developing
People**
January 2016

Date: Thursday 28th January 2016

Time: 09:50 – 13:00 hrs

Time allowed – Three hours and ten minutes

(Including ten minutes' reading time)

Instructions

- Answer **all** of Section A.
- Answer **five** questions in Section B (**one** per subsection).
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Write clearly and legibly.

Information

- Questions may be answered in any order.
- Equal marks are allocated to each section of the paper.
- Within Section B equal marks are allocated to each question.
- If a question includes reference to 'your organisation', this may be interpreted as covering any organisation with which you are familiar.
- The case study is not based on an actual organisation. Any similarities to known organisations are coincidental.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

You will fail the examination if:

- You fail to answer five questions in Section B (one per subsection)
and/or
- You achieve less than 40% in either Section A or Section B
and/or
- You achieve less than 50% overall.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

SECTION A – Case Study

Note: In your responses, you are allowed to improvise or add to the case study details provided below. However, the case study should not be changed or compromised in any way.

Rosie Goodfellow is the daughter of a well-known multi-millionaire businessman and philanthropist. Together with the prominent environmentalist and prize-winning journalist, Oliver Ruffle, she plans to launch a new magazine and accompanying website aimed at people who wish to embrace 'ethical lifestyle choices'.

'In Clover', will be launched in the autumn of 2016. It will be a high profile, campaigning, publication aimed primarily at an up-market readership interested in ethical living. Articles and features will focus on green issues, minority and disadvantaged groups, the work of charitable organisations, international development, ethical consumerism, corporate social responsibility, as well as radical artistic and literary endeavours. It will also provide advice to people about how to live ethically and be environmentally aware in their home and in their working lives. In the long term it is hoped that a variety of different but related businesses using the 'In Clover' brand will be launched; a training consultancy, a mail order shopping operation and a holiday company.

Rosie is planning to invest much of her £4 million personal fortune in establishing and launching 'In Clover'. Extensive market research has been carried out showing that a sizeable potential market for the product exists in the UK and that considerable overseas sales are also likely. Possible major advertisers have been approached and have indicated a strong interest. The magazine will break even provided sales of each edition average 20,000.

The magazine's offices will be located in Oxford with an initial staffing of 30 people. Half will be editorial staff, responsible for commissioning, writing and editing copy. The other 15 people will be divided between administrative functions and divisions responsible for advertising sales, finance, HR and marketing. Production and distribution will be sub-contracted to another company.

Rosie is determined that a magazine which promotes ethical living must itself be run along ethical lines. She will not herself play a hands-on day to day role in running the magazine, but is determined that it will be managed according to radical and democratic principles. She plans to establish an Executive Board of Control to which the editor, Oliver Ruffle, and other directors will report. The Executive Board will be made up of six well-known figures with a track record in promoting or campaigning for ethical causes (heads of charities, green politicians, specialist academics, lobbyists, heads of think-tanks etc) and six members elected by the magazine's staff from among their own number.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

'In Clover', being a magazine devoted to the promotion of ethics, must treat its people ethically and be conspicuously seen to do so. Rosie is therefore keen that the following applies as far as HRM is concerned:

- At all levels the workforce must reflect the make-up of the city of Oxford in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and disability.
- All staff must regularly attend training and awareness courses in equal opportunities and corporate ethics.
- All jobs will be advertised in a variety of publications. There will be no informal recruitment and no head-hunters will be used. Jobs will be offered on the basis of open competition.
- Short listing and initial selection interviews will be undertaken by a representative panel of staff chaired by the HR director.
- A single trade union will be recognised for collective bargaining purposes once a full establishment of staff has been recruited.
- Salaries will be determined via a job evaluation system, annual equal pay audits being carried out. A policy of complete transparency will be followed as far as pay is concerned.
- The maximum salary that any manager can receive will be capped at three times the average salary paid to all staff at any one time.
- All profits will be reinvested in the magazine - 40% of each year's operating profit being distributed equally among all employees in the form of an annual bonus.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

- Formal disciplinary action will only be taken against staff as a last resort and after a full, independent investigation has been carried out. Employees who are unhappy with the outcome of an investigation, or who have any other grievance, will be able to appeal to the Executive Board of Control, whose decision will be final.
- The highest possible priority will be given to the creation and maintenance of a safe and healthy workplace, and to the welfare of staff.
- Best practice will be followed across the whole range of HR policies and practices. Policies on maternity, paternity and other family-friendly issues must match or be more generous than those of major employers in the private and public sectors.

Rosie believes that 'In Clover' is unlikely to succeed unless it is edited by Oliver Ruffle. However, Oliver is unhappy about the proposed approach to HRM and corporate governance that Rosie is proposing. While he is prepared to compromise, he is reluctant to take up the editor's chair under these conditions. He argues that as Editor-in-Chief he should be free to make his own decisions about recruitment, selection, performance management and reward. Moreover, he should chair the Executive Board and he should be free to develop appropriate HR policies and practices as the magazine is first launched and subsequently develops.

Rosie and Oliver have agreed that the best way forward, given their profound disagreements about HR strategy and policy, is to invite a firm of HR consultants to advise and work with them over the coming months.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

Assume that you work for the firm of consultants that Rosie hires to advise her about HRM practices at 'In Clover'.

Drawing on research and current practice, you are asked to comment on and give practical advice in respect of the following:

- 1. The proposed reward practices;**
- 2. The proposed approach to recruitment and selection;**
- 3. The proposed disciplinary and unconventional corporate governance arrangements with the Editor-in-Chief being subservient to an Executive Board of Control.**

What advice will you give? Justify your answer.

It is recommended that you spend roughly a third of your available time answering each of these three questions.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

SECTION B

Answer **FIVE** questions in this section, **ONE** per subsection A to E. You may include diagrams, flowcharts or bullet points to clarify and support your answers, so long as you provide an explanation of each.

A

1. According to extensive surveys carried out by CIPD and others, most employees in the UK are happy with the relationship they have with their immediate manager. A good majority say that they trust their own line managers, that they receive the support they expect and that they are treated fairly by them. By contrast senior managers are much less well-regarded. The CIPD's 2014 Employee Outlook survey found that only a third of employees agreed or strongly agreed when asked if they trusted senior managers in their organisations.

- i. Drawing on published research and/or your own observations, explain why most employees seem to have so much more trust in their immediate line managers than they do in their organisations' senior managers.

AND

- ii. Why is this an unsatisfactory state of affairs?

AND

- iii. What steps would you recommend are taken in your organisation to improve the level of trust between senior managers and employees? Justify your answer.

OR

2. In recent years occupational psychologists have carried out several investigations into why some people are much more likely than others to 'flourish' in their workplaces and hence to achieve very high levels of personal job satisfaction. Some conclude that a propensity to flourish is largely personality-driven. Those who are more naturally extraverted and who have relatively high levels of self-esteem are much more likely to flourish at work than those who lack these personal qualities.

- i. Explain why extraverted and self-confident people enjoy their working lives more than people who have different types of personality.

AND

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

- ii. What practical lessons can HR managers who are looking to improve employee satisfaction learn from this research?

B

3. Assume that you have been appointed to an HRD management role in an organisation which employs 500 people and operates in an industry of your choice. Your major responsibilities include overseeing all workplace learning and management development activities. A confidential staff survey was recently carried out which demonstrated worryingly low levels of employee engagement and high levels of active disengagement. When asked to state whether or not they 'regularly go the extra mile for their employer' only 10% said yes.

You have been asked to draw up proposals for **THREE** distinct HRD interventions aimed at improving levels of employee engagement over the next 12 months. A modest budget is being made available to support these activities. Set out the proposals you would make, justifying each with a credible business case.

OR

4. Victor Vroom's expectancy theory, first articulated in 1964, has been highly influential over the past 50 years. It holds that employees consciously evaluate whether or not to invest effort in trying to achieve something according to their perception of expectancy (the belief that effort will lead to performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will lead to outcomes) and valence (the belief that these outcomes are valued). It follows that if one of these perceptions is absent, employees will be less motivated to achieve.

Drawing on your own personal experience or on episodes that you have observed in the workplace, discuss and evaluate:

EITHER

- i. an occasion on which Vroom's three conditions were met and resulted in increased motivation;

OR

- ii. an occasion on which one or more of the three conditions were not met, leading to limited levels of motivation.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

C

5. According to Maitland & Thompson (2014:13) 'the biggest component missing from leadership today - especially in the corporate world - is women.' They go on to argue that female leaders 'are particularly attuned to the more democratic workplaces of the future and to the needs of younger generations', but that the requirement for 'total commitment' perpetuates the 'exclusion or self-exclusion' of many women from senior leadership work.

- i. To what extent do you agree with the view that attributes associated with female leaders are going to be more relevant in the future than they have tended to be in the past? Justify your answer.

AND

- ii. What steps can organisations take to ensure that their senior talent pools are filled with more women than at present?

OR

6. Professor Dave Ulrich recently argued that 'one of the tests of a great leader is what happens when he or she leaves.' The core idea is that being highly effective in a leadership role is of limited help to an organisation if the leader's departure is followed by a period of deterioration because the next generation of leaders has not been fully developed. Ulrich thus believes that truly great leaders prove themselves by being willing to 'transfer their leadership equity' to others.

- i. You are asked to develop a business case for investment in HRD initiatives aimed at encouraging the transfer of leadership equity in your organisation. What key points would you make? Justify your answer.

AND

- ii. How might your organisation go about encouraging leaders to transfer their leadership equity before they leave? Why may this sometimes be difficult to achieve in practice?

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

D

7. It is often argued that one of the reasons that home working or telecommuting has not grown as fast as predicted is that senior managers see it as being an 'employee benefit' which does not appreciably contribute to a business's success. Over time this perspective is beginning to change.

- i. What long-term benefits can the employment of people to work from home (either all the time or for some of the time) bring to a commercial organisation?

AND

- ii. To what extent would you support any plan on the part of your own organisation to employ many more people working from home? What would be the main advantages and disadvantages?

OR

8. Your organisation is about to embark on a period of significant structural and cultural change aimed at increasing its performance and profitability. Your manager has read that the development of effective 'change agents' is widely considered to contribute significantly to the ultimate success of change management episodes. She asks you to write a short briefing paper which sets out:

- i. What a change agent is;

AND

- ii. Why change agents make a significant contribution to success in this field;

AND

- iii. What characteristics are associated with good change agents.

What points would you make? Justify your answer.

E

9. Recent years have seen the evolution and growth of competitive surveys designed to establish which are the best employers to work for. In the UK the most prominent is the annual Sunday Times survey, but there are several others. In addition we have seen the growth of websites like Glassdoor which encourage employees to 'review' their employment experiences anonymously.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

- i. How should employers respond to these developments? Justify your answer.

AND

- ii. Explain why the larger private sector companies are tending to invest more time and resources into managing their response than is the case among SMEs and public sector employers.

OR

10. You have recently started working as an HR manager in a UK-based organisation which has ambitious plans to expand its operations in the Middle East, South-East Asia and Africa. Recently an e-mail was sent out to all its existing managers asking for volunteers who might be interested in applying for three new posts based overseas. It is envisaged that the successful candidates will be well-remunerated and will return to the UK on completion of a four-year assignment.

- i. What selection criteria would you recommend were used when deciding which managers to appoint to the new overseas posts? Justify your answer.

AND

- ii. What would you recommend is provided by way of pre-departure training and preparation for the successful candidates? Justify your answer.

END OF EXAMINATION

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

Introduction

A total of 292 candidates sat the Leading, Managing and Developing People exam in January. The overall pass rate was 64% which was a little disappointing when compared with most recent cohorts, but this group did include a rather higher proportion of merits and distinctions, demonstrating plenty of excellence at the upper end. Aspects of the case study appeared to cause some candidates particular problems on this occasion. Too many appeared not to have prepared for it particularly thoroughly, demonstrating an inability to comment at any length or in any great depth about some of the specific proposals set out there. We also came across many examples of candidates apparently failing to read the questions with sufficient care. We would again therefore urge tutors to stress to candidates the importance of writing about HRD when a question asks them to (rather than HRM more generally) and to advise them that there is no need to address both elements of questions that are clearly marked as requiring answers **EITHER** to one part **OR** another.

Table 1: Examination results of unit 7LMP, January 2016 (UK Centres)

January 2016		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	8	3
Merit	47	17
Pass	120	45
Marginal fail	30	11
Fail	63	24
Total	268	

Pass rate: 65%

Table 2: Examination results of unit 7LMP, January 2016 (Overseas Centres)

January 2016		
Grade	Number	Percentage of total (to 1 decimal point)
Distinction	-	-
Merit	1	4
Pass	10	42
Marginal fail	6	25
Fail	7	29
Total	24	

Pass rate: 46%

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

The papers were marked by Andrew Hambler, Gail Swift, Graham Perkins, Julie Beardwell, Penny Graham, Cecilia Ellis and myself.

Detailed feedback on each question is as follows:

Section A

Learning outcomes: 5 and 7

The case study was inspired to a considerable extent by the experience of the trade unions and other campaigning groups who launched the radical, left wing, campaigning newspaper News On Sunday in the 1987. This is widely regarded as one of the biggest failures in UK business history, losing £6 million in less than a month. John Pilger was its high profile Editor-in-Chief who resigned before the launch due to irreconcilable disagreements with the founding owners over their proposed approach to management and corporate governance. The approach used at News on Sunday was highly ethical, but impossibly idealistic when imposed on a precariously placed start up business. This episode nicely illustrates - in an extreme form - the tension between the wish to manage ethically and the cold commercial realities of the modern business environment.

There were some outstanding answers from candidates here, a number of whom had carried out research on the demographic make-up of Oxford and had also familiarised themselves with research on executive pay, the use of social media for recruitment and aspects of management in the newspaper and magazine industries. When this knowledge was displayed alongside strong, practical points of advice, high marks were awarded. However, there were also clearly a large group of candidates who struggled to answer the questions credibly. In too many cases major points were missed altogether (for example, job evaluation, salary capping, head hunters), while a high proportion simply avoided altogether confronting the proposal that employees should comprise half the membership of an executive board to whom the editor reports. More generally there was a tendency to refrain from criticising the proposals in the case study. It was disappointing to read so many answers which did little more than summarise them approvingly on ethical grounds, while ignoring their evident drawbacks altogether, particularly in the context of a small, start-up enterprise.

The proposed reward management practices have some strong and some weak points. There is a good case for including a profit-related element/annual bonus in the pay packet. Research evidence strongly suggests that such an approach is popular with staff (and hence helps in recruiting, retaining and engaging them), while also acting as a positive motivational incentive in smaller organisations such as In Clover. However, as the stronger candidates argued effectively, distributing bonuses equally among staff without any regard to individual contribution can be problematic from a motivational perspective.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

There is also a solid case for carrying out regular equal pay audits and for determining base salaries with reference to a job evaluation system, provided it is not so inflexible as to preclude the attraction of highly talented people. Determining pay rises through collective bargaining with a single union also makes good sense, provided there is a reasonably high level of membership among staff.

We expected students to be a great deal more critical of the proposal to cap senior pay at three times the average rate. While this is attractive in principle given what we know about the de-motivational impact of excessive management pay, it may well mean that experienced people are not attracted to apply for management roles simply because the salaries on offer are way below market rates for the jobs in question. As the odds of success are stacked against all new journalistic ventures of this kind, launching with an inexperienced senior team is not at all advisable. Subsequent retention problems are also likely if competitors are paying more for similar skills and experience. Most candidates made these points, but too many avoided the issue of the salary cap proposal altogether.

Likewise, pay transparency is all very well in principle, but again in practice can be problematic because it often gives rise to conflict and feelings of perceived unfairness. A case can be made for it, but an equally strong practical management case can be made against it.

Part 2, as a rule, was the best answered part. We expected candidates to argue that while the proposed approach to recruitment and selection is highly ethical, it is also a touch idealistic given the need to build a strong, committed and highly experienced team to launch the magazine. This may simply be incompatible with the aim of appointing people who reflect the makeup of Oxford's wider population in all these respects. It is especially problematic when the numbers are so small and would inevitably lead to the appointment of less experienced and potentially less able candidates to roles (including senior roles) by reason of their race/gender/sexual orientation/disabilities. Similarly, while it is very worthy to advertise all jobs and appoint via open competition, that is not industry practice. Journalists, in particular, tend to get their jobs through personal approaches, networking and a degree of nepotism. Moving too far away from industry norms in this respect is likely to mean that the people appointed are less experienced and able than they might be. A better approach in the given situation, less ethical though it may be, would be to poach well-qualified professionals with established reputations from existing publications. It may well thus be necessary to use head hunters, despite misgivings, and it will almost certainly be necessary to accept some forms of informal recruitment including those that make use of social media.

Asking panels of staff to be involved in the short listing and interviewing of new colleagues is less problematic and is common practice in many well-run and successful organisations. It is important, however, that proper training is given to individuals who will be involved with recruitment activities of this kind.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

A majority of candidates argued these points, but again, in some cases there was a failure to engage with any of the detailed proposals in the case brief. Some candidates took a broader perspective and picked up some marks. But to do well they had to give us a full commentary on the particular proposals set out.

Part 3 generally caused the most difficulties for candidates, and it proved to be a very effective way of distinguishing between pass level and merit/distinction level answers.

Rosie's proposed disciplinary policy is robust in that it requires that a full investigation must take place and represents good practice in respect of the 'last resort' stipulation. These aspects are readily justified even in the smallest organisations in that they represent basic organisational justice and thus help ensure that staff remain well-motivated in a way that tends not to be the case when managers are perceived to act in an unjust manner in respect of the application of discipline. Most candidates made this point, giving a broad thumbs up to the procedures being put forward.

What is much more questionable is the idea that those who have been disciplined by managers after having gone through a fair and just procedure should then be able to appeal that decision over their heads to an executive board who, presumably, have the power to overturn it. This may seem admirably constitutional in principle and is an approach that is followed in local authorities where panels of councillors decide final appeals. But it is not practical in a small organisation such as In Clover - particularly where the proposed board consists in large part of worker representatives to whom managers report. It therefore appears to deny managers the right to decide who they can fire, effectively requiring them to continue working alongside people in whom they have no confidence. Together with the wider governance arrangement that is proposed, a situation is being created in which staff are able to question the authority of managers and even to undermine it with complete impunity. This is at best a recipe for ill-discipline, and at worst for organisational anarchy, making tough decisions hard to take and completely undermining the principle of management prerogative. We were very disappointed to observe that so many candidates failed to grasp these implications and hence held back from developing the strong critical perspectives that we were looking for here.

In answering each of these three questions there was plenty of room for original argument and for candidates to adopt a variety of different positions on the key issues. However, high marks were reserved for mature and sound arguments which took account of the need to find a balance between ethical principles and commercial realities. The stronger candidates argued that some of Rosie's proposed approaches would be more appropriate to introduce once the organisation is up and running and has grown somewhat. They are inappropriate for a small start-up facing a very challenging business environment, but may have greater potential in a larger organisation which is well-established and mature.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

Section B

Question A1

Learning outcome: 1

The majority of candidates attempted this straightforward question and most picked up marks. Those that did not tended either not to give proper attention to one part of the question or failed to justify the points they made, particularly when answering part two.

The CIPD report entitled 'Megatrends: Are UK organisations getting better at managing their people' suggests that the problem of lack of trust in senior managers is due in the main to the persistence of 'them and us' cultures in organisations which mean that ordinary employees as well as many junior and middle managers have no meaningful relationship with senior figures. Top managers are remote from them and have no contact with them. They are also poor at articulating a clear vision for their organisations and particularly poor at consulting before making important decisions. A range of other observations were also made based on personal experience, a number of candidates correctly observing that senior managers often have to make difficult decisions which unsettle people.

This state of affairs matters because it makes it harder for organisations successfully to achieve senior management driven change (there is likely to be more resistance) and because it makes the successful adoption of high performance approaches harder, simply because high levels of discretionary effort are less likely when trust is low. Employee retention is poorer in low-trust organisations, absence is higher and adversarial industrial relations more likely. The best answers managed to introduce theoretical content here, demonstrating their understanding of ideas such as psychological contracts or motivation theories for example.

Improving the situation is partly about process (that is, more communication and information-sharing, more meaningful consultation and a conscious attempt to break down them and us barriers. But it is also about substance. Senior managers are respected where they successfully earn respect by being fair in the way that they exercise judgement, particularly when change is introduced which has a profound impact on staff. There is thus a need for ongoing management development and coaching after people have reached senior level. The highest marks were awarded to those who went beyond process issues when answering this question.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

Question A2

Learning outcome: 1

A substantial minority attempted this, many of whom wrote answers that were interesting and thought-provoking. There was, however, some tendency simply to equate extraversion with other constructs such as 'self-esteem' and 'self-confidence' which was not entirely convincing. Introverts may lack social confidence, but may have high levels of self-belief nonetheless.

There were clearly no right or wrong answers here because the psychologists have yet to reach definitive judgements on these matters. Most, however, agree that extraverts flourish at work partly because they tend to have a more positive outlook on life generally than introverts (glass half full rather than half empty) and because they are much more likely to enjoy positive support from others when things are tough because they are good at developing strong personal relationships at work. Some also point out that extraverts tend to be selected for leadership roles and that this gives them more influence in organisations and that they enjoy being creative and undergoing new learning experiences, including those presented by organisational change. Relatively high levels of self-esteem are associated with emotional robustness and persistence in the face of setbacks/obstacles. These make such individuals more successful and also better able to cope with destabilising change.

Strong answers to part two took two main forms. Some advocated using selection systems which aim to identify extraversion; personality testing being the prime example. The aim would thus be to recruit people, and possibly to promote people, who are most likely to flourish - hence helping the organisation to flourish too. Others focused on ways of developing self-esteem and extraversion in employees via emotionally intelligent, employee-focused management. There is a limit to how far HRD interventions can help here because these are core personality traits, but HR managers can certainly help by designing jobs and allocating duties in such a way as to give individuals the maximum opportunity to flourish when at work.

Question B3

Learning outcome: 2

A good proportion of candidates opted to attempt this question with mixed results. Unfortunately, as always seems to happen when we ask questions that are specifically focused on HRD, a lot of candidates decide instead to write about HRM generally. Here, a substantial number of candidates managed to advocate three interventions which had no relationship to HRD, however much the definition was stretched. In order to pass students also had to identify three distinct interventions and justify each effectively. In some cases the suggestions were indistinct or inadequately justified.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

That said, there were clearly no right or wrong answers here, but the stronger answers contained recommendations that concerned individual development, workplace learning and management development. It is partly a question of using HRD interventions generally to improve staff perceptions of their employment experience and to increase the likelihood of a positive response 'in return'. Carrying out a training needs analysis and acting on it might be a good starting point. There would also be the possibility of more systematic individual career planning, supporting employees in attaining qualifications/certificates, providing coaching sessions and specific interventions aimed at improving performance/confidence. The same range of interventions is possible for managers, but here there is also a need for training programmes that focus on employee engagement specifically.

Question B4

Learning outcome: 2

In the past candidates have often cited expectancy theory and appear to find it interesting and compelling. This question gave them an opportunity to demonstrate that it is something that they genuinely understand, and a good proportion of candidates rose to the challenge.

All manner of examples could be used to answer the question. The more clearly and thoughtfully practice is linked to Vroom's theory, the higher the mark. Quite a number lost marks by failing to demonstrate that they genuinely grasped one or more of the elements that make up the theory, writing rather generally about an episode that they had observed or experienced.

A large number missed the EITHER/OR instruction and gave two examples when only one was necessary. In these cases we awarded marks for the best of the two examples. We would, however, urge tutors to flag this up when preparing students for future exams. Too many candidates lost time unnecessarily simply because they did not read the question carefully enough.

Question C5

Learning outcome: 3

The best answers to part 1 focused to a good extent on the two specific points raised in the question stem, namely democratisation of organisations and the preferences of younger generations (for example, Generation Y/ the millennial generation). Organisations are likely to become more democratic over time because of the information revolution which makes it less and less sensible for senior managers to make decisions in isolation. Everyone is now able to access the information needed to make good decisions and can therefore participate in its evaluation. Consensus may thus be needed more than decisiveness, something women are often considered to be stronger at fostering than men.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

Research into the workplace preferences of the millennial generation/Generation Y tend to stress their pragmatism, their strong support for environmental causes/anti-discrimination and their neediness/need for reassurance (born of active parenting and a tendency to 'put off adulthood'). It thus can be argued that they are better managed by caring, nurturing, maternal types of leaders who are pleased to focus on their personal development needs - in short, senior leaders who are more people-focused than they tend to have been traditionally. However, millennials are also defined by an ease with the use of new technologies which is not particularly associated with female leadership.

A third point that many successfully made was simpler, but no less compelling. They argued that as organisations become more diverse and as there are fewer occupations that are so female or male dominated than was the case in the past, there will be a need for greater diversity at the top both to reflect the makeup of workforces, but also to provide role models among the leadership team for all in the organisation.

Weaker answers tended to avoid justifying the point at all, simply stating that they agreed (or in one or two cases disagreed) with the view expressed in the stem. Far too often markers wrote 'but why?' or words to that effect in the margins beside these answers.

Part two was more straightforward and was answered much more effectively on the whole. The best answers did more than simply list some training-oriented interventions or processes, but managed also to articulate their understanding of the barriers which currently prevent large numbers of women from attaining senior management positions. This appears to be partly explained by choice (less willingness to pursue 'top' careers than men/other priorities in life) and partly due to glass ceilings, discrimination/stereotyping, lack of role models, career-breaks etc. Organisational responses should thus involve tackling both these issues. The stronger answers thus focused both on reducing the barriers and active encouragement/facilitation. There is also a case for using targets/quotas and, more controversially, forms of positive discrimination. As always the quality of the justification provided helped to determine the mark.

Question C6

Learning outcome: 3

This was only attempted by a minority of candidates and the quality of the answers was very varied. The main reason that marks were lost here was a simple failure to address the question, particularly part one which asks specifically for a business case. Too many candidates simply avoided doing so, or were unable to offer any compelling case at all. We also continue to read answers which are 100% focused on the HR issues and neglect entirely to acknowledge that other factors (like commercial

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

success and survival) often need to take pride of place if a compelling business case is to be made.

Ulrich makes a strong business case in respect of PLCs which is based on enhancing share prices/financial reputation. He argues that financial advisors and investors are looking for long-term value in stocks and shares and that lack of able and experienced successors to take over when a 'great leader' leaves is a major weakness. A much more general set of points can, however, be made that are relevant to leaders at all levels in all kinds of organisations. The need is to protect and build on a legacy of achievement in a role. The alternative is deterioration after someone leaves and this could be in respect of either financial performance or the capacity to meet all kinds of other measures of success (staff retention, morale, commitment included). There is also a case for a smooth transition from one leadership regime to the next, avoiding a period of uncertainty when little gets achieved as the organisation/department awaits the installation of a new long-term leader

Achieving this is easier said than done because except in the case of internal promotions, leaders often have very little to gain personally from 'transferring their equity'. If things deteriorate after they leave and they are missed as a result, they may consider that to demonstrate how great they were in the role - and perhaps underappreciated too. There is thus a need to persuade people of the importance of developing successors before they leave as well as the practicalities of doing it (via succession planning practices). The stronger answers reflected this, going on to discuss the need to identify a number of possible successors and to provide them with the range and depth of relevant experience required so that they are in a position to succeed when the time comes. Candidates also reflected on the potential role of mentoring/coaching and of tacit knowledge management activities in helping to prepare successors.

Again, the big difference between the pass and merit/distinction answers was a breadth of perspective. The stronger candidates did more than simply list practical training-type interventions, appreciating that a job of persuasion is often necessary here too.

Question D7

Learning outcome: 4

This was the most answered question in Section B, being chosen by a large majority of candidates. The quality of answers was variable, again often because some wholly omit consideration of any factors that are not HR-related. There are very considerable cost savings that can be reaped as a result of home-working, mainly in reduced need for accommodation. Yet this point, along with others - relating to service-quality, for example - were frequently missed altogether in favour of points

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

that focused entirely on employee engagement and employer attractiveness in labour markets.

In fact the business case in favour of home working has a number of strands, and the broader the answer the higher the marks we awarded. First there are significant cost savings that can often be achieved by reducing the need for office space and hence rental/property costs. Hot-desking becomes plausible when people work from home some of the time. There is also scope for a reduction in heating bills, car-parking costs and other on-site facilities. Secondly there is evidence to support the theory that home workers are more productive because they do not have to spend so much time commuting to and from work and can manage their own workload more productively. Finally, if managed well home working can enhance employee engagement and improve employee retention. In short people like it provided they do not become isolated from others in the process. It allows the establishment of a better work-life balance, is good for personal relationships that can be strained when partners are separated a lot, and generally allows people to manage their home and work lives more effectively.

Part two answers were organisationally specific, but often covered quite similar ground. In some kinds of organisations the opportunities for home working are limited by the kinds of work that people do, most evidently in customer facing roles. There is also an argument based around higher likelihood of creativity/ideas generation etc from people working in close proximity and the more familiar arguments based on notions of management control. As always, the extent and nature of the justification that candidates put forward in support of their view was as important when we were awarding marks as its substance.

Question D8

Learning outcome: 4

In the past candidates have often written with some enthusiasm about change agents, so this question was intended to give them an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding at greater length. However, possibly due to the popularity of Question D7, relatively few took up this opportunity. Those who did tended to know the field well and were thus able to write impressive answers.

All we were looking for was an appreciation that change agents are people who are happy to advocate change from within an organisation, communicating its potential advantages and generally acting as a positive enthusiast when planned change is announced. They can be people with formal managerial responsibilities, but they can equally well be enthusiastic and well-engaged people who have influence even if they have no significant, formal management responsibilities.

Research into change management suggests that a fair proportion of change management episodes either fail or disappoint their sponsors in practice. Change

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

agents contribute by helping to ensure that the case for change is made around an organisation as well as resistance and cynicism.

A good change agent is competent, experienced and respected among colleagues, but also both willing and able to communicate with them, often taking up an unpopular position. Self-confidence is thus helpful to have as well as good communication skills. Finally the change agent must genuinely believe in the message being put across in favour of change.

Where candidates made reference to theory and published research or to their own experience and observations, they were rewarded with marks.

Question E9

Learning outcome: 6

Part one was generally answered a lot more effectively than part two which candidates found rather more challenging.

Employers are wise to take developments in this area very seriously as the online review sites and 'best employer' surveys are able to have a serious impact on their reputations as employers. This affects their capacity to recruit and retain good quality staff. There is also a knock-on effect on their wider business reputations which can in turn affect sales volume and long-term financial results. The need is for a strategic response involving effective employer branding, the development and maintenance of a compelling employee value proposition for their staff and would-be staff and more generally a pro-active attempt to manage their reputations. This requires 'positioning' the organisation as an employer vis a vis its major labour market competitors by establishing and publicising what makes its employment experiences distinctive and valuable from an employees' point of view. In practice the result tends to be more attention paid to flexibility/work-life balance, to total reward and to HRD opportunities.

Part two was tougher, but there was plenty of scope to develop a wide range of possible points in answering it. We did not have any specific expectations here, so a wide variety of points were rewarded with marks.

Most of the stronger answers argued that the larger private sector organisations are investing most in such activities and taking them more seriously than the public sector and SMEs because they, potentially have most to gain and most to lose from active reputation management in labour markets. Surveys on reviews have a big potential impact on them, especially highly competitive fields such as graduate recruitment. SMEs on the whole only operate in quite narrowly defined geographic areas and are thus only focused on local labour markets. By contrast the big surveys and collaborative online review tools are nationally or internationally focused.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

The extent to which an SME can benefit financially from good reviews or lose financially from poor ones is limited.

The public sector is increasingly marketised and engaged in competitive labour market activity, but tends on the whole to employ people who see themselves as members of a profession as much, if not more, than they see themselves as employees of an organisation. The employment experience on offer thus tends to vary much less. While working for one Police Authority may differ somewhat working in another - the same being true of government departments, hospitals, schools - the difference is more marginal than is found in the big commercial organisations. The public sector, moreover, does not have the same financial imperatives that often apply as far as wider reputation management is concerned.

Question E10

Learning outcome: 6

As appears always to be the case when we ask questions about expatriation, we find that it is a subject which interests candidates resulting in plenty of answers. This was no exception, being chosen by a good majority. Most answered it pretty well, although there was a tendency in part one to ignore altogether the perhaps too obvious point that technical ability/relevant experience is as important as cultural sensitivity and language when selecting expats. A capacity to do the job needed to be included in answers somewhere if high marks were to be gained here.

The justifications that stronger candidates provided were partly practical in nature, but also reflected the considerable risks that companies experience when managing expatriates relating to early return, failure to settle, poorer than expected performance etc. Selection criteria must be partly be technical in nature (that is, ability to the job well), but must also encompass cultural sensitivity, experience of developing and working with multi-cultural teams and in a multi-cultural context. Personal circumstances may also be relevant as well as qualities such as robustness, ability to adapt etc.

On training and preparation, the emphasis needed to be on language skills and on interventions which minimise the extent to which 'culture shock' will be experienced. Pre-assignment visits to the country concerned are often wise to arrange. Practical matters around housing children's education, cultural and legal expectations etc also typically form part of effective pre-expatriation training. However, it was also important that candidates did not omit specific job-related preparation which is company-specific rather than generally relevant to expats. The purpose is to help ensure a 'smooth landing' and to assist the selected candidates to perform to as high a level as possible as soon as possible on their arrival overseas.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

January 2016

Conclusion

In most respects this cohort did as well as previous ones on this paper. We continue to be most impressed with the level of preparation and the ability of candidates to write so much that is of really high quality despite the pressure of exam-room conditions. At the upper end there were plenty of outstanding performances here. It is very difficult to sustain a very high level of performance right across the whole paper, but some managed to do this and were rewarded with merit or distinction marks for their very impressive efforts.

The weaker candidates tend to do poorly and to fail the paper largely because they are insufficiently prepared and are thus unable to do proper justice to sufficient numbers of questions. A failure to read the question fully or sufficiently carefully remains a problem, and too often candidates struggle to offer a compelling justification to back up the points they are making. Writing an answer to the question they hoped was asked, rather than the one that actually appeared on the paper is another reason that marks are lost, typically in Section A where the case is seen and thus prepared. It is clear to us that these errors are often made by candidates who are otherwise competent and able, but we can only award marks for points which are well-argued, well-informed and relevant to the question asked.

Stephen Taylor
Chief Examiner