

C COMMODITIES TO GO

Philip M. Rodgers

This fascinating and instructive book takes readers behind the scenes of twenty-four of the biggest new product success stories of the past few years and reveals the normally confidential workings of some of the institutions where these products were developed. Each story focuses on a different strategy and offers managers and professionals invaluable insights into how the brightest and best new product ideas were originally thought up, then developed and finally brought to market. £ 22.50

D A HANDBOOK OF MODERN BUSINESS MATTERS

Joyce Jamieson

The incorporation of information technology in the workplace has revolutionised the way people do business. But the revolution has not finished - new technologies are being developed every day. The divide between man and technology is becoming increasingly narrow, and in some societies social and cultural changes are gradually occurring in order to re-engineer business operations for the 21st century. A Handbook of Modern Business Matters will encourage you to think about the new concepts and ideas which often pass by only half understood, but will eventually make the difference between success and failure. £ 14.99

E BUSINESS CHOICES

Anne Jones

This original book about attitudes towards work is both for individuals in routine jobs seeking to improve the quality of their working lives and for managers who find themselves expected to do more with less in this era of uncertainty. Business Choices reveals a new way of thinking about work that will motivate both employees and companies to reach for higher levels of achievement. In a clear and very readable style that avoids much irritating business jargon, Anne Jones seeks to improve working attitudes at all levels of the workforce. £ 18.99

Part two

Questions 9 - 14

- Read this text from a business magazine.
- Choose the best sentence from the opposite page to fill in each of the gaps.
- For each gap 9 - 14 choose one letter A - H.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning (0).

Making new products a success

After successfully creating a new product it is essential to find an effective way of marketing it. Promising British creations have often failed to sell because they have not been correctly marketed by those who had the idea, with the result that large foreign corporations have successfully taken over the marketing and made huge profits from a product created by someone else. (0 = H)

It is more expensive to stop your competitors when they have already entered a market than it is to stop their initiatives at birth (9 =) This early disposal of any competition is obviously preferable, but it is possible that once you have established a new market, your competitors may spoil your plans by trying to gain a share of your profits, increase the cost of entering the market, or start their own related market venture. (10 =) If you are aware of what your competitors are planning, you can stay one step ahead..

Choosing the best time to enter the market is also important. Researchers have conflicting views about the value of being first to market. (11 =) But recent research indicates that commitment to leading the market is more important. Such commitment involves having a vision for the medium term of how the market will evolve, being prepared to "stay with it", and adapting your product and service as the market develops and new entrants emerge.

Looking ahead at what is likely to happen in the market is essential. Many new products fail because their promoters either neglect to anticipate the conditions of future markets, or mistakenly assume that their products will not need any alterations in the future. (12 =) Markets change constantly and forward thinking of this kind dictates the level of investment necessary to ensure success. Many organisations have tried to minimise risk by cutting back on initial investment. (13 =)

The ability to predict and plan, then, is the real key to the success of a new product. (14 =) You may develop a great product, but still fail because your company hasn't adapted to a new environment.

- A Some have argued that more damage is done by being over budget than by launching the product six months late.
- B This could be done by effective advertising before establishing a market, which may discourage them from entering it
- C Without these skills, a new product is very unlikely to be successful in the market place.
- D When companies launch such new products, they should be prepared to adjust over time and recognise the need for future change to the product.
- E Outside investment, however, is not always an aid to the success of a new product.
- F In order to stop them doing any of these things, it is important to improve your market intelligence.
- G But such attempts at economising invariably fail, as other companies with more realistic financial planning move in.
- H The lesson here is that it is important to put as much effort into selling the product as into its creation

Part three

Questions 15 - 20

- Read the following article about a business technique called benchmarking from a business magazine and the questions on the next page.
- Each question has four suggested answers or ways of finishing the sentence A, B, C and D.
- Choose one letter, A, B, C or D.

The expression 'benchmarking' has become one of the fashionable words in current management discussion. The term first appeared in the United States in the 1970s but has now gained worldwide recognition. But what exactly does it mean and should your company be practising it?

One straightforward definition of benchmarking comes from Chris Telfer, managing director of a New Zealand-based consultancy firm specialising in this area. "Benchmarking involves learning about your own practices, learning about the best practices of others, and then making changes for improvement that will enable you to meet or beat in the world." The essential element is not simply imitating what other companies do but being able to adapt the best of other firms' practices to your own situation.

Instead of aiming to improve only against previous performance and scores, companies can use benchmarking to inject an element of imagination and common sense into their search for progress. It is a process which forces companies to look closely at those activities which they may have been taking for granted and comparing them with the activities of other, world-beating companies. Self-criticism is at the heart of the process, although in some cases this may upset managers who are reluctant to question long-established practices.

The process of identifying 'best practice' in other companies does not just mean looking closely at your competitors. It might also include studying companies which use similar processes to your own, even though they are producing different goods. The point is to look at the process rather than the product. For example, Italian computer company Arita wanted to improve the quality of its technical manuals and handbooks. Instead of looking at manuals produced by other computer companies, Arita turned to a publisher of popular handbooks such as cookery books, railway timetables and car repair manuals. As Arita's Technical Director Claudio Benelli says, "All of these handbooks are communicating complex information in a simple way - exactly what we are aiming to do. And in many cases they succeed far better than any computer company."

There is some disagreement between benchmarking specialists as to the best methods to follow when starting a benchmarking exercise in your firm. Everyone agrees that the process must have the full approval of senior management but that it is best carried out by a comparatively small team. Some consultants feel this should be as small as three

people, but most favour a team of between five and eight, at least one of whom should have some prior knowledge of the benchmarking process. In practice this often means bringing in an outside consultant - at least at the beginning. Once the team is assembled, there can be anything from three to five formal stages in the process - different companies have developed different approaches - but, whatever the exact technique, benchmarking can only work if everyone in the company, from top to bottom, is committed to change.

- 15 According to the writer, benchmarking must always involve
- A changing your activities on the basis of new information.
 - B copying exactly what your competitors do.
 - C identifying the best company in your market.
 - D collaborating with other companies in the same field.
- 16 Some managers may resist benchmarking because
- A it takes their activities for granted.
 - B it makes them examine the way they work.
 - C it makes others question their efficiency.
 - D it gives them a lot of extra work.
- 17 What sort of companies should you compare yours with?
- A those producing similar goods
 - B those communicating most effectively
 - C those using similar processes
 - D those leading the domestic market
- 18 Arita found that a publishing company could
- A make more money than a computer firm
 - B produce technical manuals for them.
 - C show them how to improve their own manuals.
 - D help them move into new markets.
- 19 Benchmarking specialists agree that in order to succeed there must be
- A a team of no more than three people.
 - B total support from top managers.
 - C a fixed timetable for the process.
 - D an outside consultant in the team.
- 20 What is the writer's purpose in writing this article
- A to recommend the process of benchmarking
 - B to criticise firms that do not carry out benchmarking
 - C to give factual information about benchmarking
 - D to explain why benchmarking does not suit every firm

Part four

Questions 21 - 30

- Read the article below about temporary workers.
- Choose the best word from below to fill each gap.
- For each question 21 - 30 choose one letter A, B, C or D.
- There is an example at the beginning **(0)**.

Growth in temporary workers

The rise of the temporary worker has become one of the most prominent **(0 = A)** of the business landscape. In a recent report by an international research organisation, 35 per cent of companies **(21 =)** temporary workers to account for at least 10 per cent of their total workforce by the end of the decade. Five years ago that level of temporary, casual and contract employment **(22 =)** in only 12 per cent of companies. The **(23 =)** majority of the companies surveyed said that labour-force flexibility was the main reason for using temporary workers. Another reason was to **(24 =)** specific expertise without having to recruit permanent staff. Most companies said they liked the casual nature of the work relationship, the apparently cheaper costs, **(25 =)** paperwork and fewer legal problems that came with using temporary workers.

But there are **(26 =)**. The most frequently mentioned difficulty was that temporary workers **(27 =)** the skills and training to do the job. Also mentioned was **(28 =)** about the quality of the work and level of commitment of temporary workers. The study also casts doubt on the **(29 =)** that employing temporary workers will save money. It argues that this is only true if temporary workers receive less in **(30 =)** income than permanent employees.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------|---|----------|---|---------------|---|------------|
| 0 | A | feature | B | points | C | items | D | marks |
| 21 | A | expected | B | thought | C | presumed | D | calculated |
| 22 | A | ran | B | existed | C | stood | D | stayed |
| 23 | A | big | B | wide | C | vast | D | enormous |
| 24 | A | own | B | receive | C | earn | D | acquire |
| 25 | A | lessened | B | declined | C | reduced | D | lowered |
| 26 | A | troubles | B | thought | C | drawbacks | D | hardship |
| 27 | A | lacked | B | missed | C | failed | D | lost |
| 28 | A | care | B | concern | C | consideration | D | bother |
| 29 | A | guess | B | faith | C | acceptance | D | assumption |
| 30 | A | total | B | absolute | C | sum | D | complete |

Part five

Questions 31 - 40

- In **most** lines of the following job advertisement, there is **one** unnecessary word. It is either grammatically incorrect or does not fit in with the sense of the text.
- For each numbered line 31 - 40, cross out the unnecessary word. Some lines are correct. Indicate these lines with a tick (✓). The exercise begins with two examples (0) and (00).

Examples: 0 = and

 00 = ✓

Investment Analysts wanted

- 0 A Fund Management and subsidiary of a prestigious Investment Bank
00 seeks bright young Investment Analysts to augment its rapidly expanding research
31 department. Our client is a top US institution with significant fund under
32 management from world-wide. Increasingly it is seeking to manage the European
33 component of its portfolio from London. This has been led to an impressive rise in
34 its profile in European markets. The Bank is looking for talented and ambitious
35 Investment Analysts to form a new specialist research team. Investment Analysts
36 who perform rigorous and detailed investigation into companies and securities
37 before making recommendations to those Fund Managers. Ideally, you will have
38 excellent academic credentials and a solid professional with grounding in
39 analytical techniques. Particularly useful would be training in an accountancy
40 an MBA or a legal qualification. Excellent communication in skills are required.
For an initial, confidential conversation contact the Bank's Personnel Manager directly.