

IT and business



Information technology (IT) benefits the business world by allowing organisations to work more efficiently and to maximise productivity. It has to do with computer applications which concern the production of goods, the organisation of office work, and the provision of services and marketing.

IT can improve the **production** of goods and services thanks to the following systems and applications:

- **Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM)**, an accurate and faster system of production in which the computer controls the machinery and contributes to the reduction of labour costs;
- **Computer Integrated Machinery (CIM)**, a system in which the computer controls the whole production line with the use of robots to perform routines or dangerous tasks;
- **Computer Aided Design (CAD)**, an application software used to generate models and 3D drawings which reduce the need to produce physical models, or prototypes.

In the **office**, communication is more effective, faster and costs less thanks to emails, video conferences or internal chat rooms. Moreover, you can use a word processor to write, edit and save



your text, a spreadsheet for mathematical calculations or to produce graphs, a database to store information about your customers and suppliers, or a dedicated programme to manage your accounts and produce financial reports.

As data need to be stored and protected, IT creates electronic storage systems to protect all the company's valuable records and allowing only authorised users within the company to access the documents. Moreover, IT systems make it possible to work remotely, outside the office environment. Teleworking is a growing trend: people can work from home or while they are travelling.

As regards the provision of **services**, IT may offer:

- an **Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS)**, a system that allows payments with credit and debit cards in shops to speed up transactions and sort out information about stock levels;
- an **Automated Teller Machine (ATM)**, to deliver cash or make deposits 24 hours a day;
- **handheld computers** to take orders in restaurants or to work out what is wrong with machinery;
- **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)** to identify or locate goods. Data are transmitted by a portable device, called tag, read by a RFID reader, and processed according to the needs of a particular application;
- a **bar code**, a sequence of bars and spaces on goods, identification cards, and postal mail used to identify a particular product number, person, or location.

Technology influences marketing in many ways. An example is a mobile marketing tool, the Quick Response or **QR Code**, which is similar to a bar code but is square. The image can be read by a smartphone or tablet and a link is immediately established with the company's website.

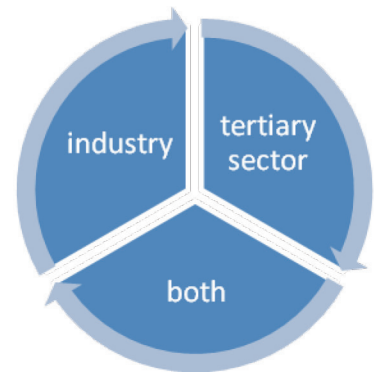
- 1** BEFORE READING. Cover the table on the left page. Brainstorm ideas and make predictions on the uses of Information Technology (IT) in business with reference to these categories. Then, look at the table and compare it with your own/class ideas. What are the main differences?

| Production | Office Work | Marketing and services |
|------------|-------------|------------------------|
| | | |

- 2** Read the text on the left page and write a short definition, in your own words, of the following.

- CAM:
 CIM:
 CAD:
 Telecommuting:
 EPOS:
 ATM:
 RFID:
 Bar code:
 QR Code:

- 3** Read the text again and decide which systems or applications refer to industries, tertiary sector or both.



- 4** Look at the table again and make notes for a presentation. When ready, practise describing one of the columns.

Useful language
IT is very important/essential/fundamental for business.
IT operates/is beneficial in various fields/sectors.
The main uses in ... are ...
... is a system/an application which is/can be used ...
The advantages are ...

- 5** Plan to start your own activity. Decide on the type of activity and list the types of IT systems or applications you will need. Use the table at the top of the left page and the table from activity 1 as reference.

- 6** Without looking at the left page, make a summary of what you remember from the lesson. Use short sentences or phrases, as in a list.

