

*Stella:* Hi Nathan. Shall we compare ideas for our assignment on market research?

*Nathan :* Good idea. So first in the assignment, I think we should explain what 'market research' is. One definition I found was this - <sup>(1)</sup> information about consumers' needs and preferences.

*Stella:* I like that, nice and clear. So then, we need to establish the benefits of market research. Why do it? I read that many business people think it's about finding the next market they can exploit. But it's more complex than that.

*Nathan:* I agree. To me, it's about <sup>(2)</sup>. Markets can change unexpectedly. But if you've done research, you can <sup>(3)</sup> the chance that something will go wrong in your own business.

*Stella:* That's a really significant point. You may also learn the most effective means of promoting your business.

*Nathan:* But that <sup>(4)</sup> on the business. It's not a general advantage.

*Stella:* No, you're right. But I do think, the sums you invest in market research, you'll see a <sup>(5)</sup> eventually.

*Nathan :* That's it exactly. Great point. The trouble is, too many of those working in business take a short-term view.

*Stella:* OK, so there are benefits. But there are <sup>(6)</sup> of market research, as well. We should acknowledge that in the assignment.

*Nathan :* But some criticisms are more valid than others.

*Stella:* Like?

*Nathan :* Well, apparently some managers say they're just too busy. But that's a poor excuse.

*Stella:* Maybe they think they already know everything they need to know?

*Nathan :* Maybe they do, but that's an <sup>(7)</sup> not with market research.

*Stella:* OK, fair enough. But I read an interesting study out of the USA showing that the results of a lot of market research are just unreliable. The <sup>(8)</sup> developments identified by the research <sup>(9)</sup>.

*Nathan :* Yes, that's a good point. Then, another question is, can businesses actually see if market research is working? I mean, is it possible for a business to say <sup>(10)</sup> that increased profits resulted from market research?

*Stella:* But that's a criticism of how businesses are structured, <sup>(11)</sup> research itself.

*Nathan:* Yeah OK. Though you've got to admit, market researchers love <sup>(12)</sup>. These are examples from one report I read - 'psychographics', 'coolhunting' and 'asynchronous research'. Some people are bound to be put off by these terms.

*Stella:* Yes, that's a <sup>(13)</sup> complaint.

*Nathan :* So, what about sources of information for market research? Which sources of information work best? I mean, we all know that putting cameras in stores tells us a lot about consumer behaviour.

*Stella:* Yes, that's well documented. But I read that managers can learn a lot about social trends just by doing really obvious things, like keeping up with the news on TV, radio and digital networking sites. I <sup>(14)</sup> thought it could be that simple.

*Nathan:* No, me neither. Then there's a lot of data put out by bodies like the <sup>(15)</sup> and the civil service. That can be helpful.

*Stella:* Maybe, but it depends on the business. What I hadn't <sup>(16)</sup>, though, was the evidence showing that talking to consumers directly about their preferences really works.

*Nathan:* Yeah, I was a bit <sup>(17)</sup> when I read that. But apparently, it's more effective than internet questionnaires and polls.

*Stella:* I think people are less likely to be honest in questionnaires.

*Now listen and answer questions 27 to 30.*

*Nathan:* All right. So, if a business wants to use its own resources for market research, what's the process?

*Stella:* Good question. Let's think about a company that isn't using outside consultants, but doing it <sup>(18)</sup>. Then I think the first step is staff education. You've got to get all employees committed, to maximise the chances of success.

*Nathan:* Agreed. Then, you need to show staff examples of what they can do every day.

*Stella:* You mean in their interactions with customers?

*Nathan:* Yes. What, precisely, should they ask customers in order to get valuable information? Show staff the sorts of things they can ask on a <sup>(19)</sup>.

*Stella:* OK. And next, I was reading an article by the BQR Group. Apparently, staff need to keep an <sup>(20)</sup> what the customers are saying.

*Nathan:* You mean on computer, or by hand?

*Stella:* The format doesn't matter. But, say, every Friday, they should add to the document. So they build up a picture of customer opinions, and the insights aren't lost.

*Nathan:* Good point. Right, next, I read about ways of motivating staff. Business Guide magazine had a report on the importance of maintaining motivation.

*Stella:* So, what, by looking ahead and deciding what to do next?

*Nathan:* Well, in fact, Business Guide's approach is to get your staff <sup>(21)</sup> round a table as frequently as possible to discuss their findings.

*Stella:* That sounds like a good approach. Next, you need to provide detailed feedback about any changes you decide. So everyone can see the outcomes of the research.

*Nathan:* Nice idea. Then you have to ensure continued participation by the staff. You want market research to be ongoing, not just a one-off.

*Stella:* Oh, this is the idea of <sup>(22)</sup>, so that each staff member is accountable for market research in one area of the business.

*Nathan:* Yeah, exactly. And then another aspect of this is...