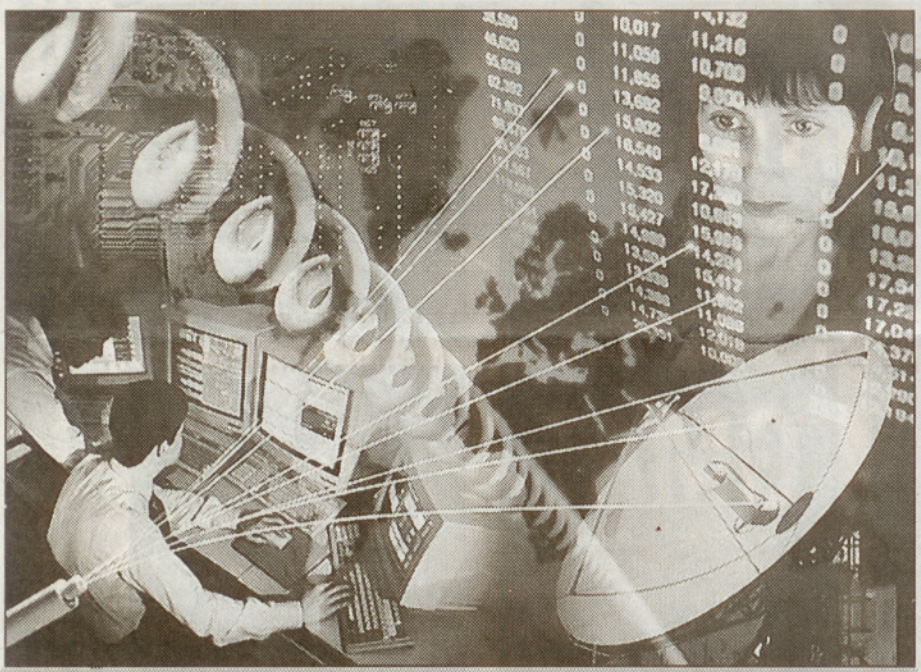

DEVELOPING SKILLS IN DATA INTERPRETATION

The Data interpretation (DI) section is an extension of the quantitative and analytical sections of management entrance tests. It's a favourite section with examiners to experiment new format of questions.

Data is presented numerically or by means of an illustration followed by a series of questions that demand a combination of mathematical and reasoning skills. Hence, a sound knowledge of quantitative techniques is a pre-requisite for success.

Structure

DI can either be a separate section or be a part of the quantitative and reasoning section. Data that forms basis of the questions is presented in a table, pie chart, bar or lines graph. Some questions can be framed in caselet or paragraph form too. The examinee is expected to read each set, cull outrelevant data and arrange it suitably for meaningful interpretation. If data is not presented graphically, it may be better to convert it into graphical form using a rough sketch or data diagram to interpret it easily.

Data is followed by a set of questions. Rules similar to those in Reading Comprehension (RC) apply like read fast and comprehend at the same time. Here, unlike RC, you cannot afford to skip any portion of the passage. Even the smallest data can add a new dimension to the questions that follow.

Mathematical formulae

While preparing for the examinations, aspirants should have gained a good grasp over arithmetic and geometric formulae. An inability to work quickly with numbers would mean a slow pace of problem solving.

Questions

Scan the whole section quickly before attempting the questions. In examinations like the Common Admission Test, data is often presented in more than one table or graph to test the examinee's ability to establish data relationship. There are two ways to approach such questions -either work on the data to arrive at the answer or work backwards by eliminating the alternatives until you get to the correct answer. The second option is time consuming for direct questions but may be useful for question sets where the data involves enormous calculations. Understand and scrupulously follow instructions - a whole set of questions depends on some key instructions that are set out at the beginning. Attempt all the questions in a set together.

Data Sufficiency

Most often the data sections have questions on data sufficiency too. Data sufficiency questions are aimed at testing, understanding and knowledge of arithmetic operations. These questions are slightly different to data interpretation and do not expect a direct answer. Examinees are required to judge whether data presented in the problem set is adequate to answer the question set out in the situation.

Guess Work

DI and sufficiency questions require precise understanding of subject matter and the use of mathematical formulae. It's crucial to understand the instructions to each question set and interpret accompanying data quickly. A correct answer cannot be ascertained until you have read through the question and evaluated the accompanying data carefully. Guess work may or may not work depending on the nature of data and questions. If the question requires a straight calculation, eliminating the options could get you to the right answer quickly but if it requires complex calculations and derivations from the given data, guess work may seldom bears fruit. In the preparation phase, sustained practice can significantly improve pace of working through the questions. The emphasis at this stage should be on improving speed and accuracy to ensure all questions in the section are attempted correctly.

SCORING HIGH IN THIS SECTION WILL AUGMENT YOUR CHANCES OF BEING SHORTLISTED FOR THE TOP B-SCHOOLS, SAYS TARUN WASAN