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SET UP INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY FOR THE MICRO BUSINESS

UNIT BSBSMB307

This unit describes the skills and knowledge required to identify information and communications technology (ICT) needs for a home-business operation and resolve common technological problems when they arise.

KEY CONCEPTS

- ☛ Hardware and software
- ☛ Internet connections
- ☛ Suppliers and support services
- ☛ Pricing and payment options
- ☛ Locating hardware
- ☛ Setting up hardware
- ☛ Installing software
- ☛ Troubleshooting and resolving malfunctions





CHAPTER 1

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

In this chapter, we will discuss a range of information and communications technology, and how this may be relevant to you in your micro business. It is not intended to be a technical discussion, nor is this unit a specialist information technology unit.

Our discussion will take place under the following headings:

- A. Using technology**
- B. Computers in micro business**
- C. The Internet**
- D. Improving business performance with technology**

A. USING TECHNOLOGY

Technology can be defined as ‘the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry’. It is not a new concept, but rather as old as human civilisation itself, developing over time as a result of the fundamental needs of humans for food, shelter and clothing.

In the twenty-first century, technology, both as a term and a concept, has become an integral part of our everyday lives. Information technology and telecommunications have transformed the ways in which societies function. More broadly defined, technology uses resources, including materials, tools and machines, knowledge, skills and experiences, as well as investment of time, energy and money. It involves systems for collecting, transporting and transforming materials, for storing and processing information and resources, and for communicating and marketing the outcomes. Technology also includes the processes and products that result from its application.

Technology serves a vital role in the running of a micro business, and in the management of its resources and operations. It is crucial that those involved in micro business are able to select, adapt and apply technologies to maximise the efficiency and productivity of their enterprise.

The applications of technology for micro business

Technology comprises a number of different components which can be applied in a variety of ways to the management and operations of a micro business enterprise. These applications are presented in Figure 1.1 on the following page.

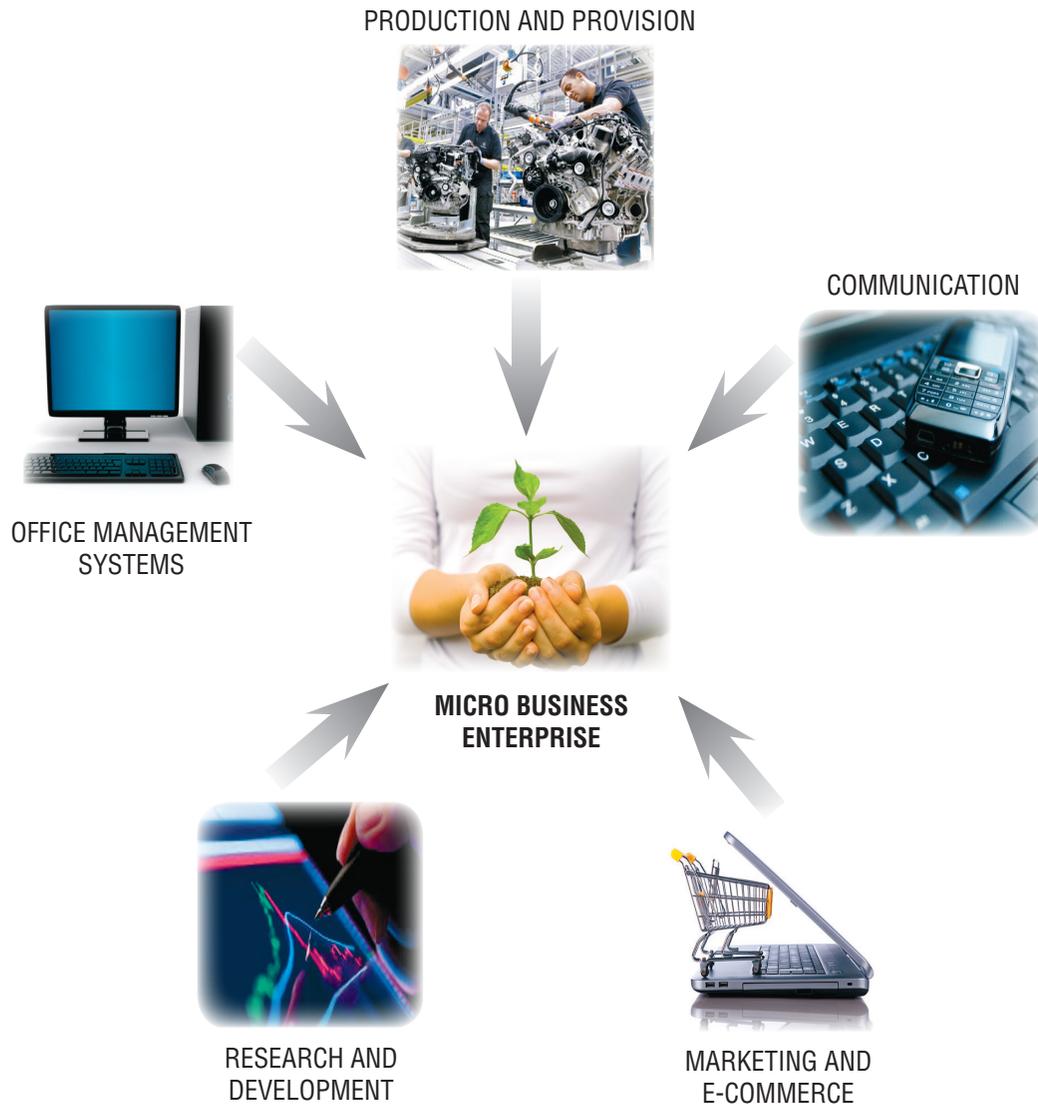


FIGURE 1.1: APPLICATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY TO MICRO BUSINESS

We will now consider each of these applications of technology as they relate to micro business in more detail, before narrowing our focus to the potential role that **computers**, and more particularly information technology, can play in the management and operations of an enterprise.

1. Communication

Within a micro business, the ability to effectively communicate with others within the enterprise, with clients, potential customers in the marketplace, suppliers, and with those providing specialist services such as accountants, solicitors, and bank personnel, is crucial to business success.

Enormous changes have occurred in the area of communications over the past decade, as a consequence of advances in both telecommunications and information technology. The result is more convenient, efficient, and faster interaction between all those involved in, and connected with, a micro business enterprise.

- digitising business cards (eg. Shoeboxed)
- digitising and organising receipts for taxation and audits (eg. Receiptbank, iAuditor)
- tracking, classifying and separating business and personal expenses (eg. TrackMySpend)
- creating invoices on the go (eg. Invoice2go)
- having access to documents and plans on the job site (eg. Dropbox)

ICT and marketing

Information and communication technology is also changing the ways in which businesses promote their products and services. It is estimated that by 2020, as much as 85 per cent of the customer journey will be completed online, before ever speaking to a person.

For micro businesses working on a limited marketing budget, the Internet provides the perfect low-cost solution.

The Internet and gaming

An Internet Web presence provides a low cost 24-hour, 365-days-a-year vehicle for presenting clear and precise brand identity. New product launches are supported by websites, **blogs** and competitions based online and with SMS. These try to generate demand, interest and novelty about a new product or brand. Australian spending on online advertising is growing faster than the traditional media of newspapers, radio and television.

An area of advertising that is growing rapidly is aimed at the 18 to 34 age group. This group is difficult to reach with print and television advertising because they spend more time using the Internet and playing games than watching television and reading print media. With Internet-enabled PC and console gaming, advertising is being designed as part of the game. It can take the following forms:

- **Advergaming:** a game that is designed around a particular product or brand, games based on movies or television shows.
- **Dynamic ads:** served to games live during game play, the connection to the internet enables new in-game advertising to be automatically downloaded into the game.
- **Product placement:** involving a product within a game, a drink vending machine, a vehicle, a pizza box.
- **Static ads:** permanently integrated into the game during game development, could be part of a loading screen, logo on a characters T-shirt or on a billboard in a landscape.

Hypertags

Hypertags are small electronic tags embedded in an advertisement such as a poster on a bus shelter. When a person sits at that bus stop video, audio, images, animations or calendar reminders are downloaded to their phone using a Bluetooth or infrared connection. Hypertags may be included in a digital point of purchase display.





STEP 1: Define the problem to be resolved

An important aspect of problem resolution is actually being able to identify what is wrong, and to be able to communicate this to a third party if required. For example, it is not enough to say that you can't access the Internet. It is important to determine what is the exact problem. First check the following:

- Is the power supply OK? Check modem lights.
- Is the connection to the computer OK?
- Is the telephone line OK?
- Is there an error message that comes up on your screen?
- Can you send and receive email?



Once the problem is identified, you have a chance to fix it.

STEP 2: Identify support services for common malfunctions

Possible sources of assistance and support include:

- **Manuals, books and journals:** all hardware and software will come with a hardcopy or online manual. Many of these have a dedicated 'troubleshooting' section that addresses the common problems that you are likely to encounter.

However, if your problem is inability to access the Internet, then of course online manuals will not be of any assistance, and you will need to find alternative sources of support.

- **Online information:** online information can take a variety of forms, including chat groups, blogs and specific forums established by manufacturers. These can be effectively accessed using a Google search on the problem.
- **Vendor help desk:** purchases of software, in particular, should be registered with the company that produced it. This enables the user to receive any updates and also to access support through the Internet, or by phone, to the Help Desk.
- **ISP support:** ISPs all have Telephone Help Desk support as well as email support. This is free, and gives you access to a powerful knowledge base.
- **Professional technicians:** this is a more expensive support option as they tend to charge on an hourly rate to make onsite visits. If available, using an 1800 or 1300 call option is preferable.

However, in instances where you are unable to resolve a problem, then this form of support may be the only option. The cost at the time to have your systems installed correctly, may avoid many headaches and loss of productivity further down the track.

One excellent generic online support site that offer free troubleshooting help is Computer Hope.com at: www.computerhope.com/basic.htm.