

ICT is vital to GAP. Every aspect of their operation is controlled or monitored by ICT – stock, distribution, payroll, communication methods, and so on. ICT is essential to the running of a modern store. It is used for planning, monitoring, auditing and communicating between store operations.

For example, when an item has its barcode read at the checkout, the system not only logs the price onto the till, but also logs the financial transaction between GAP and the customer and the fact that the stock has been reduced by one item. On the distribution side, instructions from the mainframe computer are sent directly to forklift truck operators at depots by radio links. This shows the integration of departments by using ICT.

All stores are connected to the mainframe at Head Office via the GAP Network. There are a large number of different applications that stores use both independently and via the mainframe connection. For example, there are Personnel and Scheduling systems in store, and access to electronic mail via the mainframe.

ICT in Communication

GAP need to communicate with a range of individuals and organisations. Including their customers, their competitors and their suppliers. Good communication in GAP is essential if it is going to achieve its objectives and to operate effectively. GAP has a lot of channels of communication internally/externally between their functional areas. GAP relies on the emphasis of ICT to communicate with people. ICT has had a dramatic effect on the way communication takes place.

Communication is vital to GAP because then everyone is clear about objectives, there is smooth and accurate communication both within the organisation (internal) and between the organisation and other individuals (external), ideas and views are clearly heard and everyone in the organisation is kept informed of developments and changes. GAP uses letters, reports, fax, phone, e-mail, and memos to communicate with people.

Internal and External Communication

Internal communication is communication that takes place within an organisation, while external communication takes place between the organisation and the outside world. Both communications have been transformed by rapid developments in ICT. Tesco have a linked internal communication system – an internal network, links with customers – a system for e-commerce and links with other businesses – e-business. Together these links create the networked economy, which vastly increases the potential of business to connect with employees, customers, other businesses, shareholders.

Internal use of ICT in GAP

GAP use Electronic Mail a lot to communicate with its functional departments and the members of The Board. Meetings between directors and managers of each functional department are held frequently to discuss the businesses objectives and functional targets. Teleconferencing allows people in different physical locations to exchange ideas and information interactively using either the telephone or e-mail. This means that GAP can carry out meetings with a number of superstore by using ICT to communicate with them. They use these communication methods often to discuss important business issues.

GAP also use memos and letters to communicate with each functional area. Telephone and mobile phones are used frequently for exchanging ideas and views. GAP also use Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), this allows users to exchange business documents and information such as orders and invoices directly through the telephone network and electric communication systems.

GAP have an organisational database for internal communication so those members of staff can quickly access records and information about their customers. GAP is very dependent on running an effective database. That's why GAP has become to dominate in the retailing field more elaborate and advanced than those of major rivals. GAP recognize that if they have the best ICT systems to communicate internally and that these are applied

appropriately to their communication needs, they are strongly placed to gain competitive advantage.

The most dramatic increase in the use of electronic communication and media for the purpose of internal and external communication is the creation of Internet websites. GAP as an Internet website they use for all forms of communication within the business and outside the business. The Internet allows GAP to carry out tasks such as payrolls, business done, product scheduling and goods ordering, this speeds up the work done before.

GAP need to communicate with a range of stakeholders, including shareholders, customers, government officials, suppliers and the community. A range of different external communications media is employed to communicate with these groups of people.

Investors and shareholders are kept up to date with GAP by a number of communication methods. Company reports and documentation are sent by post and notified of any meetings taking place, which involves their presence. But ICT allows the shareholders and investors all the news they want to know about the share price, meetings and companies progress, by logging onto GAP corporate website. Which allows them to look up any thing they want to know about the company. It also shows them the financial information, sales records, and directors reports. This is a much quicker way of finding out the information than by posting the information. But the problem might be that the shareholders could have faults on their computers, might not be logged on to the Internet or they might not have a computer to check up the information. But they are kept updated by the most frequently used form of external verbal communication, which is the telephone or mobile phones. They are contacted by this communication nearly everyday by the directors or managers. The shareholders also can be in direct contact with the directors or managers by the use of e-mail. They have all the e-mail addresses of the directors or managers to find out more detailed information.

GAP uses Electronic Mail the most frequent way of communicating with their suppliers. This allows them to order for goods by using the Internet and the

goods are arrived quicker. They also communicate with the Government to show statistics about the company and PR materials. For this they have used video conferencing which makes possible meetings with people who are geographically separated.

Communication (ICT) and the achievement of business objectives

GAP have created excellent communications channels within the business and outside the business, which enables them, achieve its business objectives effectively. This makes sense in meeting a range of GAP objectives for example building strong relationships with customer, becoming the leading market leaders, developing a reputation and to maximize sales and revenues.

GAP are continually communicating with different groups of people, these communication performs a number of functions:

- “ A public relations function – to present a good image of the company.
- “ An information function – to provide various groupings with essential information about the company.
- “ A day to day trading function – to transact the business's daily commercial relationships.

The impact of ICT

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, in GAP ICT has totally transformed the ways of communicating within and outside the business:

- “ The use of e-mail to replace many communications that were previously carried out to give information to shareholders and directors by letters, faxes and phones calls.
- “ The use of networked database to replace GAP traditional systems of filing and storing information.

“ The use of computers to replace a range of standardized operations involving the interface between GAP and its customers. For example registering an order, requesting items from stores, maintaining stock levels, ect.

“ The use of an internet website to create a communication link between GAP and its global market.

“ The use of digital methods for much faster communications, involving a range of visual, sound, and other forms of communications.

Tesco based on business processes put a high premium on information and on sharing ICT facilities. ICT has a very important role to play for GAP achieving its business objectives. Groups working together in a team will need to share information, and computer terminals of different specialists are linked, so that information is available to all.

ICT systems and their applications influence the ways in which GAP operate and compete at all levels of decision making. ICT is essential to the running of a modern store. It is used for planning, monitoring, communicating and auditing store operations.