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CIPS L4M1 - Question & Answer Past exam questions

Q1. Outline FIVE differences between purchasing goods and purchasing services. - correct answer 1. Goods are tangible, services are intangible:

2. Services cannot be separated from their supplier:

3. Heterogeneity: goods are usually uniform in nature while services are unique at each delivery

4. Services 'perish' immediately on delivery whereas goods can be stored until required

5. Products are easier to specify, being tangible

Q2. Explain THREE circumstances in which a competitive tendering exercise might not be the best approach to making a purchase. - correct answer 1. Urgency

2. Commercial confidentiality or national security (e.g. military organisations):

3. Value of the purchase:

4. Production costs cannot be measured accurately:

5. Price is not the only criterion for supplier selection and contract award

6. Intellectual Property Rights and monopoly

Q2. Describe TWO e-sourcing tools and their use in procurement and supply. - correct answer 1. E-Catalogues

2. E-Tendering

3. E. Auction

4. Reverse Auctions

5. Online supplier evaluation data

Q3. Explain the role of a shared services unit (SSU). - correct answer SSUs reflect a desire to centralise and share services

The shared service provider becomes a dedicated provider of services such as: finance, HR, IT and procurement which continue to be provided internally

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CIPS L5M1 Exam Syllabus Topics:

Topic	Details
Topic 1	Understand, Analyse, and Apply Management and Organisational Approaches: This section of the exam measures skills of Operations Managers and covers the understanding and evaluation of organisational behaviour and management approaches. It assesses knowledge of individual and team behaviour, organisational structures, and the psychological contract, as well as factors like STEEPLD influences. Candidates are tested on traditional and contemporary management approaches, including administrative, scientific, and human relations methods, as well as postmodernism, socio-technical systems, and distributed leadership. The role of individuals, teams, and organisational culture in shaping behaviour is also evaluated.

Topic 2	• Understand and Apply Approaches to Managing Individuals: This section of the exam measures skills of HR Managers and focuses on managing individual behaviour effectively. It examines how differences in behavioural characteristics affect management style and approach, highlighting diversity, emotional intelligence, and assessment techniques for development. The section also covers the creation and management of knowledge, formal and informal learning processes, cognitive and behavioural learning theories, motivation theories including intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and factors influencing job satisfaction such as job design, collaboration, and flexible working arrangements.
Topic 3	• Assess the Application of Management Concepts and Principles in a Procurement and Supply Function: This section of the exam measures skills of Procurement Managers and focuses on applying management principles within procurement and supply operations. Candidates are tested on aligning team knowledge, skills, and behaviours with organisational strategy, defining the scope of operations, and developing teams. The syllabus also includes managing stakeholder relationships, building trust, promoting collaboration, fostering a culture of learning, sharing procurement knowledge, professional development, and the importance of personal behaviours such as unbiased decision-making, communication, creativity, and reflective practice to enhance procurement and supply effectiveness.
Topic 4	• Understand and Apply Approaches to Planning and Managing Work Groups or Teams: This section of the exam measures skills of Team Leaders and covers the dynamics and effectiveness of work groups or teams. Candidates are tested on understanding group vision, values, norms, and alignment, as well as formal and informal group structures. The syllabus includes strategies for developing effective teams, team roles, self-managed teams, virtual team management, diversity benefits, and conflict management. It also assesses knowledge of team development, learning integration, role congruence, and approaches for merging, disbanding, or changing teams.

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CIPS Managing Teams and Individuals Sample Questions (Q10-Q15):

NEW QUESTION # 10

Discuss 3 main sources of conflict that may arise within a group (15 points). What positive and negative outcomes may arise from conflict? (10 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Part A - Sources of Conflict (15 points):

Conflict is natural in groups and arises when individuals or teams have incompatible goals, interests, or behaviours. Three common sources are:

Task-based conflict - This occurs when members disagree about the content of the work, objectives, or methods. For example, in a procurement team, conflict may arise over whether to prioritise cost savings or sustainability in supplier selection.

Relationship conflict - This stems from personality clashes, communication breakdowns, or differences in working styles. For instance, an extroverted negotiator may clash with an introverted analyst who prefers data-driven approaches.

Resource conflict - Groups often compete for limited resources such as time, budget, or staff. In procurement, this could occur if multiple project teams require the same supplier's resources or internal budgets.

Part B - Outcomes of Conflict (10 points):

Positive outcomes:

Can lead to creativity and innovation as different perspectives are debated.

Encourages problem-solving and improvement of processes.

Strengthens understanding when conflicts are resolved constructively.

Negative outcomes:

May reduce morale and trust if personal attacks or unresolved tension occur.

Can delay projects, damage productivity, and harm relationships with stakeholders or suppliers.

Creates stress and alienation, leading to higher turnover if prolonged.

In procurement, positive conflict may lead to innovative supplier solutions, while negative conflict may damage supplier negotiations or internal collaboration.

Conclusion:

The three main sources of conflict are task, relationship, and resource issues. Conflict is not always harmful - it can drive improvement and creativity if managed well, but if left unresolved, it can damage morale, performance, and stakeholder relationships. Managers must therefore encourage constructive conflict while minimising destructive forms.

NEW QUESTION # 11

Describe FIVE types of power that a stakeholder may have and compare how they may interact with the procurement department (25 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Stakeholders can exert influence over procurement decisions in different ways. French and Raven identified five types of power that stakeholders may hold. Each has different implications for how procurement interacts with them.

1. Legitimate Power:

This comes from a stakeholder's formal position or authority. For example, a Finance Director may require procurement to comply with budgetary controls. Procurement must respect legitimate authority but can also influence decisions by providing evidence and business cases.

2. Reward Power:

This is based on the ability to provide benefits or incentives. For example, senior management may reward the procurement team with recognition or bonuses for achieving savings. Procurement can use this positively by demonstrating performance and aligning with organisational goals.

3. Coercive Power:

This is the power to punish or impose sanctions. For instance, a project manager may pressure procurement to prioritise their project by threatening escalation if deadlines are missed. Procurement must manage this carefully, balancing demands with fairness and compliance.

4. Expert Power:

This arises from specialist knowledge or skills. For example, a procurement professional with strong knowledge of supplier markets holds expert power, which can influence strategic decisions. Conversely, technical departments may hold expert power in specifying product requirements, requiring procurement to collaborate closely.

5. Referent Power:

This is based on personal relationships, respect, or charisma

a. For example, a well-liked senior stakeholder may influence procurement decisions even without formal authority. Procurement must manage these situations by maintaining objectivity while leveraging strong relationships to gain support.

Comparison of Interaction with Procurement:

Legitimate power often requires compliance, while procurement may respond with process adherence and evidence-based justification.

Reward power creates motivation for procurement, but risks short-term focus if overused.

Coercive power can create conflict and stress; procurement must use negotiation and diplomacy to manage.

Expert power can be collaborative, as procurement and stakeholders share knowledge to improve outcomes.

Referent power relies on trust and relationships, which procurement can use to build coalitions and support for initiatives.

Conclusion:

The five types of power - legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and referent - shape how stakeholders interact with procurement.

Understanding these power bases enables procurement professionals to adapt their approach, whether through compliance, persuasion, collaboration, or relationship-building. This ensures stakeholder management supports both procurement objectives and organisational goals.

NEW QUESTION # 12

What is meant by the 'systems approach' and 'contingency approach' to management? (20 points)

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Theories of management provide different ways of understanding how organisations can be led effectively. Two important perspectives are the systems approach and the contingency approach. Both move beyond early "one best way" classical theories and instead highlight the complexity and adaptability required in modern organisations.

The systems approach views the organisation as an integrated whole made up of interdependent subsystems such as HR, finance, operations and procurement. It is based on systems theory, seeing organisations as "open systems" that interact with their external environment. Inputs such as people, information and resources are transformed into outputs such as products, services and stakeholder value. Feedback loops are essential to monitor performance and make adjustments. The key idea is synergy - the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. For example, in procurement, sourcing decisions influence not only supplier performance but also finance (budgets), operations (continuity), and CSR (sustainability). A systems approach ensures that procurement strategies are aligned to wider organisational goals and continuous improvement.

The contingency approach develops this idea further, arguing that there is no universal way to manage. Instead, the best approach depends on situational factors such as environment, size, technology, or workforce capability. It rejects "one-size-fits-all" rules and stresses that management must adapt. For example, in a stable market, a hierarchical structure with formal rules may work well, whereas in volatile markets, flexible and decentralised decision-making is more effective. In procurement, this could mean using strict process controls for routine, low-value items, but adopting agile, collaborative approaches when managing strategic supplier partnerships in uncertain global supply chains.

In comparison, the systems approach gives managers a holistic view of how different parts of the organisation connect and interact with the external environment, while the contingency approach emphasises adaptability and situational leadership. Together, they suggest that effective managers need both a broad systems perspective and the ability to tailor their approach depending on context. In conclusion, the systems approach stresses coordination, integration and feedback across the organisation, while the contingency approach stresses flexibility and the idea that "it depends." Both are highly relevant to procurement and supply leaders who must integrate across functions and adapt strategies to dynamic and uncertain supply environments.

NEW QUESTION # 13

Describe what is meant by a group 'norm', giving examples. (10 points). In what way can group norms affect performance? (15 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Definition of Group Norms (10 marks):

A group 'norm' refers to the shared standards of behaviour, values, and expectations that develop within a group. Norms guide how members act and interact, creating predictability and cohesion. They can be formal (set by rules and policies) or informal (emerging naturally over time).

Examples include:

A procurement team having a norm of punctuality for meetings.

A social norm where colleagues share supplier insights openly.

A negative norm, such as tolerating late submission of purchase orders, which may undermine performance.

Norms act as unwritten rules that shape group behaviour and influence the culture of the organisation.

Impact of Group Norms on Performance (15 marks):

Positive norms can enhance performance. For example, a norm of collaboration and knowledge sharing improves innovation and decision-making in procurement projects.

Negative norms can reduce performance. If the team develops a culture of cutting corners in supplier evaluation, this may damage compliance and reputation.

Norms create consistency and cohesion. Members know what is expected of them, reducing conflict and ensuring smoother teamwork.

Peer pressure reinforces norms. High-performing norms, such as meeting deadlines, encourage all members to contribute fully, while low-performing norms, like tolerating absenteeism, can lower standards across the team.

Norms influence motivation and morale. Supportive norms (e.g., recognising achievements) motivate employees, whereas destructive norms (e.g., ignoring contributions) lead to alienation and disengagement.

In procurement specifically, if the norm is strong ethical conduct, the team will collectively avoid corruption risks. If the norm is to focus only on cost savings, the team may neglect sustainability or supplier relationships.

Conclusion:

Group norms are the unwritten rules that shape behaviour within teams. They can have a powerful effect on performance, either enhancing collaboration and accountability or reducing standards and morale. Managers must actively shape positive norms through leadership, communication, and role-modelling to ensure that group behaviour supports organisational goals.

NEW QUESTION # 14

What is needed for a group to be effective? (15 points). Is it important that each person plays a different role within the group? (10 points).

Answer:

Explanation:

See the Explanation for Detailed Answer

Explanation:

Part A - What is needed for a group to be effective (15 points):

For a group to be effective, several conditions must be in place.

Firstly, the group must have clear objectives and purpose. Without shared goals, members may pull in different directions, leading to inefficiency.

Secondly, strong leadership is needed to guide the group, set direction, and balance concern for people with concern for tasks. Leadership provides motivation and resolves conflicts.

Thirdly, good communication ensures information is shared openly, problems are raised quickly, and collaboration is smooth. In procurement, this means buyers, finance, and operations align on sourcing decisions.

Fourthly, groups need defined roles and responsibilities. Clarity prevents duplication of work and ensures accountability. For example, one person may manage supplier contracts while another handles negotiations.

Finally, trust and cooperation are essential. When group members respect and support each other, they are more willing to share knowledge, take risks, and commit to decisions. Psychological safety is key to team performance.

Part B - Importance of different roles in a group (10 points):

It is important that each person plays a different role within the group. According to Belbin's Team Roles theory, groups are more effective when individuals contribute complementary strengths. Roles may include "Shapers" who drive action, "Plants" who bring creativity, "Implementers" who turn plans into reality, and "Monitor Evaluators" who provide critical analysis.

If everyone in the group plays the same role, important skills may be missing. For example, a procurement team made up entirely of "Shapers" may generate energy but lack careful analysis, leading to poor supplier selection. Conversely, a balanced team ensures creativity, organisation, and delivery are all present.

Conclusion:

For a group to be effective, it needs clear goals, leadership, communication, defined roles, and trust. It is also important that members bring different strengths and roles, as this diversity improves problem-solving and ensures the group performs to its full potential.

NEW QUESTION # 15

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