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 – [1)] 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 [2)]. Markets can change unexpectedly. But if you've done research, you can [3)] 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 [4)] 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 [5)] 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 [6)] 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 [7)], 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 [8)] developments identified by the research [9)].

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 [10)] that increased profits resulted from market research?

Stella: But that's a criticism of how businesses are structured, [11)] research itself.

Nathan: Yeah OK. Though you've got to admit, market researchers love [12)]. 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 [13)] 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.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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 [14] thought it could be that simple.

Nathan : No, me neither. Then there's a lot of data put out by bodies like the [15] and the civil service. That can be helpful.

Stella: Maybe, but it depends on the business. What I hadn't [16], though, was the evidence showing that talking to consumers directly about their preferences really works.

Nathan : Yeah, I was a bit [17] 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 [18]. 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 [19].

Stella: OK. And next, I was reading an article by the BQR Group. Apparently, staff need to keep an [20] 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 [21] 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 [22], 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…

LIVEWORKSHEETS