

Administration Administrative Services Support Notes

[Intermediate 2]

Karen Hope



The Scottish Qualifications Authority regularly reviews the arrangements for National Qualifications. Users of all NQ support materials, whether published by LT Scotland or others, are reminded that it is their responsibility to check that the support materials correspond to the requirements of the current arrangements.

Acknowledgement

Learning and Teaching Scotland gratefully acknowledge this contribution to the National Qualifications support programme for Administration. The help of Beverley Leslie in the preparation of this pack is acknowledged with thanks.

First published 2005

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes by educational establishments in Scotland provided that no profit accrues at any stage.

ISBN 1 84399 067 9

CONTENTS

<u>Outcome 1</u> Describe factors which contribute to the effectiveness of an organization	4
<u>Outcome 2</u> Describe factors affecting the administrative assistant in the work environment	22
<u>Outcome 3</u> Describe the roles of the functional departments within an organisation and activities carried out within these departments	35
<u>Outcome 4</u> Describe the uses of the Internet and office technologies	48
<u>Outcome 5</u> Explain the procedures for arranging and paying for business travel and accommodation	63

OUTCOME 1

Outcome 1

Describe factors which contribute to the effectiveness of an organisation

Duties and qualities required of an administrative assistant at an intermediate level

Introduction

Admin Support Assistant (Intermediate Level)

Permanent, Full Time
£14,358–£14,950

We are looking for an Admin Support Assistant to help in our busy department. This post is primarily to deal with a range of services within the department that require contact with clients and staff, therefore, good communication skills are important.

Additionally, the successful post holder will handle enquiries and other general duties such as arranging travel and assisting in other functional departments. Knowledge of computerised systems is essential, but full training in our internal systems will be given. A working knowledge/understanding of Microsoft Office packages and the Internet would be an advantage.

Education to SVQ Level 2 / Standard Grade is essential and previous data-inputting experience is desirable.

Application forms are available from the Human Resources Section on 0131-123-4567 or e-mail human.resources@co.uk

Administration Assistant

£14K

Ref: 2914/ADMIN ASST

Working as part of the busy administration team, your main duties will include providing customer service, making travel arrangements and processing business documents associated with the sales, purchases and finance department. Other duties will include answering telephone and e-mail enquiries and electronic file management.

Given the computerised nature of this post, the suitable candidate will have up-to-date experience of using Word, Excel, Access and e-mail. The successful candidate should also demonstrate good communication skills, problem-solving abilities, organisational skills and be able to work both unsupervised and as part of a team.

Applicants should be trained to NC level and preferably have relevant work experience.

For further information, contact Gordon Christie, Administration Manager.

This unit prepares the student for an administrative job at an intermediate level, similar to the jobs outlined in the above job adverts.

At this level you will be required to fulfil general administrative duties such as processing business documents, assisting functional departments within the organisation and making travel and accommodation arrangements. In order to competently carry out these tasks you will require good IT skills and good communication skills.

Outcome 1

Are you up for the job?

Job description

More details relating to a specific job are usually found in a job description, provided by the employer. A job description sets out some background to the post, the duties associated with the post, the post holder's responsibilities and who their line manager is. The information contained in the job description will be similar to the job adverts shown above, but will give more details and will usually include a complete list of duties.

Person specification

From the job description, the organisation can prepare a person specification. The roles and responsibilities detailed in the job description will highlight the skills, qualifications, experience and personal qualities required from a suitable candidate which will be placed on the person specification.

Each component of the person specification is usually classed as essential (a 'must-have' skill or quality) or desirable (having this skill or quality would be an advantage, but it is not vital). Thus a profile of the ideal person can be prepared and used to assist in the selection process.

Outcome 1

There follows an example of a person specification for an intermediate administrative assistant:

ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT Person Specification		
	Essential	Desirable
<u>Skills, Knowledge and Abilities</u>	<p>Ability to accurately key in data</p> <p>Ability to create and edit word-processed documents</p> <p>Ability to create and edit spreadsheets</p> <p>Confidence in using e-mail and Internet</p> <p>Ability to process various business documents</p> <p>Ability to make travel arrangements</p>	<p>Ability to create and edit databases</p> <p>Knowledge of prioritising workloads in order to meet deadlines</p> <p>Ability to learn new ICT skills quickly</p>
<u>Qualifications</u>	Administration Intermediate 2, NQV Level 1, NC or equivalent	Standard Grade English and Maths
<u>Experience</u>		Previous administrative experience at an intermediate level
<u>Personal Qualities</u>	<p>Excellent verbal and written communication skills, including good telephone manner</p> <p>Ability to quickly follow verbal and written instructions</p> <p>Willingness to undertake training to improve skills</p>	<p>Good organisational skills</p> <p>Good time-management skills</p>

Outcome 1

Identify current skills and gaps in skills

Introduction

Most people find it difficult to assess their own skills and qualities. However, it is an important task that will highlight any areas you need to gain knowledge or experience in. Staff development is vital to ensure that you are doing your job to the best of your ability. Training and development will also help further your career and may lead to a promotion in your organisation.

Skill scan

A skill scan is a statement describing your skills, knowledge and qualities to date. For example:

Outcome 1

ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

Consider the following skills. For each, use a rating of 1–4 where 1 indicates that you are very good at this skill and 4 indicates that you have no knowledge or experience of this skill.

	Very Good 1	2	3	No Knowledge 4
(a) Ability to prioritise workloads in order to meet deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Verbal and written communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Organisational communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Ability to quickly follow verbal and written instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Awareness of health and safety issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Ability to process business documents associated with the sales, purchases and finance departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Ability to process business documents associated with the human resources department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Ability to deal with customers of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Ability to follow procedures for dealing with petty cash	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Confident at using e-mail and Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(k) Ability to use initiative and work unsupervised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(l) Ability to work as part of a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outcome 1

Having completed a skill scan, you will be able to analyse your own levels of skill and knowledge. Columns 3 and 4 will highlight areas in which you need further training and development.

An alternative approach to a skill scan may be to prepare a SWOT analysis where you identify your areas of strengths and weaknesses with any opportunities and threats you face.

Strengths	What positive characteristics do you have? What are you good at? Do other people compliment you on certain skills or qualities?
Weaknesses	Are there things you do badly? What skills and abilities need improvement?
Opportunities	What are the promising prospects facing you? Are you doing all that you can to ensure success in your studies and secure a job in the future? What more could you be doing?
Threats	How are things likely to change in the future, especially with regard to IT? Will you be able to adapt? Are there any obstacles that could threaten your success on this course?

Skills, knowledge and qualities that require improvement will be highlighted under weaknesses and threats.

Use the grid below to complete your own personal SWOT analysis.

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>

Outcome 1

Effective communication

Introduction

Communication is often ineffective because of barriers (obstacles), e.g. two people unable to speak well in the same language.

Look below at the adventures of Calvin and Hobbes. Calvin is an imaginative 6-year-old who thinks his toy tiger, Hobbes, is real. You are required to consider the following situations and identify what is wrong with the communication. List the barriers to effective communication in each of the three situations. Use the space provided on the next page to record your answers.



Situation 1

Calvin: How do bank machines work?

Calvin's Dad: Well, let's say you want £25. You punch in the amount and behind the machine there's a guy with a printing press who makes the money and sticks it out the slot.

Calvin: Sort of like the guy who lives up in our garage and opens the door?

Calvin's Dad: Exactly!

Situation 2

Calvin: Want to hear a joke?

Hobbes: Sure!

Calvin: OK, this guy goes into a bar. No, wait, he doesn't do that yet. Or maybe it's a newsagent. OK, it doesn't matter; let's say it's a bar. He's somewhere in the vicinity of a bar, right? So anyway, there's this dog and he says something odd, I don't remember, but this other guy says, um, well, I forget, but it was funny.

Hobbes: I'll try to imagine it.

Calvin: Yeah, you'll really laugh.

Outcome 1

Situation 3

Calvin: (Shouting.) Mum! Hey, mum!

Calvin's Mum: Calvin, stop yelling across the house. If you want to talk to me, come to the living room where I am.

Calvin: (Walks through the house to where his mum is.) I stepped in dog doo. Where's the hose?

Barriers to Good Communication

Student Notes:

Outcome 1

Features of good communication

There are various theories regarding good communication, for example the KISS theory of keep it short and simple and Gowers' five Cs of good communication (concise, clear, courteous, correct and complete). Whatever the theory, communication has basic features that determine its quality. The information communicated should be:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Accurate | Unlike Calvin's dad's communication about how an ATM works (situation 1), the information transmitted should be accurate. |
| Complete | Unlike Calvin's joke (situation 2), the information transmitted should be complete. A message that is only partly communicated will be misunderstood. |
| Timely | The timing of a message is important. A message that is communicated at the wrong time (such as Calvin's message in situation 3) is useless. |
| Relevant | Good communication is adapted to meet the needs of the audience. Excessive or irrelevant information is commonly misunderstood, forgotten and ignored. |
| Cost effective | Communication represents a cost to any organisation: the cost of preparing communication and the time taken to transmit and receive information. Care must be taken to ensure that the cost of the communication justifies its value and use. |
| Meaningful | Information should be communicated using the most appropriate method and using suitable language for the recipient. |

Internal communication with colleagues

Internal communication with colleagues will tend to be informal and less structured. The most common methods of communication between colleagues are e-mail, memo and regular meetings.



Outcome 1

External communication with customers

External communication with customers will be formal and structured. In order to create a consistent image, organisations will have a house style – a set format and layout for external communications. The most common form of external communication is a letter. Other methods of communicating with customers will include reports and presentations.

Methods of communication

Methods of communication can be split into two broad categories: oral and written. Oral (or verbal) communication includes meetings, interviews, presentations and using the telephone. Written communication includes letters, memoranda, reports, adverts and job descriptions.

To ensure that the correct information is transmitted and received, it is important to choose the correct method of communication. The strengths and weaknesses of oral and written communication are summarised below.

Strengths of oral communication

- Information can be quickly and directly transmitted.
- Compared with preparing and copying a letter or report, oral communication is cheaper.
- Oral communication provides an opportunity for discussion and interaction.
- There is instant feedback – for example, the person receiving the information can ask questions.
- Oral communication gives the opportunity to use non-verbal cues. This is the term used to describe anything that conveys a message without using words or symbols. Sometimes referred to as body language, non-verbal cues can include facial expressions, gestures and posture.

This advantage only applies to face-to-face communication. Using the telephone does not allow for non-verbal cues.

Outcome 1

- Flexibility – for example, if a person transmitting information realises from the receiver's body language that the message has not been understood then the information can be modified.
- Oral communication is a more appropriate method of communicating personal messages as delicate matters can be handled sensitively face to face.

Weaknesses of oral communication

- Oral communication does not provide a record of what was said. This can cause problems if those involved either forget what was said or disagree on what was said. For this reason, oral communication is often combined with written communication: in the case of meetings, minutes are taken for future reference.
- Distractions and interruptions can interfere with oral communication.
- Strong personalities and emotions may cause a barrier to oral communication. Where two people have a strong dislike for each other this can interfere with oral communication. Similarly, if one of the participants is feeling angry or upset at the time of the oral communication, this can interfere.
- Oral communication can be difficult to control, especially where large numbers are involved.
- In the case of the telephone, the number of participants is limited.

Strengths of written communication

- Written communication provides a permanent record for future reference.
- Communication that is transmitted in written form is more structured and consistent. Where a number of people are required to receive the message, each will receive a duplicate of the letter, memo or report. This means that each will receive exactly the same information.
- Whereas recipients have no choice when an oral message is transmitted, if the information is given in written form they can study the material at a time that is more convenient. Recipients can also reread the message.
- Written communication is more appropriate where many points need to be covered.



Outcome 1

Weaknesses of written communication

- Written communication takes longer to prepare and, in some cases, send.
- This form of communication is inflexible, it does not allow for immediate feedback or interaction.
- As there is no personal contact with written communication, the sender cannot use non-verbal cues.
- Written communication is inaccessible for some – people who have learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, find it difficult to process written communication.

Barriers to communication

Consider the following cartoon strip. What is causing a barrier to communication in this case?



It may be that Calvin's dislike or lack of respect for his teacher is interfering with the communication. However, it is more likely that Calvin is disappointed in his result and his strong emotions are creating a barrier to communication.

You are likely to be aware of other barriers to communication as illustrated below.

Outcome 1

How much do you know about the art of listening? Answer true or false to each of the following statements:

	TRUE	FALSE
(a) People's thoughts can interfere with their listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) People may resist listening to others who blame or get angry with them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) People are more likely to talk to those with whom they feel safe than those with whom they do not.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) People who have something they can't wait to say are good at listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) People who feel very emotional about issues make good listeners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) People who are very angry rarely make good listeners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) People are more likely to hear messages that agree with their views or opinions than messages that challenge those views.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Fatigue never affects the quality of people's listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Answers

- (a) True
- (b) True
- (c) True
- (d) False
- (e) False
- (f) True
- (g) True
- (h) False

The above activity demonstrates some of the problems, or barriers, to verbal communication. It is likely you will have experienced some of these problems yourself.

Outcome 1

Other barriers to communication are given below:

Distortion

Distortion occurs when the sender does not accurately state the message or when the receiver does not properly interpret the message. Examples of distortion include using inappropriate language, typing errors or unclear explanations.

Noise

Noise, in connection with communication, can refer to:

- physical noise – traffic, road works, machinery, etc.
- technical noise – bad connection, faulty line, technical problems
- social noise – clash of personalities
- psychological noise – excessive emotion interfering with the communication

Differences in perception

How we view the world will be shaped by our past experiences, therefore people of different ages, cultures, education and personality can interpret situations differently.

Jumping to conclusions

By hearing or seeing what we expect to, people can miss the actual message.

Lack of interest

The sender must relay the message in an appropriate form that appeals to the interests and needs of the receiver.

Information overload

The sender should be careful not to include too much information in the message as this will lead to the receiver becoming confused or tired.

Bias and selectivity

This is where the receiver only receives part of the message and filters out the rest.

Lack of feedback

Feedback, such as asking questions or using non-verbal cues, is an important feature of good communication. Without feedback it is difficult to determine whether the message has been received and understood.

Outcome 1

By being aware of the factors that can cause problems for communication, you can minimise their effect and make communication more effective.

Effects of poor communication

Have you ever misheard or misunderstood your teacher or lecturer? What were the consequences of this poor communication?

On the individual

In the first instance, the result of poor communication is likely to be poor task performance. An individual who has misheard or misinterpreted information is unlikely to correctly complete a task. Poor communication at work can damage relationships, cause frustration, affect general performance at work and lead to low morale and self-confidence. Ultimately the stresses of poor communication can lead to physical health problems.

On the organisation

Miscommunication in organisations has high costs, including poor relationships with employees, customers and suppliers, lowered productivity and increased staff turnover.

Importance of good customer service

Introduction

Simply stated, customer service is about gaining and retaining customers. In today's competitive environment it is important for organisations to deliver a good-quality product and do it in a way that exceeds the customer's expectations. This means that organisations must provide good communications, effectively deal with enquiries, efficiently deal with complaints and offer excellent after sales service.

Research shows that keeping a current customer is much easier and cheaper than attracting a new one. Good customer service aims to increase customer satisfaction and therefore increase customer loyalty.

If your current customer asks you a question, respond appropriately. If they would like something fixed, then fix it. If they have a complaint, do everything possible to turn their frown upside down.

Outcome 1

Mission statement

A mission statement sets out the purpose of an organisation. It answers the question 'What are we here for?' Creating such a statement helps the organisation develop a common understanding of its main task. It allows everybody in the organisation to identify with the objectives of the organisation and establishes a sense of purpose.

A mission statement is normally no longer than a paragraph and is written in language that everyone can understand. For example, the mission statement of Edinburgh's Telford College is 'To be accessible, responsive and flexible, and to achieve excellence.'

From the general targets established in the mission statement, specific policies such as the customer-service policy can be developed.

Impact of poor customer service

Poor customer service may include the following:

- poor communication
- lack of opportunity for customer feedback
- not listening to customer feedback
- lack of suitable staff training
- bad impression of organisation created by poor presentation
- absence of a clear complaints procedure.

A business cannot function without customers. If the customer is not satisfied with the organisation's product or service, he/she will take their business elsewhere!

Without good customer service, the organisation will find it difficult to be competitive and, even, survive. The lack of repeat business (or returning customers) and poor reputation will have negative effects on income and profits.

Outcome 1

Current legislation

Introduction

As an administrative assistant you may deal with customers who have a wide range of enquiries. It is therefore important that you be aware of consumer rights.

Current legislation affecting consumer rights

A summary of the main legislation affecting consumer rights is given below:

Trade Descriptions Act 1968

This Act prevents organisations making false descriptions or claims about a product or service. For example, if a salesperson tells you that a jacket is 100 per cent leather but you later discover that it is made from PVC, then you can ask for your money back.

Consumer Credit Act 1974

This Act gives protection to consumers buying goods on credit. In particular, this Act ensures that consumers receive a written copy of the credit agreement, are fully aware of how the repayments will be calculated and details of the payment dates and methods. Consumers also have a 'cooling-off period' during which time they have the right to cancel.



The Sale of Goods Act 1979

Like many laws it has evolved to keep up with changes in society so the Act now includes the 'amendments' called the Sale and Supply of Goods Act 1994 and the Sale of Goods (Amendment) Act 1995.

This is a wide-ranging piece of legislation that applies to both new and second-hand goods. It protects consumers by ensuring that:

- goods are of 'satisfactory quality' – products must last a reasonable length of time and be free of defects
- goods are 'as described' – a trader or advertisement must honestly describe the product
- fit for purpose – products must do what the supplier says they do.

Outcome 1

If a consumer buys something that does not meet any of the conditions stated above, they have the right to demand their money back from the trader (the person/shop from whom they bought it), not the manufacturer, wholesaler or importer.

Consumer Protection Act 1987

The law does not control the amount an organisation charges for goods, but you are entitled to expect the price of goods to be accurately displayed in a shop, catalogue, or advert.

Traders have a duty to supply products that are safe. If they knowingly supply unsafe goods they are committing an offence. This Act also ensures that goods sold comply with general safety requirements.

The Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000

The purpose of these regulations is to protect consumers who purchase goods or services without any face-to-face contact with the seller. These regulations give consumers new rights when buying goods or services online, or via telephone, fax, mail order or digital TV.

Under these regulations, consumers are entitled to:

- clear written information on products before placing an order
- a 'cooling-off period', usually five days, during which time the consumer can cancel an order
- a full refund if goods or services are not provided by an agreed date or within 30 days
- protection against credit-card fraud.

OUTCOME 2

Outcome 2

Describe factors affecting the administrative assistant in the work environment

Working practices and benefits to employees and the organization

Introduction

As society, lifestyles and attitudes have changed so too have working practices. In particular the 'normal' working day has become a thing of the past and both employers and employees have become more flexible.

Employers benefit from more flexible working practices as staffing levels can be set to handle busy periods. Part-time staff can be scheduled to work at busy times of the day or week and temporary staff can be employed during busy seasons such as summer or Christmas (depending on the product or service).

Such flexibility means that employers can benefit from a more satisfied and motivated workforce which in turn can lead to the following advantages:

- increased job performance and productivity;
- lower staff turnover (in other words, staff will stay with the organisation for longer) resulting in reduced recruitment and training costs;
- lower absenteeism;
- ability to attract a wider range of applicants and the right calibre of employee.

Employees also benefit from these flexible practices which help improve their work–life balance. Working practices such as flexi-time and part-time working help employees to manage their work as well as meet family responsibilities and personal interests.



Outcome 2

Not only are employees more satisfied and motivated at work, they are happier, and healthier, with improved concentration and with time to focus on life outside work. With the help of flexible working practices, there is a reduction in stress created from having to cope with personal and work commitments. In the long term, employees can benefit from improved skills and experience, having been able to stay with the same organisation for a longer period.

Read the following case study from the Beardmore Conference Hotel.

'In an area where competition with other employers is tough, we need to stand out from the crowd. Our flexible benefits package has helped us recruit some excellent people – and they have stayed with us too!' says Carol Hampson, Human Resources Adviser.

Recruitment and retention of staff are major issues for the hospitality industry, but Beardmore Conference Hotel has devised a number of ways to attract the staff it needs, including many policies geared to work–life balance.

Competition with other employers in the area is tough, but Beardmore's flexible approach to accommodating individuals' needs within the demands of the business has enabled it to attract and retain the right calibre of people.

Flexible working also helps cater for busy periods. For example, non-managerial staff work annualised hours. This means that if the hotel is particularly busy one week, staff are prepared to stay longer until the work is done. In return, they can leave earlier if the hotel is not so busy. Sometimes it may entail employees working very hard for a four-month stretch in the summer, but shorter hours in winter.

Family-friendly policies also help to increase staff loyalty – time off for dependants, career breaks, and term-time-only working are acceptable as long as the job can be done. Training is also encouraged, as any form of learning benefits the company in terms of increased staff self-esteem, motivation and commitment.

Source: The Department of Trade and Industry (<http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/>)

So what are flexible working practices? Well, for example, Sainsbury's offers their retail non-management employees a range of contracts. This helps families balance their working hours with childcare, and helps students balance their working hours with exams and study periods.

Outcome 2

Specifically, students are allowed to work in one store during term time and another during the holidays.

A range of flexible, and not so flexible, working practices is given below.

Full-time

Employees are required to work a set number of hours per day (commonly 9 a.m.–5 p.m.), five days per week. The average full-time week in the UK is 41 hours, the longest in Europe.

Source: Eurostat

Part-time

Part-time working refers to weekly basic hours that are less than full-time. The number of hours worked will depend on the nature of the job and will be agreed by employer and employee. Examples of part-time hours: three full days per week, five half days per week, etc.

Part-time hours are commonly scheduled to cover peak periods such as first thing in the morning (for covering mail and other routine duties) or at lunch times.

Part-time employees are entitled to the same wage rates, working conditions and benefits received by full-time employees. However, part-time employees receive these benefits on a pro-rata basis, in other words in relation to the number of hours worked. If a part-time employee works a half week then they will receive half of the wages received by a full-time employee.

Flexi-time

Employees may vary their starting and finishing times so long as they complete a minimum amount of hours per month. The only restriction is that employees must be present at busy or important times of the day, known as core times. Core times vary from organisation to organisation but are likely to be 10 a.m.–12 p.m. and 2 p.m.–4 p.m. Outwith these times, employees can choose their own start and finish times.

Employees can accumulate 'flexidays' (days off) by building up the number of hours worked in the month.

Flexi-time allows increased personal freedom for employees and improves personal and domestic arrangements (such as dropping off children at school or attending a doctor's appointment) as well as helping to avoid travelling in peak periods. Another advantage of flexi-time is that the employee can continue with a large, complicated task without interruption.

Outcome 2

Job-share

Job-sharing is a voluntary arrangement in which one full-time job is shared between two (or sometimes more) employees, each working on a part-time basis. The pay and benefits will be shared between each employee in proportion to the hours each works.

Offering job-sharing is a way of recruiting or retaining an employee who otherwise would not be able to work for the organisation.

Job-sharers may work split days, split weeks, alternate weeks or their hours may overlap. Commonly one employee will work at the beginning of the week and the second employee will work at the end of the week. Some arrangements may also include alternating hours such as Monday, Wednesday and Friday one week then Tuesday and Thursday the following week.

Homeworking

For some employees working from home may be a preferred option. By working from home, employees do not have to spend time and money travelling to and from work. Employees can also work at times that are more suitable and with fewer interruptions.

However, there are drawbacks associated with working at home. The main drawback is the sense of isolation felt by the employee and the lack of social contact with workmates. It is also easy to be distracted when at home – you may have experienced this from trying to do homework or study at home.

Teleworking

The number of employees working away from the office has increased as information and communications technology has advanced. These technologies include broadband Internet connections, which are becoming more and more popular and affordable, and multimedia mobile phones with improved Internet access.

Those employees who work away from the office, making use of these telecommunications technologies are referred to as teleworkers. You should note that teleworkers do not only work from home, executives or salespeople who are constantly on the move can also be classed as teleworkers.

Outcome 2

In addition to the advantages outlined under the heading 'homeworking', teleworking allows for even greater flexibility – employees can work from almost anywhere, eliminating stress and increasing productivity. Another advantage of teleworking is that it brings the organisation closer to the customer as employees are more mobile. The use of the Internet also means that organisations can attract more customers from all over the world.

By reducing the number of employees in the workplace, the organisation can also reduce overheads such as heating, lighting, rent and cleaning. However, there is one main disadvantage. The cost of purchasing and setting up teleworking equipment is expensive.

Read the following article for a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking.

Teleworking 'is good for your health'
Andrew Swinton
14 October 2002

The results are in: ditch the office and work at home if you want to stay healthy.

More than 90% of BT's teleworkers who responded to a survey said they experienced less stress and that their productivity increased – plus, they had more leisure time.

Respondents also included among the benefits the ability to multitask, the lack of commuting and the ability to choose when to work.

Drawbacks for teleworking included concern at increased working hours, and home-based teleworkers felt isolated from 'social and professional contact in the workplace' which, they said, can be demotivating and depressing. Some also said that teleworking made it more difficult to get visibility at higher management level – a case of 'out of sight, out of mind'.

However, the overall feeling was that the advantages of working from home far outweighed the drawbacks.

Adrian Hosford, director of BT group social policy, said the report reinforced the growing importance of flexible working for the company's employees and a national trend of increasing numbers of teleworkers. 'Most staff say they are enjoying an improved quality of life, reduced stress, feeling more productive,' said Hosford. 'BT is benefiting from higher employee productivity and morale as well as lower absenteeism.'

Source: <http://news.zdnet.co.uk/>

If you would like to learn more about teleworking, visit <http://www.eto.org.uk/faq/faq03.htm>

Outcome 2

Hot-desking

To overcome the disadvantages of homeworking and teleworking it is common practice for workers to have a balance between working in the office and working from home. In these circumstances workers may not be allocated their own desk – this is known as hot-desking.



When employees work in the office, they set up at any available desk. When they have finished working they have to clear away files and leave the area free for whoever uses the workstation next.

For some employees, hot-desking makes them feel insecure as they do not have their own defined space. Employees also dislike the fact that they cannot have personal touches, such as family photographs, around them.

For employers, hot-desking not only saves space and money, it encourages employees to be organised and tidy.

In one section of IBM, over 800 sales representatives are employed but only 300 desks are provided. The philosophy behind this approach is that sales representatives will make more sales away from their desks. Hot-desking is therefore used to encourage the employees to be out of the office, selling!

Contract of employment

Introduction

The Employment Rights Act 1996 requires that employers give employees, who are employed for one month or more, a written statement of their terms and conditions of employment and their rights as employees. This contract of employment should be issued within two months of the employee starting work.



Features of a contract of employment

As stated by the Contract of Employment Act 1972 a contract of employment should contain the following:

- the name and address of the employer and the employee
- the title of the job and the date when employment began (and, if applicable, when it will end)
- the hours of work
- the rate of pay (or the method to be used to calculate pay), when payment will be made (weekly or monthly) and the dates of any increases

Outcome 2

- holiday entitlement
- conditions relating to sickness benefit
- details regarding any pension schemes
- a note explaining disciplinary and grievance procedures
- period of notice that the employee must give and is entitled to receive.

This statement should be kept up-to-date and the employee notified in writing of any changes within one month of the change.

Types of contract

The terms and conditions of each employment contract will vary from job to job. Examples of different employment contracts are as follows.

Temporary

A temporary contract is one that does not last indefinitely but the date at which the employment ends will not be stated. In some cases, there may be an opportunity for permanent employment. Temporary contracts are commonly used as a trial period to vet new employees before offering a permanent contract. This period is commonly referred to as a probation period. If the employee does not perform their job satisfactorily, the contract will not be extended beyond the probation period.

Permanent

The word permanent means everlasting or endless. A permanent contract is therefore one that does not have an end date – it is a safe, secure job.

Fixed-term

This is similar to a temporary contract, however the difference is that an end date will be stated. Alternatively, a fixed-term contract will end on completion of a certain task. Fixed-term contracts are likely to be used for busy periods or for special, one-off tasks.

Full-time

As previously mentioned, full-time refers to the number of hours worked in a week. On average this is 41 hours per week in the UK. If you are employed for this number of hours each week, you have a full-time contract.

Part-time

If an employee is employed for less than the full-time hours, they are said to have a part-time contract.

Outcome 2

Other relevant legislation

The following section is not a mandatory part of your course; the information is provided for extra interest only. If you do not wish to learn more about your legal rights regarding working hours, period of notice, redundancy or unfair dismissal you should go directly to the next section on Health and Safety Issues.

Working hours

The Working Time Regulations 1998 give employees the right to:

- 4 weeks' annual paid leave
- 11 consecutive hours' rest in any 24-hour period
- one rest day in a week
- a 20-minute rest break after 6 hours of work
- a limit of an average of 48 hours' work in one week
- a limit of an average of 8 hours' work in any 24-hour period for night workers.

Period of notice

The minimum period of notice the employer must give the employee is:

- after 4 weeks of unbroken service – at least 1 week;
- for 2 years of unbroken service – at least 2 weeks;
- for each further complete year of service – 1 additional week (up to 12 weeks).



After 4 weeks of unbroken service, the employee is required to give notice of at least 1 week. This minimum period of notice does not increase with length of service. A contract of employment may state longer periods of notice required from both the employer and the employee than the minimum requirement stated by the Act.

Both parties may voluntarily give up their rights to notice or the employee may accept pay in place of notice.

Redundancy

An employee may be made redundant in one of the following situations:

- the business is closing down;
- the business is moving;
- there is insufficient work or a labour surplus.

An employer must consult with trade unions over any proposed redundancies. If the union feels that the employer has not met requirements, it can complain to an industrial tribunal.

Employees who are made redundant are entitled to a period of notice.

Outcome 2

Under the Employment Rights Act 1996 employers are required to make a compensation payment (called a redundancy payment) to employees dismissed because of redundancy. The amount payable will be related to the employee's age, length of service and their weekly pay.

Employees who have not worked continuously for an organisation for 2 years full-time (or 5 years part-time) are not entitled to a redundancy payment; nor are employees who are younger than 20 or those who have reached the retirement age.

Employees who are entitled to statutory redundancy pay should receive approximately one week's pay for every year worked.

Unfair dismissal

The Employment Relations Bill 1999 states that employees who have worked for an employer for more than one year have the right not to be unfairly dismissed. Unfair reasons for dismissal under this Act include not following correct procedures when dismissing. Where an employee is dismissed because of lack of ability and qualifications, misconduct or lack of demand for the product produced, this is fair dismissal.

An employee who claims to have been unfairly dismissed can appeal to an industrial tribunal. Complaints to an industrial tribunal must be received within 3 months of the end of the contract.

Where the tribunal finds in favour of the employee then the tribunal can order:

- the employee to be given back the same job;
- the employee to be given another job;
- compensation to be paid to the employee.

Health and safety and security issues

Induction training

The word induction comes from the word introduction. Induction training is training which an employee first receives when starting a new job. The Human Resources (or Personnel) Department will be responsible for general induction training such as general policies and procedures. The employee's department will be responsible for specific job-related training.

In some organisations the induction process will last for a few hours, in others it can last for a few days.

All employees must be given training on health and safety issues as part of their induction training.

Outcome 2

Health and safety policy statement

A health and safety policy statement sets out how an organisation manages health and safety in the workplace. It demonstrates the organisation's attitude towards health and safety and the steps, arrangements and systems the company has in place to ensure it is following health and safety legislation.

There is a requirement under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 that an organisation with five or more employees must have a written health and safety policy.

A health and safety policy is not just a legal requirement. It demonstrates an organisation's commitment to achieving good health and safety standards. It should also clearly set out what is required by the employer and employee of an organisation and show that the organisation tries in every way to reduce accidents and ill health within the workplace.

All employees should read, understand and follow the health and safety policy.

Responsibilities of employer and employee

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 sets out the responsibilities of employers and employees with regard to health and safety in the workplace. Compared to previous legislation, this Act is more detailed and applies to all places of work and everyone at work. (See page 32 for more detail.)

Common security measures

The extent of an organisation's security arrangements will depend on the type of organisation, its size and the nature of its activities.

Security measures should be taken for various reasons: to protect and reassure staff, to prevent theft of stock and equipment and to maintain confidentiality of information. The organisation will need to implement security measures for the entry and movement of staff, visitors and access to information.



Staff entry and movement

To ensure that only authorised personnel have access to the premises an organisation can use a combination of the following methods:

- intercom and/or security doors
- identification passes to be carried (if not displayed) at all times – passes will display name, title, department, picture; they may contain an electronic activating device such as an electronic strip which needs to be swiped for entry; they will be re-issued regularly
- careful handling and issue of keys.

Outcome 2

Visitors

To ensure that only genuine visitors enter the premises an organisation can use a combination of the following methods:

- visitors should report to reception on arrival and have their reason for visiting verified
- the reception should be located at the main entrance and constantly staffed
- other entrances should be kept to a minimum
- visitors' passes should be issued and displayed
- visitors should not be left unsupervised
- the receptionist should ensure that all visitors leave the building and that passes are returned.

Access to information and technology

In accordance with the Data Protection Act an organisation should use a combination of the following methods to ensure the security of information:

- passwords – these should not be obvious and should be regularly changed;
- read-only files – some files can be read but not amended;
- virus-screening software to ensure that files are not lost;
- lock rooms, filing cabinets and computers where appropriate;
- confidential documents should be discarded appropriately.

General security measures

Other security measures that can be taken to protect staff, equipment and information include the use of specialist security firms, the use of CCTV, keeping a register of serial numbers of computers and the use of ultra-violet markers to identify equipment.

Current legislation

Offices, Shops & Railway Premises Act 1963

The purpose of this Act is to ensure that employers provide minimum health and safety standards. Key points covered by this Act are:

- cleanliness
- heating, lighting and ventilation
- prevention of overcrowding
- sanitary conveniences
- drinking water
- fire precautions.

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

This Act outlines the general responsibilities of employers and employees – it is more comprehensive than previous pieces of legislation and applies to all premises and everyone at work. Key points covered by this Act include the following.

Outcome 2

Employers are required to:

- provide and maintain suitable surroundings
- provide information and training
- provide protective clothing and equipment if necessary
- prepare a health and safety policy.

Employees are required to:

- take reasonable care for their own safety and others
- cooperate with employer
- do not interfere with or misuse equipment.

Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

These regulations were introduced to ensure that employers provide first-aid equipment, facilities and staff in the event of an accident or incident. Under this Act employers are required to provide a suitably stocked first-aid box, appoint a first-aider (one for every 50–100 employees is recommended in an office) and inform staff of first-aid arrangements.

Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1995

These regulations ensure that employers take reasonable steps to protect employees in the event of a fire. Employers should:

- assess fire risks in the workplace
- check fire detection times and warning systems
- check evacuation routes
- provide reasonable fire-fighting equipment
- check employee knowledge of fire procedures
- check and maintain fire-safety equipment.

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

In keeping with technological advances, this legislation was introduced to ensure employers provide comfortable working conditions for computer users. The key points of this legislation require employers to:

- assess the computer environment, identify potential risks and take action to minimise these
- assess workstation requirements and provide:
 - adjustable controls on VDU
 - adjustable and stable seating
 - suitable workstation surface and design
 - adjustable, separate keyboard
- vary work and allow regular breaks
- arrange eye tests and provide corrective spectacles if appropriate
- provide adequate training and information for employees regarding health and safety in relation to their workstations.

Outcome 2

The Health and Safety Executive

Health and safety legislation is developed and enforced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and by local authorities. HSE inspectors can visit business premises without warning. The following sanctions and penalties can be imposed by HSE where health and safety legislation has been breached:

- serve an improvement notice – where the organisation will be required to make improvements within a given deadline
- serve a prohibition notice – the HSE can close premises which are considered to be too dangerous for work
- impose fines of up to £20,000
- imprison employers for up to 6 months.

For more information on up-to-date health and safety legislation visit <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>.

OUTCOME 3

Outcome 3

Describe the roles of the functional departments within an organisation and the activities carried out within these departments

This section will examine the various departments which play a vital role in the smooth running of an organisation. Departments which will be covered include:

1. the sales department
2. the purchases department
3. the finance department
4. the human resources department.

1. The sales department

Introduction: the role of the sales department

Organisations are in business to provide a product or service for customers. Once the product or service is complete, the sales department is responsible for selling it to the customer. The sales department deals with customer enquiries, process orders and handle complaints. This department will make use of advertising and sales promotion to promote and sell the product.



Activities carried out by the sales department

In most cases, the sales department will be involved in various marketing activities designed to bring the organisation and its products to the customer's attention. These activities may include:

- analysing the market (known as market research) to find out what the customer needs
- improving existing products
- developing new products
- determining suitable prices for products (in liaison with the finance department)
- advertising;
- sending out mail shots
- sales promotions such as special offers, discounts and competitions
- the design and up-keep of the organisation's website.

If marketing campaigns have been successful, they should generate customer enquiries at the very least. This may be in the form of a letter of enquiry (see page 40) to which the sales department will reply with a price list, catalogue or quotation (see page 40). The sales department will therefore also be responsible for keeping price lists and catalogues up-to-date.

Once an order is received, the sales department will be responsible for processing the order, delivering it and any after-sales service. The sales department will also deal with any resulting returns, queries or complaints.

Outcome 3

In some organisations, the sales department will see an order through to preparing invoices. Thereafter the finance department will take over and prepare the monthly statements and collect payments.

2. The purchases department

Introduction: the role of the purchases department

The purchases department will be responsible for buying the raw materials or components that will be used to provide customers with a product or service.

In addition, this department will be responsible for arranging the purchase of office equipment, stationery and other regular consumable items.

The purchases department will also be responsible for the proper storage and issue of these items.

Activities carried out by the purchases department

When another department first realises that it needs a component or an item of stationery it should fill in a requisition slip. This is a document that simply states the items that are required by the department:

Outcome 3

Requisition Slip	
From: <i>HUMAN RESOURCES</i>	
Quantity	Description
<i>5 PACKS</i>	<i>A4 PAPER (WHITE)</i>
Date: <i>20 MAY 2005</i>	
Authorised by: <i>M McKENZIE</i>	

The purchases department will be responsible for processing this requisition. For commonly used items, there should be stocks available in the storeroom. Any items that are removed from the storeroom must be recorded on the stock record card:

Stock Record Card				
Item:	A4 PAPER (WHITE)	Min Stock:	50	
	PACKS OF 100 SHEETS	Max Stock:	100	
		Reorder Level	30	
Date	Details	Stock In	Stock Out	Balance
10 MAY	OPENING BALANCE			10
11 MAY	INVOICE NO 2334	40		50
15 MAY	ADMIN DEPT		5	45
18 MAY	REPROGRAPHICS DEPT		12	33
20 MAY	HUMAN RESOURCES		5	28

A careful record of stock movements should be kept for the following reasons:

- to ensure that there is not too much stock being held as this would result in a waste of money (if items are perishable) and space – this is why a maximum stock level is set

Outcome 3

- to make sure that stocks do not fall too low and eventually run out as this would result in some departments being held up – this is why a minimum stock level is set
- to ensure that stock is not being stolen.

If a department requires a more unusual item that is not held in the storeroom, then the purchases department will send out letters of enquiry to suppliers (see page 40).

Once a suitable supplier has been decided from price lists, catalogues and quotations received (see page 40) then the purchases department will be responsible for completing an order form (see page 40).

On receipt of a delivery, the purchases department should ensure that the items correspond with those stated on the delivery note (see page 41) and check for any damaged or faulty items.

3. The finance department

Introduction

This department deals with the money matters of the organisation such as money received from customers and money paid out to suppliers and employees.



Activities carried out by the finance department

The finance department will be responsible for recording money received from customers and depositing this money in the bank. It is important that proper procedures are in place for recording monies received and issuing receipts.

Each customer will have their own account with an organisation, which is used to record all goods sold, any returns and payments made. The finance department will be responsible for keeping these accounts up-to-date. An example of a customer's account is given below:

Outcome 3

Account: R BORTHWICK				
Date	Details	Debit	Credit	Balance
10 MAY	SALES	50.00		50.00
12 MAY	SALES RETURNS		5.00	45.00
18 MAY	SALES	75.00		120.00
20 MAY	BANK (Cheque No 01487)		45.00	75.00

At the end of the year, the finance department will use the closing balances of all accounts to prepare its final accounts. These statements show the profit of the organisation (Trading, Profit and Loss Account) and how much it is worth (Balance Sheet).

The finance department will also be responsible for making payments to the organisation's suppliers. When an invoice is received the finance department will check the details and process payment. To maintain good relations with suppliers and take advantage of any discounts offered, payments to suppliers should be made promptly. It is likely that a cheque will be used to pay suppliers (see page 42).

It is important to keep a record of cheques paid – this will be another of the duties carried out by the finance department. Organisations use a cheque-control sheet to record details of cheques issued, when they were cashed and the balance remaining in the bank account. Details recorded on the cheque-control sheet can also be used if a cheque needs to be stopped and to ensure that cheques are not being used dishonestly.

When a statement is received from the bank, organisations will check that the bank balance corresponds with their own records. This is called bank reconciliation and is used to check that all cheques have been cashed and ensure that automatic payments have been processed. Preparing a bank reconciliation statement will also flag up any mistakes in the accounts.

While the human resources department will be responsible for calculating wages (see page 45), the finance department will be responsible for processing these payments. Wages can be paid directly into employees' bank accounts or the finance department may be required to make up cash pay packets instead.

Outcome 3

Business documents used in the sales, purchase and finance departments

Letter of enquiry

When an organisation is interested in purchasing a product they will post a letter of enquiry to a supplier. This is a letter requesting product information; in particular the price of the item. Other details such as delivery cost and time may also be requested in a letter of enquiry.



Unless an organisation has a regular, dependable supplier, it is likely to post a number of letters of enquiry (usually at least three) in order to find the best deal.

Price lists and catalogues

In response to enquiries, suppliers will send a list of all its products and prices to customers. Price lists are commonly issued along with catalogues. Because they are expensive to produce, most catalogues are printed without prices and are accompanied with an up-to-date price list.

Quotation

For more specific requests a price list is not suitable. In the case of special orders, suppliers will prepare a quotation. The main purpose of a quotation is to quote the price of the order as well as information about delivery and payment methods.

Order form

Ordering can be done over the telephone, the Internet or by letter. However, it is more common for suppliers to have a specially designed order form that should be completed. An example of an order form is given below:

Outcome 3

Order Form				
Order No:		Order Date:		Your Ref:
Contact Name:				
Position:				
Organisation:				
Address:				
				Postcode:
Telephone:		Fax:		E-mail:
Item No	Item Description	Item Price	Quantity	Total Price
			Sub-Total	
			VAT	
			Postage	
			Grand Total	
Payment Details				
<input type="checkbox"/> Please send an invoice for the full amount <input type="checkbox"/> I have enclosed a cheque for the full amount <input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my credit card with the full amount, details as follows:				
Card No:		Expiry date:		
Signature:				

Delivery note

This document will be sent along with the delivery. It will give details of the items which have been delivered. The receiving company should check that the details on the delivery note are correct and report any missing items immediately to the supplier.

Outcome 3

Invoice

Many organisations do not pay for goods immediately. This is known as buying on credit. Where an organisation has bought goods on credit, the supplier will issue an invoice which is a request for payment. An invoice will give details of the items which have been delivered, the cost, VAT and discounts and clearly state the total amount to be paid. An invoice will also give details of the payment period allowed.

Credit note

Where faulty or damaged goods are returned the supplier will issue a credit note. This is in place of a refund for goods that have not yet been paid for. The effect of a credit note is to reduce the amount owed to the supplier.


Credit notes contain similar information to invoices but are usually printed in red.

Statement

At regular intervals, usually at the end of the month, a supplier will send a statement to its customers clearly showing the total amount owed for the period. The statement provides a summary of all invoice amounts less any credit-note values.

Cheque

Organisations will commonly issue a cheque to suppliers in payment for goods. Cheques are a secure way of paying suppliers as only the person or organisation named on the cheque can pay the money into their bank account. An example of a cheque is shown below:

<i>Counterfoil</i>	 The Bank of CCHS Pennywell Road, EDINBURGH, EH4 4QP		83-17-26
Date: _____			Date: _____
Pay: _____	Pay	_____	or Order
Amount: _____		£	_____
	Signature: _____		
000137	Chq No: 000137	Sort Code: 011725	Acc No: 01700433

The person who is receiving the money should be written on the 'Pay' line – this person is known as the payee.

Underneath the payee, the amount to be paid should be written both in words (on the line) and in figures (in the box). Any space that is left should be filled with a line or the word 'only' may be added at the end of the amount in words. These safeguards are to prevent fraud and dishonesty.

Outcome 3

The signature on the cheque should match that shown on the cheque guarantee card. The person who signs the cheque is known as the drawer. Most organisations will have a limited number of employees who are authorised to sign cheques and some business cheques require two signatures.

Each cheque is attached to a counterfoil (or stub). When the cheque is used, the counterfoil is left in the cheque book. The main information should therefore be summarised on the counterfoil as a record for the drawer.

The bank will refuse to honour a cheque in the following instances:

- the cheque is more than six months old
- the cheque is dated in advance
- the payee does not have a bank account of the same name
- the amount in words does not match the amount in figures
- the cheque appears to have been tampered with
- mistakes are not initialled by the drawer
- the signature is not valid
- there are insufficient funds in the drawer's account to cover the cheque amount.

4. The human resources department

Introduction

This department deals with all matters relating to the employees of the organisation. The human resources (or personnel) department will be responsible for recruitment and selection, calculating wages, staff training and general staff welfare.



Activities carried out by the human resources department

In a firm, the human resources department will be responsible for the following duties:

- advertising job vacancies
- preparing job descriptions
- interviewing
- induction of new staff
- staff training
- organisation of holidays
- writing staff appraisals
- health and safety issues
- calculating wages and salaries
- dismissal and grievance procedures
- any other matter which relates to the welfare of the staff.

Outcome 3

The main duties of the human resources department are discussed in more detail below:

Recruitment

Recruitment of staff is the responsibility of the human resources department. Organisations have a variety of ways in which they can seek applicants.

Internal recruitment occurs when the business appoints an existing employee to the post. In this case, the human resources department will place a notice on the staff notice board or in the staff bulletin.

If there is no one in the firm who is suitable, it will need to recruit externally. External recruitment is when a job is advertised outside the firm.

In this case the human resources department may advertise the job vacancy in the Jobcentre, in a suitable newspaper, with recruitment agencies or on the Internet.

Selection

Once the closing date for a job vacancy has passed, the human resources department will start the process of selection. It will sort through the application forms (see page 48) which have been received, and decide which applicants look promising enough to invite for an interview.

The interview is very important as it allows the employer to meet the applicant, expand on information given in the application form and decide whether the applicant is suitable for the post. The interview is also an opportunity to test the applicant's communication skills, personality and appearance.

Having interviewed those on the short list, the human resources department will select the best applicant. It is usual for the selected applicant to be offered the job subject to references. A reference is a report from an employer (or someone similar) who can vouch for the applicant's employment history, qualifications or character. The human resources department will be responsible for checking references.

Some organisations have a more unusual selection process. Read the following article that describes the selection process at TGI Friday.

Outcome 3

Thank goodness it's fun getting a job at Friday's

The American restaurant chain Thank Goodness It's Friday (TGI Friday) has a very special approach to recruitment. It starts normally enough with candidates filling in a conventional application form.

Then the real fun begins when selected candidates are invited to an assessment day. The manager who welcomes them reveals they are about to experience the most unusual interview process of their lives. They start off by talking to their neighbour for 5 minutes. Then they have to stand up and introduce themselves. What they say about themselves can be true or completely made up. What the interviewers are judging is how they sell themselves and how original they are.

This is followed by a creative team game when small groups are given 30 minutes to devise a new board game. Applicants are assessed for their leadership, communication, presentation and analytical skills and their ability to work with others.

Then comes the 'freestyle' section where applicants are asked to perform a short sketch or improvisation. For instance, an applicant might be told: 'You are the target of a firing squad: die a dramatic death.'

At the end of the assessment day each person sits a 100-question personality test and has a short personal interview with one of the management team. Those who do well and have the necessary experience and qualifications are invited for a second interview where the final decision on employing them is made.

Adapted from *The Daily Mail*, 3 March 1994

Calculating wages

Wages can be calculated based on hours worked (time-based system) or on the amount of work completed (results-based system).



- *Flat rates* – the same rate is applied by the hour, with no allowance made for the time of day.
- *Time rates* – the employee is paid a fixed amount per hour, day, week or month. Time rates do not reward hard workers; therefore there is no incentive to be more productive.
- *Overtime rates* – where an employee works longer than the agreed basic working week, they usually get an overtime payment. This is often paid at a higher hourly rate such as time-and-a-half or double time.
- *Piece rates* – the employee is paid according to how much they produce. This method encourages workers to be more productive because the more that is produced the more that is earned. Quality controls need to be in place to ensure that the work is done to a satisfactory standard.

Outcome 3

- *Standard hour* – combination of time and piece rates where employees are expected to produce a certain number of units in an hour.
- *Bonus rates* – a bonus will be given to an employee who completes extra units in the standard time.
- *Commission* – sales staff are likely to be paid on a commission basis where they receive a percentage of the value of sales made.

Once the employee information relevant to the payment system is collected, the human resources department will be responsible for preparing a payslip. A payslip is a document that shows the employee's net (or take-home) pay and how this was calculated.

Business documents used in the human resources department

The human resources department will use the following documents:

Job description

Please refer to page 5.

Person specification

Please refer to page 6.

Application form

Some organisations may request a letter of application and a Curriculum Vitae (CV). A letter of application is a letter in which the applicant explains why he or she wants the job. The letter will then be accompanied by a CV which is a document giving:

- personal details
- education and qualifications
- employment history
- hobbies and interests
- referees.

More commonly however, the human resources department will use a specially designed application form. An application form will normally ask for information contained in a CV but will also ask specific questions relevant to the job.

Outcome 3

Contract of employment

Please refer to page 27.

Holiday rota

The human resources department is responsible for overseeing holiday arrangements. It needs to make sure that holidays are staggered (or spread out) so that it is not too difficult to cover remaining work and keep the organisation operating smoothly. The human resources department will often make use of a holiday rota. This is a chart which shows clearly who is on holiday for any given week. Using this visual planning chart, the human resources department can, at a glance, identify any problems with holidays. For example, using the following holiday rota you can easily identify on which weeks too many staff may have requested holidays.

HOLIDAY PLANNER

PERIOD: April–September
SECTION: Administration

Employee Name	Years Service	APRIL		M AY			JUNE			JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER												
		01 Apr	08 Apr	15 Apr	22 Apr	29 Apr	06 May	13 May	20 May	27 May	03 Jun	10 Jun	17 Jun	24 Jun	01 Jul	08 Jul	15 Jul	22 Jul	29 Jul	05 Aug	12 Aug	19 Aug	26 Aug	02 Sep	09 Sep	16 Sep	23 Sep	30 Sep
Natalie Stroud	12																											
Jenna Hardie	8																											
Ahmid Khalil	9																											
Vicky Fernando	1																											
Lia Dalley	6																											
Andrew Duncan	5																											

Staff rota

This is a chart used in a similar way to a holiday rota but on a daily basis. The human resources department will be responsible for ensuring that enough staff are present to cover the workload. They must also ensure that employees are working the correct number of hours and sufficient cover is available for breaks.

Training request form

When an employee is interested in attending a training course, they will be required to complete a training request form. The human resources department will then process this form, checking affordability and availability, then book a place on the course where appropriate.

OUTCOME 4

Outcome 4

Describe the uses of the Internet and office technologies

Uses of the Internet

Introduction

Computers throughout the world are linked through the telephone network allowing users to communicate with almost anyone anywhere in the world or obtain information on an enormous range of topics.



In order to use the Internet, users require a computer, a modem, a telephone line, a telephone socket and browser software. Users will require to register with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and will be charged a registration fee, an annual subscription and monthly usage charge plus the normal charge for using the telephone line at the local rate.

When we refer to the Internet we are usually talking about the **World Wide Web (WWW)**. The WWW stores millions of **web pages** which are accessible via the Internet. These web pages contain a variety of text, pictures, movies, animation and sound.

You can find your way around the WWW by typing in the web address, for example, <http://www.bbc.co.uk>. If you do not know the web address then you can enter a key word, for example BBC, into a search engine such as Google, Yahoo or Ask Jeeves.

There are millions of websites on the WWW covering topics such as arts (for example, www.tate.org.uk); references (for example, www.encyclopedia.com); government statistics (for example, www.statistics.gov.uk); news (for example, www.news.bbc.co.uk); sport (for example, www.itv-f1.com); and newspapers (for example, www.scotsman.com). You can also buy online (for example, www.amazon.co.uk); take part in auctions (for example, www.ebay.co.uk); book a holiday (for example, www.expedia.co.uk); or play games (for example, www.electrotank.com).



The Internet is easy to use and has volumes of information in a variety of formats (text, graphics, videos and sounds). Searching for information on the Internet can be very time consuming and not all the information is guaranteed to be accurate.

The WWW is only one feature of the Internet. The Internet provides other features such as e-mail, instant messaging and discussion groups.

Outcome 4

E-mail

Electronic information can be directly transmitted from one computer to another computer anywhere in the world using e-mail. More than just an electronic letter, e-mail can be used to send diagrams, pictures, video clips or sounds.



Useful features of e-mail include being able to send the same message to more than one mailbox, attach other documents to a message, reply quickly and easily to a message and forward a message to another mailbox. Frequently used addresses can also be stored in an address book and retrieved instantly.

Advantages of e-mail:

- *it's easy* – setting up and using an e-mail account is relatively straightforward, users are guided through features with easy-to-use menus and buttons;
- *it's fast* – messages can be sent instantly from your office to anywhere in the world;
- *it's inexpensive* – the cost of sending an e-mail is far less expensive than making a telephone call, sending a fax or posting a document; e-mail can also be sent, received, read and then deleted without using any paper;
- *it's convenient* – unlike using the telephone, e-mail messages can be sent and received at any time of the day;
- *it's reliable* – e-mail can be more reliable than regular mail, you know that the message has been delivered;
- it can be easy to sort – unlike regular mail which has to be opened and scanned, you can see your messages at a glance and attend to those which are marked urgent;
- *it's secure* – unlike telephone messages, fax messages and regular mail, e-mail messages are secured by a password and will only be read by the intended recipient.

Disadvantages of e-mail:

One main drawback of e-mail is that the informal nature of the message makes the tone difficult to manage and the message can come across in the wrong way. The lack of personal interaction can also make the message unclear – without being able to see body language and hear the tone it can be difficult to interpret the message accurately.

E-mail is also open to misuse in the office, therefore it requires monitoring. Many working hours every day are lost through personal use of e-mail.

Outcome 4

Lastly, SPAM or junk mail is a major problem associated with e-mail. You should never open attachments from unknown senders as they may contain viruses. Nor should you reply to random mail shots – that will only confirm your e-mail account is active and encourage more junk mail.

Instant messaging (or chat rooms)

Using instant messaging, individuals can communicate with each other in real time. A number of people will be connected to the Internet at the same time, sending and receiving messages instantly. Everyone in the group can see the messages as individuals ‘talk’ to one another. However, it is possible to send private messages to an individual and you can control who is part of the group (referred to as your ‘buddy’ list).

The main advantage of instant messaging is that the conversation is live – it provides an immediate response and interaction between participants.

As with e-mail, because you can’t see or hear the other people, instant messaging can be an unclear way of communicating.

Instant messaging can also be distracting. Some instant messaging formats run in the background on your computer. When someone wants to contact you, a window pops up with the message. This is the reason that instant messaging is banned from many computer rooms in schools and colleges.

Finally, but most importantly, there are security concerns with instant messaging. Individuals taking part in instant messaging can disguise their true identity – so be careful – never give away personal details such as your telephone number or address when chatting.

Discussion groups

Also known as message boards, newsgroups or forums.

Individuals connect to a certain site on the Internet and post messages to each other, usually in the form of questions and answers. This differs from chat rooms because the conversation is not in real time. People can visit the site at any time to read others’ messages and post their own questions or responses – the whole group does not need to be present at the same time. This feature of the Internet is likened to an online notice board or bulletin board.



Discussion groups are usually devoted to a specific topic of discussion and access can be limited by use of a password. Your school or college may have discussion groups that students can use to discuss certain subjects or assignments.

Outcome 4

Mailing lists

By subscribing to mailing lists, subscribers will receive information via e-mail. There are three types of mailing lists:

Discussion lists

These mailing lists are used in conjunction with discussion groups. Users who subscribe will be e-mailed a copy of all messages posted to the discussion group. In this way users can keep up-to-date with the discussion without visiting the website.

E-newsletter lists

These are electronically distributed publications written by organisations.

Announcement lists

These are lists where postings are usually limited to product announcements, press releases or notifications of updates or other items of interest on an organisation and its products.

Researching business information through the Internet

Advantages

Not only has the Internet improved communication, but also organisations can use the Internet to advertise their product, provide up-to-date information about its services and ultimately sell more products.

The Economist magazine summarises the benefits of the Internet to customers in the following way:

Consumers clearly love to shop on the Internet. So they should: leading websites, after early teething problems, now provide a superb service. Certain sites, such as Amazon, have won some of the highest customer-satisfaction scores ever seen in the retail industry. In fact, websites have had little choice but to raise service levels, often far above those of other retailers. Competition on the web is intense. Price transparency is the rule; with shopping comparison services, it is possible to check the price offered by hundreds of merchants with a couple of mouse clicks. Consumers also have access to a vast amount of product information, not just from manufacturers' websites but also from online reviews written by previous customers.

Source: 'E-commerce takes off', The Economist, 13 May 2004

The Internet benefits both the organisation and customers because of its convenience and speed.

Students also find the Internet useful when seeking information and for research assignments. Positive features of researching information on the Internet include:

Outcome 4

It is convenient

Access to the Internet is commonplace these days. All students will have access to the Internet at school or college, most will have Internet access at home and others will visit Internet cafes. Accessing the information is easy – either type in the web address or enter key words in a search engine. It's that simple... it's all at your fingertips! Shopping online is another convenient feature of the Internet which is becoming more popular. Shopping online is convenient as it eliminates the cost and time of travelling to shops. For organisations, information can be sourced in one convenient stop without referring to numerous paper-based materials. Take arranging a business trip for instance – all travel and accommodation arrangements can be completed online.

It is fast

Finding the relevant web page can be done quickly using a search engine. Type in your key words then Google, Yahoo or Ask Jeeves, for example, will find you thousands of matches (known as hits) in less than a second. Think carefully about your key words – the more specific you are, the less hits you will have to investigate. Depending on the complexity of the web page, information will load on your screen very quickly. Internet connections are getting faster so that even complicated web pages are displayed quickly.

Information can be of a good quality

So long as you access a reliable site, such as government sites (indicated by .gov.uk), academic sites (indicated by .ac.uk) and reputable sites such as www.bbc.co.uk the information provided is of a high quality. The quality of the information is also enhanced by the interesting way it is presented, making use of colours, graphics, sound and video.

A huge quantity of information is available

There are millions of web pages contained on the Internet covering every subject imaginable. This can make finding the information you need difficult and time consuming. Some would therefore argue there is too much information! Nonetheless, the increased number of organisations now selling their products online means that there is a greater choice for the consumer. Increased competition online should also lead to lower prices for the consumer.

It is up-to-date

Active web pages are up-dated on a regular basis. Compared to text books, the information found on the Internet therefore tends to be more accurate and up-to-date.

Other advantages

A large, global audience can be reached; it is relatively inexpensive and the Internet is open 24/7.

Disadvantages

The rapid development of the Internet has unquestionably increased the amount of information available and the speed and convenience with which we can access it. However, there are drawbacks:

Outcome 4

Validity of information

Anyone can upload information to the Internet therefore not everything on the WWW is accurate or true. Some websites may contain inaccurate, out-of-date or biased information. It is therefore recommended that you use official and/or reliable websites for sourcing business information.

Possible technical difficulties

Some websites may not always be available. Some pages that you visit may be off-line due to technical difficulties, routine maintenance or the server may be too busy. On the other hand, you may be unable to access the Internet due to problems with your own computer, Internet connection or Internet service provider.

Non-permanent source of information

Web pages are constantly being up-dated, amended and deleted – a page which is available one day, may not be available the next.

Uses and features of electronic methods of communication

Introduction

As previously discussed, developments in information and communications technology (ICT) have improved the speed and ease of communication in the workplace. However, these developments have also led to an increase in the amount of information available.

To allow this information to be shared within the organisation and avoid the need to duplicate and distribute the information manually, networks are used.

Networks

A **network** is a number of computers connected together to allow them to share resources such as printers, software programmes and data files. It is likely that your school or college networks its computers.

Many networks are run from one powerful main computer called a server. This can hold the files of all computers that it is linked to and acts like a manager.

The two main types of network are the local area network (LAN), such as is found in a school or organisation and a wide area network (WAN), which links computers over large distances.

Outcome 4

Advantages of networks:

- sharing devices such as printers saves money
- network software licences are likely to be cheaper than buying several individual licences
- files can easily be shared between users and data can be accessed from any location within the network
- network users can communicate by internal e-mail
- security is good – users have limited access to only appropriate files by means of a password; they cannot see other users' files
- a file server is easy to back up as all the data is stored in one place; this is usually done automatically on a regular basis to ensure that important data is not lost or damaged
- file management is carried out centrally – it is important for organisations to have good 'house-keeping' processes in place to clear out unnecessary data so that the network is not overloaded; this will include archiving old data, general disk clean-up and regular reminders to staff to delete unwanted files
- management can monitor user activity on the network. Disadvantages of networks
- purchasing the network cabling and equipment can be expensive;
- managing a network is complicated, requires training and a network manager usually needs to be employed
- if the file server breaks down all the computers will break down
- viruses can spread to other computers throughout the network
- there is a danger of hacking, particularly with wide area networks – expensive security procedures are needed to prevent this.

Electronic diaries

Advances in technology are leading to the demise of the paper-based diary and individuals now make use of electronic diaries. Functions that can be carried out by electronic diary software include:

- appropriate slots for appointments are automatically found;
- routine appointments can be programmed in one easy step, for instance a monthly departmental meeting need only be keyed in once and then it will automatically appear in the diary every month at the same time;

Outcome 4

- automatic reminders can be set 15, 30 or 60 minutes before a meeting so that important appointments are not missed;
- a number of diaries may be accessed and coordinated to schedule a time for complex appointments such as large meetings;
- information contained in an electronic diary can be e-mailed to others;
- files can be directly linked to database files to provide more information quickly – for example, by clicking on an appointment in the diary, a doctor can have direct access to that patient's record.

To summarise, the main advantages of electronic diaries are;

- it is much quicker than manually skimming through pages of a diary to find an available appointment or manually inputting regular meetings;
- you can access others' diaries to coordinate a complex meeting;
- if appointments overrun or appointments are changed, amendments can be easily made. Some programmes will automatically inform the attendees of any alterations, while others will have a direct link to room and catering booking systems.

For a demonstration of Microsoft Outlook, a combined electronic diary and e-mail software package, visit:

www.microsoft.com/office/outlook/evaluation/tour/default.asp.

Email

Refer to 49.

Voicemail

Voicemail is a telecommunications feature that transfers unanswered calls to an electronic mailbox where callers can leave a message. It eliminates the need for an answer machine.

When you are unavailable or your phone is switched off, voicemail is used to record messages that can be retrieved later. This means that colleagues and customers can leave messages for you when you are out of the office or in a meeting.

Outcome 4

Fax

Fax machines are used to transmit exact copies of documents (containing text, diagrams and graphics) via the telephone network. By inserting the original and dialling the recipient's fax number, a copy will be received within seconds and the original can be retained for filing.



Provided the recipient's fax machine is turned on, documents can be transmitted at any time. Companies may also save money by transmitting at cheap rate times by using a delayed transmission function.

Fax machines are an easy-to-use, quick and cheap method of transmitting information to any part of the world.

Modern fax machines also have scanning and copying facilities.

Mobile phones, video phones and wireless telegraphy

Mobile communications allow staff to stay in touch with the organisation while on the move. Primarily, the speed of communication has improved as individuals can be contacted anytime, anywhere.



Other developments include improvements in infrastructure, such as ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) and fibre optics, which are improving the speed and quality of telecommunications.

The problem of lack of non-verbal cues (in other words, body language) associated with telecommunications is also being addressed with the development of video telephones.

Mobile phones and video phones use technology known as wireless telegraphy (from the word 'telegraph' which is a machine for transmitting and receiving messages over long distances). Wireless telegraphy transmits data without wires, using radio signals to send the message. Without wires, communication is more portable and convenient.

Video and audio conferencing

Video conferencing is a method of connecting individuals and groups in different locations. Each party has a TV screen and recording equipment so that all parties can see and speak to each other in meetings, presentations and seminars.

Equipment can be bought or rented or companies can rent regional studios. More portable equipment is presently being developed.



Outcome 4

Advantages of video conferencing include:

- meetings can be arranged quickly
- travelling time, fares and hotel bills are saved
- those involved are not tired from travelling
- recordings can be made easily
- communication among branches located miles apart is improved.

Web cams and Internet meetings

Web cams, attached to the monitor of a computer, are used to capture video images and broadcast them on the Internet in real time. Web cams can be used to broadcast live images from places, such as San Diego Zoo or Sydney Harbour (www.camcentral.com) or can be used by people participating in a meeting online (known as an Internet meeting).

The advantages of web cams and Internet meetings are the same as those for video conferencing.

Current legislation

Introduction

This section looks at legislation that controls how information is collected and stored (The Data Protection Act 1998); how information is copied and used (The Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988) and how information held electronically is accessed (Computer Misuse Act 1990).

As you can see from the dates of these Acts, this legislation was introduced recently to keep up with developments in information technology. As technology continues to improve and diversify, it may be necessary for your teacher or tutor to provide additional information on current legislation.

Data protection

The Data Protection Act governs how personal information is collected, used, stored and destroyed. Originally the Act was introduced in 1984 to protect only computer-based information. However, in 1998 the Act was amended to include also paper-based information.

Before we consider the details of this Act, it is first necessary to explain two pieces of important terminology:

Data subject: This is the individual to whom the personal data refers.

Data user: This is the person or organisation that controls the way in which the data is used.



Outcome 4

Under this Act, the Data Protection Registrar supervises data users. Data users must register the following details with the Registrar:

- the nature of data held
- why it is held
- how it was collected
- who it will be disclosed to.

Anyone processing personal data must comply with the following eight principles of good practice

1. The personal data shall be obtained fairly and lawfully.
2. Personal data shall be used only for the registered purposes.
3. The personal data shall not be disclosed for purposes other than those registered.
4. Personal data held shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive for its purpose.
5. Personal data held shall be accurate and kept up-to-date.
6. Personal data shall not be kept for longer than necessary.
7. Data subjects shall be entitled to: be informed of any personal data held by the data user; access any personal data held; have data corrected or deleted where appropriate.
8. Appropriate security measures shall be taken against unauthorised access to personal data, disclosure of personal data and accidental loss of personal data.

Failure to register with the Registrar and obey these principles can result in prosecution. Penalties can include fines (of up to £5,000) and the removal of the data files. Data subjects may complain or seek compensation for damage or distress caused by inaccurate data or the loss or disclosure of data.

Examples of how these eight principles can be obeyed are given below. We will use the example of information held about students on a college database obtained from an application form.

1. The application form will be used to determine if the student will be offered a place on the course applied for. If any other use will be made of the information, this must be stated on the form; in particular if it will be used for future marketing or passed on to a third party.

Outcome 4

2. The college will register with the Data Protection Registrar, stating how it intends to use the student information. The college is not permitted to use this information for any other purpose.
3. The college is not allowed to pass on student information to a third party; for example the student union, universities or employers.
4. The application form should be carefully designed so that only relevant information (such as name, address, qualifications and work experience) is collected. Information such as bank details would be excessive, as these details have no bearing on whether or not the student will be offered a place on the course.
5. The college will have procedures for checking student information. As part of their induction, students may be asked to check and confirm that the information is correct. Inaccurate information must be corrected and out-of-date information deleted. Where paper-based information is destroyed, this must be done using a shredder or alternative secure procedure.
6. The information will only be retained for a limited period then destroyed once it becomes unnecessary or out-of-date. The length of time information is held will depend upon the type of information. For example, any queries relating to an assessment result are likely to be received within one year, this is also the length of time that the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) reserves the right to check internal assessment papers. Assessment materials are therefore usually destroyed after one year.
7. Students have the right to ask the college for a copy of their information. The student can demand that inaccurate information is corrected and out-of-date information is deleted.
8. Access to students' personal details should be limited to authorised members of staff. The information should be held securely, either locked away if paper based or protected by a password if computer based. All college staff will be trained not to disclose student information to external parties without the express permission of the student.

Here are some actual examples of how this Act has been breached (or broken) in recent years.

Example 1

Utility companies (such as Southern Electric and Thames Water) were under investigation after customer database records were used to post marketing materials. Customers were not fully aware of the way their personal information would be used when it was first gathered.

Outcome 4

Example 2

The Halifax was warned for improper disposal of personal information after confidential details (such as name, address, account numbers and balances) were found outside a Plymouth branch. The Data Protection Registrar has the right to serve an enforcement notice and to prosecute the offender if there are more breaches.

Example 3

A police officer was charged under this Act for accessing and printing personal data from the national police computer relating to customers of a friend's debt-collection agency. The charge was dismissed, there was no evidence of the police officer actually passing the information on.

Copyright

The Copyright, Designs & Patents Act controls the copying of protected material and ensures that no unauthorised copying of material takes place. It applies to more than just paper-based materials such as books and newspapers; this Act also covers music and computer programs.



If anyone wishes to copy materials covered by copyright, they must first seek the owner's permission. In some cases, the owner may charge a fee for copying.

By paying a fee to the Copyright Licensing Agency, organisations are allowed to copy small extracts from materials without seeking permission.

Copyright is indicated in the following ways:

- © followed by the name of owner, for example, © Scottish Qualifications Authority
- 'all rights reserved'
- 'no part of this publication may be reproduced without permission'.

Computer misuse

This Act was introduced to prevent unauthorised access to computer systems (for example, computer hacking). The Act also covers the use of computers to commit a criminal offence.

Under this Act the following actions are not permitted:

- unauthorised access to computer material
- unauthorised access with the intent to commit an offence
- unauthorised changes to computer materials.

Outcome 4

Benefits of e-commerce

Introduction

Buying and selling products online is known as e-commerce. For example, customers can buy:

- groceries from www.tesco.com;
- books from www.amazon.co.uk;
- clothes from www.urbanoutfitters.com;
- jewellery from www.ortak.co.uk;
- holidays from www.expedia.co.uk;
- computers from uk.insight.com, and so on.



Benefits to the customer

The benefits of e-commerce to the customer are similar to those outlined on page 51 where the advantages of using the Internet were discussed:

- customers can quickly and easily find what they are looking for
- there is a wider choice of products
- prices are more competitive
- goods are available round the clock.

It is also possible to track orders when using e-commerce. Many websites now allow users to log in and track the progress of their order. This feature allows customers to see if the goods are available and when they will be dispatched.

Benefits to the organisation

Below are the main benefits of e-commerce to organisations:

- By selling online, an organisation is not limited to one geographical area; it can reach a larger number of customers all over the world.
- The Internet is a flexible, effective channel for communicating with customers which allows organisations to react quickly to changing customer needs.
- The increased efficiency of the Internet reduces the time involved in processing orders and resolving customer queries.
- Costs associated with e-commerce are lower: property, printing and staff costs are all less than those associated with traditional trading. Although there are setting-up and maintenance costs, these are relatively low. Reduced costs can lead to greater profits for organisations.

Outcome 4

Problems

Despite the increasing popularity of e-commerce there are some drawbacks:

- *security and privacy* – organisations must ensure that their site is secure before consumers provide personal details and credit card numbers online
- *intangible* – some products are difficult to sell online as consumers like to see and touch certain goods before buying
- *extra charges* – such as delivery
- *lack of social interaction* – some consumers enjoy the leisure experience of going out shopping.

OUTCOME 5

Outcome 5

Explain the procedures for arranging and paying for business travel and accommodation

Information required before arranging business travel and accommodation

Gathering information for a business trip

An administrator will often be required to organise the travel and accommodation arrangements for employees attending meetings, conferences and events.

To make sure that the most appropriate travel and accommodation arrangements are made it is important that the administrator obtains the following details:



- the name and department of the employee(s) going on the business trip
- the destination
- the purpose of the trip
- the dates of the trip
- the method of travel preferred
- the type of accommodation required (if necessary)
- the budget for the trip
- whether the employee is a smoker/non-smoker
- any special needs the employee may have, e.g. wheelchair access or special diet.

An administrator responsible for making travel arrangements should require all requests to be confirmed in writing – either by fax, e-mail, memo or brief note. Some organisations ask staff to complete a preprinted request form for travel and accommodation to assist the administrator when making arrangements. An example is given on the next page. The use of this type of pre-printed request form should ensure that the administrator receives the essential travel and accommodation requirements. Because the request is in writing and signed, there should be no dispute as to what was requested or required.

It is important to remember that misunderstandings resulting in unsuitable travel arrangements, long delays, missed appointments and unsuitable accommodation can be very costly to an organisation. The administrator should get the correct information before he/she begins to book travel and make accommodation arrangements.

Outcome 5

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION REQUEST FORM			
Name:			
Department/Position:			
Reason for Trip:			
PASSENGER DETAILS			
Title	Surname	First Name	Date of Birth
TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION DETAILS			
	Destination 1	Destination 2	Destination 3
Place of Departure:			
Departure Date:			
Length of Stay:			
Preferred Form of Travel:			
Preferred Accommodation:			
<p>OTHER DETAILS Smoking or Non-Smoking (please delete as appropriate)</p> <p>Special Dietary Requirements, please state: _____</p> <p>Any Other Special Request, please state: _____</p> <p>Please ensure that the following have been organised in advance of your trip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • passport & visas • foreign currency • vaccinations <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p>			

Outcome 5

Booking travel and accommodation

After obtaining the necessary requirements for the trip the administrator should make use of the relevant sources of information when organising the travel and accommodation. Many of these sources of information are either available at a travel agent or, increasingly, on the Internet:

- travel timetables, for example Scotrail timetable
- directories, for example Guest Houses in the UK
- hotel guides, for example Stakis Hotel brochure
- maps, for example AA British Road Map
- brochures, for example Short Breaks brochures
- CD-ROM, for example AutoRoute Express and Europe in the Round.

A local travel agent can be an excellent source of information, help and advice with regard to travel and accommodation. Their experience in arranging travel and accommodation for businesses can be very valuable to the administrator. A travel agent may also be able to obtain better rates when booking travel and accommodation.

The Internet is an excellent source of travel and accommodation information. Up-to-date information can be accessed from the ever growing travel, accommodation and holiday web sites on the Internet, for example:

- www.britishairways.com/flights;
- www.flybritishmidland.com
- www.paris.org/Accueil;
- www.rail.co.uk

Increasingly travel and hotel bookings, many with discounted rates, can be made over the Internet.

Using either a travel agent or the Internet can save the administrator a great deal of time in gathering information together. The administrator can also have confidence that the information the travel agent is using or which is provided on the Internet is up-to-date.

The administrator must ensure that he/she follows any organisational procedures when booking travel and accommodation, e.g. the organisation may always use a particular travel agent or may prefer a particular hotel group or flight company.

The administrator should keep the budget for the business trip in mind at all times when organising the travel and accommodation. It is important that the administrator contacts his/her superior if it is proving difficult to keep within the budget.

Outcome 5

Factors affecting choice of method of travel and accommodation

Choosing the method of travel

There are four basic methods of travel:

- road (including car hire);
- rail;
- air;
- sea.



The advantages and disadvantages of each method of travel are discussed below.

Travelling by road

Advantages

Private or hire car:

- can choose own time of departure and route taken
- door-to-door
- relatively inexpensive
- can stop for a break when you want.

Taxi:

- convenient
- no parking problems
- no difficulties in finding address, especially in a city centre or unfamiliar place.

Disadvantages

Private or hire car:

- tiring, if long journey
- delays possible due to heavy traffic, road works or getting lost
- parking may be difficult to find and/or expensive.

Taxi:

- more expensive than private motoring, especially for long journeys
- traffic delays increase cost
- can prove difficult getting a taxi during peak times.

Travelling by rail

Advantages

- usually quite fast
- reliable in most weathers
- useful if travelling from one city centre to another
- frequent service
- can pre-book your seat
- space to work, move and/or relax.

Outcome 5

Disadvantages

- expensive to travel during peak times
- train can be crowded and no guarantee of seat if not pre-booked
- may have to change trains on some routes
- may be delays
- difficult to store much luggage.

Travelling by air

Advantages

- fastest type of travel
- good facilities at most airports; refreshments/meals en route
- minimal check-in time for most domestic (within the UK) flights
- most popular method of transport if going abroad.

Disadvantages

- expensive
- airports can often be several miles from city centre
- long check-in time required for some flights abroad
- bad weather can mean delays, rerouting or cancellation
- need to pay extra if your luggage is above the weight limit
- parking can be expensive if leaving car at the airport for more than just one day.

Travelling by sea

Advantages

Ferry and hovercraft:

- reasonably priced
- useful method of transport between British mainland and surrounding destinations
- modern ferries have reduced sailing times – hovercrafts are even faster
- cars allowed on most vessels
- regular sailing times on popular routes
- sleeping accommodation and other facilities on board.

Channel Tunnel:

- fastest crossing into Europe
- regular service
- booking not always required
- simplified customs procedure
- can take your car.

Outcome 5

Disadvantages

Ferry and hovercraft:

- slower than air travel
- boarding/disembarking can take time
- delays or cancellations in bad weather
- rough seas can make journey unpleasant
- ferry ports are not usually near city centres
- limited number of seats and car spaces make advanced booking necessary, especially in peak season (summer months).

Channel Tunnel:

- quite expensive in peak periods
- delays possible.

The method of travel chosen will depend on the following:

- the reason for the trip
- who is going on the trip (level of responsibility) and any preferred methods of travel
- the distance involved
- the amount of time available
- the budget available
- company policy.

Given below are some business scenarios requiring travel arrangements to be made from Edinburgh to various destinations. The most appropriate travel arrangements for each situation are provided to give you an idea of the types of decisions an administrator will be required to make.

Travel from Edinburgh to Glasgow for a meeting – the business traveller could either drive or take the train. Suitable transport from the train station would have to be organised.

Travel from Edinburgh to London for a business conference – the business traveller could drive, take the train or fly. Suitable transport from the train station or airport would have to be organised.

Travel from Edinburgh to Paris, France – the business traveller could either:

- drive to a ferry port and take the ferry or hovercraft to France – this would also enable him/her to have the option of taking his/her car to France; drive to Paris
- take a train to the South of England and travel through the Channel Tunnel to Paris
- fly from Edinburgh to Paris and, if necessary, hire a car in Paris.



Outcome 5

Travel from Edinburgh to New York, United States of America – the business traveller would require to fly and, if necessary, hire a car on arrival in New York.



Travel from Edinburgh to Orkney – the business traveller could either:

- drive to Aberdeen and get the ferry from Aberdeen to Stromness, Orkney
- take the train to Aberdeen and get the ferry from Aberdeen to Stromness, Orkney
- fly from Edinburgh to Kirkwall, Orkney.

If the business traveller was using option 1 or 2 above suitable travel arrangements would have to be made on arrival in Orkney.

When making travel arrangements the following should be remembered:

- many towns and cities have more than one train station – a careful note should be made of which station the business traveller is departing from and arriving in
- if the budget stretches to first-class travel or business class then this can offer extra comfort to the business traveller
- if hiring a car for the business traveller make a note of the hire company and where the car is to be collected from, e.g. if it is to be picked up on arrival at the airport.

Once the administrator has decided on the most appropriate method of travel, he/she would complete a form similar to the one below. The completed form would be given to the travel agent or travel organisation which would then make the necessary bookings.

Outcome 5

	No:				
TRAVEL BOOKING FORM					
To:					
<p>Please arrange the following travel requirements. If there are any queries, please contact:</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Contact Tel No: _____</p>					
Date	Time	From	To	Details	Costs
<p>This travel booking has been authorised by:</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <p>Designation: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>					

Outcome 5

Booking accommodation

The accommodation chosen should ensure that the employee is well rested and ready to conduct business the next day. The budget available for the business trip must also be taken into account. Well-known hotel groups which are familiar with the needs and expectations of business customers are used by many organisations. Such hotels offer many of the following facilities:



- desk area for working
- office services, such as Internet access, photocopier and fax machine
- stationery
- telephone in room
- a private bathroom
- tea/coffee making facilities
- 24-hour room service
- TV and video
- early morning breakfast
- fast check-out service.

This type of hotel can, however, be expensive and may not be appropriate for all business budgets.

When booking accommodation it will be necessary to:

- specify the accommodation requirements
- check carefully the rate quoted, e.g. whether the cost is per room or per person, and whether the cost includes breakfast
- check any special requirements with the hotel, e.g. if the business traveller has a disability or has special dietary requirements
- check the expected time of arrival with the hotel – especially if this is likely to be after 6.00 p.m. – otherwise the room may be re-let
- check the exact location of the hotel and obtain maps as appropriate
- check car-parking facilities (if appropriate).

Below is an example of an accommodation order form an administrator may be required to use:

Outcome 5

	No:		
ACCOMMODATION ORDER FORM			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40%; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">To:</div>			
<p>Please arrange the following accommodation requirements. Please send any invoices to:</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Department: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
Date	Length of Stay	Facilities Requested	Special Requirements
<p>This accommodation booking has been authorised by:</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <p>Designation: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>			

Outcome 5

Unless your travel agent is making the booking, it is usual for the administrator to telephone the booking agency or the hotel to make the reservation and then to write or fax a letter of confirmation of the booking. As with the accommodation order form the letter of confirmation should include the following details:

- the dates
- the type of accommodation required
- the number of people requiring accommodation
- the agreed cost
- any other facilities requested.

A copy of the letter or fax should be kept and given to the business traveller as proof of reservation. The copy letter or fax may also be used to resolve any disagreement on arrival or departure at the hotel.

International time zones and effects on arrangements

Some examples of time differences between the UK and other countries are given below:



Country	Time difference
Australia	+ 10 hours
USA	- 5 hours
France	+ 1 hour
Japan	+ 9 hours

+ = hours ahead of the UK

- = hours behind the UK

Note

These are not always exactly to the hour as Britain and several other countries change their clocks during the year to make the maximum use of daylight. Always check on the air ticket as this shows the time of departure and the time of arrival in each country (i.e. local times). You should also note that countries such as the United States of America and Australia are so large that different parts have different time zones.

When organising a business trip abroad the administrator should check the time difference between the UK and the country being visited before arranging appointments and meetings for the business traveller – particularly if there is a large time difference as this can cause jet lag.

Outcome 5

Jet lag is extreme tiredness and other bodily effects felt after a long flight involving marked differences in international time zones.

Jet lag is always worse if the journey is from west to east and is a long one.

For example, if a business traveller leaves San Francisco at 6.00 p.m. (local time) to fly to Glasgow it is already 2.00 a.m. the following day in Glasgow. By the time the business traveller arrives in Glasgow, his/her body clock is saying it is 4.00 a.m. but in Glasgow it is actually 12 noon. When the traveller arrives in Glasgow he/she is likely to feel very tired because of the time difference and the long journey.

In a situation similar to the above, if possible the first appointment should not be scheduled until the next morning.

People travelling from east to west (e.g. from the UK to America) gain time – if you left the UK on a 9.00 a.m. flight to New York, the arrival time would be 5.00 p.m. UK time but 12 noon in New York. A meeting could then be made for 2.00 p.m., given that the traveller's body clock would be registering 7.00 p.m. However, due to the long flight it may be considered more appropriate to hold the meeting the next morning.

The time difference also needs to be considered when the administrator requires to contact the business traveller. A traveller to the United States is unlikely to welcome being woken up in the middle of the night by an unimportant telephone message from the UK.

Preparing itineraries

An **itinerary** is a programme of travel, accommodation and events for a trip, which gives a brief summary of all the arrangements made, in date and time order, for easy reference.

An itinerary is the main document that the administrator arranging a business trip will be expected to prepare once all the travel and accommodation bookings have been made and confirmed. A well-prepared itinerary will be invaluable to the person going on the business trip.

When preparing an itinerary the following rules should be remembered:

- show clearly at the top all the dates covered by the trip, the destination and the names of those involved
- ensure the arrangements start from the traveller's home (or the office) and return to the home (or office)
- list the arrangements in date and time order
- always use the 24-hour clock
- give clear information regarding the travel and accommodation arrangements made, for example

Outcome 5

- times of departure and arrival
- flight numbers and terminals
- check-in times
- name, address, telephone and fax number of hotel and/or car hire firms.

The administrator should include the following along with the itinerary:

- travel tickets
- relevant maps
- letters/faxes of confirmation for hotels and car hire
- current passport (if business trip is abroad)
- reports, presentation materials and other relevant business documentation.

The style of itinerary will vary from one organisation to another, although the main features will usually be the same. An example of a basic itinerary is given below.

Outcome 5

Itinerary of Mr Marc Jones

Trip from Edinburgh to London: Wednesday 21 June–Thursday 22 June

Wednesday 21 June

0630 hours	Taxi (booked) from house to Edinburgh airport
0700 hours	Check-in for flight to London Heathrow (Flight Number BA 288)
0800 hours	Depart to London Heathrow
0900 hours	Arrive London Heathrow where Mrs Rosemary Queen will meet you and take you to the London Transport Museum
1030 hours	Attend conference at London Transport Museum
1230 hours	Lunch with other delegates which is being organised by Mrs Rosemary Queen
1700 hours	Tour of the London Transport Museum
	Overnight accommodation has been booked at the nearby Palace Hotel for yourself and the other delegates: Palace Hotel, Edgware Road, London, W2 1 JU, Tel: 0171 402 4141 Fax: 0171 724 8866
2000 hours	Dinner Dance at the Palace Hotel

Thursday 22 June

0730 hours	Taxi (booked) from Palace Hotel to London Heathrow airport
0815 hours	Check-in for flight to Edinburgh airport (Flight Number BA 624)
0845 hours	Depart from London Heathrow
0945 hours	Arrive Edinburgh airport. Taxi (booked) from airport to office

Outcome 5

Methods of payment

Introduction

From booking flights and accommodation to paying for meals, there are a variety of different payment methods available.

The options are:

- currency
- travellers' cheques
- credit cards
- debit card
- cheques



By travelling with a combination of the above options, a business traveller can minimise the risk of theft or loss while still ensuring that money is available when required.

Currency

All travellers should have a small amount of foreign currency when they first arrive at their destination. Different countries have their own type of money; in Britain the currency is the pound (£), in most European countries the currency is the euro (€) and in America the currency is the dollar (\$). For more examples of foreign currencies, visit the following website:

www.xe.com



This site also provides up-to-date exchange rates – the price of one currency in terms of another. For example:

£1 = \$1.80 or £1 = €1.40

To pay for incidental items such as newspapers, snacks, bus tickets or cab fares travellers should always carry a small amount of local currency. It is not advised that travellers carry large amounts of cash in case of theft. Most travel insurance policies limit the amount of cover for cash to £250.

Outcome 5

Travellers' cheques

Available in all major currencies and in a variety of different denominations, travellers' cheques are signed by the traveller on receipt and then again when used. The second signature must be completed in the presence of a cashier who should also check the traveller's passport for identification purposes.



Like cash, travellers' cheques are a convenient and easy-to-use method of payment which is accepted worldwide. However, unlike cash, travellers' cheques are replaced if lost or stolen. It is important that the traveller records the serial number of travellers' cheques as these are required in the event of theft or loss.

Credit card

A traveller may use a credit card to purchase goods and services or obtain cash advances. Instead of paying the cash at once, a statement is received every month. The traveller can choose to pay for the items at the end of each month or carry the debt over into the next month. If the balance is not paid in full by the 'payment-due date' interest is charged on the outstanding amount.

Most foreign businesses take credit-card payments and many automatic teller machines (ATMs) around the world accept credit cards. However, some credit-card companies charge customers a fee for using it outside the UK. On the other hand, the exchange rate used is much more competitive than those offered by most foreign exchange bureaux.

Debit card

Banks issue debit cards to customers who hold a current account. At home, debit cards are used to withdraw cash from ATMs and pay for goods and services. Unlike credit cards, debit-card payments are (almost) immediately deducted from the holder's bank account.



When abroad, debit cards can be used at many ATMs to withdraw cash in the local currency. Many banks are part of international alliances but travellers should first check with their bank to determine which ATMs will accept their debit card.

Outcome 5

As with credit cards, transactions abroad are likely to incur a fee but a competitive exchange rate is applied.

Cheques

Cheques are discussed on page 42. As you can see from the example given, cheques are written in a specific currency, for example pounds (£). This means that the cheque shown on page 42 is only valid in the UK.

Cheques are a relatively safe method of paying for travel and accommodation in advance if the trip has been organised through a UK agent. However, cheques are of no use to the traveller if the trip is outside the UK. If a traveller requires a cheque to be made out in a foreign currency this must be arranged through a bank for which a fee of approximately £20 per cheque is charged.

Expenses claim forms

On return from the business trip, the business traveller will wish to claim back any money he/she spent on business expenses. It is important that every organisation should operate an effective system for checking and verifying expenditure incurred on business trips. Such a system should allow the organisation to check that they are not paying too much for travel and accommodation, and should also assist in estimating how much future trips are likely to cost.

Two types of claims for expenditure will usually arise from business trips:

- invoices from the travel agent, airline or hotels;
- expenses claim forms from the travelling employee(s).

The invoices from the travel agent, airline or hotels are the bills for travel and accommodation. When making reservations for a business trip, the administrator should make a careful note of the prices being charged. This will assist in checking that the final invoices are for the agreed amount. If you have a query regarding any bill it is important to check with the business traveller to see if there is a simple explanation for the invoice charge. If the charge cannot be explained then the charge should be queried with the organisation which sent the invoice.

The following are examples of common discrepancies on invoices:

- a room may have been booked which was to include breakfast in the price yet the hotel may have charged separately for breakfast
- arrangements may have been made for the hire of a particular make and model of car. When the business traveller goes to pick up the car the hire firm may not have the make and model of car available and may try to charge for a more expensive car.

An expenses claim form is used by employees when claiming for expenses incurred during a business trip. It also assists the business in checking the claim and verifying expenditure.

Outcome 5

It is normal practice for an organisation to insist that business travellers attach receipts to expenses claim forms. Receipts are used to verify that the expense was actually incurred – they are also useful in checking that the claim is for the correct amount.

The expenses claim form should be checked carefully by the organisation as personal expenses may have been inadvertently claimed or an arithmetical error may have been made when adding up the expenses.

Overleaf is an example of an expenses claim form.

Outcome 5

	No: _____	
EXPENSES CLAIM FORM		
Name: _____		
Department: _____		
Please give details of expenses using the headings below. All claims must be supported by receipts.		
	Cost (inc VAT) £ p	For Office Use Only
1 Air Travel		
2 Rail Travel		
3 Accommodation		
4 Meals		
5 Mileage		
TOTAL		
Employee's Signature		Authorised by:
Date		Date: