

Your response .....  
 Model version **So my recommendation is the second solution, which is to hire more permanent staff. Recruiting permanent staff will give us a major opportunity to create a really effective team of specialists.**

Instruction 5 Refer the audience to the handout.

Your response .....  
 Model version **I have a cost breakdown for the two solutions, which I'll be passing round now.**

Instruction 6 Thank the audience and invite questions.

Your response .....  
 Model version **Thank you for your attention, and if you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.**

### D How to create interest

#### D1

##### Extract 1

PRESENTER: So, the option which we **strongly** recommend for more detailed consideration, is to sub-contract **all** administrative computing to an outside supplier of computer services.

##### Extract 2

PRESENTER: As you've seen, the brand is performing **badly** in this sector, and some customers have **actually** decided to delist the brand because it is priced **so high**.

##### Extract 3

PRESENTER: For the reasons I've explained, discounting the brand is not an option if we **really** want to maintain our premium positioning. So we're looking for other ways to **bring** our lemonade **back onto the shelves** of the Independent Grocers.

##### Extract 4

PRESENTER: Therefore, we've changed the procedures for selection and orientation, and have managed to **boost** our success rate to 90 per cent, which **I'm sure you will agree**, is a **very** satisfactory level.

#### D1

See tapescript D1 above. The missing words are in bold.

#### D3.1

- a. really far/much too low
- b. so ... just/simply/really
- c. extremely/very... strongly
- d. really ... highly
- e. quite .... just ...

#### D3.2

PRESENTER: I am aware that some of you may feel that the costs and the time we've invested in preparing overseas assignees for their new contracts are much higher than many companies would wish to bear. However, I would like you to consider also the cost of replacing someone who returns early from a contract; not only the financial costs but, more importantly, the costs to the company's reputation. And I'm sure that if you consider those costs, you will feel that the time and the money we've spent in implementing these new methods and achieving the improved success rate are well justified.

#### D3.3

PRESENTER: Our results for this year are satisfactory ☐ but we feel there's still room for improvement ☐ The question is ☐ are we going to sit back and enjoy the success we've achieved so far ☐ or press on ☐ to even better achievements?

PRESENTER: We've allowed just four months to prepare detailed plans for the new system ☐ We realise it's an ambitious timescale ☐ but we're confident it can be achieved.

#### Key

☐ a short pause

#### D3.3

See the answer key above for the tapescript.

#### D3.4 Model version

PRESENTER: I strongly recommend the second option ☐ which is to hire more permanent staff ☐ This will not only solve the overtime problem ☐ but it will also give us the opportunity ☐ to create a really effective team of specialists ☐ who are able to cope with the increasing work load ☐ and offer our customers a higher quality of service.

#### D3.4

See the key D3.4 above for the full tapescript.



## UNIT 6

# Handling questions

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| A Preparation               | Understanding questions                 |
| B What to say               | Clarifying questions                    |
| C How to use tactics        | Handling difficult or hostile questions |
| D How to handle information | Offering help to clarify information    |
| E Activities                |   |



### A Preparation

Most presentations include time for questions and answers. Sometimes presenters ask for questions during the presentation, but more frequently there is a question time at the end of the presentation.

A large American company, Marcon Chemicals, has made the decision to sub-contract its European administrative computing to an outside supplier of computing services.

The Head of the Human Resources Department is presenting the manpower implications to senior managers from the different subsidiaries.

- I. The questions below were asked during the presentations. Which ones were asked?
- a. because something was not clear?
  - b. to raise doubts about a point?
  - c. to get more information?

- 1 How many data centres did you say will have to close?
- 2 I agree that sub-contracting is the best solution, but can you explain why people weren't informed about the decision straight away?
- 3 Isn't there a major security risk involved in sub-contracting to an outside supplier?
- 4 I can see big advantages in a single data centre, but is 1993 realistic?
- 5 You said some staff will be transferred to our manufacturing data centres. Does that mean a big expansion in their activity?
- 6 Isn't it the case that the decision to close down the data centres was taken months ago?
- 7 Could you give us some more information about how you propose to deal with retraining?
- 8 I have a question about the data centres. What will happen to them after they close down?
- 9 I'm not really clear about the timescale for the project. Could you explain it again?

Check your answers in the key **A1**

2. Now listen to tape. A2. You will hear all the questions from the last exercise.
- Say which questions are:
- Hostile in tone
  - Neutral

Check your answers in the key **A2**

## B What to say – Clarifying questions

### B1 Focus

- Listen to tape B1. You will hear extracts from the questioning phase of three different presentations. Notice how the presenters make sure they understand the questions before they give their answers.
- Listen to the questions and answers. As you listen, complete the missing words in each extract. Then read the notes on the right.

#### Extract 1

##### Question

Yes, I wonder if you could say a little more about the trend for Aqua-Sparkle? Is it seasonal, or is there another explanation for the fall-off in sales in the early part of the year?

##### Answer

Well, it is seasonal to a certain extent.

..... at the January/February figures?

Notes

Asks for more information

Asks for clarification before replying

Handling questions

### Extract 2

#### Question

Excuse me, but when you mentioned the growth in profits, did you mean to say that the company is going to have more money to invest in plant and equipment next year?

Refers back to a point in the presentation  
Then asks for clarification

#### Answer

....., do we plan to plough back profits into investments for production next year?

Rephrases question to make sure he understands  
Then asks for clarification

### Extract 3

#### Question

Could I have another look at the slide which shows when we'll break even?

Asks to see the slide again

#### Answer

..... didn't ..... Apologises

Which slide .....?

Then asks the questioner to repeat his request

Check your answers in the key **B3**

### B2 Summary

#### Clarifying questions

- Before you answer any question, make sure you really understand it. Here are some useful tactics you can use.

#### Rephrasing the original question

So, do we plan to plough back profits ...?

So, what you're asking is ...

If I understand the question correctly, you would like to know ...

#### Asking further questions to clarify the question

Are you looking at the January/February figures?

When you say ... do you mean ...?

#### Asking for repetition

I'm sorry, I didn't hear. Which slide was it?

Sorry, could you repeat that?

## B3 Tasks

## 1. Listen to tape B3.1.

You will hear questions and answers from the questioning phase of three different presentations. Which tactic does the presenter use to make sure he or she really understands the question?

Match each of the presenter's answers with one of the tactics.

Follow the example.

Question	Presenter's tactic
a. ....	i. asking for repetition
b. ....	ii. rephrasing
c. ....	iii. asking for clarification

Check your answers in the key

## 2. Listen to tape B3.2. You will hear four questions.

Answer each question following the instructions below. Make your response after each of the questions. You will then hear a model version.

Question	Instruction
a. ....	Ask for a clarification – which product line?
b. ....	Ask for a repetition – what product number?
c. ....	Rephrase the question – explanation for our confidence in fertilizers as a major growth area in the coming year.
d. ....	Rephrase the question – why so optimistic about the figures for the second quarter?

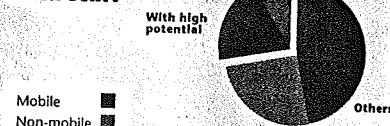
## C How to use tactics – Handling difficult or hostile questions

Sometimes you may have to handle difficult or hostile questions from the audience. These can be handled using a variety of tactics e.g. by delaying answering the question or evading the question altogether.

The chart below is from the presentation about the manpower implications of sub-contracting administrative computing at Marcon Chemicals. It shows the status of the 60 people who will be affected by the decision to close the data centres.

Look at the chart and think of four questions you would like to ask the presenter.

**Classification of administrative data staff**



There is no key to this activity.

## C1 Focus

## 1. Listen to tape C1.

You will hear four extracts from the questioning phase of the presentation about the manpower implications of closing the administrative data centres at Marcon Chemicals.

In each extract the presenter handles a difficult question.

Complete the missing words in each of the presenter's answers.

## Extract 1

## Question

Excuse me, I would like to know how you have classified people as 'others' and 'high priority'. I mean, they all work for the same company, and many of them do very similar types of work. I'm not at all happy about it.

## Answer

Yes, ..... we have to make decisions, and we do have to make judgements. And, there's another point, by reducing the number of data centres we're concentrating our strength and reducing costs.

..... the ..... of that.

Notice how the presenter shows he understands how the questioner feels, and then puts forward an alternative way of looking at the decision.

## Extract 2

## Question

How can you be sure of keeping someone who you've identified as high priority and also mobile? Aren't those the kind of people who could easily find work with one of our competitors?

## Answer

Yes, ..... a lot. .... the company, ..... has an excellent record of keeping staff. If ..... look around, ..... see ..... how many people have been with the company for more than five years.

Notice how the presenter acknowledges there is a problem, but then puts forward a very different way of looking at it.

## Extract 3

## Question

I've heard that Headquarters are also thinking of closing down the data centre at our plant in Trieste as well. Is that true?

## Answer

....., it's not for ..... You should ask John Roberts at the meeting on Friday.

Notice how the presenter evades this question by implying that he doesn't have enough responsibility to answer.

## Extract 4

## Question

Are the changes going to affect the staffing of the data centres at our plants?

## Answer

I ... about manufacturing data centres at this stage. Could we ... later?

Notice how the presenter evades this question by delaying his answer until later.

Check your answers in the key

## C2 Summary

## Evading difficult or hostile questions

- One way of evading difficult or hostile questions is to show you understand the questioner's position, and then to introduce an alternative way of looking at the situation.

## Show you understand

Yes, I quite see your point ...

Yes, it's something we've thought about a lot.

That's an accurate observation ...

I know it's difficult to accept the decision,

## Introduce an alternative point of view

However, I know you'll appreciate ...

But the company ...

On the other hand, if we consider ...

but the evidence is there ...

- Two other useful tactics are:
  - not to accept responsibility for answering
  - to delay your answer

## Evade by not accepting responsibility

I'm afraid I'm not the right person to answer that.

Jo Stockton is a much better person to answer that.

## Evade by delaying

Could we leave that till later?

That is scheduled for discussion at the next meeting.

I'm not sure this is the right place/time to discuss this particular question.

## C3 Tasks

1. Read the following evading replies and categorise them under the headings below. Follow the example.

Introducing an alternative topic/position	Not accepting responsibility	Delaying
	a	

- a. I'm afraid that's not my field, really. Perhaps Dr Fielding would be able to help.  
 b. We're hoping to talk about that at the meeting next week.  
 c. Actually, I don't have these figures on me. Could I speak to you later?  
 d. Yes, I think it is important, but perhaps even more important is the inflation rate.

Check your answers in the key

## 2. Listen to tape C3.2.

You will hear six questions. Give evading replies following the instructions below. Make your response after each question. You will then hear a model version.

## Example

Question Could you show us the breakdown of your advertising budget?

Your response

Model version **Actually, I don't have those figures with me, but I can get them to you by the end of the week.**

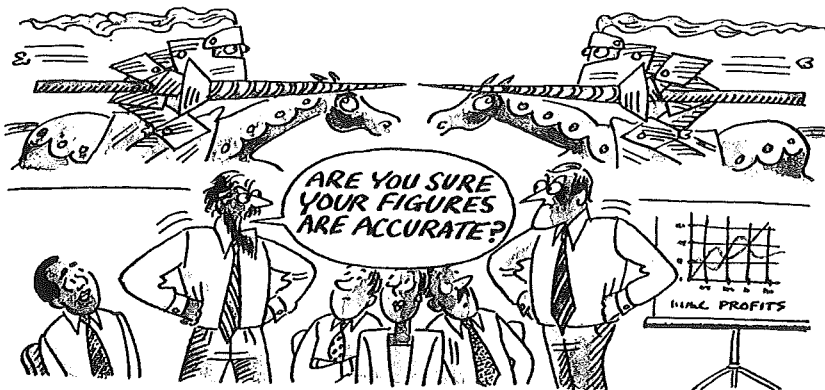
## Questions

## Instructions

- a. You don't have the figures and promise to get them to her by the end of the week.  
 b. Agree that it's a long time to wait. Then give an alternative point of view – will give us longer to really study the market.  
 c. You're not in a position to answer and he should ask the Personnel Department.  
 d. You don't want to say anything at this stage. Say that it will be discussed at the next meeting in Chicago.  
 e. You prefer to leave the point for now – you will deal with it later in the presentation.  
 f. Acknowledge four per cent is not a big increase, introduce another point of view – bonus payments are still at a high level.

## D How to handle information – Offering help to clarify information

When handling the questioning phase of a presentation, it may be necessary to clarify points from the presentation. At this stage it is often helpful to show slides and transparencies again.



### D1 Focus

Listen to tape D1.

You will hear another extract from the questioning phase of the presentation about the decision to close all the administrative data centres at Marcon Chemicals.

In this extract the questioner asks for clarification of a point. Notice how the presenter deals with the request.

Complete the missing words in the extract. Then read the notes on the right.

#### Extract Question

I'm afraid that I'm not at all clear what's going to happen to the two different categories you mentioned, the 'high priorities', and 'others'.

Could I see that slide again?

#### Answer

..... This is the chart  
we looked at earlier, but .....  
be ..... if ..... our  
current plans ..... you two more charts.

#### Notes

..... the doesn't  
..... end

..... asks for help

..... and brings  
back the slide, then  
offers additional help

Check your answers in the key

### D2 Summary

#### Offering help to clarify information

- When responding to requests from an audience you may need to:

##### Agree to a request

Q: Could we see that slide again?

A: Yes, of course/Certainly. This is the diagram we looked at earlier ...

##### Offer further help

This is the chart we looked at earlier, but perhaps it will be clearer if I show you two more charts.

Would you like to see another slide?

It might help if I spoke a little more about ...

I have another transparency which gives more details about ...

### D3 Tasks

- The visual below is one of the transparencies from the presentation about closing the administrative data centres. It shows the actions which are planned for the employees who have been identified as high priorities.

Study the information on the visual.

If you were an employee at Marcon what questions would you want to ask?

#### HIGH PRIORITIES

##### NEW CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Inside or outside local area

##### Actions

Identify vacant positions

Identify positions which will soon be vacant

Stop recruitment

Identify and plan necessary training

There is no key to this task.

2. Listen to tape D3.2. You will now hear three questions from the audience, requesting help. You are the presenter. Reply to each request for help following the instructions below. Give your reply after each request. You will then hear a model version.

Question	Instruction
a.	Agree – offer a document which you've prepared on the subject.
b.	Agree – explain you are having a meeting to discuss training implications. Invite the questioner to the meeting.
c.	Agree – offer to show a slide again. It shows how you've classified the 60 staff affected by the close-down of the data centres.

### E Activities

1. Choose a visual you have used during a presentation. Then prepare questions and answers following the frameworks below.

#### Frameworks

A	B
Introduce a topic for a question. Ask for more detail.	Answer. Add more information and your comments.
Introduce a topic for a question. Ask for more detail.	Evade the question. Not in position to answer. Suggest where information is available.
Introduce a topic for a question. Request clarification.	Agree to explain but offer to show other slides.
Introduce a topic for a question. Ask a question which raises a doubt.	Evade the question. Focus on another point of view.

### 2. The questioning activity

#### Stage 1: Preparation

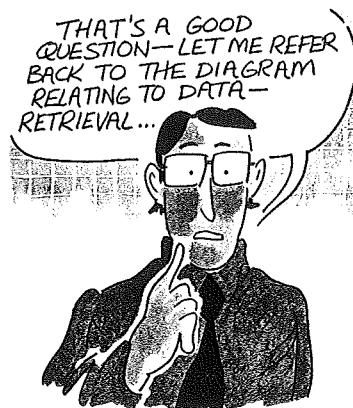
- A You are attending an informal meeting, and you have been asked unexpectedly to give a brief presentation. Your task is to prepare a quick presentation of one of the following:
- an unpopular decision
  - the implications of a decision for your department or company
- B You are the other participants at this meeting. Your task is to think about the kind of questions you might want to ask in this type of situation. Check through the summaries in this unit.

#### Stage 2: The presentation

- A Give your presentation.
- B Listen to the presentation and take some notes about points you want to raise, other information you need, or points you need to clarify.

#### Stage 3: The questioning phase

- A Invite questions from the audience. Be prepared to answer the questions, but evade any which you don't feel able, or willing to answer.
- B Ask your questions. Remember to introduce the topic of the question before you actually ask it.



## UNIT 6

giving presentations  
Answer key

## A Preparation

## A1

- a. 1, 9  
b. 3, 4, 6  
c. 5, 7, 8, 2

## A2

- How many data centres did you say will have to close?
- I agree that sub-contracting is the best solution, but can you explain why people weren't informed about the decision straight away?
- Isn't there a major security risk involved in sub-contracting to an outside supplier?
- I can see big advantages in a single data centre, but is 1993 realistic?
- You said some staff will be transferred to our manufacturing data centres. Does that mean a big expansion in their activity?
- Isn't it the case that the decision to close down the data centres was taken months ago?
- Could you give us some more information about how you propose to deal with retraining?
- I have a question about the data centres. What will happen to them after they close down?
- I'm not really clear about the timescale we'll be working to. Could you explain it again?

## A2

- a. 3, 4, 6  
b. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9

## B What to say

## B1

## Extract 1

QUESTIONER: Yes, I wonder if you could say a little more about the trend for Aqua-Sparkle. Is it seasonal, or is there another explanation for the fall-off in sales in the early part of the year?

PRESENTER: Well, it is seasonal to a certain extent. **Are you looking at the January/February figures?**

## Extract 2

QUESTIONER: Excuse me, but when you mentioned the growth in profits, did you mean to say that the company is going to have more money to invest in plant and equipment next year?

PRESENTER: **So, do we plan to plough back profits into investments for production next year? For which product lines?**

## Extract 3

QUESTIONER: Could I have another look at the slide which shows when we'll break even?

PRESENTER: **I'm sorry. I didn't hear.** Which slide was it?

## B1

See tapescript B1 above. The missing words are in bold.

## B3.1

- a. ii b. i c. iii

## B3.1

a. QUESTIONER: We were rather concerned about the apparent intention to reduce numbers of staff in Brussels and Paris. Could you confirm the numbers in each place and what your intention is concerning their future?

PRESENTER: So, you'd like some information about the manpower implications for both sites.

b. QUESTIONER: Yes, my name is Dr Okamoto and I would like to refer to your last slide. The reason is my colleagues in Sendai are working on a similar project and I would be interested in some detailed answers to some specific points.

PRESENTER: Excuse me Dr Okamoto, but where is it you're from?

c. QUESTIONER: Many of my colleagues are concerned about the plans to license the product. Can you tell us something more about that?

PRESENTER: Excuse me, but which product are you referring to?

## B3.2

a. Questioner You talked about the sales figures for the first two quarters of the year and you mentioned that the trend was surprising. Could you comment on that further?

Your response

Model version **Sorry, but sales for which product line?**

b. Questioner Yes, My name is Dr Maurice Brotherton. I have a question about field trials for Karate 3000E.

Your response

Model version **Excuse me. What was the product number?**

c. Questioner As I understand it, your forecasts for agricultural products are quite optimistic. You mentioned fertilizers as being a real growth area. What do you think are the underlying reasons for this? Have we broken into new market areas?

Your response

Model version **So you'd like an explanation for our confidence in fertilizers as a major growth area in the coming years?**

d. Questioner I'm not clear about how you want us to interpret the trend. You say that the first quarter saw a sharp fall, but when you spoke about the second quarter, which to my mind was equally disappointing, you seemed optimistic. Could you say something about that?

Your response

Model version **So, why am I so optimistic about the figures for the second quarter?**

## C How to use tactics

## C1

## Extract 1

QUESTIONER: Excuse me, I would like to know how you have classified people as 'others' and 'high priority'. I mean, they all work for the same company, and many of them do very similar types of work. I'm not at all happy about it.

PRESENTER: Yes, I quite see your point.

**However, I know you'll understand** we have to make decisions, and we do have to make judgements. And there's another point, by reducing the number of data centres we're concentrating our strength, and reducing costs. **I'm sure you can see the value of that.**

## Extract 2

QUESTIONER: How can you be sure of keeping someone who you've identified as high priority and also mobile? Aren't those the kind of people who could easily find work with one of our competitors?

PRESENTER: Yes, **we've thought about that** a lot.

**But** the company, **as you know**, has an excellent record of keeping staff. If **you** look around, **you'll** see just how many people have been with the company for more than five years.

## Extract 3

QUESTIONER: I've heard that Headquarters are also thinking of closing down the data centre at our plant in Trieste as well. Is that true?

PRESENTER: **Actually**, it's not for **me to comment on that**. You should ask John Roberts at the meeting on Friday.

## Extract 4

QUESTIONER: Are the changes going to affect the staffing of the data centres at our plants?

PRESENTER: I **don't think we should talk about** the manufacturing data centres at this stage. Could we **leave it until later?**

## C1

See tapescript C1 above. The missing words are in bold.

## C3.1

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introducing an alternative topic/position | d   |
| Not accepting responsibility              | a   |
| Delaying                                  | b c |

# ANSWER KEY

## giving presentations

## Unit 6 (end)

### C3.2

a. Question Could you show us the breakdown of your advertising budget?

Your response .....  
Model version **Actually, I don't have the figures with me, but I can get them to you by the end of the week.**

b. Question You said we won't be in a position to sign the contract till September. Doesn't that mean we'll lose out in the market?

Your response .....  
Model version **I agree it is a long time to wait. On the other hand, it will give us longer to really study the market.**

c. Question You said that the office is overstaffed. Does this mean we'll have to stop all recruitment for next year?

Your response .....  
Model version **I'm afraid I'm not in a position to answer that question. You should ask the Personnel Department.**

d. Question If control of marketing passes to Brussels, will that mean major restructuring of country sales teams?

Your response .....  
Model version **Actually, I don't want to say anything about that at this stage. We'll be discussing it at the next meeting in Chicago.**

e. Question You mentioned some problems with our packaging suppliers. Could you tell us something more about that?

Your response .....  
Model version **I'd prefer to leave that point for now, as I'll be dealing with it specifically later in the presentation.**

f. Question I'd like to ask a question about why pay agreements for this year are still in the region of four per cent. Could you comment on that?

Your response .....  
Model version **Yes, I agree four per cent isn't a very big increase. On**

**the other hand, our bonus payments are still at a very high level.**

### D How to handle information

#### D1

QUESTIONER: I'm afraid that I'm not at all clear what's going to happen to the two different categories you mentioned, the 'high priorities' and 'others'. Could I see that slide again?

PRESENTER: **Yes, of course.** This is the chart we looked at earlier, but **perhaps it will be clearer** if I summarise our current plans by showing you two more charts.

#### D1

See tapescript D1 above. The missing words are in bold.

#### D3.2

a. Question: Excuse me, but in the slide you just showed us there is mention of new career development. Could you explain more about that?

Your response .....  
Model version **Yes, of course. But it might be more useful for you to have a look at a document which I have prepared on the subject.**

b. Question Retraining is one of the options you mentioned on the last slide. Is there something more you can tell us about that?

Your response .....  
Model version **Certainly, but we're having a meeting to look at training implications tomorrow morning, would you like to come?**

c. Question I'm still not clear how many people you're talking about as 'High Priorities'. Could you explain that again.

Your response .....  
Model version **Yes, of course, but perhaps it would help if we had another look at this slide, which shows how we've classified all 60 data staff.**