

HANDOUT 3

IN-TRAY EXERCISE

Business Challenges

Thanks to KPMG for permission to use this exercise.

Are you ready for the challenges of a career? Here are eight situations for you to test yourself. Some are inter-related so don't look at each one in isolation.

In each situation, select the most appropriate answer. This is the sort of exercise you should expect on your assessment day and the sorts of situations you may encounter once you are employed.

The scenario

Your name is P Smith and you are the Marketing Manager of a company named Reeders. Your boss is Janet Clifton. (See organisation chart attached)

Reeders is a retailing company specialising in sales of foods and pharmaceutical products that has branches through the country. Its head office, where you work, is in Birmingham and its Managing Director is George Wilkes.

Reeders hired you because you are an ambitious, positive thinker who'll make things happen.

Question 1 – Conference Confusion

You receive this email from the company MD, George Wilkes...

Subject: Innovations in Drugs Conference 21st October

I've just had a phone conversation with Frank Fielding of Kemiko, who are the major drug manufacturing company organising the above conference. He tells me that there is going to be a presentation by the manufacturers of Supranine, a revolutionary new drug for hay fever sufferers that has just been approved for sale over the counter by retailers in this country. I've read several reviews of this new drug, and it looks set to take a very large share of the overall market.

I feel that the market in hay fever remedies is one that we have never properly got to grips with in this company, and since the size of this sector of the market expands every year, we must do something about this. We also regularly see drug sales plummet in the spring and summer months when cold remedies are not selling - increased sales of hay fever products this would help to reduce this.

I've arranged a meeting with Karen for the week after the conference to discuss this, but she is on holiday the week before and therefore cannot attend the conference itself. I want you to make sure that you bring back a copy of all handouts relating to this product and any other information that you think we'll need when coming to our decision as to whether or not to market this product.

What do you do?

- A – Attend the conference
- B – Send someone else
- C – Don't attend but order material to be sent

Question 2 – Company Car

You receive this email from R. Patel...

Subject: Delivery of new company car

I've completed final negotiations with the garage supplying your new company car. They'll have it ready for collection between 3 and 5 pm on Thursday 21 October, so I would be grateful if you could arrange for it to be collected at that time. They have agreed to include the sunroof, remote alarm and the CD player at the price we originally agreed. I've also arranged for your old car to be collected from the car park at Head Office on the afternoon of the same day.

Please let me know immediately of any faults that you notice. When we're paying this amount of money for a car it should be perfect!

What do you do?

- A – Collect the car yourself
- B – Arrange to collect the car another day
- C – Arrange for someone else to collect the car

Question 3 – Legal Action

You receive this email from susan.yu@grabit&runne.co.uk, the company's legal advisers.

Subject: Impending legal action by Kwono of Japan

I've been notified by our office in the Far East that Kwono is seriously considering taking legal action as a result of your high profile launch last month of Fango toothpaste. It appears that the name 'Fango' was registered by Kwono three years ago and has been used by them for a highly successful cream to treat athlete's foot in Japan and throughout the Far East. Last year 'Fango' was apparently the most popular over-the-counter foot care product in Japan, and they have plans to market the product in Europe. Kwono is very unhappy that another product has been launched under the same name.

What do you do?

- A – Immediately forward email to Janet Clifton and George Wilkes for them to action
- B – Reply to email seeking legal advice, 'cc'-ing it on to Janet Clifton and George Wilkes
- C – Reply to email seeking legal advice

Question 4 – Charity Calls you receive this letter:

FROM: TO:
National Society for Handicapped Children Head of Marketing
PO Box 158 Reeders Ltd
LONDON 44 Moat House Lane
NW2 5TD BIRMINGHAM

Dear Sir or Madam,

As you know, we are one of the leading charities presently helping children and young people who suffer from a wide range of handicaps. There is a vast amount of work for us to do to bring some hope into the lives of many thousands of children, but unfortunately we find that our funds are not enough to enable us to do what we feel needs to be done.

We rely very heavily on support from the public, and in particular from corporate sponsorship and donations to enable us to carry on with our work. To this end we have arranged a major fundraising concert on 12 December to be held at Symphony Hall in Birmingham, featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Choir.

In order for this to be the success that we hope for, we are asking local businesses to support the event with sponsorship or a donation. We would be grateful for donations of whatever size, but if you feel able to contribute 1000 or more we would be able to arrange some corporate entertaining for a party of you and your guests at the concert. Businesses have told us in the past that they find this type of entertaining a very pleasant way of thanking customers or staff for their support.

I do hope that you will feel able to help us in this way. If you would like any further information about our organisation or the work that we do, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Smethurst, (Head of Fundraising)

What do you do?

A – Refer to Janet Clifton

B – Refuse donation

C – Give donation or sponsorship

Question 5 – It's big news!

Reading the paper on the way to work you see this article...

Boots for Sainsbury's

Retailing giants Boots and Sainsbury's yesterday announced a deal which will see the chemist chain's Health and Beauty shops opening on supermarket sites. Initially the openings will be on an experimental basis in seven stores, but if the experiment works, observers believe that the format could be introduced widely throughout the Sainsbury's superstore chain.

Both companies were being cagey about the project's potential yesterday. A Sainsbury's spokeswoman would only say that if successful it is hoped to extend the trial into other stores. But one analyst said: "This has potentially enormous importance in the longer term". Initially the experiment will be restricted to stores in St Albans, Ipswich, Dulwich, Camberley, Poole, Sevenoaks, and Hemel Hempstead; Sainsbury's will provide space and charge Boots rent. Boots' high street shops have been under pressure from Superdrug and other competitors who have undercut Boots on perfumes, sun creams and condoms. But Boots' spokeswomen could not comment on the company's pricing strategy in the experimental concessions, and it is not known whether prices would match those in high street Health and Beauty shops. Sainsbury's already has five concessions with Lloyds Chemists, and 12 Sketchley dry cleaners.

What do you do?

A – Email summary of article to Janet Clifton

B – File it in your 'miscellaneous reports' file C – Save it to deal with later

Question 6 – Drinks do

You receive this email from Fred Hill, a manager at your level and working in a closely related area:

Subject: Drinks Do: Old Bell, Queens Rd, this Friday

As you may have heard, Marianne and I got engaged on Saturday, and we will be celebrating this at the Bell and Anchor on Friday. We hope that you will be able to join us at about 5.30 after work for a few drinks, and then to go on for a Chinese banquet at about 7.30. We need to book numbers at the restaurant, so please let me know whether you will be able to come.

Boyfriends/girlfriends/husbands/wives are very welcome of course! The following post-it note also arrives on your desk:

Your girlfriend/boyfriend phoned while you were away from your desk and asked me to give you the message that he/she has managed to book theatre tickets for the Regent Theatre on Queens Road for Friday night. Performance starts at 7.45pm. Please call back to confirm whether or not you can make it.

What do you do?

- A – Go to Fred's drinks and theatre
- B – Go to Fred's drinks, meal and theatre
- C – Go to Fred's drinks and meal
- D – Go to Fred's drinks only

Question 7 – Business Development

Minutes from a Business Development Committee meeting

1. Proposed extension of range of ready meals

F Hill reported back to the committee on this matter. There appears to be considerable evidence that ready meals are becoming increasingly popular, particularly in the larger towns and cities where the main buyers appear to be office workers who buy meals during the day to save cooking for themselves in the evening. These products have a high margin. The potential problem with them is that they have a very short shelf life. Foreign foods and "healthy" foods appear to be more popular than other types.

G Wilks proposed that a detailed costing exercise should be carried out. F Hill suggested that customer opinion could be sought in branches. J Clifton agreed to arrange this. Further discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

2. Introduction of lockable display cabinets

K Milward reported that she was very unhappy about the introduction of lockable glass covers over many products in branches. Although the committee had approved this three months ago, she felt that it was acting as a considerable deterrent to customers buying products, and sales had suffered accordingly. K Milward agreed to provide further detailed analysis of the fall in sales by line, and the effect on profit. R West agreed to quantify the fall in pilferage levels since these cabinets have been introduced. The matter would be further reviewed in the light of this information at the next meeting.

3. New branch opening

J Clifton stated that arrangements for the opening of the new branch in Southport on 18 November were well in hand. All the normal publicity had been arranged for the event with exception of the 2-page spread in the Southport Advertiser, which has not yet been arranged because they do not accept advertisements more than 1 month in advance of publication. The design work for the spread has been prepared. It was planned to appear in the 12 November edition. It was agreed that P Smith would arrange this.

4. Seasonal fluctuations in pharmaceutical product sales

G Wilks stated that he was concerned about the low sales in pharmaceutical products over the summer months that are experienced every year. Although this is due to very low sales in cough and cold remedies which yield high profits in the winter months, he felt that there were areas that we could expand which would compensate for this to some extent, such as insect repellent, hay fever treatments and skincare products. He is currently reviewing a number of possible products and hopes to have further information available for the next meeting.

5. Results for last month GW congratulated everyone, particularly the food sales staff, on very good results

6. Any other business None.

What do you do?

- A – Arrange branch opening publicity immediately
- B – Organise customer research immediately
- C – Arrange branch opening publicity and organise customer research
- D – Delegate branch opening publicity

Question 8 – Synchronised Sponsorship you receive this letter...

FROM:TO:

The Synchronised Swimming Society Marketing Manager
University of Chester Reeders Ltd
Western Road 44 Moat House Lane
CHESTER BIRMINGHAM

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of our society, which was formed last year, in the hope that you will feel able to sponsor us on a tour of the Greek islands. We hope to tour the islands next May for two weeks with a team of about 10 people. We plan to give demonstrations of synchronised swimming in the sea and swimming pools and to raise the profile of the sport in general by our presence.

We will be able to display the Reeders name and logo prominently on our swimwear, thus giving a high degree of exposure to your company. We will also be able to publicise the use of some of the food and beauty products that you sell, for example waterproof cosmetics and slimming products (as several of our team have recently been on diets and will happily attribute their success to one or more of the diet programmes that you sell).

We would hope that you would consider a figure in the region of 8,000 reasonable for such sponsorship. We look forward to hearing from you, and feel sure that this arrangement will be very beneficial to us both in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Alison Worth Secretary

What do you do?

- A – Bin the letter
- B – Accept sponsorship
- C – Write a declining letter

REEDER ORGANISATION CHART

