‘Lateral relationship’ is based on lateral or horizontal positions in an organisational structure. In the organisational chart (4.1), this relationship exists between the Department Managers or the three supervisors in the Marketing Department. In a school it exists between Pastoral Heads and Heads of Departments. For example:

(a)

Production Manager  Marketing Manager  Personnel Manager  Chief Accountant

(b)

Supervisor, Research  Supervisor, Sales and Distribution  Supervisor, Advertising and Promotions

One of the ways to coordinate the activities of the various Departments in the organisation is to meet under a superior officer of the organisation. In a school this will be under the Principal or the Vice-Principal. In the chart above, Department Managers would meet under the General Manager.

Management Information Systems

Management Information System (M.I.S.) is basically concerned with processing data into information, which is then communicated to the various Departments in an organization for appropriate decision-making.

Data → Information → Communication → Decisions

Telecommunications provide the means for one-way or two-way communication and for the transmission of messages. A combination of IT is used: telephone, computer, processor, printer, etc. A lot of time and money are saved and the security of data and messages is ensured.

MIS provides several benefits to the business organization: the means of effective and efficient coordination between Departments; quick and reliable referencing; access to relevant data and documents; use of less labour; improvement in organizational and departmental techniques; management of day-to-day activities (as accounts, stock control, payroll, etc.); day-to-day assistance in a Department and closer contact with the rest of the world.

It is important to note that whatever IT is installed must be appropriate to the organization, and to each department (Ref. to ‘Functional Areas’).

1. Accessing Information Using Computer Systems

Introduction

With the introduction of the Internet and the World Wide Web, students are able to access information faster and more efficiently using modern Computer Systems. In the past, one had to visit national and school libraries and spend large amounts of time accessing information. Presently any individual can quickly access, save and print information from any location. One can access the internet from Cyber Cafes, schools, mobile phones, at home and even at modern libraries through internet service providers and telecommunication links. Apart from the internet, information e.g. encyclopedias, tutorials and documentaries can be accessed from Compact Discs which are read from computer systems.

Components Of A Computer System

Modern computer systems consist of a central processing unit, primary storage, secondary storage, input, output and communication devices.

- The central processing unit (CPU) manipulates data and controls the other parts of the computer system.
- Primary storage (RAM) temporarily stores data and program instructions during processing.
- Secondary storage (hard disk drives) stores data and instructions when they are not used in processing.
• Input devices (keyboard, mouse) convert data and instructions for processing in the computer.
• Output devices (monitor, printer) present data in a form that people can understand, and
• Communications devices (modems) control the passing of information to and from communications networks

Computers are differently classified. We can use size and processing speed to categorize contemporary computers as mainframes, midrange computers, personal computers, workstations, and supercomputers. Accessing information using the Internet or compact discs require a minimum of a desktop or laptop personal computer. These systems once equipped with a modem, browser software and CD-ROM are sufficient enough for individuals to access and track information.

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a network of networks, linking computers to computers sharing the TCP/IP protocols. Each runs software to provide or “serve” information and/or to access and view information. The Internet is the transport vehicle for the information stored in files or documents on another computer. It can be compared to an international communications utility servicing computers. The Internet itself does not contain information. It is a slight misstatement to say a “document was found on the Internet.” It would be more correct to say it was found through or using the Internet. What it was found in (or on) is one of the computers linked to the Internet.

Computers on the Internet may use one or all of the following Internet services:

• Electronic mail (e-mail). Permits you to send and receive mail. Provides access to discussion groups often called Listservs® after the software they operate under.

What is the World Wide Web and what makes it work?

The WWW incorporates all of the Internet services above and much more. You can retrieve documents, view images, animation, and video, listen to sound files, speak and hear voice, and view programs that run on practically any software in the world, providing your computer has the hardware and software to do these things.

When you log onto the Internet using Netscape or Microsoft’s Internet Explorer or some other browser, you are viewing documents on the World Wide Web. The current foundation on which the WWW functions is the programming language called HTML. It is HTML and other programming embedded within HTML that make possible Hypertext. Hypertext is the ability to have web pages containing links, which are areas in a page or buttons or graphics on which you can click your mouse button to retrieve another document into your computer. This “click-ability” using Hypertext links is the feature which is unique and revolutionary about the Web.

What is a Browser? What is Netscape and Internet Explorer?

A browser is a computer program that resides on your computer enabling you to use the computer to view WWW documents and access the Internet taking advantage of text formatting, hypertext links, images, sounds, motion, and other features. Netscape and Internet Explorer are currently the leading “graphical browsers” in the world (meaning they facilitate the viewing of graphics such as images and video and more). There are other browsers (e.g., Mozilla Firefox, Opera). Most offer many of the same
features and can be successfully used to retrieve documents and activate many kinds of programs.

Search engines use software programs that use the browsers and enable the user to locate specific information on the internet. Most operate by searching for specific key words among the millions of sites on the web. Some of the major search websites are Google, Yahoo, and Excite. There are many different search websites, and each is organized according to slightly different principles. The best way to use these websites is to locate one that works for you and then continue to use it; as you learn more about a specific search engine your searches will become more efficient and successful.

The search engine has a textbox where one can type in a word or phrase. Pressing enter on the keyboard will display a list of related topics corresponding to the word or phrase typed. To view the information, one has to click on a link with the mouse and a new page will open with that topic. Each browser has navigation buttons for users to go back, forward, stop, refresh or go to the home page.

2. Using the Internet to Access Information

Requirements for the Internet

Logging onto the internet and getting information is a process which is very similar to that of searching a large public library for information. But the process is a lot faster using the internet services which are currently available on computers.

In a large library, our first objective is to obtain a catalog number then proceed to the bookshelf, get the required book [according to the author’s name or subject title] and search for the relevant chapters depending upon the topic.

In the case of using the internet, the user must have access to a

- Personal Computer equipped with a modem [modulator/demodulator] – this part is used to convert digital signals to analog signals and vice versa
- Username and Password – obtainable only after signing up is completed with the Internet Service Provider [example Tstt or Interserv or Carib Link]
- Telephone line connections which is attached directly to the modem of the computer
- Browser software such as Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer – normally obtained from the supplier of the software for computers

Connecting to the Internet

After entering the User name and Password, the user establishes contact with the internet and searching for information can now begin by:

- Selecting a search engine such as Yahoo or Excite or Google. There are many others available depending upon the nature of the search
- Entering the website using the keyboard, in the box provided by the search engine

The search is now carried out after pressing the [ENTER] key or using the mouse and clicking on [search] to determine the amount of information available. The user is now invited to traverse the subtopics [using the scroll knob] which are presented on the screen and choose one subtopic using the mouse. The contents can be viewed, printed out, or saved on the Hard Drive or Floppy diskette for later use.

Using the Browser and Search Engine

In the following Example, the Internet Explorer is chosen as the Browser software and Excite is selected as the search engine.

Suppose we are searching for information on the topic “SOLE BUSINESS OWNERSHIP”

The steps are as follows:

1. Start up the computer and establish connection with the internet by entering your username and password.
2. Double Click on the Internet Explorer Icon using the mouse or Click Once using the mouse then press [ENTER] on the keyboard
3. Now Type in the name of the topic in the search box provided-in this case Sole Business Ownership then press [ENTER] or click on [search] using the mouse.

The following pages display the results of the search

1. SBA - Legal Aspects | Forms of Business Ownership
   a. Sole Proprietorship: Easiest and least expensive form of ownership to organize … Sole proprietors receive all income generated by the business to keep …

2. Doing Business as a Sole Proprietor
   The sole proprietorship is perhaps the most common form of business ownership. … If you are the sole owner, your business will still be a sole proprietorship.
Getting Information

From the list of numbered headings displayed, we can select any one and view the contents by positioning the arrow, using the mouse and double clicking. Single clicking in the mouse chooses the heading and double clicking opens the file.

In our Example, double clicking on: Heading number 2 – Doing Business as a sole Proprietor will produce the following information

The sole proprietorship is perhaps the most common form of business ownership. Conducting business as a sole proprietor has distinct advantages and disadvantages. You should be aware of these characteristics, as they can have a significant impact on your business. Please note that brief references appear in this article to corporations, another form of business ownership.

What is a sole proprietorship?

A sole proprietorship is an unincorporated business owned by one person (hence, the term sole). The owner of a sole proprietorship is known as a sole proprietor. If you conduct your business through a corporation, your business will not be a sole proprietorship. If you share ownership of your business with someone else, including your spouse, your business will not be a sole proprietorship.

Please note that if the information obtained is insufficient or irrelevant, the present file can be closed and another heading selected, viewed and printed. This process can be repeated many times as one wishes.

Terms

Accounts: the term ‘accounts’ refer to the balance sheet and the profit and loss account of a business enterprise. ‘Accounts payable’ are the current liabilities of a business, that is, debts owed to trade creditors. The current assets owed to the business by trade debtors are ‘accounts receivable’. Both are records kept in the Accounts Department.

Certificate of Incorporation: a certificate issued by the Registrar of Companies, giving legal existence (incorporation) to a company. The Registrar must first be satisfied with the Memorandum of Association, the Articles of Association as well as other documents and records required. The ‘limited liability’ of shareholders, of the limited company, is stated in the certificate. The company can now enter into legal contracts.

Certificate to Commence Business: after incorporation, the ‘public’ company is issued this certificate by the Registrar of Companies. It states that the company has the minimum ‘nominal’ value of the share capital required to start operations and be able to issue shares to the general public.

Certificate of Transfer: when a shareholder is selling his shares to a buyer, his share certificate and a transfer form are placed with the company. Upon being signed by the company secretary the transfer form becomes a certificate of transfer, and is recognised by the Stock Exchange.

Conglomerate: a number of subsidiary companies merge, under a ‘holding’ company, mainly to spread their risks and become more viable. They carry on different productive activities, and each has its own separate market. The holding company has control of the Board of Directors of the subsidiaries, and/or is in ownership of over 50% of the nominal value of their ‘share capital’.

Directors: appointed from among shareholders, at Annual General Meetings (AGM), they represent the interests of shareholders by managing the day-to-day affairs of the company. Their names are in the Articles of Association and the Prospectus. Directors may not have voting rights, and are not allowed to enter into contracts with the company or make profits. A Director ceases to function when he/she violates the terms set out in the Articles of Association, by carrying on wrongful or illegal activities. Honesty, loyalty and caring (fiduciary duties) are essential qualities.

A private limited company can start operations with at least one (1) director, while a public limited company at least two (2). Directors may be given general responsibilities or responsibility over a particular department. By the Articles of Association one Director is given extensive executive powers as Managing Director.

Dividend: a percentage sum of the nominal value (par value) of the shares held in a company. While dividends on ordinary shares depend on profits or losses, those on preference shares are fixed and take precedence. Dividends must first be declared at an Annual General Meeting and approved by the Directors. They are paid by ‘dividend warrants’ and taxable. The dividend warrant, like a check, states the gross dividend, the tax taken out and the net sum due to the shareholder. If a company cannot pay dividends, a large shareholder may decide upon ‘dividend waiver’ (not taking the dividend at the time).