Office Administration for CSEC® Examinations

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Series Preface

This new series of textbooks for the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) General Proficiency examinations has been developed and written by teachers with many years’ experience of CSEC examinations in Caribbean schools.

A textbook is used in different ways at different times. Readers might be starting a topic from scratch, and need to be led through a logical explanation one step at a time. Students with a working knowledge of a topic might need to clarify a detail, or reinforce their understanding. Or, they may simply need to believe that they do have a good grasp of the material being studied.

In this specially created format (the same for all of the books in the series) the pages are designed to allow study of the text, uninterrupted by anything but essential diagrams. Additional material, including references to unfamiliar technical terms, is placed where it can readily be consulted, in the side column. Examination-style questions are provided for each chapter, and short ‘In-Text Questions’ (with answers) are placed throughout the text, allowing students to check their grasp of the topic as they read.

Teachers throughout the region emphasize that inclusion of school-based assessment (SBA) material is of immense help and value. The CSEC syllabus explains the rationale for the SBA exercise, and explains its expected structure. The structure of the SBA component is explained in the last chapter of the text.

Dr Mike Taylor
Series Editor
About this book

This book isn’t just words on a page. This one has some important features. Each will help you, in its own way, if you take advantage of it.

► There are TWO COLUMNS.
  • The bigger column has the text and some really large diagrams; you can read straight down it without interruption
  • The smaller column has other diagrams that are mentioned in the text. Look at them carefully, as you need them. You could find that a few seconds looking at a diagram is worth several minutes’ reading.

► The first time that an important NEW WORD occurs, it is repeated in the smaller column. If you want to check what a word means, you can find it quickly.

► There are QUESTIONS called ‘In-Text Questions’ (ITQs). When you have read the nearby paragraph in the main column, try to answer the question in your head, or on paper, just as you wish. Some need a little thought; others may need you to recall what you have just read.
  • If you can, you’re on the road to understanding
  • If you can’t, just go back and read that bit again
  • Answers to the ITQs that are not pure recall are at the end of each chapter, so you can tell how accurate your answer was.

► For this examination you must submit a Project Report, based on a problem from one or more sections of the syllabus. For each year your teacher will help you to choose a suitable topic and will show you how the Report must be presented. There is a chapter giving the main points of the Report format at the end of the book.

► There is a detailed INDEX. Don’t be afraid to use it to find what you want.

► At the end of each chapter, there are some EXAMINATION-STYLE QUESTIONS. Your teacher will suggest how you can best use them.
By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- describe the role of the office;
- identify the activities of a modern office;
- outline the major functions of the office in business activities;
- describe the operations of the major functional areas/departments in a business;
- describe the organizational structure of various sizes of businesses;
- differentiate between centralization and decentralization of office activities;
- distinguish between the traditional and the open-plan office;
- explain the role of ergonomics in office efficiency;
- describe the role of various types of equipment in office efficiency;
- outline the required skills, attitudes and characteristics of office staff;
- assess the importance of good human relationships with customers, colleagues and employees.

Concept map

Office orientation

functions of the office
organizational structure
office layouts
office machines

production

organizational relationships
line organizational chart
line and staff organizational chart
functional organizational chart
matrix organizational chart
committee organizational chart

departments / functional areas
Finance Department
Human Resources Department
Purchasing Department
Sales and Marketing Department
Administrative Department

enclosed layout
open-plan layout
virtual office

photocopier
digital duplicator
facsimile machine
printer
Functions of the office

The office is considered as the centre of any business, whether large or small. It provides invaluable services to other members of the organization.

The functions of the office include:
- production;
- distribution and exchange of goods and services;
- collection, processing and preservation of information;
- dissemination of information;
- organizational and legal control.

Here are two examples:

**Case 1: a small business**

Bob’s Joinery is a sole trader business owned by Bob Scarlett. Bob and his small staff of five employees produce furniture such as tables, chairs and dressers. All activities related to Bob’s business are carried out at his workshop. The office at Bob’s Joinery will carry out the function of production by creating the various types of furniture. The production process would look like the following:

![Figure 1.1 The production process at Bob’s Joinery](image)

The joinery’s office will also be involved in the distribution and exchange of goods and services. Bob and his staff will be responsible for selling the goods and collecting payment in return as well as arranging for the distribution of the finished furniture to their customers.

**Case 2: a large business**

Universal Beverages is a large organization that manufactures canned soda pop. Universal Beverages has a general office in addition to its other functional areas and departments.

Universal Beverages’ office carries out the functions of collecting, processing and protecting information. The office can collect information, for example if customers send enquiries about the prices of products or if a customer places an order for goods.

The office can process the information collected by acting upon it, in this case ensuring that the order is received by the Sales Department.

The office is also responsible for preserving or storing information, which can be done in filing cabinets, or on microfilm, compact discs or computer hard drives. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Universal Beverages will also disseminate information – this means spreading or giving out information. The office will be providing information to customers, for example providing the price of a product to a customer who made an enquiry. Information can also be provided to other workers within the organization.
In large offices such as the one at Universal Beverages, an Office Manager might be put in charge of co-ordinating its activities, including carrying out organizational and legal control. The Office Manager’s duties may include:

- supervising other office staff;
- monitoring the stock of office supplies;
- recording office expenditure and managing the budget;
- preparing reports;
- filing tax returns;
- performing clerical duties such as filing and typing.

The scope of the duties of the Office Manager will depend on the size and type of business.

Some common activities of today’s modern offices include:

- protecting records, for example by filing;
- handling incoming and outgoing mail, including mail sent via the internet;
- making and receiving telephone calls;
- preparing written forms of communication such as letters, notices and memoranda;
- duplicating records;
- safeguarding assets, for example locking away valuables;
- receiving and directing visitors;
- making travel and meeting arrangements;
- faxing of documents.

In today’s modern business economy many firms, both small and large, have become involved in outsourcing. Outsourcing involves contracting with another firm to perform a function or service that the firm previously performed itself. Services and functions that are usually outsourced include making travel arrangements, data processing, advertising and preparing payroll.

Firms often outsource in order to reduce costs and to focus on their core functions and operations.

**Functional areas and departments**

Many medium-sized and large firms are organized based on functional areas or departments. Some common departments that exist in businesses are shown below.
Purchasing Department
This department’s responsibilities include:
• collecting and processing purchase requisitions;
• obtaining catalogues and price lists from potential suppliers;
• receiving and checking deliveries;
• keeping stock records.

Human Resources/Personnel Department
The duties of this department include:
• advertising vacancies;
• processing job application forms;
• arranging and conducting interviews;
• creating job descriptions and job specifications;
• keeping employee records up to date;
• addressing staff welfare issues, for example health and safety.

Finance/Accounts Department
This department is responsible for:
• preparing financial statements;
• preparing cheques for creditors;
• preparing payroll;
• preparing budget and final accounts, for example balance sheets.

Sales and Marketing Department
The duties of this department include:
• conducting market research;
• handling enquiries from potential customers;
• processing orders;
• preparing advertising and promotional material;
• handling customer complaints.

Administrative Department:
This department provides support services to the entire organization. This includes:
• desktop publishing;
• word processing;
• mail handling;
• clerical services;
• reprographics – making copies of an original document.

Computer Services/Information Technology Department
Because of the rise in the use of computers in businesses, many large firms, for example airlines, may find it necessary to have a Computer Services Department. The duties of this department include:
• managing the business’s computer network;
• repairing hardware, software and network problems;
• training staff on the proper use of the software and hardware.
Many of these departments will be discussed in more detail later in this book.

Organization structure
An organizational structure shows how the various tasks and individuals are coordinated in a formal way in order to achieve a common goal. The
organizational structure of the business will depend on the size of the business – a small sole trader business with just a few employees will have a much simpler chart than a large corporation with hundreds of employees.

An organizational chart is a graphical representation of a business’s formal organizational structure. Organizational charts are able to illustrate the titles and responsibilities of workers, as well as to display the lines of authority, lines of responsibility, the chain of command and the span of control. The organizational chart will be able to identify how all the areas within the business are connected.

A good organizational chart should be simple and easy to understand. It should also be dated.

**DEFINITION:** **Authority** is the right of a superior to give orders and make decisions.

**DEFINITION:** **Responsibility** is the obligation to accomplish set/prescribed goals.

**DEFINITION:** **Chain of command** (also called **unity (line) of command**). This is the structure that shows where authority flows from top to bottom in an organizational structure.

**DEFINITION:** **Span of control** is the concept that indicates the number of subordinates that a supervisor can manage effectively. A span of control may be described as ‘narrow’ or ‘wide’. When a supervisor manages a small number of employees the span of control is said to be narrow, while if the supervisor manages a large number of employees the span of control is said to be wide.

The width of the span of control depends on:

- the abilities of the supervisors and workers – skilled workers will need less supervision. A skilful supervisor will also be able to manage large numbers of employees;
- the nature of the task – simple routine tasks will mean that workers may need less supervision which will allow for a wide span of control.

**Benefits** of an organization chart include:

- it is a visual communication tool and makes it easier to understand the vast amount of information as a chart rather than as a list on paper;
- employees are able to verify their own position in the business;
- employees are able to see those staff members for whom they are responsible, as well as those to whom they report.

**Disadvantages** of organization charts:

- if not reviewed regularly charts may become outdated, as, over time, employees may leave the business while new ones join;
- charts do not show the informal relationships that exist within the business;
- some workers may be unhappy with their status in the organization (perhaps they are shown as being at the bottom) and so may lose interest in their work, thus lowering productivity levels;
- charts do not show the leadership style used, for example democratic or autocratic.

Creating organizational charts has been made easier because of special software that will create a company’s chart automatically, from the list of employees. This task will be made even easier if the employee names and their tasks are already in the business information technology database. Some types of software are also capable of inserting employees’ photographs. Examples of organizational chart software include SmartDraw and Edraw Orgchart.

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**ITQ2**

State two advantages of a narrow span of control and two advantages of a wide span of control.
A hierarchical structure of management would look like this:

**Figure 1.3 Hierarchical structure of management**

- **top / executive management level**
  - The top / executive management level will include positions such as the CEO (Chief Executive Officer), Managing Director and Senior Managers such as the Financial Controller. This is the highest decision-making authority and is responsible for setting long-term goals for the organization.

- **middle management level**
  - The middle management level or mid-management level will include positions such as the Accounts Manager and the Advertising Manager. The middle managers assist the executive-level managers in implementing the business strategies set in order to achieve the organization’s goals.

- **supervisory management level**
  - The supervisory management level, also known as ‘First-level management’ or ‘Lower-level management’, includes positions such as Accounts Supervisors. This level has the closest contact with employees and is responsible for putting the top and middle-level managers’ plans into action. They also supervise workers to ensure that tasks are properly carried out.

  At the bottom of the hierarchy are the non-managerial employees or the general workforce which makes up the bulk of the employees within most organizations.

  The lower level has the highest number of managers, with fewer middle-level managers and the least number of managers at the top level.

**Flat versus tall organizational structures**

Organizational structures may be considered flat or tall, depending on the number of levels of management in the hierarchical structure.

A flat organizational structure is typical of a small organization. It displays a few levels of management and a wider span of control.

**Figure 1.4 Example of a flat organizational structure**
In the flat structure shown in Figure 1.4, there exists only one management level – the owner, who is responsible for all the workers in the salon.

Over time, as small businesses grow into large businesses, the structure of the organization may change as new departments are added and more employees are hired. At this stage the larger firm might have a taller structure which is identified based on the many levels of management and a narrow span of control.

**Figure 1.5** Example of a tall organizational structure

In the example in Figure 1.5, there are four levels of management.

**Ways of presenting organizational charts**

Organizational charts can be visually presented in three ways:

**Vertical charts**
Also known as the traditional method, having a vertical chart allows the chart to be read from top to bottom.

**Figure 1.6** Example of a vertical chart

**Horizontal charts**
Horizontal charts allow the chart to be read from left to right.

**Figure 1.7** Example of a horizontal chart
Concentric charts
These are made up a series of circles, with the top management level located in the centre.

Figure 1.8 Example of a concentric chart

There are five basic types of organizational structure:
- line;
- line and staff;
- functional or departmental;
- matrix;
- committee.

Line organization structure
The line organization structure shows a clear chain of command with a direct relationship between the supervisor and his/her subordinate. The line structure is common among small businesses, where employees may be on a first-name basis and the owner is usually directly responsible for carrying out most tasks in the business.

Figure 1.9 Example of a line organizational chart of a garage

A line relationship exists between the garage owner and the auto electrician, since the chain of command shows that the electrician reports directly to the garage owner.

Lateral relationships exist between employees who are on the same level, for example the auto mechanic and the auto electrician.

Line and staff organizational structure
The line and staff structure includes a regular line structure as shown in Figure 1.2, but also employs a staff function. The staff function includes persons who are hired to advise and support the line functions in areas such as public relations, janitorial services and legal services. The staff function’s authority is limited to making recommendations – it has no authority over line managers or their employees. The line and staff structure is usually used by medium-sized to large companies.

In Figure 1.10, the example of a staff relationship is the Marketing Advisor. This individual provides marketing advice to the line managers but has no authority over them.
**Functional or departmental organizational structure**

The functional organization structure focuses on grouping similar tasks. Most structure therefore is divided into functional areas or departments. For example, all the marketing tasks will be done in the Marketing Department, which is staffed with specialists in the field of marketing. This can lead to greater efficiencies within each department, since each functional area is manned by specialists. Many small as well as large businesses use the functional organizational structure to outline their solid chain of command and the specialist units.

**Matrix organizational structure**

The matrix organizational structure allows employees who are members of a specific functional area or department to come together temporarily to form teams to work on special projects. This will mean that these employees will report to both their functional manager as well as their project manager. While the dual accountability may lead to some degree of confusion and contradiction, the matrix structure is ideal for obtaining creative and diverse ideas from across the various departments of the organization.

The matrix structure would be suitable in a case where a company is trying to create a design for a new product and would like input from specialists in the various departments.

Figure 1.12 shows that each departmental group reports not only to its line managers but also to the project manager.
Committee organizational structure

The committee organizational structure facilitates the creation of various committees within the organization. Committees are usually established to carry out specific tasks such as making decisions and planning events. Committees may be standing committees, which are permanent in nature, or ad hoc committees, which are temporary committees that are created to perform a specific function and then disbanded.

A committee is usually made up of representatives from various groups in the organization. This creates a diverse pool of talents and expertise and so the committee is likely to make more informed decisions and suggestions.

Centralization and decentralization

Centralization occurs when certain office activities/services are concentrated in one department. For example, if the office activity of filing is centralized this will mean that all filing matters are dealt with in one location, usually under the supervision of someone who is a specialist in filing. All other departments in the organization would need to go to this centralized filing office to deal with all their filing needs.

Decentralization occurs when office activities are carried out in each individual department. For example, if filing is decentralized this will mean that
each department within the business will have its own filing system accessible to its staff.

Examples of office activities that will be centralized or decentralized include:
• duplicating/reprographics – the process of making copies from an original document;
• filing;
• typing and word processing;
• mailing;
• legal services;
• recruiting.

The decision to centralize or decentralize activities will depend on the size of the business as well as the nature of the tasks being done. Small firms usually have one general office and may not be divided into departments. However, medium-sized and large firms which are divided into departments are better able to make decisions regarding centralization and decentralization. Businesses may also be able to use both centralization and decentralization – for example, a firm may centralize filing and legal services because of their sensitive nature, while it may decentralize duplicating and word processing.

Advantages of centralization
• The staff will be specially trained to carry out their functions and will be able to operate relevant equipment correctly.
• Noisy equipment will be housed in one place.
• Supervision of the task will be improved and accountability maintained.
• The tasks performed will be standardized.
• Costs will be minimized – for example, instead of purchasing photocopiers for each department, a few copiers may be bought for one duplicating/reprographics office.

Disadvantages of centralization
• There may be a delay in work, for example if duplicating is centralized, when a worker from the Sales Department needs to make copies of a document they will have to go to the Duplicating Office which could be far away.
• The staff may find their jobs repetitive and boring.

Advantages of decentralization
• Work can be carried out quickly, as equipment needed is close by.
• It allows for the maintenance of privacy.

Disadvantages of decentralization
• There may be a duplication of work throughout the various departments.
• Costs may be increased as equipment will need to be provided for the various departments.

Office layout

The office layout looks at the amount of space provided in the work environment as well as how desks, chairs and furniture and resources are placed in the office.

The two main forms of office layout are the open-plan layout and the enclosed layout.

The enclosed layout is also referred to as a traditional or cellular layout. It includes rooms where employees work by themselves or in small groups. The enclosed layout will be enclosed by walls and accessible by a door.

The open-plan layout is a large open area where employees work together in
one integrated office. In the open-plan layout there is no privacy and workers are able to see and communicate with each other freely. In order to create some privacy in an open-plan layout, sound-proof screens or dividers can be used to separate the employees.

Factors determining the choice of office layout

There are a number of factors that help to determine whether a business will choose to use an open-plan or enclosed layout:

- the number of employees in the organization – a business with a large number of employees may choose to use an open-plan layout;
- the amount of space that is available;
- the type of work to be done – for example, companies which have to discuss sensitive information may choose to use an enclosed layout while an advertising agency might choose an open-plan layout in order to facilitate creativity;
- the amount of money available.

Advantages of the enclosed layout

- Allows employees to have greater levels of privacy, for example to meet with clients.
- Employees are able to work in peace and quiet and concentrate on their tasks without interruption.
- The office may be locked, providing security for confidential information as well as valuable possessions.
- Employees within the enclosed layout can organize the office the way they want – for example, they can choose where to place their desk.
- Employees will also be able to personalize their space – for example, with family photographs

Disadvantages of the enclosed layout

- This layout does not encourage teamwork.
- Workers may feel isolated.
- Security devices, such as panic buttons, may need to be installed to protect the occupant of the office, who may be alone most of the time.
- There is poor utilization of space, as walls take up space that could have been efficiently organized into an open-plan layout to hold more people.
- Increased supervision is needed to ensure that workers are actually doing their jobs behind the closed door.
- There will be increased maintenance costs because of elements such as separate air-conditioning and lighting to run the enclosed office.

Advantages of the open-plan layout

- Communication is easier as all the workers are in one area – feedback will be immediate.
- Teamwork is encouraged and friendships are developed.
- Workers are easily supervised as they are all in one area.
- The open-plan layout is more cost effective in terms of bills such as cooling and lighting. For example, one large room being centrally cooled by air conditioning will be cheaper than having to place air-conditioning units in several offices.
- The layout can be re-arranged, if needed, quickly and with little effort.
Disadvantages of the open-plan layout

- Lack of privacy – confidential calls or conversations may be jeopardized.
- Open-plan offices tend to be noisy and chaotic, and prevent workers from concentrating on their tasks.
- Sicknesses and infection can spread easily in an open environment.
- The constant traffic of employees may be distracting and lead to lower productivity and efficiency.
- It will be difficult to cater for all employees in the provision of heating, lighting and air conditioning. Some employees may find the air conditioning too cold, while others may think it’s not cold enough.

Virtual office (e-workplace)

Unlike traditional office layouts, such as enclosed and open-ended, the virtual office is a company that does not have a physical location and whose employees work remotely by computer e-mail, groupware software, and other communications technology. Many employees in a virtual office work from home, however, the virtual office can be accessed from anywhere, including a hotel or a car. Working from home via telecommunications is known as telecommuting.

If necessary, a virtual office can rent a Post Office (PO) box if it needs items to be delivered to it. Conference rooms can also be rented in cases where meetings need to be held.

Virtual receptionists can also be hired when needed, to carry out tasks such as screening and forwarding telephone calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. it is cost effective – costs such as rent and electricity will be eliminated;</td>
<td>1. the lack of face-to-face communication may lead to miscommunication;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. it increases the firm’s flexibility;</td>
<td>2. workers may lack team spirit, because of feelings of separation and isolation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. employees can be hired irrespective of their physical location.</td>
<td>3. workers may experience technical difficulties with their equipment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the virtual office

Other variations of the traditional office are hoteling and hot-desking.

Hoteling is a work arrangement where the office includes providing unassigned desks or cubicles which employees who work from home (telecommuters) can reserve for specific periods of time when needed.

Hot desksing is a work arrangement where employees are not given their own desks, but instead there are specific sets of desks or cubicles that are fully equipped, with computers connected to the firm’s network and telephones, which will be used when needed. Hot desking is suitable for workers who travel a lot and do not visit the office often, such as journalists and sales representatives. Hot desking is similar to hoteling except that reservations do not need to be made.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the science of work area interaction. Ergonomics looks at how the working environment, including furniture, equipment, temperature and lighting, affects the performance of the employees.
If ergonomics is improved it will lead to:
• increased productivity and efficiency;
• a decrease in accidents and injuries;
• a decrease in illnesses and absence because of illness;
• improved morale and reduced stress levels.

**Lighting**

In order for there to be efficiency in the workplace there needs to be adequate lighting. Too much light, too little light, glare and flickering are all lighting problems that can affect employees. These problems can lead to eyestrain, headaches and errors on the job, especially in cases where accuracy and precision are essential.

Lighting problems can be solved by methods such as replacing light bulbs regularly and using localized lighting, for example using a task lamp.

**Temperature**

Ideally, the temperature in the office should be between 21.1°C (70°F) and 25°C (77°F). The office should not be too hot or too cold. Either extreme will make employees uncomfortable and less efficient, as they will be prone to making more mistakes.

**Furniture**

Well-designed office furniture helps to enhance the health of the workers as well as improving the efficiency of the office. Furniture such as desks and chairs should be ergonomically designed to suit the needs of the workers.

*Figure 1.14* The proper way to sit or stand at a computer desk
Desk
A desk should not be cluttered and only things frequently used should be kept close by, such as the mouse. The desk should not be too low or too high: the ideal height is 20–28 inches. There should also be adequate leg room underneath. The space under the desk should not be used for storage, for example for books.

Chair
An ergonomically designed chair should follow the sitter as he or she changes position. The chair should have an adjustable seat so that the user’s feet can touch the floor. If, even after adjusting the seat, the sitter’s feet do not touch the floor, a footrest should be used. The chair should also have adjustable arm rests. Chairs should also be cushioned to provide comfort for the sitter. The chair should support the lower back to prevent poor posture and back pain.

Monitor
The monitor should be of the flat-panel type (they are not as reflective as other monitors), with high resolution for optimum clarity. It should be positioned away from direct light in order to avoid glare and should be placed directly in front of the user to prevent excessive twisting of the neck.

Keyboard
The keyboard should be at elbow level, while the upper arms should be relaxed at the typist’s side to prevent strain on the wrists. When the user is typing, the hand and wrist should be ‘floating’ above the keyboard instead of resting on the keyboard or desk. Modern ergonomical keyboards are designed to increase the comfort of the user.

Mouse
The mouse should be held lightly and not tightly gripped. It should be used by moving the elbow instead of the wrist. Ergonomic mouse devices are available, to help to reduce repetitive motion disorders.

Some illnesses caused by a poorly organized office include:
Repetitive motion disorder (RMD) or cumulative trauma disorder (CTD)

This is a medical condition caused by carrying out repetitive work, holding one position for too long or from vibration of power tools such as jack hammers or drills. Signs of CTDs include aching, burning, persistent pain, numbness and tingling in areas such as fingers, wrists and elbows. Examples of RMDs include tendonitis.

**DEFINITION:** Tendonitis is the inflammation of a tendon, for example at the wrist joint.

Repetitive motion disorder can be prevented by:
- taking frequent breaks from the work station;
- changing the sitting position at regular intervals;
- doing regular stretches or exercises, for example rotating the wrist or stretching forward and backward at the desk;
- using ergonomically designed equipment.

Eyestrain

This illness is usually manifested by burning, blurred vision, watering, pain, tightness and headaches. These conditions may be caused by too much or too little light provided to work with, glare on the computer screen or not enough distance between the eye and the computer screen.

In order to prevent some of these problems occurring, the employee should:
- prevent computer glare by adjusting the monitor or using an anti-glare flare;
- take frequent breaks and shift focus from near to far regularly.

Equipment used in the office

Office equipment is necessary in order to increase the level of productivity within the office as well as to improve the efficiency of the office staff. Equipment commonly found in offices includes photocopiers, digital duplicators, shredders, scanners, LCD projectors and paper cutters.

Photocopiers

The photocopier – or simply copier – has become a standard piece of office equipment that both small and large businesses are able to own. The main function of the copier is to provide an exact copy of a document. Many desktop copiers are multifunction machines that are able not only to copy but also to print, scan and fax.

**Features to look for when buying a copier**

- Paper capacity – how much paper can the machine store? The ideal paper capacity is at least 250 sheets.
- Duplexing – this is the ability to print on both sides of the paper.
- Whether the copier can copy in black and white or colour – colour copiers are usually more expensive and slower than black and white copiers.
- Copy speed – ideally, a black and white copier should copy at least 16 pages per minute (ppm) and a colour copier at least 12 ppm.
• Duty cycle – this is the number of copies that can be made per month, efficiently.
• Other features such as collating, which is arranging documents in a specific order, as well as stapling the documents.

**Digital duplicators**

The digital duplicator is essential for a business that handles a large volume of copying, for example of fliers and brochures. Digital duplicators produce high-quality output at speeds of between 60 and 180 pages per minute. They are also able to print on different surfaces such as postcards and file folders. Modern digital duplicators are able to connect to computers and can be used as printers. The digital duplicator is more economical than a copier because of the high volume of copies (one master stencil can make up to 5,000 copies).

**How the digital duplicator works**

An original document is sent from a computer or placed on a glass surface, like that of a copier. The document is then scanned onto a master stencil; the master stencil is wrapped around a cylinder. As the cylinder rotates, a roller presses paper against it and ink is forced through the openings in the master stencil and onto the paper as a copy.

The Risograph, commonly referred to as the Riso Printer-Duplicator, is a popular example of a digital duplicator.

**Shredders**

A shredder is a mechanical device used to cut paper into small strips or unrecognizable particles. The shredder is usually used to maintain a certain amount of security regarding documents, and as such is a piece of equipment from which both large and small businesses can benefit. Confidential documents that are no longer required will be shredded, but only after the document retention period has been verified. The document retention period is that period of time during which all documents must be kept – when the period expires, the documents can be destroyed. For example, if a firm sets its document retention period for all invoices at two years, this means that all invoices are kept for two years, after which time they can be destroyed.

Most shredders cut paper into long, narrow strips, known as a ‘strip cut’; other shredders do a ‘cross cut’, which involves cutting the paper both horizontally and vertically.

When buying a shredder, a business should look at the model’s cutting ability, for example the ability to shred staples, paper clips, CDs and credit cards. It is also important to be aware of the sheet capacity, which is the number of sheets of paper that can be shredded at one time. General office shredders have a sheet capacity of up to 30 sheets, while some heavy-duty shredders have a sheet capacity of up to 450 sheets.
Paper cutters / guillotines

Paper cutters are designed to cut documents accurately or to cut a large amount of paper at the same time. Small economy cutters suitable for a small business are able to cut up to 10 sheets at a time. On the other hand, there are larger guillotine cutters, more suitable for large businesses, that are able to cut up to 800 sheets at a time. There are automated cutters that will automatically adjust and cut paper based on dimensions provided by the operator.

Printers

A printer is an output device that produces text and graphic on paper. The most common types of printers used in offices include laser printers, inkjet printers, dot-matrix (impact) printers and plotters.

Laser printers

These use laser beams to create an electronically charged image of the document, which then attracts powdered ink (toner) to the paper. Laser printers are:

• very fast;
• ideal for high-volume printing;
• available in black and white and in colour;
• expensive.

LED (light emitting diode) printers

LED printers are not very common in most offices. They use light instead of laser to create images on the paper. They are:

• safer to use, since some laser printers release particles which can cause respiratory problems;
• capable of producing high-quality prints.

Inkjet (bubblejet) printers

These spray drops of ink through a nozzle on to a page to create an image. Inkjet printers:

• produce high-quality print;
• are quiet;
• are relatively fast;
• are low cost.

Dot-matrix (impact) printers

In the dot-matrix printer a print head moves across the page. Tiny pins on the print head hit a ribbon which then hits the paper and creates tiny dots which make up the image, whether graphics or characters (letters, numbers or symbols). Dot-matrix printers:

• print up to 500 characters per second;
• are used to print receipts, labels and so on;
• print multiple-part documents such as invoices;
• are able to use continuous paper.
Plotters

Plotters are large-scale graphic printers typically used by architects, engineers and graphic designers to create technical drawings (such as plans for houses) and computer–assisted design (such as the design plan for a car). There are two types of plotters:

- a flatbed plotter – has a flat surface where pens or pencils move across the surface of paper to create an image;
- a drum plotter – the pen moves up and down while the paper moves beneath it on a large roll or drum.

Plotters:

- create large drawings;
- can draw in colour;
- are very accurate;
- are slow.

Digital projectors

Digital projectors are used to project digital images, usually from a computer onto a screen. Projectors have become very popular in meeting rooms where various types of visual presentations are made. For example, the Marketing Department might make a presentation showing a new advertisement or the Accounting Department might make a presentation showing the financial statements of a business.

Features to look for when buying a projector include:

- the resolution – which looks at the sharpness and clarity of the image projected on the screen;
- the brightness – this looks at the projector’s light output – ideally at least 1000 lumens;
- the weight – the lighter the projector, the more expensive it is. Typically, projectors weighing less than 7 pounds are good buys;
- the ability to connect to several computers at the same time.

Facsimile machines

Facsimile (or fax) machines send and receive documents through a telephone line.

How a fax machine works

- The machine converts the document to a digital image.
- The fax machine prepares to send the document by converting the digital image to a special sound/tone that can be understood by another fax machine.
- The receiving fax machine responds with a special tone known as the line acceptance tone.
- When the sending and receiving fax machines are linked to one another, the sending machine sends the fax as a series of tones while the receiving machine converts these tones into a digital image which is then printed or stored.
Some sending machines will print a report to confirm that the fax transmission was successfully sent.

The internet is fast replacing the facsimile machine. Many documents are being sent as attachments in electronic mail. There is also online faxing provided via the internet by various firms such as FaxZero and PamFax. Online faxes are cheaper than traditional faxing and are easier to use and more secure. Online faxes can be saved as e-mails and so the user needs to print only what is needed – thereby saving paper.

### Computers

The computer has become commonplace in even the smallest of businesses. The computer helps all offices to carry out their regular daily activities such as:

- word processing – to prepare letters, reports, and other forms of written communication;
- filing clients’ or suppliers’ information;
- facilitating various software so that tasks such as accounting, including preparing cheques and calculating payroll, can be done easily.

#### Features to look for when buying a computer:

- Hard drive space (where all information, such as documents and photos, is stored) – this should be at least 500 GB (gigabytes).
- Processor clock speed (determines how fast the computer processes the information). This should be 2–3 GHz (gigahertz).
- Random Access Memory (RAM) – should be at least 2 GB (gigabytes).
- Monitor type and size – a 19-inch or 22-inch LCD flat screen should be a good buy.
- The computer should be able to network with other computers.

### Voice recorders

Voice recorders are handheld devices used to record sound. Digital voice recorders are used to record notes, meetings, interviews, dictations and personal reminders. Modern digital voice recorders have long recording times – in some cases up to 540 hours. Many are also able to transfer files to a computer.
Laminators
Laminating involves applying a plastic film to either one or both sides of a document. Laminators are used to:
- protect documents from water, fingerprints, dust etc;
- provide stability to documents, allowing them to stand upright, for example menus;
- add gloss to documents such as posters and maps.

Figure 1.30  Laminator

Binding machines
Binding machines align, punch and bind documents. Binding gives documents a professional look and make them easier to use, as in many cases they can be laid flat. Some binding styles allow the document to be re-opened and pages added or removed. Many offices will bind company reports, proposals and training manuals. Binding machines may be manual or electronic and many are small enough to hold on the top of a desk.

Types of binding styles include:
- Comb – this allows the document to be edited (it can be re-opened) and holds over 400 sheets.
- Wire – can be used for brochures and calendars. It can also be laid flat, but it cannot be edited.
- Coil or spiral – is like a spiral notebook that can be laid flat.
- Velo – this allows the document to be edited and can bind documents up to 3 inches thick.
- Thermal or Perfect – the pages in the document are glued together. Documents up to 500 pages can be bound using this method.

Figure 1.31  Binding styles

Human relationships
In order to maintain and improve office efficiency, positive relationships need to exist with supervisors, colleagues and customers. Human relations involves creating a work environment that will motivate employees to work together in harmony. Practising good human relations is a skill that needs to be continued once you enter the world of work.
Relationships with supervisors
Having a good relationship with your supervisor is necessary in order to reduce stress and conflicts in the workplace, as well as to motivate employees to improve their performance.

Some ways of maintaining a positive relationship with a boss are:
- maintaining a professional attitude – know your boundaries, even if the boss is your close friend. When you are at work the relationship should be strictly about business;
- showing respect – treat your supervisor with the respect that his/her position deserves;
- carry out your duties – the supervisor will appreciate the fact that you are working to the best of your ability;
- seek clarification if you do not understand something that your boss said. Poor communication is one of the greatest sources of conflicts between employers and employees, so try to keep the communication lines clear.

Relationships with colleagues
Maintaining a good human relationship with your colleagues is extremely important. Having bad relationships with your co-workers can cause you to be less productive and efficient; it can also turn your work life into a nightmare. On the other hand, a good relationship with your co-workers can cause you to find your job enjoyable, thus increasing your levels of productivity and efficiency.

Some ways of maintaining a positive relationship with your colleagues are:
- show respect for your colleagues – in the same way as you would expect them to be respectful to you;
- be professional – for example, do not spread gossip or belittle your colleagues;
- practise good manners and office etiquette – for example, do not engage in loud conversations on your cell phone that may disturb other workers around you.

Relationships with customers
Employees need to display good customer service in order to send a positive image of the business to its customers. Customers who experience good customer service will no doubt return with their business to that organization.

Ways of maintaining a good relationship with customers include:
- treating them with respect;
- being a good listener and trying to identify and satisfy their needs;
- allowing the customer to feel important and appreciated, for example by using their name and speaking in a sincere manner;
- trying to deal with the customer’s problems as quickly as possible.

Entry-level positions
Entry-level positions are usually non-managerial positions that require minimum experience and as such are usually geared towards high school and college graduates. Entry-level positions jobs are good starting points for moving up the ‘corporate ladder’.

A few examples of entry-level positions are shown in Table 1.2 below, along with some examples of duties, skills, attributes and attitudes that they require.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry-level jobs</th>
<th>Duties and responsibilities</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Table 1.2* Examples of entry-level positions and their requirements
After being in an entry-level position for some time, workers may be deployed to other departments in the organization. Deployment involves positioning employees within the organization in a strategic manner so as to improve the overall efficiency of the organization. A deployment may be a promotion (where a worker is moved to a higher position) or it may be a lateral move (on the same level but to another department). The Human Resources Department should ensure that each person is matched with the right job. For example, an employee with a Bachelor’s degree in marketing would be placed in the Marketing Department where his/her knowledge and skills would be best utilized.
Summary

The office is the ‘hub’ of every office and is responsible for tasks such as duplicating records and handling mail.

- Major functional areas/departments within a business include Marketing, Finance, Human Resources and Production.
- Types of organizational structure include line, line and staff, functional and matrix.
- Organizational charts are able to show the chain of command and span of control within a business.
- Two main forms of office layout are open-plan layout and enclosed layout.
- Aspects of ergonomics include lighting, temperature and furniture.
- Machines used in the modern office include photocopiers, digital duplicators, shredders and facsimile machines.
- Humans relations involves maintaining good relationships with employers, colleagues and customers.
- Entry-level positions include Administrative Clerks, Sales Associates and Accounts Clerks.

Activities carried out in an office include:
- making and receiving telephone calls;
- duplicating/photocopying records;
- filing;
- faxing documents.

Two advantages of a narrow span of control:
- managers can communicate quickly to subordinates;
- greater supervision reduces the chances of errors.

Two advantages of a wide span of control:
- quicker decision making;
- it is more cost effective as fewer managers need to be hired.

The role of lower-level managers is to provide direct supervision to the general workforce.

A flat organizational structure has a few levels of management and a wider span of control while a tall organizational structure has many levels of management and a narrow span of control.

Organizational chart:

![Organizational Chart](image)

Figure 1.32 An organizational chart

- A ‘lateral relationship’ is the relationship between workers on the same level in the organization.
- ‘Office layout’ is the arrangement or design of furniture, equipment and employees in an office.
- An enclosed layout allows for privacy in conducting business activities; there are fewer distractions.
- An open layout is easy to re-arrange; it is more economical.
10. Lighting – proper lighting can improve the workers’ levels of accuracy and precision and it will also prevent eyestrain and headaches.

- Furniture – properly designed furniture, such as desks and chairs, can impact on the workers’ comfort levels. The more comfortable a worker is, the more efficient and productive he or she is likely to be. Properly designed furniture also supports the worker’s posture to prevent aches and strains.

- Monitors – should be properly placed so as to avoid glares and strain on the user’s neck. When workers are comfortable around the monitor, their level of productivity is likely to be increased.

Examination-style questions

Multiple choice questions

1. The chain of command within an organization can be shown on a/an:
   a. organizational chart
   b. matrix
   c. line graph
   d. office layout.

2. Which machine is suitable for making 2000 copies of a coloured document?
   a. facsimile machine
   b. photocopier
   c. scanner
   d. digital duplicator.

3. The science of work area interaction is known as:
   a. human relations
   b. ergonomics
   c. office layout
   d. organizational structure.

4. Which type of organizational structure includes persons hired to support and advise members?
   a. matrix
   b. line
   c. line and staff
   d. functional.

5. The type of organizational structure most suited for creating project teams is the:
   a. matrix
   b. line
   c. line and staff
   d. functional.

6. Which department is responsible for tasks such as preparing payroll, budgets and final accounts?
   a. Purchasing
   b. Human Resources
   c. Production
   d. Finance.
7 Which management level has the greatest interaction with the non-managerial staff?
   a executive level
   b supervisory level
   c middle level
   d top level.

8 A flat organizational structure tends to display:
   a a few levels of management and a narrow span of control
   b many levels of management and a narrow span of control
   c a few levels of management and a wide span of control
   d many levels of management and a wide span of control.

9 The concept which outlines the number of people a manager can supervise effectively is called:
   a span of control
   b chain of command
   c line of authority
   d organization structure.

10 Which of the following are functions of the Human Resources Department?
   I advertising vacancies
   II maintaining employee records
   III preparing payroll
   IV organizing training.
   a I and II only
   b II and III only
   c I, II and IV only
   d I, II, III and IV.

Structured questions

1 a State three duties which an Office Manager would be expected to perform. [3]
   b Identify two pieces of office equipment from the following list and explain how each contributes to office efficiency:
      • facsimile machine
      • photocopier
      • digital duplicator
      • computer. [4]
   c Figure 1.33 is an organizational chart of the Finance Department of CG’s Chemicals Ltd.
Use Figure 1.33 to answer the following questions:

i  Who does the Finance Director report to? [1]

ii State the relationship between the Administrative Clerk and the Accounts Clerk. [1]

iii How many levels are depicted on the chart? [1]

iv Identify two advantages and two disadvantages of organizational charts. [4]

2  a State two ways in which good human relationships between employees and employers can contribute to office efficiency. [4]

b Outline three ways in which the general office contributes to the smooth running of an organization. [6]

c Use the following staff list to create the organizational chart of Bowling Ltd.
- Wanda Davis, Chief Accountant
- Camille Williams, Sales Manager
- Larry Perry, Sales Representative
- Elizabeth Anderson, Payroll Clerk
- Jean Hawthorn, Clerk/typist
- Lorna Sawyer, General Manager
- Andrea Gillette, Sales Clerk
- Bob Porter, Production Manager
- Danielle Smith, Chairman/CEO
- April Chung, Production Clerk
- Sharon Crawford, Accounts Clerk
- Peter Smith, Stock Control Clerk
- Debra James, Office Manager
- Mary Johnson, Clerical Assistant
- Megan Deans, Advertising Manager. [15]

3 In the office where you work, management has decided to centralize the functions of duplicating and reprographics.

a Outline three benefits which will result from this decision. [3]

b State three office activities that may be centralized or decentralized in a general office. [3]

3 State three ergonomic factors present in a general office and tell how each contributes to workers’ satisfaction. [6]

4  a Differentiate between the following terms:
- line organizational structure
- line and staff organizational structure
- functional organizational structure
- matrix organizational structure
- hoteling
- hot-desking. [3]

b Identify three responsibilities of the following departments:
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Purchasing
- Administration. [12]

c Describe three factors to consider when purchasing a photocopier. [3]